

# To what extent can art be a form of currency?

With reference to the 1986 case of Mr J.S.G Boggs

## Honor



Mr James Stephen  
Boggs, 1955 - 2017,  
created the idea  
of the 'Boggs' Bills'  
in 1984 in a  
Chicago diner.  
Boggs would paint  
money and then  
use it as currency  
to buy goods



Boggs would buy  
anything from  
food to stocks &  
bonds - even  
legal services when  
he got in trouble  
with the Bank of  
England.

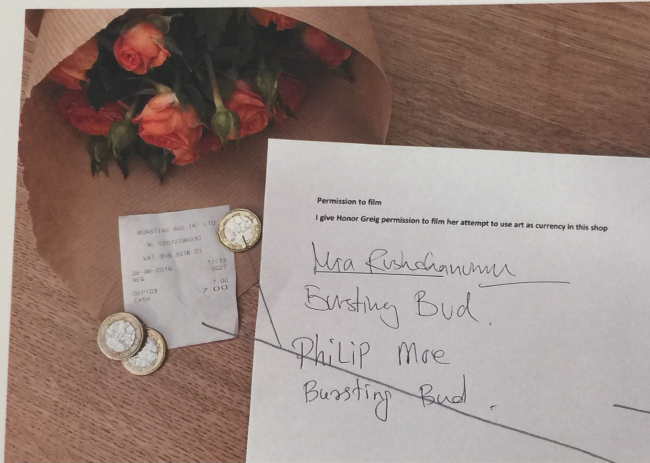
Boggs' bank notes had  
quirky deviations on  
them, for example,  
he has put his own  
face on this Swiss note



FIRST ATTEMPT - ACRYLIC  
→ I am attempting to recreate  
Boggs' process and use art  
as currency  
→ I do not like this medium as  
acrylic paints dry too quickly to  
achieve a good result  
→ additionally, this size is too  
small to achieve details

Here is my finished result. I went to FedEx and shrink the A4 image to the size of a real 10 pound note onto glossy paper.

I MADE IT CLEAR THIS WAS NOT A REAL TEN POUND NOTE - I SHOWED THE SERVERS MY PROCESS AND EXPLAINED THE IDEA BEHIND IT



I went on my 'money walk', (Wescher, 1998), and went to 3 shops:  
 → Daunt Books (a chain)  
 ↳ here I bought one-sided note was rejected

→ Bursting Bud (flowers shop - privately owned)  
 ↳ I bought a bunch of roses for £7

↳ here is my slip giving me permission to film the transaction  
 ↳ receipt & change

→ Lipp (a gift shop & privately owned)

↳ I bought a small purse for £6 and got £4 change

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TO WHAT EXTENT CAN ART BE A FORM OF CURRENCY? - With reference to the 1986 case of Mr J.S.G. Boggs

To explore the relationship between art and currency and hopefully find an answer to this question, I have created art out of currency; I painted an image of a ten-pound bank note (with small deviations) and attempted to use it as currency in public services. This experiment was inspired by the 'performance' of the 'Boggs' Bills', created by James Stephen George Boggs, 1955-2017.

J.S.G. Boggs came up with the concept of the first 'Boggs' Bill' in 1984 in a Chicago Dinner. As he sat with his coffee and doughnut, he doodled an image of a 1-dollar bill on a paper napkin. So impressed and humoured by his drawing, the waitress offered to buy it. Boggs refused and instead offered it as payment for his 90cent tab. The waitress accepted and gave him 10 cents back; 'An idea was born', (Grimes, 2017) as said by William Grimes, a journalist for the New York Times in an online article on Mr Boggs titled 'He Made Money. Literally'.

Over the next thirty years Boggs continued to 'make money' in this way; he reproduced British pounds, Swiss francs and American dollars, all with 'quirky deviations', (Grimes, 2017). For example, on an American dollar, the face of George Washington would often face the other way; sometimes the face would be drawn laughing or crying; sometimes he would even replace the face with his own. Reporter and editor for the Tampa Bay Times, Richard Danielson, reported that some bank notes would be signed with phrases such as "crazy cash" or "for what it's worth" (Danielson, 2017) in the place of the conventional phrasing on the dollar bill.

An example of Boggs' 'process' is recalled and described by Lawrence Weschler, widely regarded journalist and director of the New York institute for the Humanities at New York University. Weschler is also a friend of Mr Boggs and experienced Boggs' process first-hand, going on to writing a detailed description of it in his book titled 'Boggs, A Comedy of Values'. In chapter one, 'A Fools' Questions' he recalls a dinner he shared with Boggs which was paid for using a 'Boggs' Bill':

The two ran up a tab of 87 dollars, when it came to paying Boggs reached into his pocket and brought out a drawing of a 100 dollar note and added the finishing touches to it with green and black pens. Boggs then said to the waiter 'I intend to use it as payment' (Weschler, 1999); he assured him that he also had with him a real 100 dollar bill, 'indeed the model for the very drawing he just completed' (Weschler, 1999); Boggs explained to the stunned waiter 'I am an artist and I drew this. It took me many hours to do this and it is certainly worth something. I'm assigning it an arbitrary price that just happens to coincide with its face value, 100 dollars. That means that if you decide to accept it as full payment for our meal, you're going to have to have to give me 13 dollars in change. So, you have to make up your mind whether you think this piece of art is worth more or less than this regular hundred-dollar bill. It is entirely up to you', (Weschler, 1999). Weschler describes the position the waiter is now in as 'The freefall of worth and values', (Weschler, 1999).

The next chain of events of Boggs' performance, as explained by Robert R van Ryzin, I find to be truly fascinating: once Boggs has finally spent his bill, 'The change and receipt were sold by Boggs to a collector, along with information on where he spent the bill. If the collector was able to purchase the note from the server, he or she now had a complete transaction' (Van Ryzin, 2017); everyone involved in the process wins: Boggs makes money (somewhere around 5000 dollars) by selling the receipt and change; the unassuming server makes money by selling the drawing to the collector; and the collector has gained a very

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interesting, unique artwork that would be priced around six figures. As Weschler phrases it, Boggs runs “a sort of floating aesthetical, ethical crap game. Or else a sort of fairy-tale virtue test, in which the worthy agreed to sacrifice and [are] subsequently rewarded a hundredfold” (Weschler, 1999).

For example, when a waitress rejected a ‘Boggs’ Bill’ in a bar, Weschler recalled Boggs had later said to him “it’s a shame, if she had just taken it, somebody would most likely come along in a few days and offered her 500 dollars”, (Weschler, 1999). Ira Glass goes on to say it is a ‘con game, run in reverse. If the person falls for the game, they come out of it far wealthier than they went in’, (Lies.com, 2019).

Boggs would never sell his artworks, he would only ever spend them and seemed to have no limit in doing so: Robert R. Van Ryzin stated Boggs would spend his bills on anything from ‘fine dinners to a new motorcycle’ (Van Ryzin, 2017). Richard Danielson also stated that Boggs would buy ‘art supplies, cab fares, clothes, rented flats, even legal services and stocks and bonds’ (Danielson, 2017,) with his ‘Boggs Bills’.

These peculiar transactions inevitably took the attention of governments in several different countries, Britain being especially unaccommodating and bemused by Mr Boggs’ bank notes: ‘As he was preparing to exhibit four bank notes at the Young Unknowns Gallery in London in 1986, three constables raided the gallery and hauled Mr. Boggs off to jail. He was charged with four counts of violating the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act’, (Grimes, 2017). There is much debate to whether the Boggs’ Bills are art or forgeries.

I interviewed the prosecutor of the trial, Mr Robert Harman, who based his case on the fact the forgery act in the United Kingdom ‘prohibits copying bank of England notes in such a way that there are similarities amounting to material particulars which resemble the genuine bank of England notes’, (Harman, 2019), which is exactly what Boggs had done; in his view, ‘there didn’t appear to be much of a defence because, quite obviously, his bank notes did contain details which had been lifted from original bank notes’, (Harman, 2019). Additionally, part of Mr Harman’s case, as he was requested to portray in court, highlighted that Boggs’ bank notes ‘might end up with people being deceived, and passing these pieces of paper that Boggs was creating as bank notes and getting value from money from them’, (Harman, 2019).

Geoffrey Robertson, a civil rights lawyer, defended Mr Boggs in his trial against the Bank of England; he was so confident in Boggs’ innocence and his innovation that he accepted payments for his legal services in form of Boggs’ Bills. In his book ‘The Justice Game’, Robertson said ‘that pound note, Harold Wilson’s pound in your pocket, crumpled and grubby and going all too quickly at the super-market, has a kind of beauty, which is brought out by my client because he is an artist and not a forger’, (Robertson, 1998, page 262). Boggs’ defensive argument claims that Boggs is not a forger, but an artist and philosopher: “All money is art,” Mr. Boggs told The Orlando Sentinel in 1997; “If you look at a dollar, it’s portraiture, it’s landscape art, it’s abstract designs”, (Grimes, 2017).

The outcome of the trial found Mr Boggs to be not guilty; I interviewed Mr Robert Harman, the prosecutor of this case and when asked his opinions of the outcome of the case, Mr Harman recalled, ‘I do remember that I had hardly got out the court room... before we were told that the jury were coming back, and they immediately acquitted- no doubt all of them- and they found him not guilty’, (Harman, 2019). Mr Harman, himself, admitted ‘I personally took the view that nobody could imagine that they were genuine notes, they were the wrong size and all that kind of thing, as I remember it. But plainly and technically, literally construed, he probably was guilty’, (Harman, 2019). Although, he did go on to add ‘it was all a matter of degree. I do not think the degree of similarity in the Boggs’ case was all that

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great', (Harman, 2019). When asked whether he thought art could be a form of currency, Mr Harman replied 'No, personally. But it was said to me, on that ground, that it was a criminal offence to create them', (Harman, 2019).

On the other hand, when I interviewed Mr Alexander Whittaker, an artist, who shared the same view as Mr Robertson, that Mr Boggs' process was one of ideology and philosophy, rather than forgery: 'He is sort of approaching art as something that has value, sure, but a value that has been set by the public', (Whittaker, 2019). When I asked him the same question, 'Do you think art can be a form of currency?', he replied, 'I think art has been a form of currency for centuries- I think it's impossible it avoid', (Whittaker, 2019), he even went as far as to say that it is 'in many ways, a really, really good one, because it doesn't suffer from the same fluctuations because an artist becomes no less dead', (Whittaker, 2019).

To further explore whether art can be a form of currency, I have replicated Boggs' performance: since February, I had been painting (on and off) an A4 image of a ten-pound note. I chose to paint a 10 pound note as opposed to a five or twenty pound note as I do not like the tones of blue used in the five pound note and would find them very difficult to recreate; a twenty pound note would be too difficult to spend/be accepted as currency, especially considering the fact I am hoping to receive change in the transaction.

Alike to the 'Boggs' Bills', I have deviated from the conventional ten-pound note: in the place of the queen's face on the right of the bank note I have painted Marilyn Monroe. I chose Marilyn Monroe as her face/hair has a similar silhouette to that of the queen, making her depiction slightly more subtle. Monroe is also a very iconic face, making her easily recognisable and possibly making my bank note more appealing to the server. Additionally, I have chosen a laughing, carefree image of Marilyn Monroe to replace the Queen's humble, solemn expression, which gives the bank note a comical, playful quality, similar to that achieved by Boggs.

Marilyn Monroe's face in place of the Queen's on the right of the bank note inspired me to paint the face of the US President, John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963, on the left side of the bank note. JFK is also a very iconic and recognisable face, not to mention him and Marilyn Monroe were infamously rumoured to have had an affair; In my depiction of JFK, I have strategically placed the light in his eye in order to give the unsubtle impression he is looking at Marilyn beside him. In the place of the Chief Cashier's signature, Victoria Cleland, I have put my own, (Honor Greig), and given myself the title of 'artist' below. These deviations allow my note to be obviously different from a real bank note, ensuring no fraud or misconception can occur during the transaction

After experimenting in acrylic paint and water coloured pencil, I finally decided to paint the image in water-based oil paints. This worked best as it does not leave a 'plasticky' finish to the painting (as acrylic does), and the paints takes longer to dry, meaning I can edit and blend colours more seamlessly and effectively over a longer period of time, creating a cleaner and more realistic result.

I initially attempted to paint the bank note to scale, however I found this too difficult as I could not paint the smallest details effectively. I wanted to make the note as realistic and detailed as possible as the only reason a server would accept it is if he/she is impressed by the image. Therefore, I printed out an A4 image of a 10-pound note to copy from. As I reached the final stages of my A4 image I began to feel that the transaction of an A4 bank note is too 'clumsy', so I decided to photocopy the image down to the size of a real 10-pound bank note; I had originally planned to photocopy the image onto acetate paper, (a transparent film),

however this could not be effectively achieved, therefore I decided to print it onto glossy paper. These adaptations enabled my bank note to be as similar to a real bank note as possible, which I thought would allow it to be more accepted.

I went on what Weschler described as a 'money walk' (Weschler, 1999), attempting to spend my ten-pound note. The first shop I went into was the book shop chain, Daunt Books. When I got to the counter with the £9.99 book, 'Think like an Artist', I explained to the server my intention to 'buy goods, in this case a book, with money that I have made myself', (Greig, H, 2019); I showed them the A4 painting and then the reduced 10 pound note I was offering as tender. I aimed to keep my 'spiel', (Weschler, 1999), as clear and concise as possible, ensuring he knew it was a piece of art, **not** real currency. After looking at my one-sided pound note up and down, he said 'I would want to accept it, but I would probably get sacked, so I would have to say no', (Greig, H, 2019). After watching so many clips of Boggs' attempting to spend his art, I had expected this response from a chain as no matter what the server may want to do, he/she cannot legally accept it as they do not own the shop.

Next, I decided to go into a privately-owned flower shop called 'Bursting Buds', to see if I could get a different result. Again, I ensured the server knew it was art, not real money; I showed them the A4 painting and then the reduced 10 pound note I was offering as tender. Seemingly impressed by the art, the man and lady at the counter accepted my one sided ten-pound note with Marilyn Monroe's face on, and sold me a bunch of orange roses for seven pounds, giving me three pounds in change.

Spurred on by this success, I went into another privately-owned shop called 'Lipp'; I gave a similar explanation of what my project was, making clear it was not real money: 'This is money that I have painted (referencing the A4 note) and shrunk down to this (referencing the print out) and I was wondering if you would let me buy this little purse with this 'ten-pound note', (Greig, H, 2019). The lady who owned the shop laughed as she gave me £4 change, saying 'I like this, I might print some money of my own later', (Greig, H, 2019), to which I replied, 'Maybe you can spend my £10-pound note', (Greig, H, 2019).

In conclusion, art can be a form of currency, to an extent; as Mr Boggs' whole process has shown, art can be used to buy goods; this is further proven by my own experiment: I was able to buy a bunch of flowers (£7) and a small silver purse (£6), receiving change and a receipt in both transactions. However, the pattern that my own and Boggs' 'money walk', (Weschler, 1998), seems to show is that art as currency is somewhat limited to private organisations, when the person at the till is able to accept the currency of their choice as they have the power to do this. Additionally, it is also key that the art is intriguing enough for the server to find interesting, otherwise it is not beneficial for them. I therefore agree with Mr Robinson and Mr Whittaker's argument, that Mr Boggs' process is a philosophy, not a forgery.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **INTERVIEW WITH MR ROBERT HARMAN – PROSECUTOR OF MR BOGGS' CASE**

#### **What is your opinion on Boggs' whole performance?**

I never quite knew what his motive was, what his reason for doing what he did really amounted to, whether it was to challenge the bank of England or, generally speaking, as a joke. The bank of England, under the forgery act - the United Kingdom forgery act - prohibits copying bank of England notes in such a way that there are similarities amounting to material particulars which resemble the genuine bank of England notes. The trouble with that is you didn't go far off the straight and narrow path without apparently reproaching on that. Boggs had decided to go the whole hogg, and not to leave anyone in any doubt in what he was trying to do, which was to draw attention to himself at an exhibition he was going to have in the West End of London and I was at that time, employed by the bank of England to conduct criminal prosecutions on the banks behalf, when or if, anyone set about copying a material, in particular their bank notes, to which they were extremely jealous, for obvious reasons, and I was duly briefed to prosecute him on the face of it there didn't appear to be much of a defence because, quite obviously, his bank notes did contain details which had been lifted from original bank notes. The jury, as things turned out, were not terribly interested in my submissions to them, or what the judge said in his summing up, which was, as I remember it, loaded against the defence and encouraged convictions. I do remember that I had hardly got out the court room, after the jury had been sent out and we all had to wait for them to return with their verdicts in due course, before we were told that the jury were coming back, and they immediately acquitted, no doubt all of them, and they found him not guilty. My own personal opinion really involves giving an opinion on whether there were serious dangers that anybody would mistake Boggs- I personally took the view that nobody could imagine that they were genuine notes, they were the wrong size and all that kind of thing, as I remember it. But plainly and technically, literally construed, he probably was guilty, but the jury, as it were, intervened when it was put to them, and said 'we're were not having this', and found him not guilty and that was the end of the matter; he couldn't be tried again for the same thing; he was of course jubilant; I do remember reading about the trial in an American magazine, I do not remember what it was called now, it gave a rather unflattering description of me in it now I remember, I can't think now what it was but I remember laughing at it at the time.

#### **What do you think Mr Boggs was trying to achieve in this process?**

Mr Boggs was a professional artist/cartoonist who liked to imitate, for the purpose of his cartoons, and again this is my recollection, he liked to imitate other people's work, when it was on any view, harmless, and he did that to some effect, I think, doing simply cartoons. What upset the Bank of England- the officials at the Bank of England- was the possibility, as I was asked to portray it in court for a jury to consider, that it might end up with people being deceived, and passing these pieces of paper that Boggs was creating as bank notes and getting value from money from them.

#### **Do you think his 'performance' says anything towards the value of art, that it can be worth the equivalent of money?**

I don't think for a minute that Mr Boggs intended anybody to be deceived as to the notes themselves, rather than there would be a general danger of that, I don't think thought there was anything like that, but he thought that it was a fun idea. Mr Boggs, as I remember it, quite amusing, and again, if I remember rightly, he came up to me at the court after trial and shook hands; he didnt take it desperately seriously, but he was very relived, because quite

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apart from anything, if it was done by someone who was out to create mischief, I think there was a prison sentence available to the judge if he had been convicted, not necessarily, but he would have faced the prospect of a fairly heavy fine, and I don't think he was well off- I don't think he was well off at all.

### **What do you think about the outcome of the trial?**

The outcome of the trial, I only have to go to the book, that my old friend, my barrister friend, who was the defending barrister, Geoffrey Robertson's description of the trial, which was of course a victory for him. He, I think, recalls how at the end of the trial the judge looked at me and smiled and said 'Mr Harman, one never knows, do we', or words to that effect, and I presumably, just grinned respectfully back again, but that was how the entire thing ended. I didn't regard it as the most serious case in the world that I had ever had to conduct in the Old Bailey, obviously not. But I think the judge thought it was a forgone conclusion, because there was no real defence to it; I don't think judge minded that he was sent down, he was a high court judge- senior judge- sent down from the strand (that's unimportant I suppose) sent down to try this particular case because the bank of England took it seriously and didn't want to have one of the regular Old Bailey judges who lived there all year round, tossing their heads, ordering the jury to find him not guilty, or alternatively saying to them- which I don't think this judge did- that if they were satisfied that no defence had been put forward, then it was their clear duty to convict. He went as near as he could to saying that, but he didn't go the whole way.

### **Do you think that art can be a form of currency?**

No. personally. But it was said to me, on that ground, that it was a criminal offence to create them. the history of all this is quite interesting because it all began a little time before the Boggs case with the arrival in the modern world of the copying machine and private individuals were obtaining copying machines and copying this that and the other. Sometimes, for instance, breaching copywrite with a copying machine. And there were a number of cases, with which I was involved which were about people with copying machines copying bank notes so that in the dark, in a public house bar, that kind of thing, people were being momentarily deceived. It was quite clear because these copies were found to be moving from place to place; they were being passed as currency, and people were getting away with it. And one of the things which upset The Bank was I remember a case where a man had copied a number of ten shilling notes, (that was the currency of the day, 10 shillings, half a pound), the ten shilling note was a bit easier to copy; but there was a man somewhere up in the North of England I think, who had made, or obtained, acquired somehow a copying machine that did jolly good copies of the ten shilling note, and was selling them round the countryside in effect. So, they were much better copies, and they purported to be, altogether, what they weren't. So, I think the purpose of the legislation was one thing, but it did invite somebody who was just supposed to make a joke of it to go and see what happened, which in effect is what Boggs was doing. And the reaction of the judge, which you will be able to quote you want to, according to Geoffrey Robertson, that at the end of the trial, the judge turned to Mr Harman and said, you know, it wasn't for me to say that wonders never cease, or whatever it was, there was nothing I could do about it, they were quite plainly determined that in cases where there was not obviously an intent to defraud, that people shouldn't be found guilty in a criminal offence. I mean, one of the results of this legislation, on of the results of the forgery acts, which you have a copy of presumably, that that was there for a purpose- the aim of it was primarily to catch people who were seeking to defraud, it caught up in its net at the same time, people who weren't intending to defraud, people who may only have been intending to see what happened when you did it, or as a

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joke, or for some flippant reason, just to see how far it would go if it was spotted. Now, I think everyone accepted it at the time, that in the half light of the public house saloon bar, close to closing time, on a Saturday night if you like, that almost anything could pass for bank notes in payment for a drink; because the landlord or person serving behind the bar never pauses to examine very closely, the bank note, to see if it is genuine or not, or didn't at that time, and there were instances reported of pieces of paper, that clearly were not really resembling bank notes that were tendered and accepted in public places, like the bar of a pub. So, you may say in the end, that it was all a matter of degree. I do not think the degree of similarity in the Boggs' case was all that great, on the other hand, it had details that were particular to bank notes, and to that extent, the prosecution were maintaining, that they were inherently dangerous, and hoped to catch him of that section of the forgery act, which when it was originally drafted, was intended to catch real criminals.

## **INTERVIEW WITH MR ALEXANDER WHITTAKER - ARTIST**

### **What do you think Mr Boggs was trying to achieve with his whole process?**

I think, obviously there will be lots of actual information, lots of his own opinions, lots of his own intentions he has made public, but from an outsider's perspective, I think the artist takes what is essentially a big abstract discussion that has been going on for centuries about the value of art and the value of it as a commodity and an investment, as something that is precious and unique, and he is sort of folding in a lot of principle that would sort of contradict that; so he is sort of approaching art as something that has value, sure, but a value that has been set by the public. So the nature of him using his work to actually purchase things sort of devalues his art. Especially when you consider some of the things he purchases with it, sort of deliberate devaluing and its sort of the most literal way of letting the public set the value and the price and the level that his art achieves. I think that also you can read in some pop art philosophies to; reducing art to something that is on one hand unique- and his work is unique- but the implication that it is disposable, that it is repeatable, (even though it's not- it is handmade), but the implication is there. I don't know; without knowing more about his philosophy, I don't know whether it is rooted in disgust at the value of art and how it has deflated, and how it is monetised (no pun intended) in how he represents a commodity that is very elite, and again, there is a contradiction there that he is pushing his art into arenas that aren't very elite, they aren't unique, he's not buying billionaire Rolls Royces and paying for pent houses in New York with it; he is essentially, reducing its value; his work is essentially all about value.

### **His defensive argument was that Boggs is more of a philosopher and artist than forger, would you agree with that?**

I would say that from what you can read into it, there is a ton of philosophy there, the whole idea of money is rooted in capitalism, and as I said I am not familiar with his specific philosophies, but I think there is a strong liberal implication that art as a commodity, art as a currency, is a flawed system. And not to give him too much credit because that is a philosophy that has been around for centuries, in one form or another; the arts and crafts movement was founded on the principle that, ironically, that art should be for everyone and art should permeate into everyday life and it shouldn't just be for the wealthy because even then, centuries of wealthy patrons commissioning portraits, wealthy patrons commissioning paintings, sculptures, and things that represented their wealth and their opulence and they were the only ones that could, even after the middle class became a real force, it was still the wealthier middle class that were the art patrons, it wasn't everyday working men/small

land owners. So there is definitely- the irony with arts and crafts being of course that its other philosophies made it completely out of touch with the average person- anyway that's a different discussion, but it is a discussion that goes on throughout the centuries and the idea that the dissatisfaction, because artists do not enter the art world hoping to be rich, at least the vast majority don't, because if for no other reason, there is not expectation that you will; it is not like growing up the son of an investment banker; you don't assume that you are going to make it rich, so the expectation of wealth and fame and power isn't necessarily there and so philosophies tend to be more liberal, they tend to be more left, although philosophies always change when artists get famous and wealthy, and that sort of thing- they don't always, but they often do. And so, I would say that he is perhaps, with that sentiment, underplaying his art and making the public aware that it is more of a self-effacing- or rather confronting the art world, philosophical, ideological discussion; it is interesting. As he achieves more notoriety and wealthy, it would be interesting to see how those philosophies fundamentally alter.

### **Can art be a form of currency?**

I think art has been a form of currency for centuries- I think it's impossible it avoid, I think in many ways it is rather like land: it is a finite resource when you deal with individuals and what they produce; just as artist become more value when they die, because for the very reason that no more is being produced; it's the uniqueness of art that gives it value; it is the stupidity of men, really, that give it such overwhelming and ridiculous value. It has become, and again this is something that has been discussed for centuries, going back to my former answer, it has become the lamenter for a lot of people; there are paintings, great works of art, that will never be seen again in public, never, never, never, because they are now sitting in the back of a vault in Dubai, they are now sitting behind bullet proof glass in a pent house in Moscow, and that was never the intention of the artist- that was never the intension of any artist. So, yes, art is a form of currency, and in many ways, a really, really good one, because it doesn't suffer from the same fluctuations because and artist becomes no less dead. I suppose a really quintessential figure would be someone like Vermeer, who only produced 15-30 finished paintings in his life- that has value, the rarity has value, the skill has value, but something else has come up in the last few years: it is not just about skill, it is not just about rarity, it is about- almost religious- the canonising of certain people, the canonising of geniuses or the canonising of figures and personality, it has almost become a bit of a religion; it goes by word of mouth; before the age of celebrities, artists were some of the original celebrities; Picasso's work is neither scarce, rare, or in many cases good, but the cult to the personality of the artist really played into what has made it such an icon. But currency, yes, it always has been, always has been.