To Market We Go: Art, Advertising, and the Multiple explores two aspects of contemporary art practice that challenge long-held notions of craft, technical skill, and transcendent affect in unique works of art as defining features of art itself. A generation of artists emerged in the 1960s as broader cultural attitudes towards authority, power and money took a left turn, in many cases upending the notion of the “uniqueness” of the art object. The art of the sixties often reflects this—perhaps nowhere more than in the genres of art for advertising media and the multiple. And not surprisingly, both genres emerge in the work of Dada artist Marcel Duchamp in the early twentieth century, a major influence on artists of the 1960s and later.

As the marketplace for contemporary art began to heat up in the Pop era of the early 1960s, artists began to tackle the gallery system itself in playful, yet clearly critical works that took the form of conceptual art in the form of advertising. Ray Johnson’s Robin Gallery is a purely fictional enterprise, as is Yoko Ono’s IsReal Gallery. Implicitly addressing the commodification of the art object, Ono offers circles and holes, purely conceptual and literally immaterial works. Years later, United Art Contractors tackle art world politics more directly.

The multiple, a mass-produced art object, served, at least initially, to circumnavigate the gallery system, offering affordable art to the masses. Duchamp’s Rotoreliefs, for example, were offered to consumers at a trade fair, completely outside the gallery system. As we arrive in the twenty-first century, we see more and more artists that have come to terms with market forces with notables such as Takashi Murakami designing for luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton.

White Musallam, Jeff Koons, and others problematize the narrative of market criticality with their apparently celebratory works. Monopoly, at least, successfully collapses the notions of high and low, producing not only phenomenally expensive works of art, but convenience store “collections” within the reach of consumers working with childhood allowances.

The exhibition is presented in conjunction with the course, Art, Advertising and the Multiple, taught by Professor Kevin Concannon. Students in the class worked on didactic materials for the exhibition: Grace Barry, Diana Bayless, Briana Blanchard, Katie Chen, Casey Davis,Brandon De Aguiar, Claudia Guffin, Michael James, Samantha Koch, Isaac Kriewaldt, Kathryn Lavender, Kelby Luce, Shannon MacArthur, Megan Max, Jessica Min, Briana Moshfegh, Dede More, Jessica Re, Kelley Schneider, Brooke Smith, Henry Thompson, Maxwell Vincent, Emily Walden, and Chloe Young.
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