



Arctic energy image: hydrocarbon aesthetics of progress and form

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I consider how modernization discourse on Arctic energy development is now taking shape through a visual aesthetic system. I focus on one advertising campaign promoted by the Norwegian consulting firm Reinertsen, whose visuals aim to transform technical knowledge of energy development into an experience of artistic appreciation. I apply academic perspectives on aesthetic experience to my analysis and contribute with statements I gathered during a two-hour conversation with Geir Suul, Managing Director of Reinertsen, which took place at the Reinertsen headquarters in Trondheim, Norway, January 2016. I frame this discussion within a broader argument of the conditions that give rise to an energy aesthetics regime wherein environmental risk is increasingly disguised through enrollment processes in place for engaging consumers emotionally through marketing techniques aimed at constructing capitalist desire.

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Several decades ago, Beck (1986) prophesized a shift in the methods used to deny environmental risk, resulting from the transformation of some once-highly praised forms of wealth (the atom, genetic technology, hydrocarbon industry) into unpredictable sources of danger. The obviousness of this danger, he argued, would place more and more obstacles in the way of the customary routines of minimizing and covering up. ‘The agents of modernization in science, business and politics’, Beck stated, ‘find themselves placed in the uncomfortable position of a denying defendant breaking into a real sweat because of the chain of circumstantial evidence’ (p. 18). What Beck describes can be understood as two elements of one claim. First, the true interests of science, business, and politics had been publicly exposed as a program of profit-making erected upon legacies of earthly destruction; and second, these interests were exposed by a preponderance of empirical evidence that overwhelmed the ability of modernizing discourse to normalize this destructive program.

Drawing inspiration from Beck’s prophesy, in this article I examine promotional images in the energy industry whose presence I attribute to the rise of a system of visual representation that responds to demands originating both inside and outside Arctic energy politics, mediating new powers and attachments: relations with risk and

climate change, progress, and both state and transnational forces. I demonstrate how energy promotional imagery by the Reinertsen consulting firm re-codifies potential perceptions of environmental risk into sensuous perception through practices that the art world labels haptic effect, optical combining, installation, and presentness of grace (what I call wonderment). As a result, the customary routines for covering up industrial danger are indeed shifting; they rely not on the normalizing processes of modernization discourse but on an aesthetic experience that is post-discursive and, to some extent, post-contextual.

To orient the reader to the stakes of my research, I first relate examples that establish the possibility for characterizing energy imagery in terms of aesthetic requirements, and then I connect the analysis with my broader assertion of the centrality of the rise of an energy aesthetic regime. For analytical purposes, I refer to this shift as an aesthetic of progress and form, by which I mean that a form common to artistic practice is being replicated for the purpose of both concealing the complexity of energy provisioning and promoting conditions of reliability in energy development. I argue that, in contrast to the rational approach of modernizing discourse, artistic practice provokes an aesthetic experience. Artworks create a transgressive excitement based on their presence as sense-catching forms. To witness art is to be in attendance at an occurrence without something occurring. Following a genealogy of modern aesthetic outlined by Seel (2005) and Rebenitsch (2012), I apply four categories of aesthetic perception toward understanding the experience offered by artwork employed in the Reinertsen campaign, an experience that circumvents the limitations of discourse: (1) sensuous knowledge; (2) individual appearance; (3) lingering; and (4) aesthetic ‘advancedness’ – a term I borrow from Rebenitsch (2012, p. 107) to measure how energy imagery aligns with the art world’s own sense of aesthetic progress.

Energy’s role in provisioning and powering everyday activities arose during the nine decades between 1882 and 1973, from Edison’s electric systems to OPEC’s first oil price rise – a period that comprised a distinct energy era of progressively cheaper fuel supply and mass diffusion of late nineteenth-century inventions (steam turbine, electric motor, fuel engine). With the post-1973 response to OPEC’s high prices, the late-twentieth-century energy system has resulted in a class of consumer that can best be described by a reliance upon a ‘high-energy civilization’ (Smil, 2000). For the inheritors of this maturing system, self-image and personal identity are intimately bound to the convenience, versatility, and reliability of its energy services. Insofar as energy production is the lifeblood of this lifestyle (without which commerce – and indeed, everything else – would come to a halt), the provisioning of fuels (oil, gas, coal, nuclear) for their conversion into transport and electricity has long been the subject of various temporal and biopolitical visions in the name of security over these resources (Huber, 2015). From this end, the arguments in favor of Arctic oil development have intensified in recent years. The Arctic has altered dramatically from impacts related to climate change. As a result of opening waters, resource capture is accelerating in what some describe as a ‘rush for the Arctic’ (Anderson, 2009). The ‘rush’ will likely be slower than the term implies due to lower prices and reduced global demand in the oil market. Still, the threat posed by commercial extraction warrants an examination of the role corporate oil imagery plays in provisioning a new common-sense vision of Arctic energy development.

Fraser (1989) notes that the production of a common-sense vision is a deliberate strategy to establish or deny the political status of a given claim or policy in order to validate such claims as a matter of legitimate political concern or to enclave them as a nonpolitical matter. In this way, the intensity and persistence of debate about Arctic energy development among environmentalists, local residents, national governments, and industry developers suggest that more is at stake in provisioning a common-sense vision than the specifics of any technical issue. In fact, different views of energy shape policy choices, which in turn further legitimize particular views. The effects of policy decisions based on particular views can be profound. When a society 'accepts a particular definition of energy, the choice sets the terms for future political debate and defines the legitimate participants of that debate' (NRC, 1981, p. 24). By strengthening interest groups, policy choices provide institutional and ideological support for a whole range of policies based on similar views of energy. In this way, energy policies help shape a society's definition of energy. The connection of policies to interests and to basic perspectives partly explains why common-sense visions of energy are more a political than a technical issue.

Echoing Beck's sociological approach to the normalizing processes of modernization discourse above, Fraser's political philosophy model of struggles over a common-sense vision highlights a historically and culturally specific ensemble of *discursive* resources available to members of a given social collectivity in pressing policy claims against one another. Among these discursive resources, Fraser notes the following: *officially recognized idioms* in which one can press claims, for example, needs talk or rights talk; *vocabularies available* for instantiating claims in recognized idioms, for example, therapeutic, feminist, and socialist vocabularies; *paradigms of argumentation* accepted as authoritative in adjudicating conflicting claims, for example, with respect to needs talk, conflicts over the interpretation of needs by appeals to scientific experts; *narrative conventions* available for constructing the individual and collective stories that are constitutive of people's identities; and *modes of subjectification*, in which various discourses position the people to whom they are addressed as specific sorts of subjects endowed with specific sorts of capacities for action, for example, as 'normal' or 'deviant'. The emphasis on discourse in struggles over policy was famously echoed in political science by Hajer's (1993) identification of a *shift in the discussion* of ecological problems, in which language provides a tool to reposition agenda setting *from a positivist notion* (getting media attention, highlighting debate, getting institutions involved) to a focus on the specific form through which communication by a field of actors develops arguments which are both self-enclosed and enclaved, but at the same time, specifically different on a set of points within this enclaved story line. Story lines are conceptual modes for arranging the interests and disagreements of a variety of stakeholders.

In contrast to this older form of normalizing processes of environmental risk through discourse, I consider how common-sense visions of Arctic energy development are created through aesthetic practice. My analysis of energy promotional imagery departs from this traditional model of discourse-based claims and instead positions itself within a broader academic context that frames emotional connections between consumers and values, in what has been termed an 'experience economy' (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The aesthetic of energy promotional imagery, as with certain forms of corporate and commodity branding, involve the shaping of passions, feelings, and emotional experiences in a dynamic interplay with observers of visuals. Recent work in the area of emotional geographies

considers emotion in terms of its ‘socio-spatial mediation and articulation’ instead of a subjective interior state, suggesting that emotions derive from ‘relational flows, fluxes or currents, and in between places’ as much as from objects that can be studied or measured (Bookman, 2012, p. 242). Citing the work of Thrift (2009), for example, Bookman (2012) describes how emotion is a semiconscious phenomenon that involves bodily states, processes, and knowledge that form embodied thinking; emotion is often indirect and non-reflective, but it is also a particular kind of intelligence that shapes how people move, react, and relate to the world. Bound up with embodied encounters, emotion also moves through and between bodies that are not primarily centered on discourses of knowledge but rather on ceaselessly moving messages of various kinds. Of concern for both Bookman and Thrift is the ever more explicit engineering of emotion through the use of sensory or aesthetic design in the production of commodities or devices and the way this engineering influences dispositions.

Sensuous knowledge

One compelling example of Arctic oil imagery that cultivates emotion through sensory reaction is an advertisement for the consulting firm Reinertsen that hangs inside the domestic terminal in the Oslo airport (Figure 1). Resting two meters above the floor, rising another three meters in height, and spreading four meters in length, the image looms over passersby, depicting an offshore oilrig whose photographic realism has been



Figure 1. Reinertsen advertisement hanging in the domestic terminal of the Oslo airport depicting a computer generated rendering of an oil-based artwork whose theme is an offshore oilrig. Image by Arthur Mason, reproduced with permission of Reinertsen.

altered through computer design to give the impression of an artist's familiarity with color, paint, and brush stroke. The oilrig 'artwork' is based on an actual photograph that circulates across industry websites, where its meanings are in fact associated with operational problems in subarctic waters.

Figure 2 depicts both the photographic image from an industry website and its computer graphically altered version hanging in the Oslo airport. The two images together demonstrate a noticeable transition. The photographic image documents a mechanical record through realism. By contrast, the 'artwork' image emphasizes an artist's relationship with painting techniques such as pointillism and texture.

Figure 3 is an up-close inspection of the oilrig artwork that offers stimulation through uneven strokes of the paint brush, creating a perceptual experience of touch, or what the art world calls 'haptic' perception, derived from a Greek word meaning 'able to lay hold of'. As such, the oilrig image is perceived in a haptic way despite the apparent brushstrokes



Figure 2. A comparison of the same offshore oilrig visual as presented in the Reinertsen advertising campaign at the Oslo airport (above; image by Arthur Mason, reproduced with permission of Reinertsen) and as a photographic image available over the Internet (below; image by Øyvind Hagen, reproduced with permission of Statoil).



Figure 3. An up-close perspective of the Reinertsen oilrig visual depicting computer design brushstrokes that replicate the haptic effect in artworks of oil-based painting. Reproduced with permission of Reinertsen.

merely being printed. The image appears as a real material with expression and credibility. Art critic Budd (2008) notes that seeing what is depicted in a painting requires the visual attention of a spectator to be distributed between the marked surface and the item depicted. This alteration in visual attention is sufficient for a consequent admiration of the artist's artistry, and thus my closeness to the Reinertsen oilrig image intensifies an encounter with the artwork's artistry. Here, physical depth has implications for the perception of how the oilrig image changes with distance. From close up, the pattern of canvas and the brushstrokes of oil paint are a single element; such labors look blurred and lack precision. At some paces, however, everything congeals and stands out. From a distance, the distinct colors blend together to create a uniform motif.

In his *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, Immanuel Kant's leading idea is that an aesthetic judgment about an item is a judgment whose determining ground cannot be other than the subject's pleasure or displeasure in experiencing the item (cited in Rebenitsch, 2012). In other words, aesthetic perception must be based on the subject's hedonistic reaction to the object. Similarly, Shklovsky (1926) suggests that the logic of art imparts the sensation of things as they are confronted through perception and not as they are known through comprehension. 'The technique of art', Shklovsky writes,

is to make objects unfamiliar ... [and] ... to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object, the object is not important. (p. 3)

Likewise, I believe that the spectator experience of the Reinertsen advertisement is one of an emphasis on aesthetic judgment. What is maximal to this energy image is an interest in the aesthetic encounter. What is minimal are the interests that focus on the effects of oil production in the Arctic and of oil producers with sufficient resources to place the Arctic at risk. This contrast between the effects evoked by the photographic encounter of this oilrig, associated with the risks of oil production, and the Reinertsen artwork depicting the very same oilrig, in which these risks are covered up, is an example of the appeal of aesthetic perception in propagating Arctic development.

Energy imagery such as the Reinertsen artwork involves a special aesthetic experience that maximizes the effects of sensuous qualities associated with artistic practice, while relegating to other views secondary considerations such as the effects of oil pollution and industrial hazard. Thus, the Reinertsen artwork may be considered part of an emerging aesthetic practice surrounding energy development whose purpose includes re-codifying environmental risk into artistic expression. It suggests a newly created response for re-codifying a negative modernity under a sign of progress. In this way, Arctic development revisits the normalization processes of liability by replacing modernizing discourse with a visual system of aesthetic experience.

In the field of philosophy, critics of aesthetic perception frame a contrast between aesthetic and pragmatic experience. To behave aesthetically and pragmatically are two different orientations; as Seel states, 'knowing something aesthetically possesses a conciseness completely different from knowing it scientifically' (p. 8). The former type of experience (aesthetic) is characterized by attentiveness to what is appearing, as in the case of the senses (listening, seeing) being caught up and engrossed by an encounter. The latter (pragmatic) involves perception that disregards this fixation on events, expressing instead an interest in classifying experience through theoretical or empirical concepts. Interestingly, aesthetic perception has long been considered a lower knowledge faculty to pragmatic experience. Sociologist Bourdieu (1982) puts forth a model of surface/depth judgment, what he calls the anti-Kantian and Kantian esthetic, to show how differences in taste mark and maintain social boundaries between the dominated and dominant classes. Bourdieu's anti-Kantian aesthetic is a preference for the immediate and obvious, while the Kantian aesthetic rejects obvious representations in favor of the esoteric. Sloterdijk (1982) similarly identifies two types of knowledge faculty, what he calls cynicism (corporeal) and modern cynicism (distanced reflection through textual familiarity), echoing Bourdieu's model of surface/depth judgment.

This surface/depth dichotomy was described to me during my conversation with Geir Suul, the Reinertsen Director who oversees the company's artwork advertising campaign. Geir explained that Reinertsen is a consultant company that has experienced problems expressing its identity beyond the interests of supplying engineering design and physical installation of offshore oilrigs for Statoil and other petroleum firms in the Norwegian and Barents Sea. As Geir recalled, 'everyone recognized within the firm the idea of engineer kunst (art of engineering)'. Yet, the company brand was invisible behind its reputation for fabrication and installation. So, Geir teamed up with the Norwegian communications company Geel Muyden Kiese to dramatically increase artistic practice surrounding visual representation of the firm. In this way, the Reinertsen artwork campaign is an increasingly integral part of creating a greater sense of identity and intimacy with the convenience

and versatility of delivered energy services – a campaign that proliferates in a globally interconnected, Arctic inflected postmodernity.

In their edited volume *Anthropology of Art and Aesthetics*, Coote and Shelton (1994) describe artworks as attributing a meaningful pattern to both real and imagined experience while creating feelings of rightness of order in relations to the world. Patterning attribution is not a passive condition, but involves emotional engagement with relations invoked by the object. Moreover, works of art are social. They are composed of a physicality that mediates between two beings, the artist and spectator, and therefore creates a social relationship between them, a relationship which in turn provides a channel for further social relations and influences. Thus, the application of art to the energy image can help shape a society's definition of energy and in turn define the legitimate participants involved in making decisions about energy development. Thus, the connection of aesthetic to shaping public views partly explains why the Reinertsen oilrig image is more a political than an artistic issue.

The belief that aesthetics is a special faculty of perception and one situated in contrast to conceptual knowledge was first outlined by Baumgarten in *Aesthetica* (1750), wherein he identified a new and neglected form of epistemology concerned not only with beautiful objects of nature and art, but also with 'sensuous knowledge'. For Baumgarten, aesthetic knowledge is specialized in perceiving complex phenomena not for the sake of analysis, but to grasp them in their intuitive density. The grasping of density is similar to the way anthropologists view artwork – as an intuitive self-encounter that points far beyond the personal situation. Robert Redfield, for example, considered art to be an 'enlargement of experience' that serves as a window of transparency through which a subject sees human affairs (in Firth, 1994). In Gregory Bateson's analysis of the compositional structure of Balinese painting in the cremation procession, 'art is fundamentally part of man's search for grace, a psychic integration' (in Firth, 1994). Inspired by Levi Strauss's analysis of masks, several generations of anthropologists have regarded art as an intricate process of reasoning through myth and toward a general iconography of society. Thus, art as sensuous knowledge is a faculty concerned with perceiving symbolically on what is generally termed an extra-human plane ideas reflecting in massive patterning the desires, hopes, and fears that people normally experience on the human plane.

Individual appearance

Seel (2005) cites G.W.F. Hegel's suggestion that the content of an artwork is interwoven with the configuration of artistic material. Moreover, it is this interweaving of material and content that lends the appearance of artwork its legitimacy as an individual work. Above, haptic effect and optical combining are two examples of processes that create individual appearance with both content and materiality. Returning to the Reinertsen artwork, there are two alternate locations that execute the oilrig image as an individual work of art. First, placement of the firm's name in the bottom right hand corner, including the circular stripe that surrounds it as a flourish, creates recognition that mimics both style and location of an artist's signature on a painting. Second, directly above the signature is a phrase 'The Art of Engineering', which introduces the content of the image as a suitable theme of artwork. Both the signature and phrase invite the spectator to consider the offshore oilrig as suitable artistic material alongside classical and modern themes such as the nude, the religious icon, the landscape, and abstraction.

The combination of these two features, signature and discourse, contribute to the magical impulse that surrounds the appearance of this image. That is, the magic lies in making an object that is the result of hundreds of people working together – an oilrig – appear as the work of one person, the artist. Thus, in contrast to Redfield's belief in art as an 'enlargement of experience', the Reinertsen oilrig artwork enrolls both material and content into an example of what might be termed the reductionist epistemology of aesthetics.

This reductionist epistemology operates by collapsing autonomous forms of knowledge and interest. As I mentioned above, aesthetic and pragmatic experience are historically conceived as two separate knowledge faculties. Yet, 'Art of Engineering' collapses the interests of engineering with its focus on techno-economic planning into an artist's experience of communication and understanding. Elsewhere (Mason, in review), I have referred to this reductionist epistemology as the collapse of Habermasian forms of knowledge and human interest. Recall, Habermas (1971) identified in the 1960s three spheres of knowledge and human interest: prediction, communication, and emancipation. Arguably, the autonomy that earlier affected a division among interests may be verified by the demise of the nuclear scientist Robert Oppenheimer, whose criminality consisted of conflating an interest in Marxism with his interest in technical prediction. Another contemporary example of this collapse may be found in the way the art of climate change increasingly borrows from scientific fact. In his commissioned painting for the Brooklyn museum, artist Alexis Rockman depicts the New York City waterfront 3000 years from now. As demonstrated in this panorama, Rockman believes that by the year 5016, the effects of global warming will have left Manhattan soaking in 82 feet of water the color of orange pekoe tea. The painting is titled 'Manifest Destiny' and represents a history of the future folded into the contemporary through a multilayered architectural plan of the waterfront's projected future. Rockman calls his work 'history paintings of the future'. His vision is a collaboration with scientists working at the Goddard Institute for Space Science at Columbia University, which studies global climate change. I will return to a more in-depth comparison of the Reinertsen's oilrig artwork and Rockman's Manifest Destiny in my final category of aesthetic treatment titled *advancedness*.

Lingering

Citing several more recent philosophers of art, Seel (2005) notes that aesthetics may not actually be concerned with knowledge acquisition and thus not with epistemology as initially conceived above. Instead, aesthetics invokes an intuition that suspends determinations associated with knowledge. When intuiting a beautiful flower, cognitive powers engage in their occupation without any further aim. He states, 'we linger in our contemplation of the beautiful, because this contemplation reinforces and reproduces itself' (p. 11). In contrast to theoretical contemplation, aesthetic contemplation is not concerned with certain insights that are to be gained by turning toward the object. The object is not to be conceptualized any more than it is to be directed to a certain practical purpose. As such, lingering requires taking into account optical effects that arrest the cognitive powers of the subject, such as the proper distance to capture a sense of wonder.

In 1839, Michel Chevreul published *The Principles of Harmony and Contrast of Colors*. This 256-page book, consisting of over 1000 articles, presented the first clear statement about the scientific laws of visual color mixing and principles of color harmony. Chevreul

was an academic theorist and scientist devoted to optical effects. He opened new avenues of expression for color. Late nineteenth post-impressionist painters such as Georges Seurat promptly grasped the significance of the law of color contrast and applied Chevreul's principles to the pointillist technique for systematic development of actual effects of neighboring colors.

The optical phenomena at play, for example, in the Seurat painting *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (1884), displayed at London's Tate Gallery, creates a specific act of viewing associated with its technique of painting. At the Tate, curators have placed a non-movable viewing bench at approximately two meters away from the painting. Closer to the viewer, the colors of the painting cannot be understood, but from this specific distance the details appear clear and distinct. The significance of this distance may be seen by shifting the spectator's view away from the Seurat painting and to its viewers, who gather around the bench in a relaxed manner for thoughtful repose, experiencing a sense of wonder associated with the painting. The meaning of wonder is that instead of taking things for granted, spectators are surprised and taken aback by what they see. Merleau-Ponty (2009) writes that a reduction of perceptual impressions leads in thought and action to 'a wonder in the face of the world'. Thus lingering, as I introduce the term here, is characteristic of wonder-making through the establishment of a proscribed distance to a particular technique in artwork.

The Reinertsen advertising campaign consists of at least four artworks that invoke similar aesthetic principles to the example of the oilrig image I presented above. In a second Reinertsen artwork, for example, an offshore oilrig appears surrounded by darkness and lit up by numerous different colored lights. Here, through computer graphics, the use of a pointillist technique similar to a Seurat painting is applied to convey the lights of the offshore rig. As in the Seurat painting, whose principles of color are based on the ideas of the scientist Chevreul, the images of the offshore oilrig also require a specified form of distance for its details to appear clear and distinct.

The concept of lingering attributable to the oilrig artwork carries a thematic parallel with ocean landscape paintings of the nineteenth century, including *The Ninth Wave* (1850) by Ivan Aivazovsky, which caught my attention as I wandered through the State Russian Museum in Saint Petersburg. Both images create the drama of scale between the spectator and the large size of the painted seascape. In contrast to the Reinertsen offshore oilrig image, however, *The Ninth Wave* depicts the fragility of man in a small boat facing the extreme risks associated with navigating rough waters in open ocean. Drawing on the technical notion of 'seeing in', art critic Budd (2008) draws attention to perception in terms of both awareness of a painting's marked surface and awareness of visual experience falling into two classes: depictions of particulars (man in a boat) and states of affairs (stormy sea). Aivazovsky's painting employs these two classes of visual experience – the ocean dwarfs man's place in a divinely inspired natural world. By contrast, in the Reinertsen painting, the offshore oilrig dwarfs the ocean's place in the technically crafted human world. In this way, the oilrig is a depiction of a state of affairs and the ocean a class of particulars.

Unlike the Tate Gallery, the Oslo airport does not offer a proscribed distance in the form of a bench from which to view the Reinertsen oilrig image. The spectator can view the image from up to twenty meters when approaching it through the terminal or from five meters directly standing in front of the image before bumping into the merchandise of the store directly opposite. In my experience, there is a growing similarity between

the way viewers gather around artworks and the manner in which executives attend modern executive energy meetings in which expert visuals from Reinertsen consultants appear. What is noticeable at executive roundtable events – by the way executives are seated on the floor with hands draped over knees or leaning back with palms resting on the carpet – is a type of casualness that is similar to the viewing culture of the Tate Gallery. I explained these features to Geir Suul, stating that as an anthropologist worried about creating knowledge in a post-discursive world, it might make sense for me to stage a bench in the Oslo airport so that passersby could linger at the Reinertsen oilrig image and wonder at its appearance at an appropriate distance. To my surprise, Suul presented to me a computer design image of just such an occasion, wherein he had asked his communications firm to create a proposed setting in which a bench is placed in front of a set of Reinertsen artworks inside a gallery, ostensibly reproducing the conditions for lingering (Figure 4).

Aesthetic advancedness

In her treatment of aesthetics in modern society, Rebentisch (2012, p. 108) argues that, like bourgeois society, modernist art, too, obeys the ‘principle of progressive rationalization’, a condition she terms aesthetics advancedness. Citing critical theorist Theodor Adorno, Rebentisch holds no objection to the role technical rationality plays in the artistic procedures of modernism. ‘Art can only unfold its potential for resistance to the dominance of instrumental reason if it is rational and not by ideologically declaring itself to be a refuge of the irrational in a thoroughly rationalized world’ (119, emphasis added).

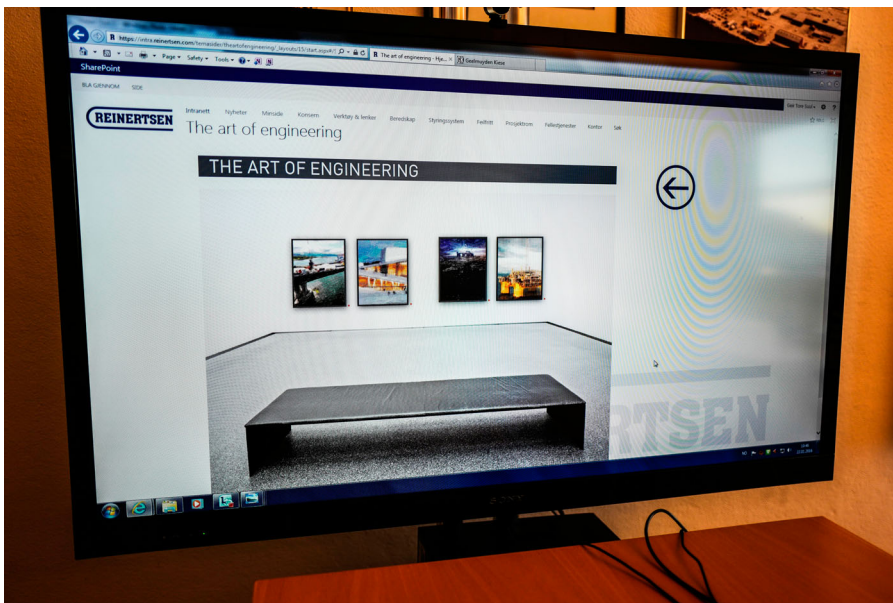


Figure 4. Computer design imaginary for a gallery space viewing of Reinertsen artwork advertisements, including the placement of a viewing bench at a specific distance for optimal visual interpretation. Image by Arthur Mason, reproduced with permission of Reinertsen.

Despite the principle of progressive rationalization common to both modern art and strictly technical-rationalist pursuits (science, engineering), Weber (1918) has noted a contrast with the preconditions in which the latter type of work shares with art, suggesting that science has a fate that profoundly distinguishes it from artistic work. He notes that while both scientific work and art are chained to the course of progress, in the realm of art, progress is not expressed in the same sense. This is because a work of art which is genuine may provide fulfillment that is never surpassed; it will never be antiquated. ‘Individuals may differ in appreciating the personal significance of works of art, but no one will ever be able to say of such a work that it is ‘outstripped by another work which is also “fulfillment”’. In science, however, accomplishments will be antiquated within a decade or shorter and this is ‘the fate to which science is subjected; it is the very meaning of scientific work, to which it is devoted in a quite specific sense’ (142).

I feel this is an important feature of the sentiment exposed by the Reinertsen campaign that, by modeling their engineering work as a genuine achievement via its presentation as an artwork, the firm aims to demonstrate how progress in both science and art can create two meaningful ends, in the former, as a conditional sense of fulfillment aimed to raise new questions and asking to be surpassed and outdated, and in the latter, aiming to be recognized as a genuine accomplishment providing a sense of fulfillment unsurpassed. I might add, that in engineering, there are no mysterious incalculable forces such that come into play, and in principle, all matters are settled by calculation leading to a condition, to cite Weber again, of disenchantment. Thus, the Reinertsen artwork counterbalances the sense of engineering’s infinite progress according to its own imminent meaning. In this way, the Reinertsen artwork image presents itself as a demonstration of sacred value in the form that engineering, too, must have a meaning, wherein art labors to interpret this meaning so that it is intellectually conceivable.

My reference to the Reinertsen oilrig image as ‘artwork’ (instead of advertisement) must also be seen as an attempt to distinguish between a work of art and artistic practice. In the Reinertsen image, certain techniques are shared with the Seurat painting mentioned above and in doing so, both images achieve the fate of fulfillment that is no longer progressive. In a similar expression, the art critic Berger (1979) notes that the Reinertsen type of publicity image takes advantage of the traditional education of the average spectator, relying on what she has learned in school of history and mythology. As such, the publicity of the Reinertsen energy image is nostalgic. It sells the past to the future. It neither supplies the standards of contemporary aesthetics claims nor its own standards of industrial modernization claims. It is, therefore, a reference to quality that is bound to retrospection and tradition and that lacks both confidence and credibility if presented in a strictly normalizing discourse of modernization – the central feature of my argument. The contention of nostalgia to aesthetic perception is also what separates Rockman’s *Manifest Destiny* and the work of art by Reinertsen – the former identifying itself in terms of aesthetic advancement and the latter appealing to recognized works whose condition of aesthetic progress has been transformed into a condition of art-as-commerce.

Concluding thoughts

Situating my analysis of energy imagery within the study of emotions associated with consumerist desire is a useful location for situating the context I describe above, in which

multinational corporate businesses utilize advertising to establish a desire for opening Arctic regions to commercial exploitation (see also Mason, 2015).

Early pioneers of this approach, Adorno and Horkheimer (1979), located the construction of desire for marketed objects in popular art and film, a process they label 'culture industry', which arguably may be linked to legacies of establishing individual identity through monetary exchange and conspicuous consumption (Baudrillard, 1995; Mauss, 1925; Veblen, 1912), as well as, as I argued above, deliverability of mass energy services. More recent observers noted how fashioning desire has expanded to govern over a commodity chain process of global capitalism (Appadurai, 1996; Castells, 1996; Harvey, 1990). Studying the popularity of the Nike brand, Gereffi and Korzeniewicz (1993) conclude that while the nature of product assembly requires standardization, constructing desire for the commodity purchase involves a media-advertising industry as the location of both capitalist creativity and accumulation.

The scholarly record, however, remains silent on the ways that the cultivation of consumerist desire is intertwined with its denial of associated risks of industrialization. Advanced capitalist advertising has not yet been effectively analyzed for its responsibility in the wholesale destruction of the planet – a process which it advocates daily with its aim of promoting an aesthetics industry whose central product (commodity desire) is concomitantly as destructive as any outputs in the extractive industry complex.

This oversight may be traced, in part, to the announcement by Beck mentioned above, who described with cautious hope the limits of denial in registering environmental catastrophe. In *Risk Society*, Beck (1992) claims that the obviousness of industrial danger today is impossible to ignore, resulting in a reflexive process about the way society now carries out its purposeful action. Instead of managers trained for creating efficiency in the preparation of products and services, today's celebrated experts are 'risk professionals' oriented toward mitigating future industrial impact. In direct contrast to Beck's hope, the imagery I am presenting captures the disappearing act of industrial risk via its melting into aesthetic experience. I characterize categories of artistic practice whose poetics and politics transform the obviousness of industrial danger into an experience of artistic appreciation. Promoting oil and gas development aligns with nuanced feelings acquired from an altogether different set of life experiences such as, for example, strolling through a museum. As such, promotion of energy development today involves the enrollment of artistic technique as an argument for hiding facts in a normalization process of unrestrained energetic consumption.

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