



HOMO FABER

At its best, is art work or play? Is it production or consumption? Is it erotic intensity or thanatic release? Is it the beauty of reciprocal obligations or the sublimity of sheer boredom and sheer delight? Modern art carried the weight of the world on its shoulders but for a long time now we have dreamed of art's purpose in other ways—in the freedom of the sliding signifier, say, or in the shape-shifting of performed subject positions, or in the ad hoc forms of seemingly spontaneous social protest, or in being one more thing in a never-ending run of things—even as we hold firm to vestiges of modernism's old anomie for the outsider's purity it affords.

This course will take up the question of our desire for art now via an excavation of what it once was in the name of work or production. In particular we will do so though the hoary figure of *homo faber* or "man the creator." What, if anything, might this old dream do for us now? Towards such an investigation we will begin by reviewing the role of our central figure in a handful of well-known texts (such as Marx on industry, Weber on science, Lukács on labor, and Arendt on freedom) before turning to our present circumstances. One particular notion of human creation we will consider both historically and in light of our desire for contemporary art is what is sometimes now called "communization," or the institution of communal, anti-market ways of being as itself the critical agent of social change.