

The social production of material life is the defining feature of the human species, with the material base of society leading to art as a product of society's form and content. As the base of society has changed, new materials and social relations have rapidly redefined the artwork society produces. The most recent shift in base towards neoliberal capitalism following WWII has produced the most significant shift in the work of art since the Renaissance by redefining the relationship between base and superstructure. In this essay, I will argue that the societal value (or role) of art under capitalism should be to further the proletarian cause by standing in contradiction to the *real* as a critique, while avoiding becoming spectacle and resisting commodification. To do this, I will look at Frankfurt school philosophers Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, and Guy Debord on art under capitalism. I will also look at Fredric Jameson's analysis of postmodern society and Peter Osborne's theory of contemporary art and the Our Literal Speed movement's theory of *Everythingism*. Through an analysis and critique of these philosophies, I will argue that under the base of neoliberal capitalism, while liberated from its aura, much of artistic production has become spectacle: serving as a commodity fetish that reinforces neoliberalism rather than a vessel of political meaning. Instead, art's role under neoliberal capitalism must be to stand as a dialectical contradiction to reality, as a critique of it, to shape the social and economic base, enabling it to resist commodity fetishisation. In this way, the value of contemporary art is rooted in its ability to shape the base of society through a dialectically motivated political message, not in exchange value as a commodity fetish or its representational ability.