THIN AIR & COLD CASH: GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS WITH *FINANCE AESTHETICS*

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> "Karl Marx wrote, "All that is solid melts into air,", which is true, as it is also true that all that is air becomes, under a later version of those same conditions, too polluted to breathe. We imagine that this air could fall on us as rain, and that as it is also in us, it falls away from us as tears and sweat and urine. Respiration is a refeeding of what is abstract into what is so tangible it changes our form, at least slightly." – Anne Boyer, *The Undying* (2019)

Finance is everywhere. In the air we breathe, the water we drink, the homes we inhabit, the streets we walk, the cities we share; as well as in the cities we don't share, the streets we don't share; the seats, the straits, the spaces we don't share; spaces we enclose, extract, and eliminate. Today, finance capitalism is not merely a world, it has become "a worldmaking force".[1] Or, as poet Anne Boyer hints at in her reflection on the metabolisms of capitalism and its theoretics, economic abstraction have become 'so tangible, it changes our form, at least slightly'.

Meanwhile, finance itself "promises to work a kind of magic, namely, to create value out of thin air".[2] A dream, or nightmare, of an unlimited practice of valuation and wealth, characterized by traders, speculators, hedge funds, portfolio managers, and investment vehicles dealing in stocks, bonds, collateralized debt obligations (CDOs), high-frequency trading, non-fungible tokens (NFTs), derivatives, cryptocurrencies, and the list goes on. Finance presents a self-image of unmoored abstraction, as Laura Finch have argued, that is perpetually reproduced in popular culture be it in *American Psycho, Succession* or on #FinTok and as finance bros.

Finance Aesthetics: A Critical Glossary intervenes in the midst of this paradox. It unfolds in-between the abstract and the tangible, representations and lived experience, thin air and cold cash. It insists on the simple fact that aesthetics is not external to finance. Financial capitalism has its own visuality and produces its own ideological narratives, and the Economy so-called does not pre-exist its representations.

Like scholars such as Donald MacKenzie, Fredric Jameson, and Denise Ferreira da Silva have pointed out, the finance economy constitutes both a performative power and a representational problem. It is not sufficient to apprehend or document the world that finance makes using only one set of tools: in the enormity and

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CENTRUM FÖR STUDIER AV MARKANVÄNDNING (CSAM) is an independent think tank, curating practice and gallery space located in Malmö, Sweden. CSAM's work is focused on the intersection of art, public policy and architecture. The aim is to challenge current modes of urban development and the narratives that support them through community engagement and utilizing art as an investigative tool. By engaging local artists and artisans to problematize the unjust allocation of urban resources CSAM work to visualize the implications of big geopolitical shifts on the local conditions in a local context. CSAM is Victoria Percovich Gutierrez, Åsa Bjerndell, and Karl Landin

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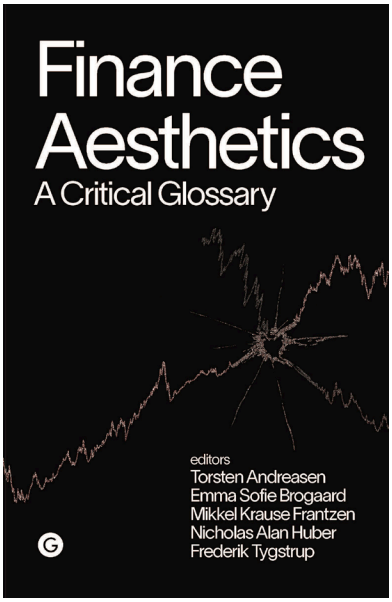
variety of its scope and scale, the historical condition of global financialization obliges scrutiny from angles more unbounded and less "invested" than those traditionally offered by the field and discipline of economics.

Guided by Anne Boyer, we, the editors, suggest: When finance economy changes the world(s) around us, changes our form(s), we need to change the forms with which we approach, understand, and navigate, too. Metaphorically and literally, we need to get down to business. With this intent, *Finance Aesthetics* offers insight into knowledges about and experiences of finance that might supplement or even challenge commonplace ideas of finance and of economy at large. As an unorthodox encyclopedia with contributions from scholars, artists, and writers across practices and disciplines, it moves from Amazon to Animals, from Gaming to Gold, from Migration to Men, and from The Pit to Property. It functions as a collective kaleidoscopic laboratory of imagining and displaying not only the halls of finance proper, but also of living in the world(s) under the sway of finance capital and its imperatives, its priorities, its values.

Finance Aesthetics is an intervention, a manifestation, and an open-ended method. We're looking forward to bringing, discussing and, hopefully, proliferating it with the Esch Clinics.

1. Adrienne Buller, *The Value of a Whale: On the Illusions of Green Capitalism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022), 195

2. Laura Finch, "Mapping" in *Finance Aesthetics: A Critical Glossary,* ed. Andreassen, Brogaard, Frantzen, Huber, and Tygstrup (Goldsmith's University Press, 2024), 234



Finance Aesthetics: A Critical Glossary, book front cover, 2024.