Billy Apple®
The Artist Has to Live Like Everybody Else
1961–2018

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THE
MAYOR
GALLERY

12 September–2 November 2018

THE MAYOR GALLERY

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fig 1
Bartered, 1989, (photo-documentation of the transaction). The signed and dated agreement stated that Billy Apple will supply and the Halls will accept 'one agreed upon art work to the value of NZ$3,000… in full exchange for one 1980 Morris Mini 1275 GT.'

Billy Apple's *Art Transactions* and the Universal Human Right to Exist

Anthony Byrt

By now, the story is well-known: on 22 November 1962, in the London warehouse of his friend Richard Smith, the artist formerly known as Barrie Bates became "Billy Apple": a living artwork and brand.[1] Apple's arrival was marked by bleaching his hair and eyebrows with that most American of products: Lady Clairol Instant Crème Whip, which he and his friend David Hockney had used together for the first time just over a year earlier, on a trip to New York. More than half a century later, Apple is still with us; he has even become a registered trademark – Billy Apple®.

Since that moment in 1962, everything about Apple's existence has been fair game for his art practice. This exhibition is about one of his most sustained explorations of the art/life border, his *Art Transactions:* a body of work predicated on the principle, articulated in 1984 with his longterm collaborator, the academic and art critic, Wystan Curnow, that "The Artist Has to Live Like Everybody Else". Series such as *Sold, Bartered, Paid* and *I.O.U.* effectively record the details of their exchange, and all serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, they strip out everything we use to justify art's elevated cultural existence, highlighting instead the status of art works as fungible commodities. And on the other, they enable Apple to meet the real, daily costs of "living like everybody else".

The *Art Transactions* began in earnest in 1981, with the exhibition *Art For Sale* at Peter Webb Galleries in Auckland, New Zealand, when a large *Sold* canvas was presold – transacted before the opening – to a collective formed to purchase the work, called the Future Group, for $NZ3,000.[2] Since 1984, *I.O.U.*s have become Apple's private currency, and with the inclusion of the words "on demand" represent a more complicated contract: they document a tax free advance

1 Throughout this essay, the name "Bates" is used to refer to events and art works before 22 November 1962, while the name "Apple" is used for everything after that date.

2 It was recently sold at auction for NZ$60,000.

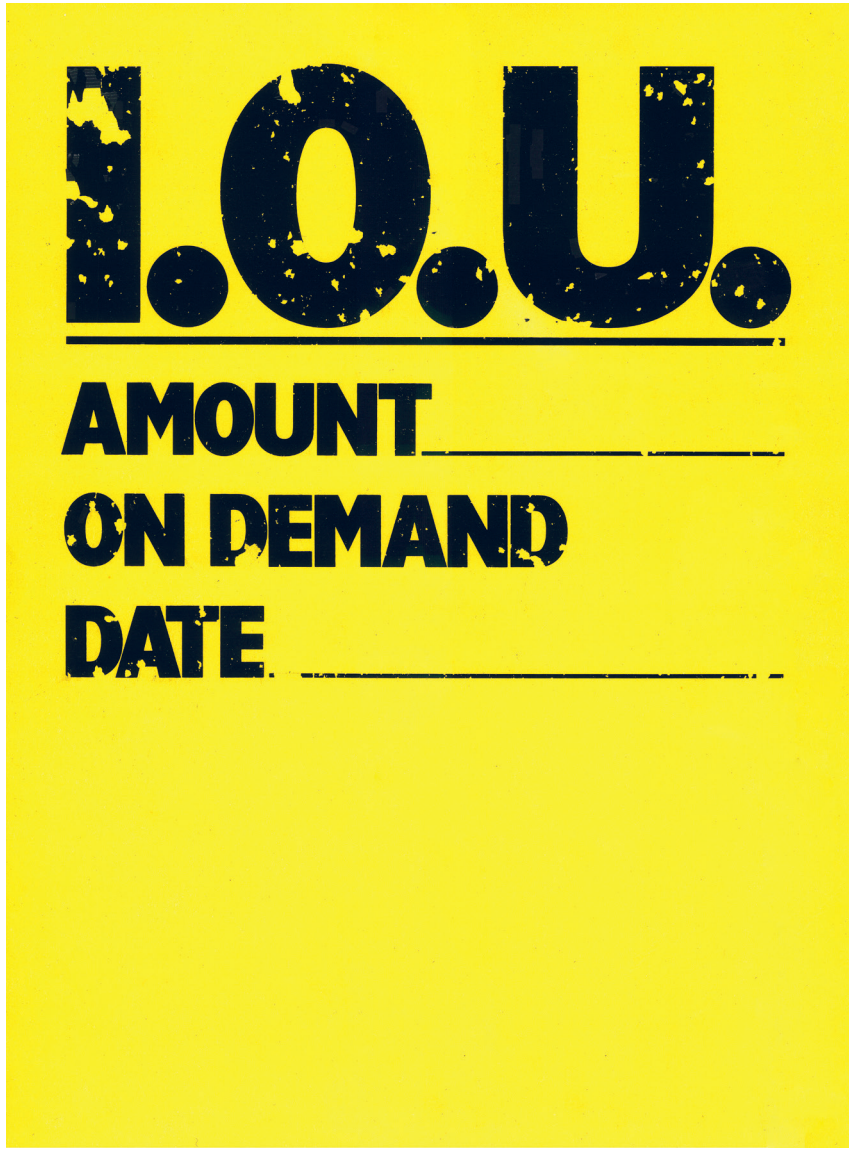


fig 2
I.O.U., 1984, black dry transfer text on yellow paper mounted on card, 444 x 310mm. In 1984 Billy Apple showed Leo Castelli a study for a promissory note. Castelli labelled Apple's new work as "pop-conceptual", arguably the first use of the term, but replied "Billy! We don't borrow money."

of money to Apple that can be redeemed upon return of the art work, which doubles as a promissory note. Given the nature of the art market, of course, this would be a strange thing for a collector to do; better to hang on to it as a long-term investment or sell it in the secondary market for much more than its face value (to date, no collector has claimed on an *I.O.U.* from Apple).

Bartered and *Paid*, meanwhile, record exactly what their titles suggest. Apple might barter for goods or services: something as particular as, say, hot smoked salmon, or as substantial as legal fees. But not every supplier or provider is interested in participating in this art-conceptual game. Better in those circumstances to have a collector pay for something on Apple's behalf: a car repair, a utilities bill, a return train ticket from London to Berwick-upon-Tweed. In the *Paid* works, the invoice itself becomes the work's content, and just as a bookkeeper might stamp a bill to remind themselves it has been taken care of, the word "PAID" – always in caps – marks the work as transacted.

When Apple began the *Art Transactions* in the 1980s he was living in New York, where he had moved from London in 1964. During those years, he "lived like everybody else" by working periodically as an art director on Madison Avenue, a pragmatic approach to making money frowned upon by some of his art world contemporaries. But with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, the art world's relationship with free-market economics and mass consumerism came into sharper focus. In this environment, the *Transactions* had the potential to become ambivalent agitators: simultaneously subversive and rabidly commercial. Reagan's economic revolution also turned the *Transactions* into a natural extension of the work that had preoccupied Apple for much of the 1970s: "institutional critiques" that took the forms of architectural alterations to galleries and museum spaces – site-specific additions, subtractions and corrections that embedded art works in the fabric of the buildings more conventionally used to house and display them. With the 1980s gallery boom and New York's changing economic circumstances – gritty bohemian life giving way to Wall Street finance – Apple's institutional critiques moved from the museums – the *Alterations* – to the marketplace: the *Art Transactions*.

And yet New York wasn't where the *Art Transactions* found their home. Instead, it was New Zealand, the country Barrie Bates had left in 1959, headed for London's Royal College of Art (RCA). Apple had begun to reconnect with the country of his birth in the mid-1970s. By the early eighties, it was on the cusp of its own Reaganesque Revolution, and in 1984, with the election of David Lange's Labour government, it wholeheartedly embraced neoliberal reforms. New Zealand's 1980s transformation is still held up in international free-market circles as an exemplar of how deep, and how quickly, a heavily regulated economy can be transformed. In New York, Leo Castelli had balked at Apple's *I.O.U.*s, telling the artist that the gallery wouldn't do something so gauche as borrow money from collectors. By contrast, in a rapidly modernising Auckland, Apple's stark

pecuniary statements become posters for a new era of credit, self-made fortunes and breathtaking losses: New Zealand had joined the world of boom and bust.

This has led to one of the most common misreadings of Apple's *Art Transactions:* that they are evidence of an artist in thrall to the forces of modern capitalism – a guy looking to make a quick buck or dodge his financial obligations. But there is another story behind them, and behind Apple more generally, which is represented by the earliest work in this exhibition: a test strip of canvas for Barrie Bates's 1961 work *For Sale.*[3] I want to argue that the year this work was made, and the lead-up to Apple's appearance in Bates's place in late 1962, in fact holds many clues as to why the art/life boundary – including the *Art Transactions* – came to define the work he would make over the next fifty years. It also helps to explain the philosophical and empathetic origins of Apple's most recent *Art Transactions:* his series *Basic Needs.*

> Made a lamentable start + very much a 'mixed-up kid.' However eventually settled down and produced some excellent work – v. contemporary + chic. Incoherent but his eye right on the ball.[4]

This was the official report on Barrie Bates's first year of study at the RCA – 1959/60. It was written by the Professor of Graphic Design, Richard Guyatt, one of the most influential British design teachers of the twentieth century. Bates had entered the RCA as part of the same student intake that gave the world David Hockney, Peter Phillips, R.B. Kitaj, Allen Jones (expelled before he could finish his diploma) and Derek Boshier. Pauline Boty was a year ahead in the Stained Glass Department, as was Adrian Berg in Painting and Ridley Scott in Graphic Design. It's often overlooked that Frank Bowling was part of the 1959 cohort too, eventually taking a Silver Medal in Painting to Hockney's gold.

Bates's breakthrough as a student came when Guyatt gave him permission to roam the RCA freely. The New Zealander had been considering joining his new friends Hockney, Bowling and Boshier over in the Painting Department, where he felt the real action was. But Guyatt's more pragmatic solution ended up being far more important and far-sighted, if also self-serving (he once described Bates as "my private pin-up boy").[5] By giving Bates permission to draw on whatever technical and tutorial resources he wanted throughout the RCA, he cast his prodigy in a new role – as an art director, outsourcing production of his work to master technicians and materials experts. He didn't need to learn how to make things himself because there was always someone with the expertise to make it better. He became, in the words of one of his other RCA lecturers Michael Kullman, an "Ideas Man."[6]

The results were instant. By the end of his second year, Bates's report opened far more ebulliently: "A dazzling, sizzling year," Guyatt wrote, "and has become the quirky star turn of the school."[7] Things were about to get considerably better, too. Bates and Hockney had secured cut-price tickets from London to New York (for £38) for the summer break. They spent around six weeks there, Hockney staying in Long Island with the family of fellow RCA student Mark Berger, while Bates stayed with the jazz enthusiast and documentary filmmaker John Craddock on West 72nd Street. Bates, still torn between wanting to be an artist or an advertising man, also landed a Madison Avenue internship with Herb Lubalin, one of the twentieth century's great typographers. It was from Lubalin, Apple told me in 2012, that he "learned how to make type talk".[8]

In a remarkably short time, then, Bates – still not yet Apple – had found himself at the fulcrum of transatlantic graphic design, between the influence of Guyatt who was running arguably the most influential graphic design department in the world, and Lubalin's office at advertising powerhouse Sudler, Hennessey & Lubalin. But this clearly came at a reputational cost, at least when it came to his RCA classmates. Guyatt's successful graduates were often viewed by their contemporaries as having been corrupted by mass consumerism. In the Summer 1960 issue of the RCA student newspaper *Newsheet*, writing under the moniker "H.D.", one student stated that:

> If Graphic Design is even to be raised above a hack level, designers must avoid plunging into such sentimental slush as surrounds many products. No one would tolerate such rubbish in any other art-form, and no matter how well you design, it's still hardly the height of personal integrity to tell lies for money.[9]

Art historian Christina Barton has written that Hockney visited Bates at Sudler, Hennessey & Lubalin, and that this "inspired a red-ballpoint-pen drawing of Apple [or Bates, as he then was] in a 'drip-dry' suit with a coat hanger still attached, as a satirical response to what he perceived as the shallow world of advertising".[10] The work was called *Madison Avenue. Lie$, Lie$, Lie$,* 1961, and Hockney gave it to Bates. The title's moralising dollar signs say everything about Hockney's attitude towards the "Mad Men" Bates was learning from.

Apple recalls that he made *For Sale* after the New York trip. Its stark typesetting suggests Lubalin's influence, and the fact the work essentially names its own condition as an exchangeable commodity points to a tongue-in-cheek attitude towards his peers' critiques of the advertising industry (Apple recalls that Hockney had actually helped him print the canvas, by pulling the lever on the printing press).

3 The resulting canvas is now in the collection of the National Galleries of Scotland.

4 A copy of Barrie Bates's student report is included in his student file in the Royal College of Art's Archive.

5 Letter by Richard Guyatt to other members of the RCA faculty, dated 16 May 1960, Barrie Bates's student file, RCA Archive.

6 Letter by Michael Kullman to other members of the RCA faculty, dated 6 February 1962, Barrie Bates's student file, RCA Archive.

7 Bates's student report, RCA Archive.

8 Anthony Byrt, "Brand, New", *Frieze*, November 2012.

9 *Newsheet*, Summer 1960, no.XVI, p.10. Held in the RCA Archive.

10 Christina Barton, "Billy Apple – The 'Sixties Remembered" in *Billy Apple® British and American Works 1960-1969*, The Mayor Gallery, London, 2010, p.15.

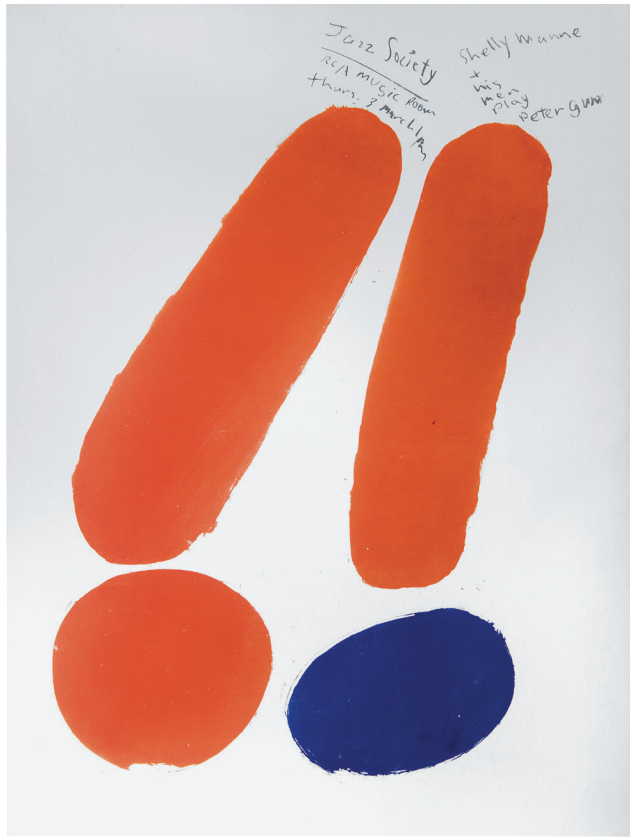


fig 3
Shelly Manne & His Men Play Peter Gunn, Jazz Society Poster, 1960, offset lithography on paper, 582 x 435mm
Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club opened its doors in 1959. In 1960 Apple was playing imported Blue Note LPs and creating the posters for the Jazz Society at the Royal College of Art. His friend, Ahmed Jarr flew the records in from the USA at great expense and loaned them to Apple for a week, one at a time.

fig 4
Green Apple Pile, 1963, serigraph on raw canvas, 1829 x 8048mm
Billy Apple looks quite the 'hipster' in his white Levi jeans and Keds sneakers. He is pictured here with Faith Shannon, the bookbinder, outside Apple's flat at 42 Cornwall Gardens, South Kensington, London SW7. Photograph: Patrick Tofts

All artists crave sell-out shows, but as individuals they never want to be seen as "sell-outs". Bates's seminal work declared that it was *For Sale;* far from being an advertising lie, it told the bald truth about its cultural status. But the two words could just as easily have been applied to their maker; a young, brilliant designer, waiting for an offer for his services from the highest bidder.

> Yeah maybe I ought to get organised, trouble is I don't know what I really want to do. OK so I could earn five thousand a year, but I'm not ending up like those other slick ad chaps. Christ they're so mass-consumed they can't even shit straight.[11]

So begins "B.B.'s [Barrie Bates's] Second Manifesto". Dated 8 January 1962, its opening lines perfectly crystallise the professional conundrum Bates was then facing: whether to make his fortune in the advertising world or follow the more precarious path of the artist. Except that the signature next to the date at the bottom of the manifesto doesn't belong to Bates. It belongs to his then lover, the soon-to-be-published novelist Ann Quin.

Quin was the secretary in Carel Weight's Painting Department from late 1959 to late 1962 – her time at the RCA, in other words, corresponding exactly with the three years of Hockney, Boshier, Phillips, Kitaj (only there for two), Jones (expelled), Bowling and Bates. Bates and Quin became involved at the start of his final year, in October 1961 – the semester straight after his trip to New York with Hockney. They broke up when he went back to New York the following summer. It was a brief but intense relationship, and one that had dramatic effects on their respective practices.

During their time together, Quin wrote several pieces not just with Bates but for and as him: letters, the manifesto and, most significantly, they collaborated on his RCA dissertation *Pop Corn* – an imagined conversation between Vincent van Gogh and Larry Rivers at the Five Spot Jazz Club, where Bates had spent plenty of evenings on his New York trip (Rivers, a jazz musician as well as a painter, also had close connections with the club). This shows that even before his reinvention as Apple, Bates was outsourcing elements of his identity. The Quin relationship also enriches the prevailing narrative about the Bates-Apple transformation: that working under the influence of American consumer culture, Apple emerged as a "new" product – an artist and a brand without a history. While this is true, the nature of his new subjectivity was also shaped by his time with Quin, and specifically by the things they were reading and thinking about together.

In the Foreword to the Quin-ghosted *Pop Corn*, dated 1962, she quotes Norman Mailer: "The final purpose of art is to intensify, even, if necessary, to exacerbate

11 "B.B.'s Second Manifesto" was recently included in *Ann Quin, The Unmapped Country: Stories & Fragments* (edited by Jennifer Hodgson), And Other Stories, Sheffield, 2018, pp.65-68.

the moral consciousness of people."[12] At the time, Mailer was a notorious transatlantic figure: in 1960, he'd drunkenly stabbed his wife Adele Morales at a party in their Provincetown home, almost killing her – an incident that sent Mailer for a brief stint in a mental institution. In 1961, the London publisher André Deutsch, no doubt seeking to cash in on the scandal, published Mailer's 1959 collection of essays and fragments, *Advertisements for Myself.* Quin's quotation comes from that collection, and specifically from an interview with Mailer conducted in the wake of one of his most controversial essays, "The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster."

Mailer's infamous piece pitched the figure of the "hipster" as America's existentialist, a postwar dandy living in the wake of the three giant traumas of World War II: the Holocaust; Stalin's totalitarian slaughters; and the US nuclear destruction of two Japanese cities. In the face of these mass murders, the American existentialist had to invent himself as a total individual and a cultural outsider, an artist and a sexual libertarian; because to run with a pack or to adopt a conventional morality was to risk conformity, which in turn could lead to fascism, totalitarianism, or genocide. And what separated the American existentialist – the "hipster" – from his European counterparts was his embrace of African-American culture: specifically jazz, as the ultimate contemporary American art form, and the language of Hip that went with it. Hip, according to Mailer, was a language felt rather than learned; you could either swing or you couldn't – the ability was innate, and essential if you were to avoid being a Square.

Bates was crazy for jazz; in New York in 1961, he'd seen many of the greatest musicians of the era, and in London he'd been running the RCA's Jazz Society, playing imported Blue Note LPs and producing posters to advertise the gatherings. He also began to cultivate a hipster persona, dressing in American clothes and adopting the language of Hip. The Quin-written manifesto is a work of teasing affection that captures this transformation: "O.K.," she writes, ventriloquising Bates, "so this Hip business is all a façade, underneath I'm just a shy regular guy, but man it takes a long time to forget a bourgeois background such as mine was, and right now I'm in the middle of a change."[13]

That change would eventually find its ultimate expression in Billy Apple. Apple was a literal embodiment of Mailer's hipster: a man who erased his colonial past as Barrie Bates of Auckland, New Zealand so he could move rapidly into the cosmopolitan future as Billy Apple, born London, 22 November 1962; a man who lived his art practice with his entire being; and a man, in Mailer's words, for whom "the only life-giving answer is to accept the terms of death, to live with death as immediate danger, to divorce oneself from society, to exist without roots, to set out on that uncharted journey into the rebellious imperatives of the self."[14]

This journey into the "rebellious imperatives of the self" has yet more potential roots in Bates's relationship with Quin. In later years, both Quin and Apple were independently interested in the writings of R.D. Laing: Quin, as Laing's antipsychiatry became part of the growing counterculture movement; Apple, when Laing's book *Knots* was published in 1970. Laing had published his first book, *The Divided Self*, in 1960. It seems inconceivable to me, given the work each of them made soon after, that Quin and Bates didn't know this book when they were together in 1961/62.

Like Mailer's "White Negro," Laing's *The Divided Self* is an existentialist text, defining mental illness not as something solely located in our subconscious, but a state of being shaped and defined through our existence in the world, in relation to others. Madness, he argued, might in fact be a form of "ontological insecurity": an inability to experience one's own subjectivity as complete, coherent and whole. Laing wrote that if the ontologically insecure individual:

> cannot take the realness, aliveness, autonomy, and identity of himself and others for granted, then he has to become absorbed in contriving ways of trying to be real, of keeping himself or others alive, of preserving his identity, in efforts, as he will often put it, to prevent himself losing his self. What are to most people everyday happenings, which are hardly noticed because they have no special significance, may become deeply significant in so far as they either contribute to the sustenance of the individual's being or threaten him with non-being.[15]

This is as good an explanation for the emergence of Billy Apple in Barrie Bates's place as any I've yet found. It also helps to explain why the daily and the banal became such central aspects of Apple's practice, those events others "hardly notice because they have no special significance": signing documents, bodily functions, cleaning activities and transactions. The first few bodies of work Apple made in London after his emergence were all insistent assertions of his identity: bronze apples and neon "A"s that acted as conceptual signatures; machine-printed self-portraits based on a pair of Robert Freeman photos; the identity page of his first passport as Billy Apple; a film called *Billy's Apple and Friends.* It's worth mentioning too that, during their time together in 1962, Quin was working on her first and most famous novel *Berg:* a book about a man who changes his name to murder his estranged father.

12 Barrie Bates (ghost-written by Ann Quin), *Pop Corn (Being a Conversation between Vincent Van Gogh & Larry Rivers at 'The Five Spot' Jazz Club, New York)*, unpublished RCA dissertation, London, 1962, n.p.

13 Quin/Hodgson, p.67.

14 Norman Mailer, "The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster," *Dissent*, 1957, p.277.

15 R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self*, Penguin Classics, London, 2010, pp.42-43

fig 5
Basic Needs: Romanian, Turkish, Kurdish and German, 2014/2017, computer cut vinyl text, 1618 x 1000mm, Installation view: *Mutterzunge*, Apartment Project, Berlin 2018. Commissioned and curated by Misal Adnan Yildiz. Photographs by Adrian Knuppertz

At the time of Apple's appearance, then, we know Bates was having an identity crisis: not just as a New Zealander on the far side of the world but as a man caught between London and the lure of New York, between the life of the artist and the livelihood of the advertising man, and between his own history and his desire to escape it. The creation of Apple became the escape pod. And Mailer, Laing and Quin may well have been where he found the instruction manual to operate it.

In light of these details, Apple's statement "The Artist Has to Live Like Everybody Else" begins to look very different: less an observation about payments and benefits, and more an existential battle-cry. It is about personhood and the right to *be.* But in order to achieve this, one's basic needs must be met. *Paid, Bartered* and *I.O.U.* therefore become mechanisms not to make excessive money in a capitalist system but to live, plain and relatively simple.

This also helps to explain why, over the years, Apple has supported so many causes similarly concerned with the preservation and integrity of personhood. He has, for example, raised substantial amounts of money over the years for New Zealand's Women's Refuge, which provides shelter and protection to victims of domestic violence. In 2014, the curator Misal Adnan Yildiz invited him to make a work for "Artists for Kobanê": a global benefit auction organised by Hito Steyerl and Anton Vidokle for the people of Northern Syria and Iraq displaced by Islamic State. The work Apple conceived was not a "transaction" in the sense *Paid* and *I.O.U.* are, but it did nonetheless reach back to the *Art Transactions*' conceptual origins – that everyone deserves to have their basic needs met. Here, the basic needs are food, water, shelter and clothing.

As we've watched the migration crisis worsen exponentially since 2014, Apple's *Basic Needs* has been given an urgent relevance, translated so far into five languages while its stark message, and its fundraising principle, remains the same. The earlier *Art Transactions*, as stated above, served a dual purpose – to be exchangeable commodities but also to fund Apple's way through the world. With *Basic Needs*, he's still creating fungible art works but crucially, the revenue raised is so others – not himself – might have the means to live. It is also an absolute reaffirmation of the rights of the individual when faced with the threats of totalitarianism, terror and genocide: the dangers Mailer had diagnosed in 1957 and which the American existentialist had a responsibility to resist, even if it cost him his own place in society.

Fifty-seven years after the transactional ambiguities of *For Sale*, Apple's work still insists on the same thing: that art and life are inextricably linked, not as some kind of art world game but as a powerful statement of what it takes to exist, and survive, in an increasingly dangerous world.

For Sale (test strip), 1961
Letterpress on canvas
217 x 745mm
Framed 460 x 856mm

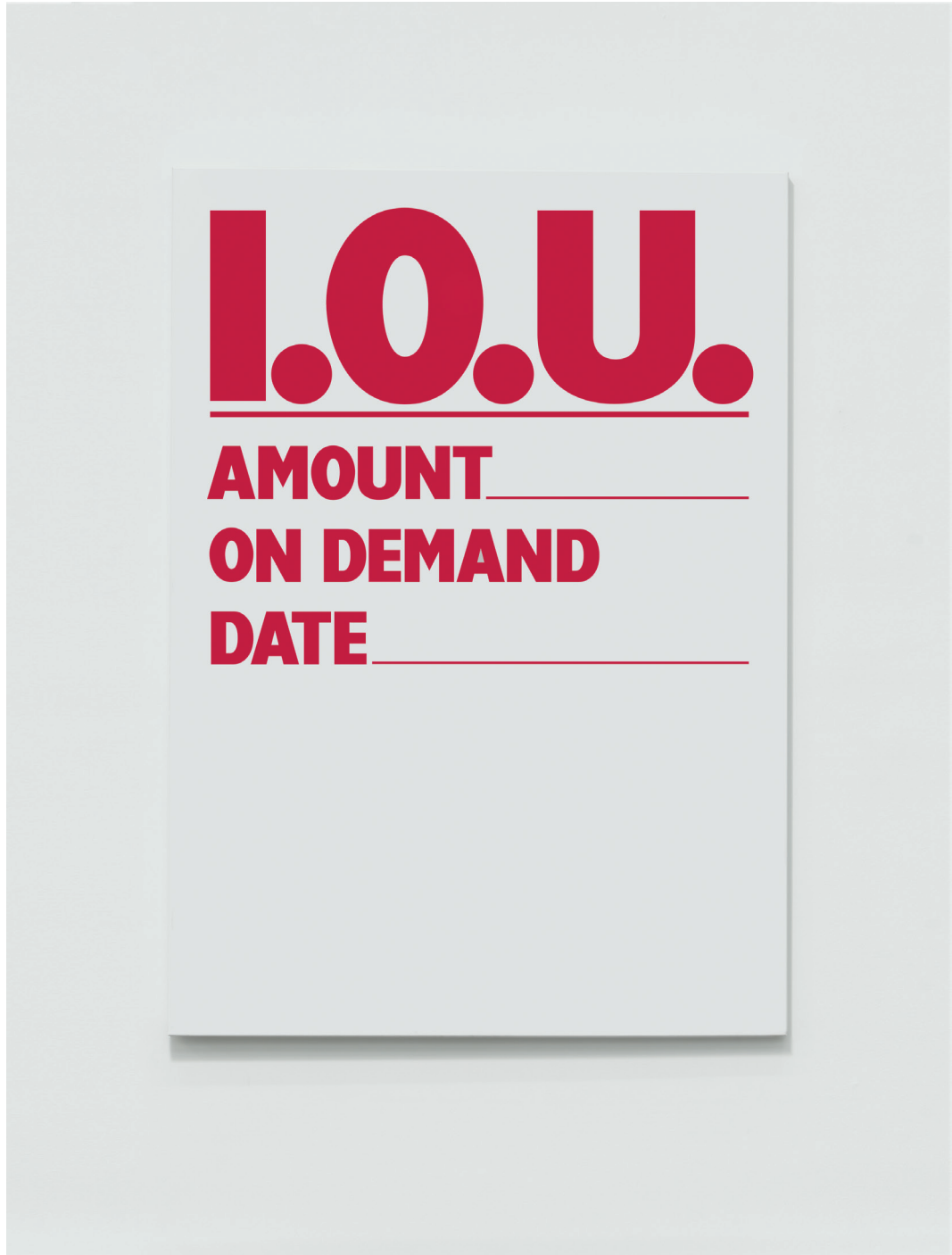
This is a test strip for the *For Sale* canvas now in the National Galleries of Scotland collection. At the time, Apple commented that "FOR SALE was a *signifier* for something that was happening everywhere. You would walk past a house in London with a sign up saying For Sale, then there was one in a shop or on a car window..."

Paid: The Artist Has to Live Like Everybody Else, 1987/2018
£219 Kings X London to Berwick on Tweed 18 Oct 2010
£178 Berwick on Tweed to Kings X London 24 Oct 2010
4 x British Rail tickets, offset print on paper, framed each 565 x 420mm

The on-going series, *Paid: The Artist Has to Live Like Everybody Else* developed from a 1984 project based on research into official statistics relating to the cost of living in New Zealand in that year. Apple used this as the basis to determine how much money he needed to live for a year. The *Paid* series was initiated in 1987. It uses invoices generated from Apple's daily living which the artist invites the collector to pay. In exchange, they receive the invoice mounted and framed with the *Paid* text developed for the series. Collectively, these works produce a paper portrait of the artist as seen through the transactions that structure his life.

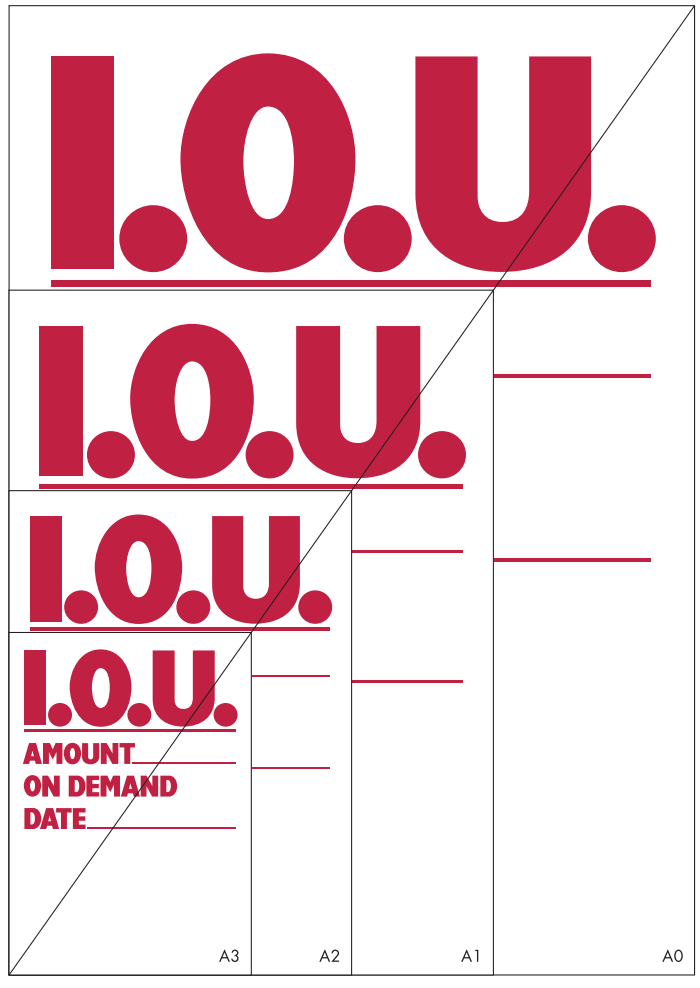
Promissory Notes (Red),
1984/2018
A0 I.O.U., 1189 x 841mm
UV-impregnated ink
on canvas

Also exhibited:
Promissory Notes (Red),
1984/2018
A1 I.O.U., 841 x 594mm
A2 I.O.U., 594 x 420mm
A3 I.O.U., 420 x 297mm



The title 'Promissory Notes' has been assigned to this new series of *I.O.U.s* made for The Mayor Gallery exhibition. Apple has been using the term I.O.U. since 1984 as a descriptor for a transaction whereby a sum of money is 'borrowed' in exchange for a written commitment should the debt be recalled. This turns the canvas into a binding contract between the artist and the patron that relies on a continuous relationship of mutual trust. Apple scales his *Promissory Notes* using the A-paper system. They are in effect his private currency which stands outside the rules and regulations of governmental and banking controls. The term 'on demand' moves the works from being a simple I.O.U. to a non-taxable form of legal tender. Unlike the face-value sale of a promissory note, which loses value due to inflation, Apple's *I.O.U.s* rise in value in accordance with the perceived worth of his art.

The *Promissory Notes* in the exhibition are represented diagrammatically here as an A-paper chart which demonstrates how all four canvases relate in scale to each other, each doubling in size from A3 through to A0.



Bartered (Red), 1984/2018
A0, 1189 x 841mm
UV-impregnated ink
on canvas

Also exhibited:
Bartered (Red), 1984/2018
A1, 841 x 594mm
A2, 594 x 420mm
A3, 420 x 297mm

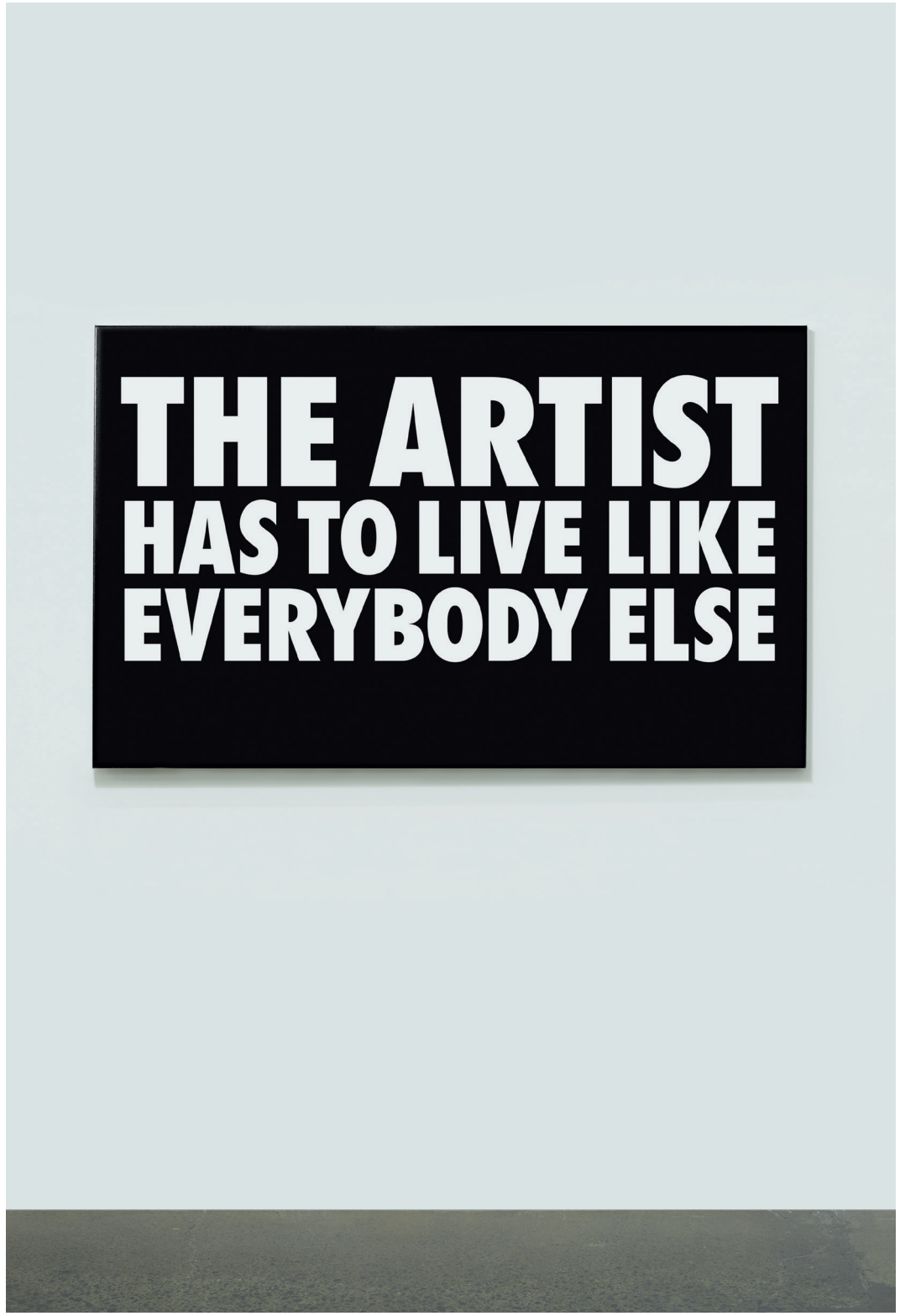
Barters are another of Apple's *Art Transactions*. They are an aspect of his aesthetic currency that are another instance of how he shortcuts the financial mechanisms of our everyday economy. For these, the artist negotiates or barters with collectors who become invested in the maintenance of his art, life and well-being.

Like the *I.O.U.*s, the *Barters* in the exhibition are represented diagrammatically here as an A-paper chart which demonstrates how all four canvases relate in scale to each other, each doubling in size from A3 through to AO.

Basic Needs, 2014/2018
UV-impregnated ink on
canvas, 1000 x 1618mm

Basic Needs is part inventory, part signifier sourced from the United Nations list of basic human needs. It was initially produced for e-flux's global benefit art auction curated by Hito Steyerl and Anton Vidokle for displaced Kobanê refugees on the invitation of then-director of Artspace, Auckand, Misal Adnan Yildiz. *Basic Needs* has been re-presented in 2018 for *Mutterzunge* curated by Yildiz for Apartment Project, Berlin.

The Artist Has to Live Like Everybody Else, 1985/2018
UV-impregnated ink on canvas, 1000 x 1618mm



The proposition "The artist has to live like everybody else" was conceived in the late 1980s by Billy Apple with the artist's longstanding collaborator, Wystan Curnow and was commandeered as the text accompanying Apple's *Paid* series from 1987. It appeared in its own right as an art work for the first time in November 1991 for an electronic text art exhibition, *Like They Are Now*, conceived by John Barnett and Lesley Kaiser for outdoor electronic signs in downtown Auckland. The phrase has been used prominently since then, most notably as a 12.18 x 6.50 metre billboard commission by Sculpture International Rotterdam on a high rise building opposite Rotterdam Centraal Station in 2009 and on the exterior of the Auckland Art Gallery for Apple's retrospective curated by Christina Barton in 2015.

Contributors

BILLY APPLE® was born Barrie Bates in Auckland, New Zealand in 1935. He left New Zealand in 1959 to study Graphic Design at the Royal College of Art in London. After graduating in 1962, he took the radical step of changing his name to Billy Apple to establish a new identity and turn himself into his own art work. In 1964, he moved to New York where he produced pop-related paintings and objects, some of which were included in the landmark *American Supermarket* at Bianchini Gallery in 1964. These were followed by xerographic works and neon sculptures shown at Bianchini Gallery, Howard Wise Gallery and the Pepsi Cola Gallery. By 1969, Apple had shifted to a more conceptual and process-oriented practice. As a venue for his and others work he established APPLE, a not-for-profit space at 161 West 23rd St which he operated between October 1969 and May 1973. He also exhibited at various spaces in New York's alternative art scene including 3 Mercer Street, Holly Solomon, Martha Jackson West, and the Clocktower, and for one year was director of 112 Greene Street Gallery from 1975–76. A major survey of Apple's work, which brought together his British and American works from 1960 to 1974, was staged at the Serpentine Gallery in London in 1974. Apple remained in New York until 1990, continuing to exhibit his work in various venues, including Leo Castelli Gallery (in 1977, 1978, 1980, and 1984). He also made two extended tours to New Zealand in 1975 and 1979-80, producing site-specific installations in dealer and public galleries throughout the country. Since the early 1980s Apple has complemented his installation practice with text-based works that draw attention to the art system and highlight the artist's social networks. A survey of these, *As Good as Gold: Billy Apple Art Transactions 1981-1991,* was organised and toured by Wellington City Art Gallery in 1991. Billy Apple® became a registered trademark in 2007. He has created a range of branded art products in the eight different classes in which his trademark is held, including a new breed of apple called the 'Billy Apple', 'Billy Apple® Cider', 'Billy Apple® Tartan', registered with the Scottish Register of Tartans and 'Apple's Blend' a mix of coffee beans. More recently he has been involved in several art-science collaborations such as finding the *Centre of the Extended Continental Shelf of New Zealand,* which is the continent of Zealandia's new geopolitical boundary ratified in 2008 by the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea; his somatic blood cells have been virally immortalized to create the *Billy Apple® Cell Line* which is available for research through the American Type Culture Collection, Virginia and the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Auckland; his entire genome has been sequenced; and the microbial composition of his gut microbiome was determined using DNA extracted from a 1970 conceptual work titled *Excretory Wipings* and compared with contemporary samples from 2016 and 2018 extending previous research by 40 years.

Based in Auckland, New Zealand, since the 1990s, Apple's works have been included in major international and national exhibitions. These include: *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin* (New York, 1999); *Kronos + Kairos: Über die Zeit in der Zeitgenössischen Kunst,* (Kassel, 1999); *Shopping: A Century of Art and Consumer Culture* (Frankfurt & Liverpool, 2002–3); *American Supermarket* (Pittsburgh, 2002); *Art of the '60s from Tate Britain* (Auckland 2006); *Gold* (Vienna, 2012), and *International Pop* (Minnesota, Dallas & Philadelphia, 2016). More recent solo surveys include *Billy Apple®: A History of the Brand* and *Revealed/Concealed* at Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam in 2009 and *Billy Apple®: The Artist Has to Live Like Everybody Else* at Auckland Art Gallery in 2015. His works are in many public and private collections including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, Virginia; Corning Museum of Glass, New York; Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit; Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand, Wellington; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Tate Britain, London, and the Scottish National Galleries of Modern Art, Edinburgh.

Billy Apple is represented by The Mayor Gallery, London, Rossi & Rossi, Hong Kong, Starkwhite, Auckland, and Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington.

ANTHONY BYRT is a journalist and critic based in Auckland, New Zealand. He is a regular contributor to Artforum International and the New Zealand current affairs magazine Metro. In 2013 he was Critical Studies Fellow at Cranbrook Academy of Art, Michigan, and in 2015 he was named New Zealand's Reviewer of the Year at the Canon Media Awards. His first book, *This Model World: Travels to the Edge of Contemporary Art* (Auckland University Press, 2016) was a finalist in New Zealand's premier book prize, the Ockham Book Awards.

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