

# FORWARD RETREAT

## Mass Customization in Art: Expressing the Modern Consumer

Identity Crisis: Works by Christopher Hauck in Gallery twenty-four, Berlin, Germany

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[Gallery twenty-four](#) just announced an exhibition of new mixed media paintings by US artist **Christopher Hauck (April 26– May 10)** with the vernissage on May 05, 7-12 p.m. The exhibition is part of the Berlin Biennial 2006. The work of Hauck sounds like a perfect painted expression of a customer of a mass customization offering: on the hand side freedom of choice and co-creation, on the other burden of choice, emotional costs. And more general, of the contrast of following standards for peer-recognition versus the expression of one's self.

### From the invitation:

"Hauck's detraction explores the commoditization of identity that occurs in all socio-economic strataes; the person as product. Through a mixed media of paint and marker, Hauck investigates the mutually non-exclusive blurring of consumer and consumption; the "we are what we eat" materialization of identity in contemporary marketplaces and societies that are influenced by shifting cultural norms. ...

Influenced by **mass customization, on demand programming, user defined desktops**, personal digital assistants, global distribution chains, and just in time inventories. All of which force the individual's identity to the fringe. On one hand reducing our identity to a percentage point in a market share statistic and on the other hand liberating individual identity through mediated and technology defined personas.

The works both explore, and beg the question of, where all of this leaves the individual's identity. Is our identity determined by MAC cosmetics and plastic surgery and kept alive by way of intravenous infusions of reality TV and talk radio? The "me too" persona on slow-drip life support. Or is there a **new found freedom of individual identity and global self expression**, blogging, podcasting, public authoring, and cyber-dating our way through shifting cultural norms and disintegrating geographic borders all of which afford us multiple and distinct identities?"

*Frank Piller, an associate professor of management ("Privatdozent") at TUM Business School, Technische Universitaet Muenchen Currently he is on an extended leave to work with the MIT Sloan School of Management (BPS, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Group), Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, MA.*