

**‘Shrines and the  
Commodification of Spirituality’**

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## **Disclaimer**

Please note, that images which are marked with a \* are linked and can be used interactively.

## **I Seeking Spirituality**

The network as shown in the Maag-Areal is an analogue reality which is dependent on the proximity between the different actors on a specific geographical site. However, in a globalised world the network as a global entity is not bound to a physical site but is propelled to infinity.

It is held together by different confessions of the same belief in capitalist economics. New communication methods as well as digitised markets have gradually enhanced the entropic power of the economy, transforming it into an incomprehensible force. Goods, people, services within the network are subjected to commodification and therefore represent market value. All of those are needed to keep the system running.

>But what is it worth now?

>What happens when the global economy can no longer produce services and goods at the usual rate?

>What happens when the value of locality of the highest

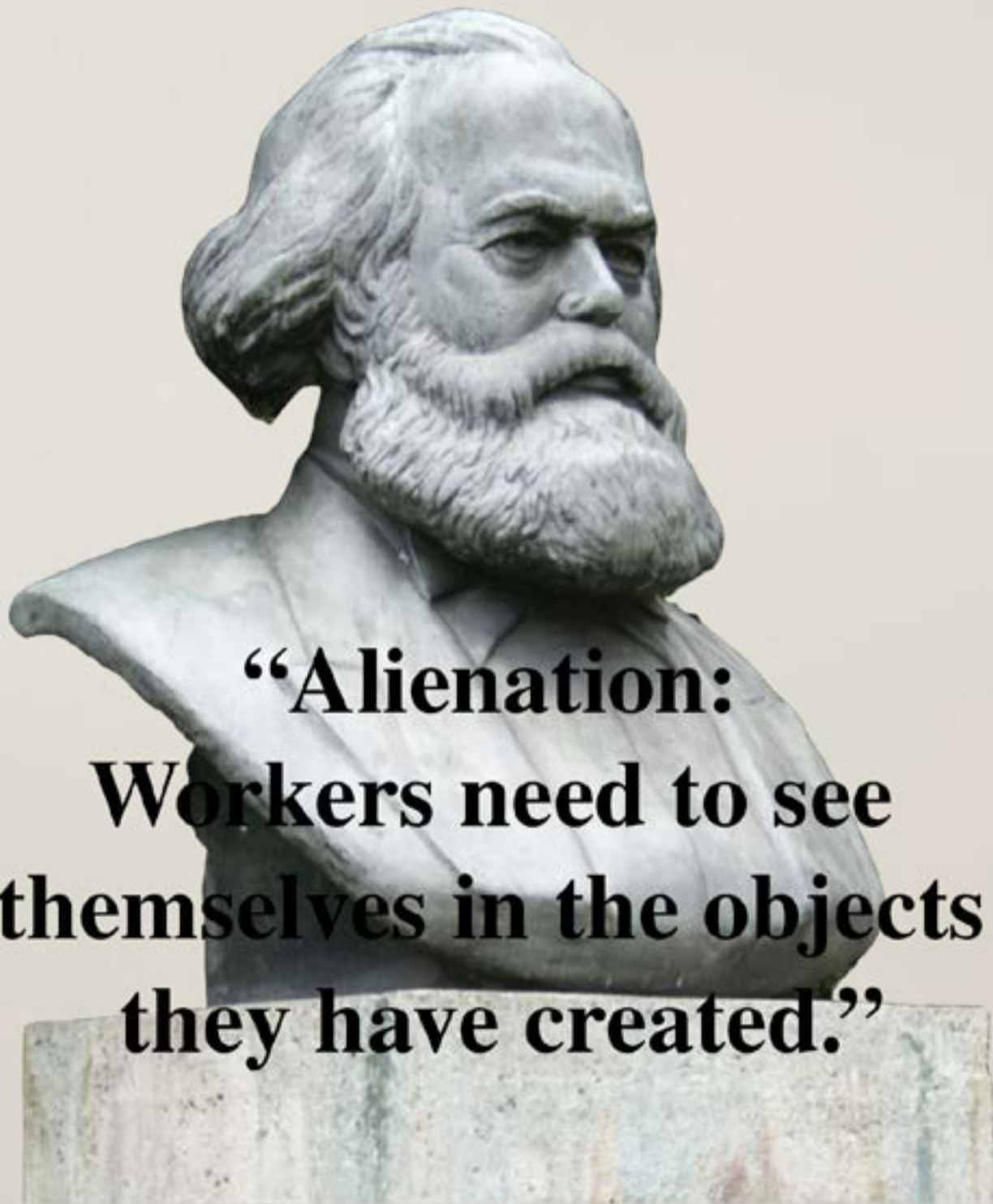
office in town vanishes?

>What happens when you're stuck at home because you can no longer go to work?

Suddenly, one is confronted with the superficiality of the shiny glass architecture, the tailor-made suit and the extravagant velvet bow on the Swiss cheese platter offering. Confused and anxious one turns to the home.

Deprived of the emancipatory power of work one starts to engage with the home and everything it offers: Furniture is moved around, things are repaired, cleaned, and moved around again, and cleaned again. New compositions of the same furnitures conquer the familiar space and shed light on never before noticed things. They catch the eyes' attention, gain importance and value.

Tired of the hopeless outlook communicated through abstract numbers and devastating facts, the question of the meaning of life moves to the centre of consciousness. The answer doesn't lay in scientific reasoning but rather comes from the study of the spiritual self.



**“Alienation:  
Workers need to see  
themselves in the objects  
they have created.”**

## Notes on Karl Marx

- Marx criticizes many things about capitalism: rich people manage to make a profit from the goods, while the poor have neither the means nor the products themselves, they distance themselves from their work, or the work itself can't fulfill them with joy > **alienated work**
- **emancipating** workers against alienation of work



**“...now more than ever,  
we should contest  
the meaning of value  
and those who produce it.”**





## Notes on Mariana Mazzucato

- creation of value cannot be given out of hand to people who do not generate value for society > value creators such as hedge funds who make more money from money instead of “giving” money back to society
- during a crisis big players are often reimbursed because of their importance to the state’s economy > **“too big to fail”**
- a crisis is a possibility to enforce stricter laws in the form of taxes because neoliberals often use a crisis to further pursue their agenda and to strengthen their grip on power

## **// Break [lockdown]**

- What could be the effect of the crisis on labour in general?
- What is its effect on capital and labour and their relationship?
- How does it affect our perception of value?
- How does it affect our relationship to the interior?

## II Commodification of Objects and People

Glass<sup>#</sup> of Architecture

=

Suit<sup>#</sup> of Worker

=

Packaging<sup>#</sup> of Presents

All of <sup>#</sup>them are used as tools for representational purposes in order to create value, thus they become commodified, meaning they become objects of trade.



**“The way to create  
a good economy  
lies in our own homes.”**

## Notes on William Morris

- through the criticism of Marx, one reaches architects like William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement  
> alternative business model helped him to fight for his ideals, both in terms of product and social aspects
- local production is in the focus, as well as the craft
- two key issues of Morris' have become decisive for modern capitalism: the role of pleasure in work & the nature of consumer demand
- the principles of satisfying work and dignifying work for the worker could or should be at the heart of the modern world
- **use of capitalism to fight capitalism**
- economy can feel as if it is governed by abstract laws, this resembles the network
- the true task in generating a good economy lies much closer to our home

## **// Building Spirituality: Network and the Territory**

In her essay “A-Ware” Keller Easterling notes that in recent times site has multiplied to a more complex understanding of territory and hence of network. Like the network of neoliberal economy, so is spirituality subject to atomisation. It can't be defined as an entity. As with capitalist economy, the industry around spirituality is governed by economic, social and therefore abstract laws. The urbanist Jochen Becker regards the spiritual industry as a worldwide phenomenon which has substantial impact on societies. According to Becker “the [religious] movements offer a triangle of services: social services when states fail, economic investment as firms, and spiritual practice.”.

An important player in the spiritual industry is the International Christian Fellowship a Christian Organisation in Zurich. The company has risen to popularity in the last ten years proclaiming a very youth-friendly but still conservative gospel. In the ICF community and music

create the sacral, not the design of the room > Day rooms are being transformed into prayer rooms. Due to the high donations the organisation receives, they managed to book the Maag Hall for their sermons paying up to 30'000 CHF a night. After having substantially financed the refurbishment of the Maag Hall into a concert hall, they transferred their location to the Samsung Hall in Stettbach.



DIE WOCHENZEITUNG

WOZ | Schweiz | Wirtschaft | International | Kultur/Wissen

Nr. 12/2012 vom 22.03.2012

RELIGION UND STADTENTWICKLUNG

### Wo bitte gehts hier zum Altar?

Vom «Holy Ghost Congress» in Lagos zur Popkirche ICF: Der Urbanist Jochen Becker sprach in Zürich zur Frage, wie neue religiöse Bewegungen auf die Stadtplanung Einfluss nehmen.

Von [Kaspar Surber](#)



Monoblockstühle bis zum Horizont: Im Prayern in Lagos feiern 750 000 Menschen. FOTO: BITTER/WEBER

Arte-Metropolis: Report on "the Urban Cultures of Global Prayers"

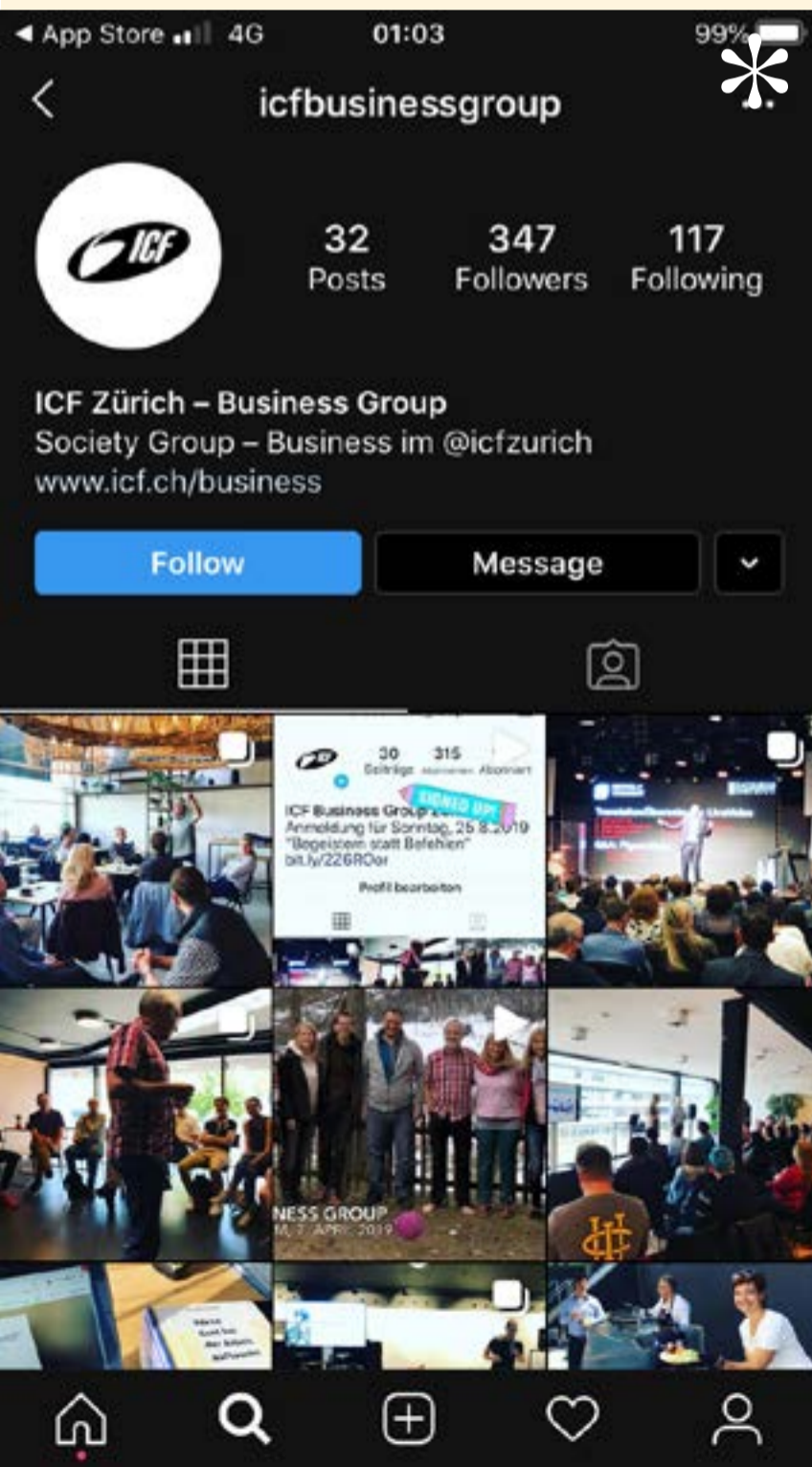


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ICF Zürich at Maag Halle (2013-17)

## ICF Zürich - Business Group







Aryo Danusiri: On Broadway (2012)

### **III Home and Its Objects**



Isenheimer Altar

## **// Negotiating Spirituality**

Maybe in the last couple of weeks by staying at home and wandering around the same rooms, you regained consciousness of this particular space in your house:

Everyone has his or her own hidden corner, her little stool, his shelf where he deposits things which don't have a clear value. Those shrines and altars are often made up of unproductive but not worthless objects. Everyone has them in their homes. Sometimes they can mean the world to someone. Sometimes it is a depository of loose thoughts. Objects are added and subtracted.

The company "Shine" tries to actively sell such objects found on the altar which everyone has. It promises you by buying the objects to be able to build your own altar. Thus "Shine" claims by having a place to meditate and reflect you be more productive. Concepts of unproductive time and individuality move to the background whereas commodification and self-design come up.

# *Shrines by Family & Friends*



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# *Shrines by Family & Friends*



*Shrines by Family & Friends*



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*Shrines by Family & Friends*



## **// Curation of Objects**

A photograph of a kitchen pantry with four shelves. The shelves are filled with various food items, including cans of soups, pasta, and vegetables, as well as bottles of ketchup and soy sauce. The kitchen counter below the shelves has a sink, a faucet, and some cleaning supplies. The wall is tiled with white square tiles.

**”If we gain concentration  
we lose territory,  
if we gain territory  
we lose concentration.”**

## **Notes on Hans Ulrich Obrist**

- make Museum where you expect it the least
- we are in time where things are atomised
- A curator is a caretaker of objects, he is filtering, enabling, synthesizing. One curator who put forward his own obsessions and artists beyond the usual canon is Harald Szeemann:
- The Museum of Obsessions is a private passion, a permanent pervasion of the spirit. Objects are chosen by liking. They reconstruct thinking and create an associative formation rather than clear answers.
- Work with your own “concentrated” surrounding
- If we lose territory when gain concentration and vice versa.
- As a role model for curatorial practices Obrist names Édouard Glissant.





**“Good design is about  
isolating us from the  
weirdness of the world.”**

## **Notes on Mark Wigley**

- “in design human emerges as the designer but also foremost as the victim”
- “the whole planet has become a subject of design”
- “architects always think that things are a bit screwed up, and with architects help thing could get better” > in a screwed up world architects should take this “beautiful” moment to redesign the whole world”
- we play with world, see ourselves what we’ve made and then we become what we have made > feedback loop

A classical painting depicting a man in a dark, patterned tunic leaning over a table. He is looking down at a small object on the table. In the foreground, a woman lies on the floor, her head resting on the ground. The scene is set against a plain, light background. The man's tunic has a white, floral or geometric pattern. The woman's head is resting on a dark, rounded object, possibly a pillow or a piece of furniture. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

**“...things are not only  
tools for practical life  
but also manifestations  
of their user’s soul.”**

## Notes on Boris Groys

- “Contemporary subjects cannot only rely on the looks they were born with: they must practice self-design, and produce their own image with the goal of becoming liked by society.”
- “The subject of self-design is interested in the existence of society to find and receive recognition and admiration.”
- “Self-design means rewriting inner, psychological, political attitudes or economic interests on external media: **self-design creates a second, artificial body** that potentially replaces and survives that of the human.”

## // Self-Design

- God is replaced by society as the judge of “good and evil” but it is no longer just internal factors that count but also external factors > self-design is a tool to actively shape the external factors in order to be “liked” by society
- The shrine isn't necessarily religious anymore but has undergone a process of **secularisation** > it has become an object of commodification
- Objects live on even when their owners have passed

## **IV Shrines and The Commodification of Spirituality**

## **// Finding Spirituality**

- Religion decreases, spirituality increases!
- “In our society, certain issues that have to do with what people experience as external: Money, success, prestige are so present that the other topics, which can also be of existential importance for people and which have to do with meaning, with the search for meaning, but also with experiences, those are often neglected. Thus, one tries to create a balance on a spiritual level.”
- “Spirituality and Health: People don’t just want to rely on other authorities (eg hospital or the general practitioner), but want to do something themselves. The possibility to connect with oneself in another way, through the totality of nature, with the energies of the universe, in order to strengthen oneself, seem of great interest.”

(Professor for Religious Studies Dorothea Lüddeckens)



## Web Shop

Are you interested in creating your personal shrine?

- |   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p>New</p>                                    | <p>New</p>                                       | <p>New</p>   | <p>New</p>  |
| <p>Matryoshka Doll 9 piece<br/>CHF 78.50</p>  | <p>Blue Vase "Amalfi"<br/>CHF 24.20</p>          | <p>Pine Cone "Côte d'Azur"<br/>CHF 21.00</p>           | <p>Incense Oak Wood Candle<br/>CHF 30.00</p>            |
| <p>New</p>                                    | <p>New</p>                                       |  |   |
| <p>Buzard Feather "Briwn"<br/>CHF 18.20</p>   | <p>Chinese Money Plant<br/>CHF 10.00</p>         | <p>Pharmacy Bottle Vase<br/>CHF 21.50</p>              | <p>Wooden Card Holder "Samskand"<br/>CHF 19.50</p>      |
|   | <p>SALE</p>                                      | <p>New</p>   |   |
| <p>Ceramic Plate "Ornament"<br/>CHF 14.50</p> | <p>Blue Vase "Paris"<br/>CHF 34.00 CHF 30.96</p> | <p>Incense Ash Wood "California"<br/>CHF 11.00</p>     | <p>Tea Light Glas "Glas"<br/>CHF 24.90</p>              |
|   |  |  |   |
| <p>Marble Block "Carrara L"<br/>CHF 27.30</p> | <p>Glas Globe "Berlin"<br/>CHF 12.00</p>         | <p>Post Card "Siena"<br/>CHF 4.50</p>                  | <p>Wooden Bowl "Kapstad"<br/>CHF 20.90</p>              |
|   | <p>New</p>                                       | <p>SALE</p>  | <p>SALE</p>   |
| <p>Wooden Box "Da Vinci"<br/>CHF 18.20</p>    | <p>Candlelight Stand "Milano"<br/>CHF 25.00</p>  | <p>Pocket Shrine Container<br/>CHF 10.00 CHF 15.30</p> | <p>Kraftstein "Onque Terre"<br/>CHF 18.00 CHF 15.56</p> |



## // About [shine-on-you.net] ✨

“Shine is a company that facilitates your access to spirituality through various services, informs you about its potential and responds to your individual ideas. In a world where prestige, money and success often come to the fore, we want to emphasize the importance of meaningful values and show you how these can be successfully used to create a balanced everyday life.

Our small team consists of spiritually trained creative people who, in their respective specialisation, make a decisive contribution to the whole.

We have made it our goal to accompany you on your spiritual path with our expertise, whether at home or at work.

On our website you will find information about the various services, as well as an extensive webshop, which is constantly being enriched with new articles.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us via the contact form. We are looking forward to your suggestions and will do our best to answer you within a short time! -Your Shine-Team”

## // Services [[shine-on-you.net](http://shine-on-you.net)] ✨

Our company has three different core competencies, each of which we carry out with great passion and to the satisfaction of our customers.

In addition to a webshop with various spiritual products, we are happy to welcome you to one of our workshops, where you can expand your knowledge about shrines and more.

Furthermore, we offer the possibility to work out room concepts for spiritual solutions in cooperation with us. All our services can be used for the home or for professional purposes.

You can find additional information about the individual services under “Web Shop”, “Workshop” and “Spiritual Space Solutions”.



Matryoshka Doll 9 Pieces - CHF 78.90



Buzzard Feather "Brown" - CHF 18.20



Incense Ash Wood "California" - CHF 11.00

## **// About the Artwork**

The work consists of a series of three images of a shrine. All of them are accompanied by a number of products, 25 in total, supposedly bought from [www.shine-on-you.net](http://www.shine-on-you.net). The same products are part of those three spatial compositions, photographed inside our apartment during the Corona-Virus lockdown. In addition, each of the panels has an invoice-like list which shows all the products that were purchased to help building the shrines.

In times of crisis spirituality becomes a selling point, now more than ever. Because we see spirituality in the objects we own and in the way we arrange them, we created the illusion of a company that sells different spiritual services through the tool of the website. Besides the web shop the company also offers spiritual guidance through seminars and room solutions that are mostly aimed at businesses.

The absurdity of selling our own things critically reflects upon two points:

- the productivity of the individual during a time of crisis and

-the value we associate with objects we own or buy in relation to spirituality

The company we have created has the potential to become an active player in the Maag-Areal. Our company promises by meditating success in the form of efficiency and productivity.

*Shrine I*





# Shrine I

## INVOICE I

### *Candles*

Candle "Rose" NEW	CHF 14.50	
Candle "Blondie" SALE	CHF 10.20	
Candle "Pink" SALE	CHF 9.45	
	<u>CHF 34.15</u>	<b>CHF 34.15</b>

### *Sculptures and Other*

Matryoshka Doll 9 Pieces	CHF 78.90	
House of Mirrors	CHF 35.00	
	<u>CHF 113.90</u>	<b>CHF 148.05</b>

### *Fabrics*

-	CHF 0.00	<b>CHF 148.05</b>
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### *Natural Products*

Chinese Money Plant	CHF 10.00	
Tuscan Sea Stones SALE	CHF 20.00	
	<u>CHF 30.00</u>	<b>CHF 178.05</b>

### *Plates*

Concrete Coaster "Thailand" SALE	CHF 12.00	<b>CHF 190.05</b>
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### *Containers*

Glass Container "Light"	CHF 19.00	<b>CHF 209.05</b>
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### *Post Cards*

Post Card "Lazgi"	CHF 4.50	
Post Card "Cloudy Sky"	CHF 3.50	
	<u>CHF 8.00</u>	

***TOTAL*** **CHF 217.05**

# *Shrine I*



# *Shrine II*



# Shrine II

## INVOICE II

### *Candles*

Candle "Earth Tone"	CHF 12.50	<b>CHF 12.50</b>
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### *Sculptures and Other*

-	CHF 0.00	<b>CHF 12.50</b>
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### *Fabrics*

-	CHF 0.00	<b>CHF 12.50</b>
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### *Natural Products*

Pine Cone "Côte d'Azur"	CHF 21.00	
Marble Block "Carrara L"	CHF 27.30	
Marble Block "Carrara M"	CHF 25.30	
Buzzard Feather "Brown" NEW	CHF 18.20	
	<u>CHF 91.80</u>	<b>CHF 104.30</b>

### *Plates*

Ceramic Coaster "Ornament"	CHF 14.50	<b>CHF 118.80</b>
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### *Containers*

Blue Vase "Amalfi" NEW	CHF 24.20	
Pharmacy Bottle Vase	CHF 21.50	
Glass Container "Pond"	CHF 17.30	
	<u>CHF 63.00</u>	<b>CHF 181.80</b>

### *Post Cards*

Post Card "Shaman"	CHF 4.50	
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<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>		<b><u>CHF 186.30</u></b>
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*Shrine II*



# *Shrine III*



# Shrine III

## INVOICE III

### *Candles*

Incense Oak Wood Candle	CHF 30.00	<b>CHF 30.00</b>
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### *Sculptures and Other*

Knitted Coaster "Grosi" NEW	CHF 18.90	<b>CHF 48.90</b>
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### *Fabrics*

-	CHF 0.00	<b>CHF 48.90</b>
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### *Natural Products*

Incense Ash Wood "California" NEW	CHF 11.00	<b>CHF 59.90</b>
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### *Plates*

-	CHF 0.00	<b>CHF 59.90</b>
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### *Containers*

Monstera Leaf Ceramic Bowl	CHF 12.90	<b>CHF 72.80</b>
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### *Post Cards*

-	CHF 0.00	
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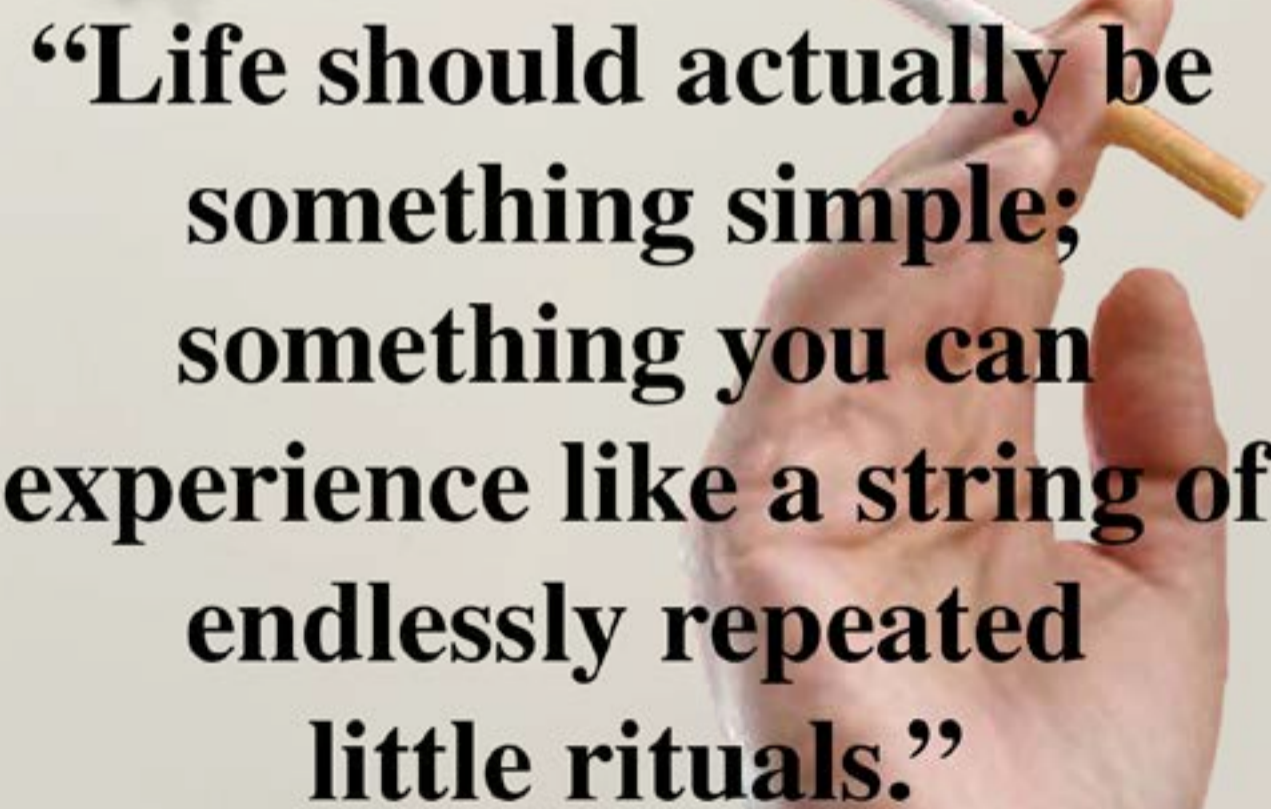
***TOTAL***

**CHF 72.80**

*Shrine III*





A close-up photograph of a hand holding a lit cigarette. The cigarette is held between the fingers, and a plume of grey smoke is rising from the tip. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**“Life should actually be something simple; something you can experience like a string of endlessly repeated little rituals.”**

## **V So, What Is It Worth?**

In a time where the question of value is often asked, one can either come to the conclusion that everything or nothing is worth anything. The intervention aims to address certain issues and raise questions in this regard. The popularity of spirituality is increasing rapidly, especially now, replacing on the one hand religious pastoral workers, psychologists and scientists on the other.

The intervention shows that the spiritual industry is targeting something which society lacks. In environments where rationalized work takes the upper hand and all incisive elements are missing, one has succumbed to commodified spirituality.

One problem could be that value is not associated with the work but its monetary merits.

The value of spirituality lies not in the commodified products and services offered on the website but in the collective of the community.

# *Shrines and the Commodification of Spirituality*

FS20

Samira Lenzin & Edoardo Signori