Gifts sometimes go to the very core of artistic practice. During a period of recovery, Jutta Koether worked for a year and a half on a body of work that she designated as occasional gifts for friends, and these were also grid drawings. One, a gift to Richard Phillips, is on view in this show.

Conversely, the gallery work can assume a different status when given as a gift. The skin painting by Byron Kim in this show belongs to a familiar and much exhibited body of work, but as a gift to his mother-in-law, it became a point of origin and the skin painting’s meaning shifted. The art work, redefined as gift, becomes an intersection of two worlds.

How do these different registers relate to one another? Several of the participants indicated that the act of gift-giving opened up a sphere of production that they would not consider suitable for display in the gallery but that they value as part of their practice. Occasionally however, the gift work translates into the gallery work. The piece by Paul Ramirez Jonas in this show, Observance (Felix), given to Amy Sillman is now part of a larger body of work. By contrast, the works by Amy Sillman on view here, an illustrated book and a comic-style narrative drawing, are examples of a kind of production that she makes strictly as gifts and that she keeps separate from her gallery paintings.

Several participants in the exhibition have insisted that giving art is a basic part of how they identify themselves as artists. This might seem merely naïve, given the market-driven nature of the art world. Yet the practice continues, threading in and out of that larger economy and prompting basic questions about how it works. It seems appropriate that it come into view at apexart, a not-for-profit exhibition space positioned both inside and outside the system of contemporary art.

Byron Kim
That kind of painting has a certain clear status in the context of an art gallery but as a gift for my mother-in-law it was something entirely different. It shifts much of its status as art work, and yet the fact that the painting could have this intimate, family life is also of part of its meaning, a part of it that the art world might have a hard time seeing.

Gifts sometimes go in one direction
July 5 - August 12
organized by Alexander Nagel

Several participants in the exhibition have insisted that giving art is a basic part of how they identify themselves as artists. This might seem merely naïve, given the market-driven nature of the art world. Yet the practice continues, threading in and out of that larger economy and prompting basic questions about how it works. It seems appropriate that it come into view at apexart, a not-for-profit exhibition space positioned both inside and outside the system of contemporary art.

When I'm stuck in the studio I trick myself into making a gift, and then that frees up my decision making—I don't worry... I don't make it an art work, work I produce for the gallery. I wish I could let it be an art work and most often I don't.

Paul Ramirez Jonas: gift to Stephen Andrews

Stephen Andrews, ink on paper, 18 x 24 in, Untitled

Julie Voyce, 48 in, gift to Eliza Griffiths

...always dynamically defined in relation to a field of other transaction modes. A token of gratitude should not be... a bribe. A friendly extension is not a loan. An art work is not a piece of merchandise. They put him under permanent obligation.

Negotiating the Gift

Michel Gazi has observed in the recent... that Michelangelo (as described by Vasari in... him something, that he was under permanent obligation to the giver."

"HE DIDN'T LIKE BEING GIVEN GIFTS"

...artists are sold and sold in art galler...nical activities. When art started to be made independent of commerce and, more than simply a claim that... when it was given...continue to be generated today.

Even this small sampling reveals that the "gift func... same relation to things, to the world of consumer items. Artists recognize this in each other.

"Gift-giving between artists is like breathing. You say: It's time for me to give you something. Being an artist means having a..."