



# Summer of Equivalence

Ernst Fischer



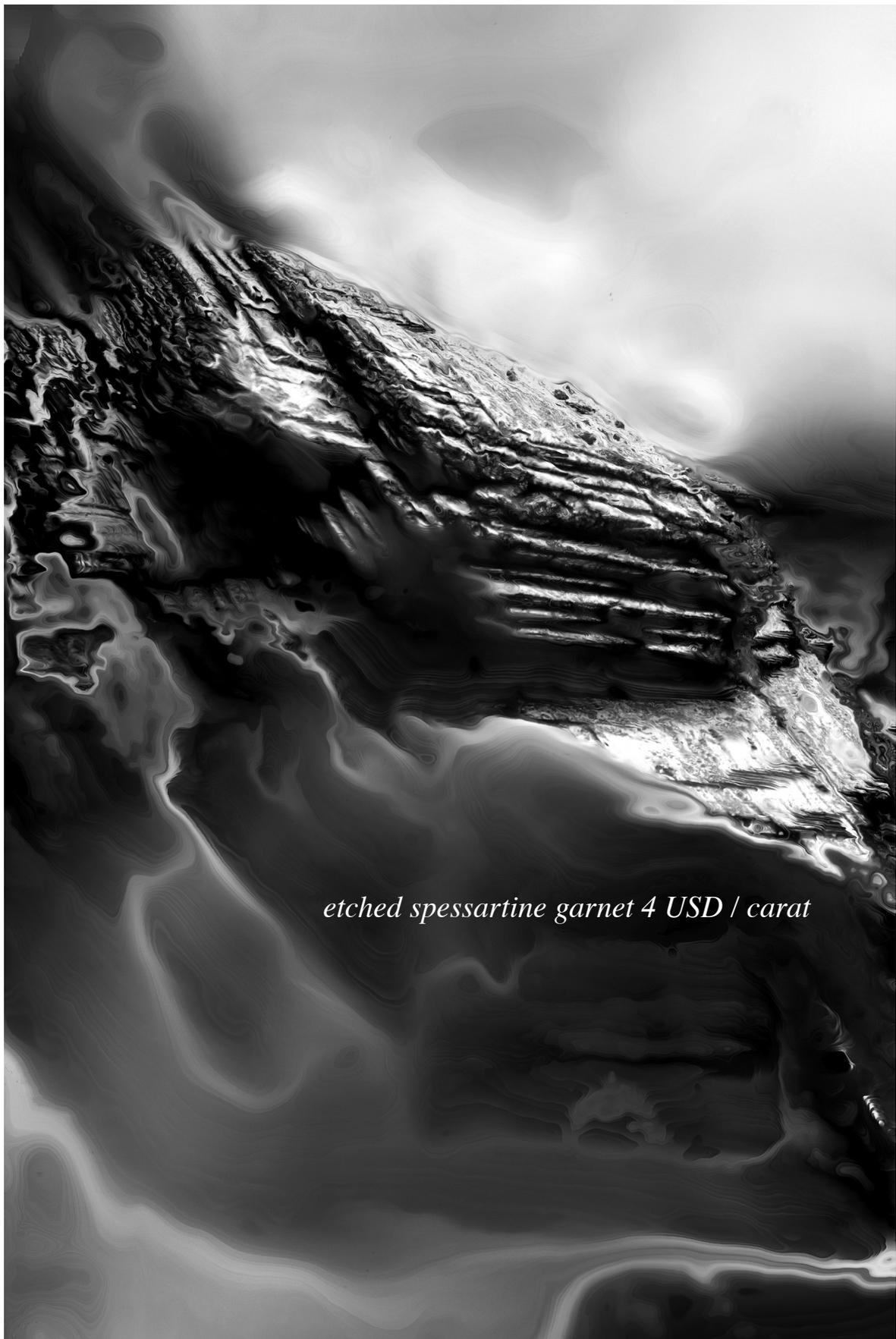


*beer for the fire brigade EUR 23*



*one-fifth of our father's estate*





*etched spessartine garnet 4 USD / carat*

Not until last summer was I able to express the entirety of my social exchanges in monetary syntax, that is, come last September, everything seemed suddenly to have found its bottom line, its price fixed in a series of mutable spreadsheets that projected both a tight range of probable futures and a cone of light on my past.

This may be as much a marker of the advanced decline in my net worth as it is of the mess I found myself in, personally speaking, that none but the magic broom of quantified value would sweep.

Satire will not redeem the underlying travesty, however, which persists by the uncanny sense of purpose that arose from the act of finally again subsuming my life to capital's presupposed totality. Soothing to finally be able to measure just how much of my remaining time I am likely to have to sell. This insouciant short essay is an attempt to exorcise this spirit. Pierre Klossowski perhaps best describes it:

Consenting to subsist by one's labor, thus to buying back one's original passivity, establishes the notion of needs and their variable hierarchy, pursuant to which the propagation instinct can prevail over its own freeness; its arbitrary repetition becomes a necessary repetition, since it provides its human specimens with a pretext for resisting the sterile prolongation of ... voluptuous emotion.

First the earth; then the instruments; the objects, and then at last mere symbols representing the objects, and finally even the interposition between beings and their desires of symbols seen as being worth those desires and their objects as appraisable resources: these all have been like deductions taken from perversion by the specific instinct in order to structure them as needs.<sup>1</sup>

The act of finding congruence between one's life and those MasterCard "priceless" commercials has something perfidiously liberating. One joins the First Church of Ever-Accelerating Affect/ Value Reciprocity (of which George Soros is Pope) and finds



that all its members are in on the joke: “priceless” of course is the ever-receding horizon, the carrot so to speak that we dangle in front of self-valorizing value itself in order to keep it striving to quantify that which resists measurement. We faithful share in that same commixture of control and abandon that marks out the “good” hedge fund manager as well as the “good” artist: having “skin in the game” while maintaining an elevated perspective.

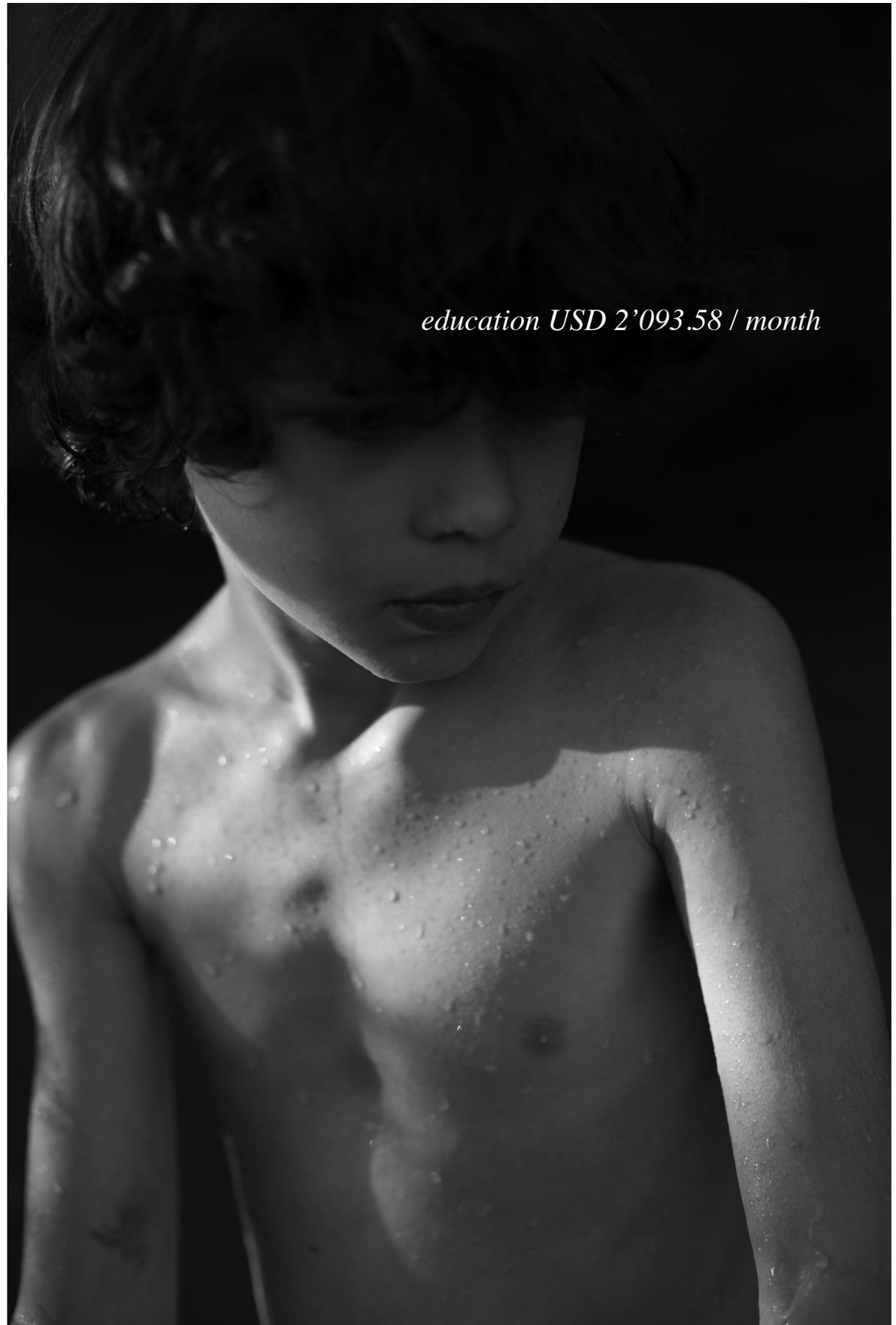
By denying the perpetual deferment of “priceless” and insisting that an exact number should caption the images of my loved people and places as well as my still lifes, I hope to be clear: it is this double function, so elegantly described by Georg Simmel<sup>2</sup> that makes money such a powerful piece of code and lends it its Trojan quality. Its paradoxical status as both pure sign and store of value, its being so intensely real *and* fictitious, is a line of self-contradiction that precludes any criticality, at least at long first.

This I think money shares with photography: this simultaneous being and representing, this oscillating splitting and linking that we cannot help but gaze at in wonder, as at an emerging wilderness. It will take a sober measure of fulfilled nihilism<sup>3</sup> to inhabit this place subversively. I begin by assuming both that everything has its price and that things are only as real as they are photographable. This I hope will sharpen my sense for what is left: islands shrouded in a fog that this lens will not penetrate.

1. Klossowski, P., “Living Currency,” [http://monoskop.org/images/b/b0/Klossowski\\_Pierre\\_Living\\_Currency.pdf](http://monoskop.org/images/b/b0/Klossowski_Pierre_Living_Currency.pdf).

2. See also Von Flotov, P., “Die Auflösung des Substantiellen und die ‘Doppelrolle des Geldes,’” in *Geld, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1994).

3. Cacciari, M., “Epilogue: On the Architecture of Nihilism,” in *Architecture and Nihilism: On the Philosophy of Modern Architecture*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).



*education USD 2'093.58 / month*





*EUR 76'885.15 including opportunity cost of money*

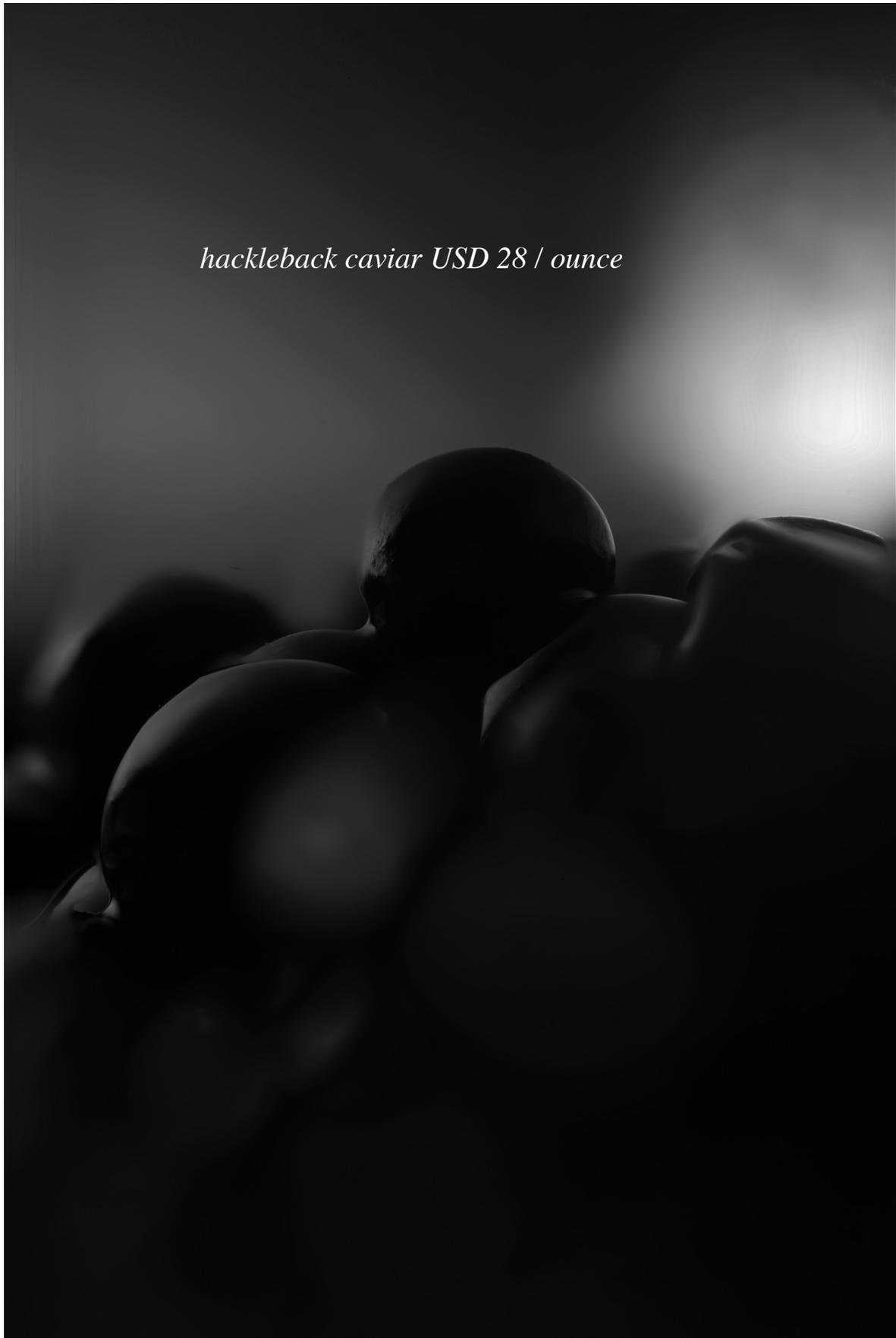


*USD 33'210 interest free, repaid in full*





*hackleback caviar USD 28 / ounce*



*future liabilities neither known nor limited*





*cubo-dodecahedral fluorite 78 USD / lb*



*USD 39'792 per annum*





*gifts in excess of CHF 706'000*



*flights USD 4'275.45*