NEW ART examiner
The Independent Voice of the Visual Arts

'The Independent Voice of the Visual Arts'

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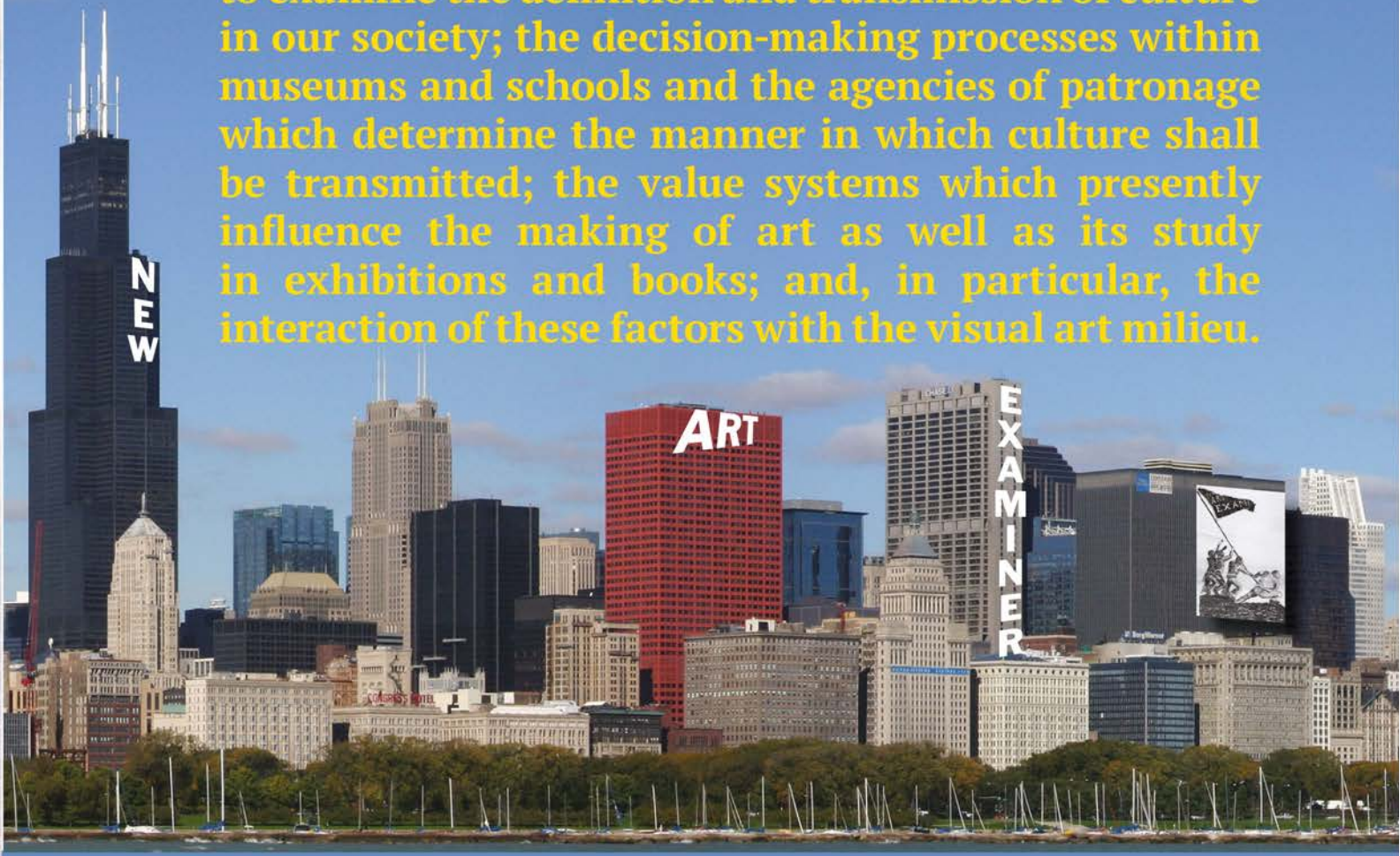
Since 1973 the New Art Examiner's purpose has been to examine the definition and transmission of culture in our society; the decision-making processes within museums and schools and the agencies of patronage which determine the manner in which culture shall be transmitted; the value systems which presently influence the making of art as well as its study in exhibitions and books; and, in particular, the interaction of these factors with the visual art milieu.



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The New Art Examiner is the product of the thinking and life-long contribution of Jane Addams Allen. We thank you in her name for reading her independent journal of art criticism. This is the first time we have planted roots in the UK, based in Cornwall. If you have an interest in our venture, please consult Google, also Art Cornwall, for an interview with the publisher, Derek Guthrie, a painter who keeps his art practice private.

The New Art Examiner has a long history of producing quality and independent art criticism. Chicago and Cornwall, as any art scene, needs writers to keep a professional eye on art activity. Otherwise, insider trading will determine success in this troubled art world. We urge you to please subscribe so we can find and encourage writers to share their visual experience with you. You can also participate directly by submitting personal commentaries. All Letters to the Editor are published.

All editions include the digital issue sent via email.

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LETTERS

To the editor,

Finding something coherent in contemporary art - surely one possible role for the critic - may be as difficult as finding the bearded man within the mass of lines engraved on a stone slab some 15,000 years ago. Sorting out which lines add up to anything is getting rather difficult. No wonder critics are having an identity crisis. It used to be celebrities who exhibited their therapy artworks in public but critics and curators recently rushed to London to display their own artistic efforts in The Opinion Makers 2 at ALISN, Redchurch Street (16 December 2014- 11 January 2015) in which I took part. Even this magazine feels the need to justify its presence in territory which used to be accepted as its native ground.

Artists carry on without critics. Had an ice-age critic quizzed the engraver -with the implied demand for explanations-it might even have put off a good idea. Vasari had no impact on the production of innovative artwork, and the same can be said of Bernard and Greenberg, at least compared to their impacts on the tourist industry and art trade. Rosalind Krauss's claim that art critics change our conception of nature is harder to prove than that artists do so. The critics' independent judgment becomes valuable once the art is there.

So how does a critic today identify art in such a confusing mess of interests? Standing back and viewing things the other way up might be a start. No doubt art is slowly growing somewhere less disturbed - the un-grazed meadow is the one with flowers.

Christopher Barrett

To the editor,

Since the immensely popular Tutankhamen exhibition of the 70s museums have attracted visitors through the spectacular. They have become little more than a show for the sake of show and in so doing often have left most of their nation indifferent to contemporary art.

When people no longer notice or care what museums and galleries are showing because it doesn't say anything to them, young artists have to respond by saying they don't care what anyone else says or thinks.

The disconnect is absolute.

Amy Miller

Meeting Artspeak'
Inspired by notes taken at an artist led meeting

A Biennial event?
A big shiney event
We need Critical debate
Long term projects
Continuous dialogues
Critical dialogue
Lasting cultural legacy
Additionality
And strengthened Diversity
Cultural Offer And Critical debates
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Framework, mirrors manifesta
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Residential site visits
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Specific approach to education
Business Model
People nominated intellectual resource
Collaborative established artworks
Viable context for work
7 new public sited artworks
Collaborate
Major artworks……

Jan Phethean

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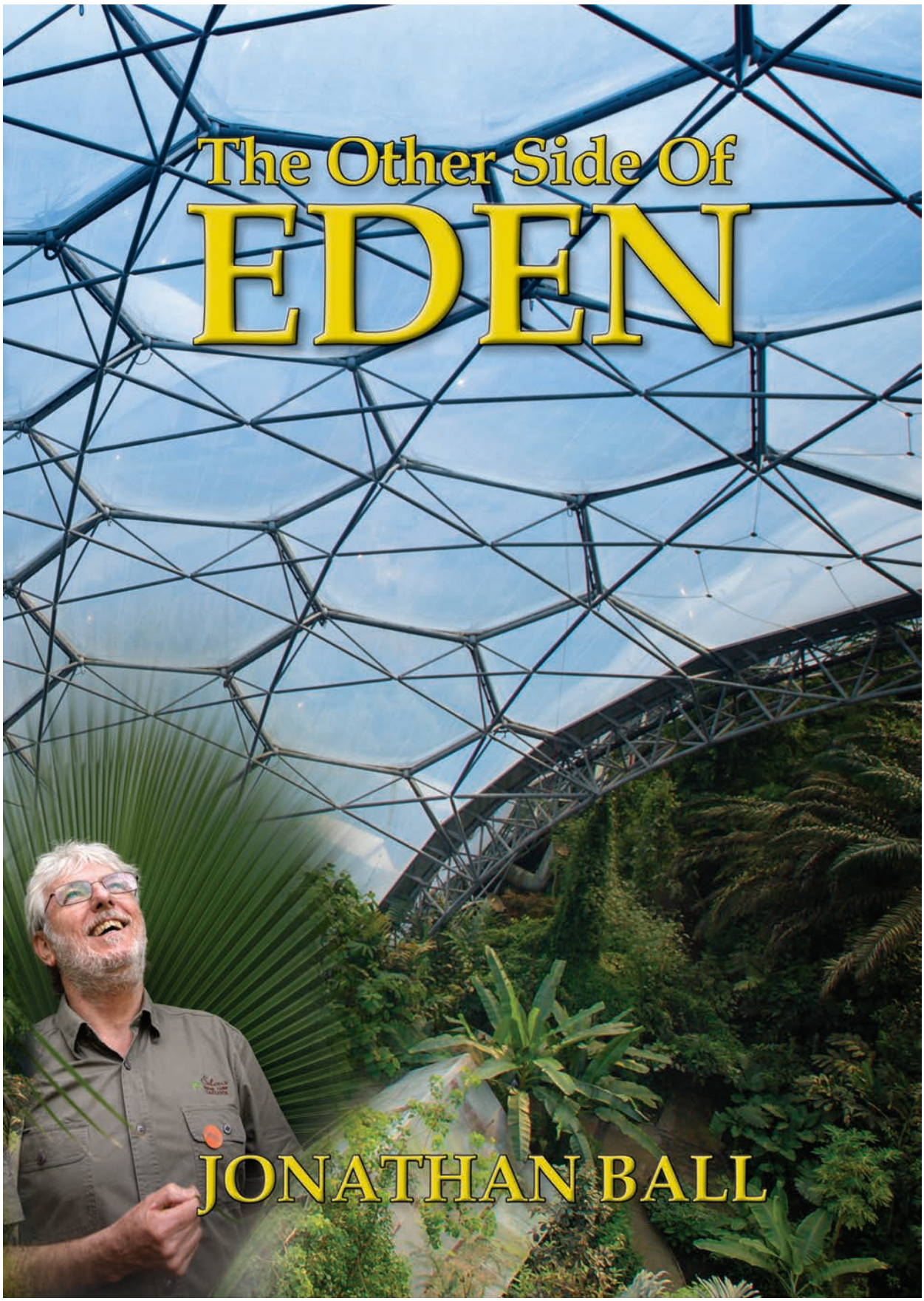

The astonishing true story behind the Eden Project, written by its co-founder Jonathan Ball. FootSteps Press non-fiction. ISBN: 978-1908867247 £20 / $27.50

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The New Art Examiner is a not-for-profit organization whose purpose is to examine the definition and transmission of culture in our society; the decision-making processes within museums and schools and the agencies of patronage which determine the manner in which culture shall be transmitted; the value systems which presently influence the making of art as well as its study in exhibitions and books; and, in particular, the interaction of these factors with the visual art milieu.

Full Circle

by

Derek Guthrie
Publisher

Power and Influence can raise a mediocre artist from obscurity to high status and the scramble is hectic. It did before in the Victorian Academy and the then named celebrity artists are now footnotes of history.

A short explanation of current thinking. Many of you are not aware of the long history of the New Art Examiner. The Art World is very complex and difficult. It is also a billion dollar industry that gets its raw material from artists who permanently supply Art, whether good or bad, in the hope that one day they may earn a living or recognition for their particular creativity.

Art criticism has a bad name which in the opinion of this writer is a cultural disaster for which their are many contributing factors. In large part the failure of Art education, both in secondary school and even more so on the University Campus. In short the system is eating itself. The complexities of the elite market, as opposed to the 'community market' is just a reflection of the broken and fragmented society. Art belongs to all but cannot straddle the class divide.

Power and Influence can raise a mediocre artist from obscurity to high status ...

The idea of individualism first considered in history by Socrates, but was practiced before by early humans who decided to leave a visual experience on the walls of the cave. This idea has survived or underscored human history and has political expression as Art as a social activity. The artist as the romantic hero true to self, is still with us and acts as a refuge for the lonely soul.

Therefore young people attend Art School. How does Art School teach the corruption of the Art World and therefore teach a confident professionalism? Frankly I do not know. I know it is the training ground for the managers of the Art World. Curators, other Museum and academic personnel who have to walk the line with the pressure of money, while serving the public.

Here in Cornwall where the scene is about to emerge from the wings of provincialism onto center stage, it is more than interesting. Power and influence can raise a mediocre artist from obscurity to high status and the scramble is hectic. It did before in the Victorian Academy and the then named celebrity artists are now footnotes of history.

The opening of the St Ives Tate, an outpost of the power base in London, has had a profound effect in that the Museum will and does draw punters to the town looking for quality and authentic contemporary Art. It is the major hub of influence and will give visual meaning inside the complicated power arrangements that now structure the Art World.

Art needs Art criticism particularity in our frenzied world over washed with celebrity culture. The future of quality Art , will be the struggle for cultural authenticity inside or resisting the banal requirements of a market driven by manipulation of the vanity of depleted egos that are happy to ride any wave of Fashion. The New Art Examiner looks forward to hosting future debates on Art and its discontents. Sometimes history tells us discontents become important artists.

editor@newartexaminer.net

The Catch in Kitsch

by

Annie Markovich
Managing Editor

An artist once asked me why is it museum gift shops look like department stores?

How is it that every blockbuster exhibition has a stall at the end of the show selling memorabilia with umbrellas, keychains, coffee mugs, etc.? There was a time when all you could buy at an exhibition was postcards of the great masters.

Other than referring to the artworks through stencils, lettering or silkscreen images the objects have nothing in common with the Art. More visual clutter assaults the confused viewer who enters or exists and finds the allure of Van Gogh magnet holders, Gauguin umbrellas and Rembrandt refrigerator magnets manufactured in China. Just in case the viewer forgets the experience of the exhibition, a scarf decorated with a print or part of the artist's work serves as a practical reminder.

... visitors have more empathy for the kitsch in the shop that the works in the exhibition spaces.

Do cultural institutions need these objects to keep a museum running? Yes, they do and museums are big business. Museums help the economy and add status to a city, and in other parts of the world or country, so it is not assumed to be a cultural desert.

What happens to one's perceptions, discernment and appreciation upon walking into the galleries face to face with authentic emotional, aesthetic and spiritual experience that good art offers to those who come with careful looking? Does the viewer become jaded confused and/or disoriented by stopping first to the shop where all that glitter and baubles entice?

Questions worth pondering as more and more museums are built with extensions and bigger wings.

Last but not least, who could afford what is seen on the Museum walls? Maybe gift shops afford the viewer a vicarious opportunity to own something from the museum because not many people could afford what's on the walls. There is however, plenty affordable Art made by local Chicago artists. Turning the museum shop into a gallery for Chicago or Midwestern artists would be a dynamic addendum to fill that space with affordable Art where hopefully the minds and hearts would be rewarded with original Art.

That would lessen the ever more apparent anomaly that visitors have more empathy for the kitsch in the shop that the works in the exhibition spaces.

As we work to bring back critical discourse to the Visual Arts, please share your thoughts and comments with us.

annie.markovich@newartexaminer.net

ARTS JOURNALISM IN A DIGITAL AGE

Conference Tackles Criticism and Connectivity, Fails to Address Ethics and Collusion

Tom Mullaney
US Editor at the Superscript conference

SuperScript
Arts Journalism and Criticism in a Digital Age

Widespread euphoria in the arts has prevailed in the last decade over the new possibilities offered by digital media. Writers no longer need be confined by the space limitations of, or access to, print media. The abundance of thoughts and images now available online exponentially expands the audience for art.

The digital realm is now what one observer has called "one big garden party" and the primary platform for publishing. The new ranks of untold commentators has hastened the demise of critical gatekeepers to guide the cultural conversation. Both Chicago dailies, along with many other papers nationwide, have sacked their art critics in recent years.

The 21st century has seen the construction of new museum buildings and arts facilities across America. Museums have embraced digital media as powerful fundraising and marketing tools to promote exhibitions, build membership, offer digital tours of the collection and reach a global audience.

What do these new trends signify as to how we think about and experience art? How do we measure the expanded boundaries of arts journalism? And does formal art criticism have a future or has it been permanently eclipsed?

The Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, known for its strong commitment to evolving modes of artistic production, convened a two-day conference in late May titled "SuperScript: Arts Journalism and Criticism in the Digital Age". The organizers did an outstanding job of assembling a top-notch cast of writers, critics and publishers in digital media to examine essential themes surrounding the topic.

When I entered the Walker's auditorium on the first morning, I found a wall-to-wall gathering of close to 300 attendees that I later determined were divided among digital journalists and bloggers (roughly half the audience), university art students and staff from schools and arts venues such as the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and

The 21st century has seen the construction of new museum buildings and arts facilities across America.

Chicago's Renaissance Society.

As the first day progressed, I grew to feel increasingly like a stranger in a strange land, not just a "legacy journalist" from the print realm but an older writer in a sea of men and women in their 20 to 40 prime.

I brought a different, older perspective than

most other attendees, whose knowledge, attitudes and working practices were shaped by the internet over the past 15 years at most.

I came to Minneapolis to focus on a theme of keen interest to the

New Art Examiner, the Midwest's most successful art publication between 1973 and 2002, and which I was now helping revive for a new era: the fate of art criticism and if serious exploration of art issues was possible online.

Several provocative addresses and panel discussions gave me hope.

I discovered fine digital art publications (Rhizome, Triple Canopy and Momus) that I hadn't been aware of which are plowing the same rich soil we intend to cultivate. Momus' editorial motto is "A Return to Art Criticism".

Orit Gat

The conference was less than a half-hour old when Orit Gat, a writer for Rhizome and many other art publications, defined the role of art criticism as keeping a check on the art market.

Auction houses and dealers are in the ascendant right now and viewed as our new cultural tastemakers (A disturbing new trend has major dealers curating museum shows). Gat said they are redefining and reducing cultural capital to purely monetary capital. Christie's reportedly spent $50 million building an e-commerce business online.

Real art criticism provides original content and a counter narrative to monetized culture. Gat spoke against service and crowd-source criticism. Service-oriented criticism simply offers recommendations while crowd-source criticism aggregates "Likes" on sites such as Yelp and Facebook.

She asked the audience "Has the web affected or changed art criticism"? Her answer: "Not yet but it definitely will". One such change is that ArtForum.com won't publish negative reviews.

Christopher Knight, art critic for the Los Angeles Times and the only panelist at the conference from "legacy media", made a comparative analogy between a ship and the dock. "The dock in this instance is print, old media, dead trees…the boat, of course, is digital, the internet and its proliferating social media formats."

"I write art criticism for one primary reason: I write in order to find out what it is I think and my job… is to find ways to bring the reader into that process." Knight noted that, if he knew what he thought before he sat down to write, "I would just be typing."

Christopher Knight

He characterized social media as "home to society's raging id and readers, as well as editors, are its restraining superego."

Many references were made throughout the two days of talks to "metrics", "traffic", "clicks" and "eyeballs", strategies that have hijacked more serious fare and drive a lot of what purports to be "journalism".

"Listicles", like "The 10 Greatest 20th Century Paintings", are the cheap cat video-equivalent of many art postings. They cater to readers' short attention spans, the desire for smart cocktail chatter and, importantly, boost viewer numbers on a site, leading to higher ad-revenue.

While one conference cannot tackle every topic, as an arts journalist who investigated of art world ethics and museum trustee malfeasance, I found it discouraging that the panel on "Credibility, Criticism and Collusion" failed to address "Collusion", clearly a threat in today's super-heated art market

Similarly, the panel on "Sustainability, Growth and Ethics" avoided the issue of ethics entirely. I suspect most young arts journalists prefer penning short, clickable posts or blogs besides being not well-versed in the ethical issues involved with art dealers and museums. Not the kind of news that drives traffic in the digital era.

Even more experienced writers tend to steer clear of addressing institutional power. A critic at the conference actually told me if would be professional suicide to expose questionable behavior for fear of retribution and denial of future cooperation.

Cultural critic Ayesha Siddiqi, editor of the online magazine, the New Inquiry, gave a provocative address on an important topic: DIY culture no longer being indie. She noted the recent internet moment began optimistically that encouraged millions to share their thoughts and start "Do It Yourself" projects, such as blogs or zines, on the web's infinite platform.

Yet, by using an app or service provider, she claimed, writers, the actual "content creators",

surrender ultimate control to their host platforms. They essentially work for free and help build value for powerful site owners like Twitter, Facebook and Tumbler.

The issue that got the audience very involved concerned properly compensating the content writers provide. Many audience members acknowledged that the free model dominates digital art sites. Payments, when made, fall in the $50 and $75 range.

"We (Writers) are increasingly mistaking visibility for power," Siddiyi asserted. Vekan Gueyikian, owner of Hyperallergic, the web's most successful arts publication, admitted paying $50 for short posts and only an average of $100 for longer articles.

Sky Goodden, editor of Momus, a fairly new online magazine, expressed shock at such paltry pay. She pays contributors $200 for articles and plans to soon increase writer fees to $300. I'll bet she offers the highest rates online.

When the conference ended, confusion still reigned. Attendees and contributors to the Walker's conference website expressed continued ambivalence on what their role or editorial stance should be.

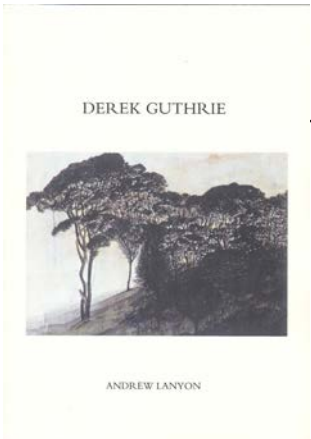
The question of whether arts journalism online was radically different from legacy journalism remained unanswered. A vital question: is "critical authority" possible in the digital cacophony of untold voices or is authority an outmoded concept?

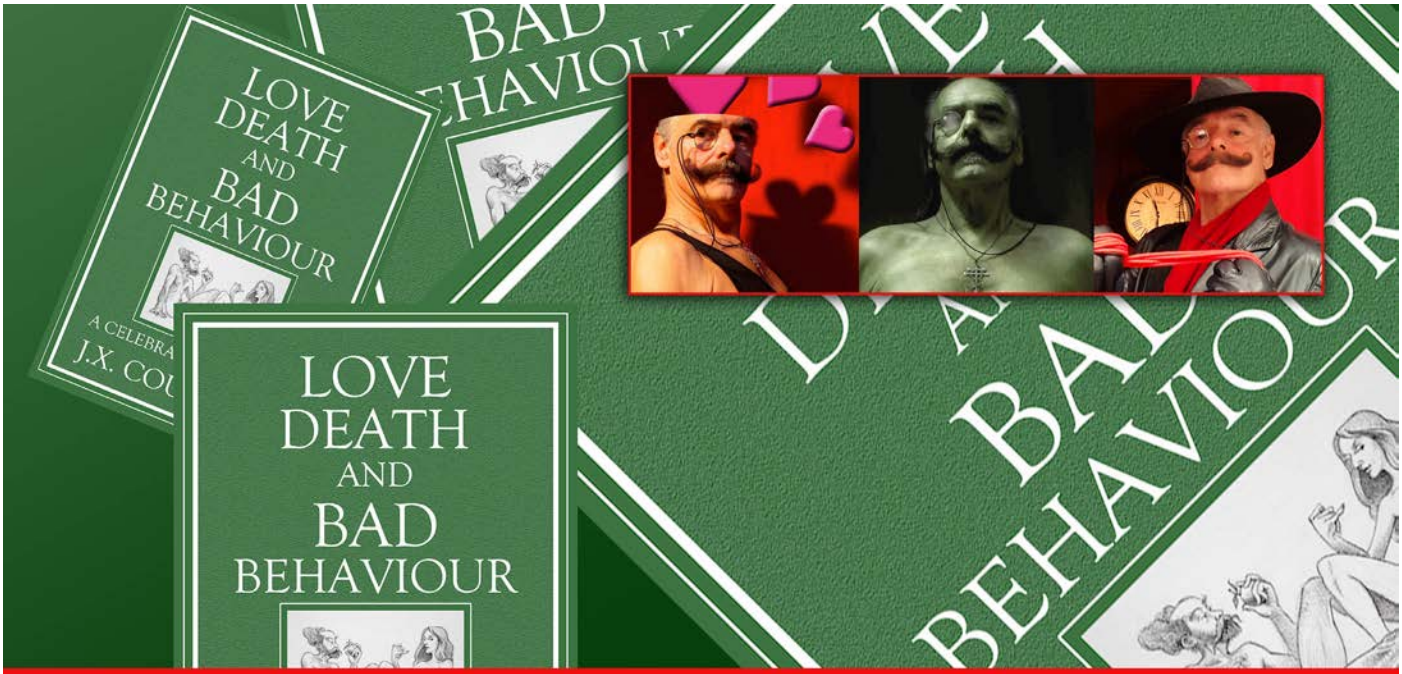
Definitive answers on the role and responsibility of online arts journalism proved hard to come by. Yet, the gathering had been valuable simply by bringing a digital tribe together to hash out important issues and give voice to often unarticulated thoughts.

My hope is that arts journalism doesn't ditch investigative reporting, clearly a missing commodity online, as a relic of old media. Arts journalists must remain "cultural first responders" who critique institutional power and expose misdeeds. There remain issues and abuses in the arts about which voices need to be raised and not overlooked due to fear of retribution. That would put true journalism into arts journalism.

Digital arts journalism is a young experiment that is still writing its own rulebook while creating new forms of storytelling and visual presentation. A future Superscript is needed at which these vital issues are aired, debated and held to account.

useditor@newartexaminer.net





LOVE DEATH AND, BAD BEHAVIOUR
A Celebration by Jonathon X. Coudrille

LOVE DEATH AND, BAD BEHAVIOUR http://footsteps.co/ldandbb
And, a Reading: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bs79vZlmOuM

STAFF

Derek Guthrie, Publisher and co-founder

Tom Mullaney, US Editor

Annie Markovich, US Managing Editor

Daniel Nanavati, UK Editor

Roland Gurney, West Cornwall Editor

WEBSITE: www.newartexaminer.net

UK Cartoons
John Dunbar Kilburn
Jonathon Xavier Coudrille

Distributor, Ingrams

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Would you like to write for
the New Art Examiner?

contributor@newartexaminer.net

UK Office:
Rosehill,
Altarnun,
Cornwall. PL15 7RL. UK.

US Office:
13213 S. Commercial Avenue,
Chicago,
Illinois 60633.USA.

Inquiries:
advert@newartexaminer.net
contributor@newartexaminer.net
subscribe@newartexaminer.net

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letters@newartexaminer.net

EDITORIAL

by
Daniel Nanavati

Adolph Gottlieb

"The role of artist has always been that of image-maker. Different times require different images. Today, when our aspirations have been reduced to a desperate attempt to escape from evil, and times are out of joint, our obsessive, subterranean and pictographic images are the expression of the neurosis which is our reality. To my mind certain so-called abstraction is not abstraction at all. On the contrary, it is the realism of our time." - Adolph Gottlieb

Sight is one of the earliest of our senses to be active. For much of our childhood images are explained for us. We come to call these explanations traditions.

The image is not always accurate. The brain works on a library of previous experience which is why we often recognize shapes in the misshapen – we delight in seeing shapes in clouds. We are, as has been said by others, inveterate pattern makers.

Interpretation comes along later with our conscious effort to 'think' about what we see. It is a fact that a huge amount of what is visually open to us is hidden – like looking into a forest - we only see the first line of trees not every tree at once. The world comes to us in bits and pieces and we assume the next bits to come to us will nonetheless, make sense and be consecutive to those we have already seen.

We have evolved, so we would expect our senses to have empathy with the rest of the natural world. An empathy, we now realise, that informs our instinctive ideas of aesthetics.

The brain is reaching for unifying standards in all visual images. The Theosophy of abstract artists since Hilma af Klint, regarded as the first pioneer artist of abstract art, set in place much activity of twentieth century painting, of which some worked and others did not. All dependent upon the individual taste of the artist. We have had the same size brains for 150 thousand years – it is unlikely our instinctive

– The Reality of Abstraction

aesthetics have changed in that time. Partly the reason Gottlieb's pictographs are highly iconized with primitive symbols. Kandinsky also appreciated the primitive. Abstract delights in the reduction of reality.

Adolph Gottlieb,
Pictograph-Symbol
Oil on canvas. 1942

But Gottlieb's mention of 'neurosis', a word unused before modern times, could be a key to understanding Modern Abstract Art. Perhaps even the whole of Modern Art. We are, all of us, as all before, trapped in history. We cannot forget in Europe and across the world millions of men and women were slaughtered in two world wars, mighty revolutions and genocidal nationalism. We have only sketchy information on those artists who died young. Repeating the ravages of history from the ancient world until today. It doesn't matter – the art world has been dictated by those who survived one way or another but when we look back at Greek and Roman history we know some of the names we do not have, some of the works we do not have. History will always ask the question of the twentieth century and we need the courage to meet it – we may have many in the canon who would have been second or third tier had others survived.

When history looks and finds so few and casts aside those we have held high and wonders what might have been, we can anticipate the same. We do so on the basis that 'anything can be art' (a twentieth century proposition only) is obviously a philosophy of convenience. It is not true. The videos of the dead being bulldozed into mass graves in Auschwitz is not, and never could be, an art video but certainly a documentary. Not everything can be or is, art. But everything can be sold.

Much post-1914 abstract art could be categorised as self-medicating in the same way Ted Hughes writings are for his black depression. It is not unusual for academics to use words to self-medicate in this way. Artists have also done the same. Rothko, whose demons and the greed of the New York art system killed him, and were no comfort to Jackson Pollock.

The abstract is brilliant at this for it can be anything. It can be the art of those who cannot draw. It can be the art for those who do not want to be reminded of the world or remind the viewer of anything but the pure sense of art unfettered from the horror of history. Except that is a delusion. As Gottlieb says “our aspirations have been reduced to a desperate attempt to escape from evil.” Truly 'different times' but one which gave everyone the excuse to be artists. We are all artistic. We are not all artists.

Abstraction was the only place for many artists after 1914 to go in the face of industrialized warfare. It is our aesthetic looking for an explanation as to why butchery springs out of us. Why nationalism speaks so strongly to us. Why war is our most ardent child. It is an endless series of experiments towards the unrealized art work.

It has become a cowards way out.

Daniel Nanavati studied Theology and Philosophy at Balliol College Oxford. He is the son of the poet Shänne Sands. He is a writer and publisher based in Cornwall, UK.

dhn@newartexaminer.net

A Visit to the

Jonathan Ball, MBE., is the co-founder of The Eden Project Cornwall. 19 years ago the Eden project was Britain's exhibit at the Venice Architectural Biennale.

The first Venice Biennale took place in 1895 and 120 years later prospers as the oldest and probably most famous of the many international gatherings for contemporary art and architecture.

This year's Biennale opened on Friday 8th May in the Giardini Gardens, a gentle stroll alongside the lagoon beyond the famous Piazza San Marco described by Napoleon as 'Europe's sitting room'. This parkland setting is home to some 30 national pavilions, the oldest of which is the British Pavilion, acquired in 1909. It is on the highest ground but still only a few metres above sea level and is built on the remains of the Campanile di San Marco which collapsed spectacularly at the turn of the 20th century.

You need only to know that Tiepolo was born nearby and Vivaldi lived just around the corner for your spirits to soar. This was only my second visit to Venice and the Biennale, my first being 19 years ago when I attended the VI Venice Architecture Biennale when the Eden Project represented Great Britain. I attended as client and Project Co-founder

It is this cultural, aquatic spaghetti junction where art, architecture and music intermingle and collide that is its very raison d'être, and provides compulsion and longevity to the Biennale.

I headed first to the British Pavilion and to the much publicised Sarah Lucas exhibition, I SCREAM DADDIO. Always lauded in the second tier of the YBA, enlightenment is in short supply for the casual observer. I am not sure what sort of metaphor are lower torsos with cigarettes strategically protruding from orifices - wacky baccy perhaps? I loved the custard yellow of the Pavilion but I was left wondering about intellectual and historical foundations and whether the long gone Campanile was not the only thing at risk of coming tumbling down. Is truth a casualty to celebrity in these times? Surely the British exhibit answers the question of where we

Venice Art Biennale 2015

Jiang Heng Highways to Hell

are in the world. But what is this saying of us? Is it a smoker's protest to the puritan politics of our times? Is it saying the internet has now made pornography so inescapable we had better get used to ubiquitous, naked titillation?

Perhaps it is indeed symptomatic of a Britain all at sea in its identity, afloat in uncertainty of whether we are inside or outside Europe and whether, indeed, the Kingdom is to remain United.

This exhibition belongs to a time that has long gone when shock, not skill, was all the rage.

Some forty years before the first Biennale in 1895, John Ruskin produced his masterpiece The Stones of Venice and it remains Venice's Bible for architects. A handsome city where the hand of God has given so much and this is so beautifully captured by Ruskin's draughtsmanship, prose and poetry, and commentary on decay and departed decadence. On this visit I took with me the newly published Ruskin's Venice, The Stones Revisited by Sarah Quill and this volume was close at hand throughout my stay as an aid to context and awareness.

Waking up the first morning in Venice is an experience like no other. A tolling Campanile greets the day, its call discordant. My bedroom window on Venice's world is a top floor Grand Canal bird's eye view. To my left the Rialto Bridge and immediately below and to my right are thirty parked up gondolas in serried ranks all sheathed in blue canvas covers, save one, a camping green. One anchor pole to bow, and one to stern takes a single turn of painter through the night. The first gondolier is unwrapping his day. First the stern section of the two separate canvas pieces is rolled back with cat like tread that would have seen you or I tumbling into the Canal Grande. The bigger bow canvas follows, is folded and stowed, the glitter and gilt of the midships seat catches the morning sun. The paddle, the seats and the velvet cushions all assume their place.

And so as the fishmonger's day in the market on the opposite side of the canal nears its end of labour with shadows shortening to the rising sun, the gondolier's glorious, profitable, operatic day is about to begin.

The pantile topped canal side façades display such genteel distress above and who knows what below the waterline. But what enclosure, what space to co-inhabit what perfect equilibrium of nature and man; this is the Venetian alchemy and why it has enjoyed its must-see status down the ages.

This tolling dawn bell implores, why waste a moment, it says. There is so much to see.

The thirty or so exhibits in the Biennale Gardens are but a small part of what Venice has to offer during the exhibition. All Expos have journeyed from the Great

Exhibition of 1851 in London capturing the spirit of each age. Here in Venice evidence abounds of the ever more intrusive technology in our lives. Vast cruise liners ply their invasive lagoon pathways daily, incongruous in their scale and disturbing in their commerce. They cast monstrous shadows, metaphorical and physical in their late afternoon passage, obscuring western sun.

Our Biennale opening night has us accepting an invitation at La Galleria-Venezia, a mere canal's width away from La Fenice. We attend a celebration of 35 years Gallery ownership by Dr Dorothea van der Koelen in Mainz, Germany with her playing a major part in the Biennale these past 10 years. According to Philip Rylands, Director of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, this is the best international gallery of Venice. The theme is Towards the Future. This holds much synergy for me as our Eden architecture exhibit of 19 years ago came under the theme of Sensing the Future. Alas our German is not sufficient to keep up with the introduction. Lore Bert's PERSONAL STRUCTURES – Crossing Borders, exhibition is comfortable and thought provoking.

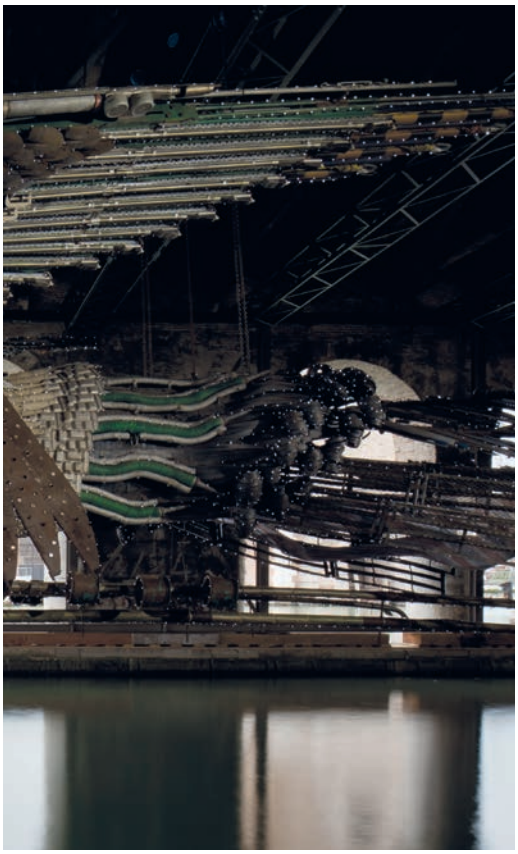
Other exhibitions leave you far outside your comfort zone. Beneath our top floor hotel rooms in the Palazzo Michiel Chinese artist Jiang Heng has set out with the intention of taking you, the observer, on a journey through the collapse of moral values in contemporary Chinese society, entitled Highway to Hell. I doubt there could be a more discordant presentation in the hallowed Piano Nobile in gentle distress at first floor level. The extravagant mouldings and painted ceilings, the exquisite proportions, the charming balcony projecting over the canal will surely never have accommodated such confrontation to well being.

Xu Bing, Phoenix-2015

The intention is to chart China's rapid evolution from poor isolated nation into one of the world's pre-eminent market powers but how this does not lead to happiness. Any fast moving market economy transforms habits and living standards, but with this comes a revolution in the desires and morals of a generation.

By the time you have traversed the landscape of pills that greet you as you enter and move through to the colourful but disturbing skulls and skeletons signifying the fragility and insignificance of life you are in desperate need of sunshine, fresh air and the restorative majesty of returning to the comfortable Grand Canal immediately beyond the skulls.

Between pill and skull I have passed the single most challenging exhibit of my Biennale week. It is called Device, a bare tree that is shedding Chinese-sub-brands of Barbi dolls instead of autumn leaves. The exhibition catalogue explains these dolls dispersed on all of the floor become corpses sacrificed to the idea of female beauty and its commodification promoted by the media in the West. I do not want to dally here. I want to move



on quickly, but I cannot. It is a narrow point in the exhibition which is enjoying substantial footfall. Barbi corpses crunch beneath straying feet as pedestrian flow makes you barge and sway. Reaction to what you see detaches you from the normal courtesies of passing fellow man when in a crowded hurry. For me this is almost paedophilia. Jaing Heng's future is scary.

We move on to Salute and to what I find is the most memorable and most enjoyable exhibition in the Biennale. It is entitled Expo '67 Fragments: Alexander Calder and Emilio Vedova and is held in the Magazzino del Sale and Spazio Vedova. From Highway to Hell to Stroll down Memory Lane.

I was there in 1967 in Montreal, Canada and Cornwall's Eden Project genesis and homage to Richard Buckminster Fuller started there. The explanatory notes to the exhibition by Germano Celant are erudite and comprehensive. They bring back so many vivid recollections, not least the spectacular stabile by Alexander Calder of 'Man' on the island of Sainte-Hélène a centrepiece of the World Expo. Man stood on a concrete plinth 20 metres high and weighing in at 46 tons. Here fragments have been gathered of this Expo of 48 years ago where Emilio Vedova represented Italian artists in Canada. Small scale models bearing witness to Calder's working methods, one of Calder's kinetic mobiles and a film of his working methods are a magnet.

But an architect will always put architecture first. The Magazzino del Sale by renowned architect Renzo Piano is the most inspiring contemporary space visited in the week. The gallery slopes upwards to the most extraordinary piece of technology, an automated handling and storage system for works of art. This is a unique arrangement. The storage facility, a piece of art in itself, is a rack system with the capacity for 30 works of art. A retrieval machine is used to deposit and retrieve works of art with automation managed by microprocessor. I stand mesmerised. An elderly art collector is escorted up to close by where I am standing and she sits in isolated splendour on an Alvar Aalto birch stacking stool. The whirring noises produce large canvases for her review and consideration.

Here we have a new dimension to the words ' private view', The leading edge technology of our time combines with inspiring space created by the leading Italian architect of our age with a collector sitting on an Alvar Aalto stool - so timeless in its design.

Is truth a casualty to celebrity in these times?

Surely in any visit to Venice, the last word belongs to John Ruskin who coined the phrase 'modern painters':

'It requires a strong effort of common sense to shake ourselves quit of all that we have been taught for the last two centuries, and wake to the perception of a truth just as simple and certain as it is new: that great art, whether expressing itself in words, colours, or stones, does not say the same thing over and over again; that the merit of architectural, as of every other art, consists in its saying new and different things; that to repeat itself is no more a characteristic of genius in marble than it is of genius in print; and that we may, without offending any laws of good taste, require of an architect, as we do of a novelist, that he should be not only correct, but entertaining. '

Amen to that.

Jonathan Ball was awarded an MBE in 1992 for services to architecture.

Shay Culligan

Each issue the New Art Examiner will invite a well-known, or not-so-well-known, art world personality to write a speak-easy essay on a topic of interest - whatever it may be

Having dedicated my entire life from age 2 to the visual arts, I now feel that much of that life has been wasted, because my personal fortunes—like those of most artists—are at the mercy of the elite stewards entrusted with steering the fine art world, and they are a sorry lot indeed.

In November of 2012 the New York art gallery/museum elite came out in force to honor glamorous Russian socialite Dasha Zhukova who was awarded the *Independent Curators International* group's prestigious "Leo" Castelli curator award, for the flimsy reason of bringing contemporary art (inoffensively uncritical of power structures) to the Russian Federation. Zhukova is the wife of controversial Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich, a Vladimir Putin-compliant oligarch currently based in London. Zhukova's father is the lesser oligarch Alexander Zhukov, former Communist Party elite, accused arms dealer, and also closely connected to Putin. With help from her husband Zhukova opened the Garage Art Centre in Moscow, her stated goal being to "raise the profile of Russian Contemporary Culture internationally." But the silence from Zhukova was deafening about one infamous cultural event that occurred in Russia that same year. When all-girl Russian punk band Pussy Riot committed the grave sin of publicly embarrassing Putin—with their punk prayer performance at Moscow's largest Orthodox cathedral—a show trial convened in August during which 2 band members were given custodial sentences. But Zhukova made no public statements about this Russian Contemporary Culture issue. Being a Putin-connected gallery owner in Moscow effectively renders Zhukova a censor of dissident art, as none of her curated exhibitions feature art that is remotely critical of Putin. Guilt by association may not be a crime here in America, but maintaining a conspiracy of silence with an oppressive police state should be construed as being complicit in censorship, ruling one out of the running for prestigious awards here in the democratic west.

But it seems that pandering to autocratic regimes does not have negative consequences for those wishing to mingle among New York's gilded elites, because awards are no longer earned for accomplishment, but rather upon the basis of whom one knows?

While this game is still in play, many struggling artists here in America feel abandoned

Given Zhukova's access to near limitless funds, her accomplishments should be considered mediocre. Asked in an interview (by Robert Frank at the Wall Street Journal) who her favorite visual artists were, Zhukova was unable to remember any names, and still she was invited to sit on the board of trustees of LACMA (Los Angeles County Museum of Art). Zhukova's qualifications for this position are laughable, even if one considers her substantial financial resources.

Zhukova and Abramovich have sought to purchase respectability in the West via the fine art world. The ICI event of November 19th, 2012 must be seen for what it was: an attempt by speculative gallery and museum curators to ingratiate themselves with Abramovich's tainted wealth. His vast fortune—estimated by Forbes at $9.1 billion—was accumulated under the dubious circumstances of Russia's lawless mid-1990s, when Soviet state assets were sold off at knockdown prices to closely connected Kremlin insiders. Abramovich's conspicuous propensity for ostentatious yachts, private jets, priceless works of art, and his high-spending ownership of Chelsea Soccer Club were judged by many as distastefully extravagant during the recent era of austerity. The ICI's pursuit of Abramovich's favor should be accompanied by critical scrutiny as to the source of his vast wealth.

While this game is still in play, many struggling artists here in America feel abandoned by the hegemony that is the top-heavy art-dealing elite who preside over an unregulated industry where the reputations of a select few artists (usually mediocre)

are manufactured and inflated for maximum profit. In the art world success is rarely determined by the quality of the art, but rather by the influence of the artist's connections, enhanced by hype and spin. The ICI's time and resources would be better spent addressing the inequities of the art world by enabling struggling artists, instead of sucking up to the wealthy friends of dictators. I unsuccessfully lobbied the ICI to withdraw the Leo award from Zhukova for refusing to speak out against the Pussy Riot imprisonment.

The corporate news media must also be exposed for failing to highlight the ICI charade, despite my constant urging. But my greatest disgust is reserved for the establishment New York Times for refusing to print my op-ed (from which this current text is derived) not wishing to jeopardize their shrinking revenue sources I'm sure.

The shameless behavior by the beautiful people of NYC's art gallery/museum elite was mirrored by the non-coverage in our corporate news media. Two brave young ladies rotting in Russian penal colonies also revealed the stark contrast between the consequences of running afoul of Putin and the benefits of being a close family friend and associate of the brutal Russian dictator, as Zhukova well knows.

Shay Culligan is a graduate of Boston's Massachusetts College of Art, and has exhibited widely as a painter and photographer. Shay is an outspoken critic of the fine art establishment and its elite dealership culture which he claims peddles overrated mediocrity for vast sums at the expense of 99% of visual artists. Genetically incapable of pandering to any form of unjust establishment, Shay thrives in his role as an outsider artist, which he claims ultimately to be the essence of visual creativity.

Do you have something to say?
Write to the editor.

letters@newartexaminer.net

CAN YOU HELP?

Janet Koplos has recently been awarded an Andy Warhol Grant to research the history of the New Art Examiner. She is looking for original material dealing with the Examiner - letters, journal / diary entries, photographs and the like from 1973 to 2002.

Contact:
janetkoplos@gmail.com
or by snail mail at:
987 Como Blvd. E.,
St. Paul,
MN 55103.

The Tate St.Ives Interview

On 30th June 2015 Sam Thorne, (ST) Artistic Director of the Tate, St Ives, interviewed Derek Guthrie (DG), Publisher, NAE, in the off site Tate St Ives offices at The Old Sail Lofts.

In these convivial surroundings near the harbour in St Ives, the two men talked about Derek's life and career, the chances that led into publishing the New Art Examiner, his broad philosophy of the visual arts, how age has found him accidentally 'walking history', and his hopes that a renewed Examiner will continue to champion independent thought long into the future.

ST: I am the artistic director here at the Tate, St. Ives and I teach critical writing at the Royal College, founder of Urban School East, free to attend which I founded two years ago and I'm a contributing editor of Freeze as well. Joined by Derek Guthrie, artist, publisher, critic, any of those things, how do you identify?

DG: Co-founder of the NAE. And I'm a secret artist, I don't exhibit. And I occasionally write but I'm more of a backroom person rather than an outfront person. Its nearer my nature, but I've acquired a reputation over the years.

ST: So behind the scenes, co-founder of the NAE. Maybe we can talk about reputations.

DG: Okey.

ST: So, I'm curious what was your first connection with St. Ives was . Because as I understand it, you didn't grow up around here.

DG: I came down here when I was about 18.5, thereabouts, I was student at the West of England College of Art and we had a sketch club exhibition which was work done outside of the college and Peter Lanyon was at that time at Corsham Court (Bath Academy of Art) and I got the prize.

ST: So when would this have been?

DG: Approximately 1956. I was a very nervous and timid child and it went to my…it fired me up so to speak. I came down here and of course, we heard about St. Ives.

ST: What did you know about St. Ives at that point? What did it mean?

DG: Well artists lived down there and Peter Lanyon spoke about it and one of our faculty was coming down here all the time and you would have known him by name a guy named Paul Filer. So it was a sort of an exotic remote place.

ST: And were you aware of Lanyon's work before you met him when you were… ?

DG: No.

ST: No. That's interesting And so you came down here after winning this prize.

DG: Well, just to have a look, I only came to visit.

ST: And what did you find?

DG: Well, I found a very beautiful place. And I went up to Man's Head and I felt the world or the sea and it had a profound effect upon me. I felt so moved by this I decided on this as sort of home. I couldn't live here at the time but it became my touchstone so I kind of made a series of return visits one way or the other.

ST: Where were you living at that time?

DG: Bristol.

ST: And so did it ever become a full time home?

DG: Oh yes, a few years later.

ST: What did you do in between?

DG: I dropped out of Art school and I went to Paris. And you can see some of this in a long interview in Art Cornwall. And I lived in 9 Rue Gît-le-Coeur.

ST: Famous address.

DG: Oh yeah, next door to William Burroughs.

ST: Was Brian Guyson there at that moment?

DG: No, I was very young and naïve. And just took in stuff. But I was painting memories of St. Ives.

ST: So you were in Paris, living next door to the Beats but you were painting St. Ives. And what kind of style of paintings were you making at the time?

DG: I think my first trip to London as an art student I went to Whitechapel and saw an exhibition which really resonated with me. DeStael, and so west of England is very conservative and I learned many lessons but I didn't understand them until years later. It planted in me a dissatisfaction for art education. Anyway DeStael go through to me and the west of England was all Slade and Post Sickert and you had all these middle aged faculty and of course the reasons people were appointed to be inside the tradition of the place and I remember asking them about Picasso and they couldn't talk about Picasso because they had rejected Picasso. So that was the beginning of awareness and I just fumbled my way through from thereon.

ST: Did you see in London at that time any other important exhibitions? I'm thinking of This is Tomorrow at the Whitechapel or the American painting show that was at the Tate?

DG: Yeah I saw that. I didn't see This is Tomorrow but I got to be very familiar with it because I followed what was going on. And I was certainly aware one way or the other of all the discourse.

ST: How were you following things? Through magazines or publications?

DG: Publications and talking to other people.

ST: Do you recall what kinds of magazines you were looking at the time?

DG: There was Studio International and that was like a major place. Yeah and Apollo with pieces in the back. I can't remember the names of others.

ST: So you were in Paris for awhile and then you moved here in a more full time capacity.

DG: Actually, I took a quick trip to Ibiza. That was before there was an airport.

ST: Oh really? How did you get to Ibiza?

DG: Hitchhiked.

ST: And why was that? What took you there?

DG: Well, this was one of these places where writers and painters were going. It was a sort of underground.

ST: Walter Benjamin spent a lot of time there.
And so you were in Ibiza for some time and then you moved to St. Ives.

DG: No I went back to London.

ST: And when was this?

DG: I moved to the Portobello Road. When the race riots broke out. I was on the corner, and then I got down to St. Ives. And I lived here for three years.

ST: What years?

DG: I can't remember exactly.

ST: Maybe around 1960.

DG: Yeah I guess. And then I moved to Newlyn.

ST: Why was that?

DG: Because I could see St. Ives was dying.

ST: Were things going on in Newlyn at that time?

DG: Well, Newlyn wasn't inundated with the tourist trade. And I could see it was the beginning of a paralysis. Exactly what was going to happen I cold see in the early days. I didn't want to deal with it. It got too ugly.

ST: Why did you stay so close? You wanted to stay in West Cornwall?

DG: I wanted to stay in West Cornwall

ST: And what was it that was keeping you?

DG: It was home for me, it was my identity.

ST: What artists were you talking to at that time?

DG: I was talking to all of them.

ST: Who would that have been?

DG: All the St. Ives school. I think I got to be a member of Penwith which was also very interesting. I think I might have been the youngest member. And that was a great education.

ST: Education in what sense?

DG: I learned about how people spoke about Art. And I learned how people behaved in the Art world.

ST: What kind of work was being exhibited at the Penwith at that time?

DG: All the normal stuff.

ST: Because Penwith had been running for a dozen years. It would have been after Nicholson had left.

DG: Hepworth was around.

ST: Was she still involved? I thought she left the society at that point.

DG: Well there was trouble she left and she came back three months later. By accident I'm a little bit of walking history actually.
A fight started, well, I remember Penwith when it was on 4th Street and then they purchased their present location. And everybody used to send in but the big boys gradually dropped out for diverse reasons as the gossip goes. Peter Lanyon was the power behind the throne in Newlyn. There were only two places to exhibit in Newlyn, or Penwith. But there was a different tradition and history that was operative there.

ST: I suppose I'm more aware of the history of St. Ives, but what were you encountering when you were in Newlyn? How was the work different?

DG: You had the residue of the old time figurative painters. And figurative art didn't get much of a look at Penwith. It was really not trendy. I learned about Art world fashion and how it gets into people's heads. And how they find, initially, themselves one way and the other. It was my graduate school. But without anybody giving degrees.

ST: What was your niche? What niche did you find?

DG: I was a figurative artist and I never embraced total abstraction. That was the big fight that was going on, everything, whether it was abstract or not. An non figurative art, did it start as figurative or did it start as abstract? The ideology was flying like mad everywhere. So those were the options that were in the air.

ST: To what degree at that point were you influenced by American critics, I mean Greenberg of Rosenberg, the formalist critics?

DG: No I wasn't aware of them at that time. It was in St. Ives again on the ground that I learned that criticism was important. And I very very quickly learnt there are two kinds of people in the Art world: there were people who read criticism and there were those that did not. And that lesson stayed with me my whole life. And that did me very well years later when I fell into being a critic by accident in publishing. That taught me that lesson. I learned in St. Ives you've got to have words with you if you want to be a professional artist.

ST: Did you in terms of, say, visitors who were coming to Newlyn and St. Ives that period, of course there were a number of famous international people who came through – were you aware that there was a steady traffic of, say, critics.

DG: Sure, you had to be in the right circles and invited to the parties. I was a fringe kid.

ST: Was that deliberate?

DG: No.

ST: You wanted to be at the parties?

DG: No, I didn't want to be. But I would have given anything to have been invited. But some artists were infinitely more accessible than others. And that was to do with personality. I remember a hilarious time its when Antony Armstrong Jones, Lord Snowdon make his famous book. Have you seen it?

ST: Yes, I have.

DG: Well, everybody went beserk over this, I mean you would have thought Obama was visiting or something it was just like madness, and the games that people used to play. Certain people were abroad and they flew back to be around Anthony Armstrong Jones. I learnt this whole business by being a very acute observer. Now I was making up my own mind about Art and I wasn't rushing to arrive anywhere. I was much more interested in finding *my* steps. And that's what I held onto.

ST: Were you exhibiting at the time?

DG: I got a show in the Portland Gallery which is a very small gallery just off Bond Street. And they showed naïve artists, that was their stock and trade. And they took me on, by the time I was 24 I had three sellout shows. But, again, my learning experience at the Portal as an exhibiting artist opened up so much awareness. By that time the Pop Art thing had started and I knew St. Ives was dead. There's this famous movie, called, Pop Goes the Easel by Ken Russell and when that came on television, that was it.

ST: When was that?

DG: I don't know. But I knew that was the end of St. Ives. Now I had shows and I was hanging out a little bit in London but I saw the effect of that, and oh, Laurence Alloway was another one that we used to read. And of course, the daily papers were much more into criticism then than they are now. They were a vital source of information and the Sunday supplements had just started, the colored supplements. So I learned a lot by being in London and being a 5 minute wonder.

ST: How was it for you to be showing at the Portal Gallery which was exhibiting naïve artists? First of all, how did you feel to be in that kind of context but then.

DG: I didn't care because I wasn't going to go anywhere in St. Ives because the orthodoxy precluded me. The orthodoxy was so deeply rooted. And of course, you had innumerable hangers on and people who would join in so there was no way, I could, I remember right now a funny incident. I came back from London and I was very pleased with myself cause I made the Times and the Telegraph and all that kind of stuff and St. Ives was slightly fashionable. And everybody I knew at the Castle Inn got up and sat at another table. And I said, what's up, what's up? And they said, we don't talk to chocolate box painters.

ST: Chocolate box painter?

DG: That was the ultimate thing you could say about a figurative artist. And the Penwith Society had this situation of electing members every year or so, I remember when they kicked off Dod Proctor, who was a fine leftover Edwardian painter but all the young Turks regarded it as obsolete. So this is when I learnt a kind of trendy prejudice.

ST: Sure, I don't know what kind of work you were making at the time but if you were showing in a gallery that was focused on naive Art, I imagine your work was some way away from chocolate box painting.

DG: No they weren't chocolate box painting, they were no where near chocolate box painting.

ST: So what were they?

DG: They were sort of , I like looking at things and I got my inspiration but they look, kind of slightly abstracted. It was an abstraction of what the eye saw. I was interested in the process of abstraction. Not in the process of composing to see what you found out. It was more a voyage of discovery and by this time I'd given up the thick paint which I did before.

ST: Were you looking to New York at all at this point?

DG: No.

ST: So what kind of Pop were you looking at?

DG: There was one show and they had a few but the big thing was I got to know Peter Blake slightly, when I was showing in the Portal. And Peter was a kind of strange one off. Though he got incorporated into the Pop movement he was Pre-Pop and he was doing his own thing in kind of eccentric way. But he was like a prophet. So it all caught up and absorbed him. He also visited St. Ives at that time. He did a great painting of a boy eating a hotdog on Rednagh Hill.

ST: He was here for a little while wasn't he?

DG: And Joe Tilson as well, they were mates. They talked to me and I learnt a lot from them. It was all kind of informal, I mean the scene was much smaller then and artists were much more important then than they are now. Cause what artists thought was much more important. And you didn't have the whole market PR machinery that has grown out of the Art world.

ST: Then what happened to you next you were in this position of relatively young, you were exhibiting.

DG: I lived down here for six year, I had to leave Cornwall, I didn't want to, I had a wife at that time who was desperately unhappy. So I went to London to try and look after that situation. Shortly afterwards, I got a Commonwealth Scholarship and I went to India.

ST: Okey.

DG: That was such a fantastic experience.

ST: What does a Commonwealth Scholarship involve exactly?

It s like having Residency with money for two years. I was attached to Baroda University which is one of the modern campuses in India.

ST: That must have been incredibly exciting.

DG: Now understand I got to know Bernard Leach in Penwith. He took a shine to me, we used to talk a lot. And I wasn't a Potter and he said a lot of stuff that I couldn't remember, I didn't know what it really meant. I learnt what it meant years later and I learned a lot from Leach.

ST: What kinds of things?

DG: Just aesthetics.

ST: Did that have a particular resonance for you when you went to India?

DG: Not exactly, I mean I learned one lesson in India. Which is a simple lesson, I learnt that I didn't know what I didn't know.

ST: You found peace?

DG: No. I learned to deal with a cultural vacuum, which in a way joined up with my own personal vacuum.

ST: Did that have an effect on your work?

DG: Not particularly. I felt better about my work at this time because figurative Art had returned on the scene and it wasn't deemed obsolete. I was in no way fired by the concerns of the figurative artists.

ST: Who you have in mind here, people like Hockney?

DG: Yes, Allen Jones and the guy who did the large glass?

ST: Richard Hamilton.

DG: I was aware of all the talk that was going on. I read Orwell's essays on comics. Have you read that?

ST: I don't think I have.

DG: It's a very important essay. Very English and anticipated their concerns by a long time.

ST: I just remembered you mentioned Alloway, he actually mentioned in one essay that Francis Bacon was the first ever Pop artist. He said the first ever Pop was made in 1949 by Francis Bacon.

DG: There was all this talk Hamilton and Reyner Banham and others who I don't know were trying to form an intellectual analysis of Pop. They had it worked out in various ways. Now Alloway was a bit in your face as a personality and he had a huge chip on his shoulder.

ST: Chip about what?

DG: Class, which he was quite happy to tell you in a very short time. Now I think he invented the word Pop in the English context, I'm not sure about that.

ST: Its sometimes said its Hamilton.

DG: But Hamilton, they were talking about popular Art. I think it's a kind of trendy word, it might have been Alloway. I'm not sure but if I looked at it the Royal College the Young Contemporaries. And the Young Contemporary show was a big deal then because everybody went there to see what the students, what the new trends were.

ST: And that was being shown at the ICA at that point?

DG: I think so but other places. There was one more and it came from the kids in the Royal College and Hockney was a major part of that. Do you know how that came about?

ST: How Hockney?

DG: ... and the others got into that?

ST: No

DG: This is a very interesting historical that few people know. Kitaj got a English speaking scholarship and he went to the Ruskin which was traditional and not exciting and he changed to the Royal College. He was a figurative painter. Now Americans were like gods in those days. And here was this red bearded guy, straightforward American in the Royal College and he did two figurative paintings. Now all those guys, Hockney was doing abstract at that time. That gave them confidence to get into Pop. There were two paintings that were key in this and they were in the Evergreen Review which was a hippie Magazine out of San Francisco and one was 'The Last Confederate' and the other was 'Washington Crossing the Delaware'. This tipped them over into reviving Dan Dale out of their memories. The other thing was the 1944 Education Act which meant that the working class boys suddenly dominated the Slade and the Royal College and Bloomsbury culture died at that point.

ST: You mentioned Reyner Banham as well. Banham was fixated on Los Angeles in the 60's.

DG: That was the vernacular Hollywood architecture. I remember as a little boy looking a photography albums, like early editions of National Geographic, you would open up to America and they would have pages and pages of photographs of all the funny signs they would have or drive-ins that looked like a beer bottle, Disney architecture which was commercial architecture. I was aware of that as being a very American thing. Now the people who were a bit younger than me which was the generation on, got to be more aware of it. That's how California through Pop, through America - so that was how it leached into the culture.

ST: What took you to America? We're skipping forward a bit.

DG: No I came back and I was here and by this time London had changed. And nobody cared about Paris any more.

ST: This was the mid 60's.

DG: I went to America in 1969, the year after the Democratic riots and I had been coming back from India for about a year and a half. I chose to go to Chicago because by this time having lived in India and having lived in Paris and living here I kinda had an acute awareness that the culture of a country is largely defined by the metropolitan center. But in a way always metropolitan centers always had an international outlook. Because they related to other centers whereas the regions didn't. I didn't want to go to California. So Chicago seemed a good place.

ST: What did you know about Chicago at that time?

DG: Just that it was Second City. I didn't go there for the culture, I thought I would go there for awhile, get used to America and then make my way to New York. I didn't want to go straight into New York.

ST: It was a kind of stepping stone.

DG: It was a stepping stone that never happened. I never lived in New York although I spent a lot of time there.

ST: Did you know people in Chicago or did you just turn up?

DG: No I just turned up. I got a teaching job. What happened was, you see I didn't have a degree but I had a young man's confidence I wouldn't have now. So I went to Chicago on a charter flight and I checked into the hostel at the University of Chicago. And I knocked on every door in Chicago asking people for a job. And what I could sell was me and my history

and somebody gave me a job in the evening divisions and that guaranteed my return to Chicago.

ST: Where were you teaching?

DG: On the southside, an irrelevant place.

ST: Okey, so you were teaching Art?

DG: Yeah, it didn't matter.

ST: Who were you teaching? What kind of age group?

DG:

The kids were the dregs of Chicago. They were ¾ black and the others were rejects from the Catholic School System so it was very, very basic but it was a wonderful experience of falling into the downtrodden in America.

ST: What did they make of you as this Englishman who had been living in Indian and Paris?

DG: Someone crazy. So exotic you wouldn't believe it. It was all fantasy.

ST: **A**nd so how long were you doing that for?

DG: Couple of years.

ST: And what happened after that?

DG: I met my future wife, a woman called Jane Addams Allen. And she was the great grandniece of Jane Addams. I don't know if you know anything about Jane Addams.

ST: Oh, she...education reformer... Hull House.

DG: She was one of the great activists who founded Hull House. And a great admirer of John Ruskin. And Jane was from that family. And I fell into a very rich aspect of American culture, I was so fortunate and it was a chemistry made in heaven. And we got to be art critics for the Chicago Tribune by accident. And we were not towing the party line.

ST: What was the party line?

DG: Hairy Who?, They were alright but they weren't the greatest thing since sliced bread. Chicago is a very repressive city. Its very team minded. And its quasi fascist.

ST: In what sense, quasi fascist?

DG: You can't buck City Hall. The social divisions in Chicago are so absolute.

ST: How were you encountering that as an art critic?

DG: Because the nouveau riche opened their own Art Museum, which is called the Museum of Contemporary Art. And that was on an ethnic basis. Because it was alleged that the Art Institute was anti-semitic.

ST: Oh really? Huh.

DG: Now whether it be true or not I don't know. But it was a great indication of how you still have in Chicago that kind of precinct thinking which is defined by ethnic heritage. And Daley kept his position as the overlord by knowing this better than anyone else.

ST: Were you, how were you making a living at this point? You stopped teaching, you were working...

DG: I stopped teaching, there was no living from being a stringer for a newspaper.

ST: Even then?

DG: No.

ST: That's good to hear.

DG: Why?

ST: Because I think it gets slightly romanticized that in the 60's and 70's it was possible to make a living from that.

DG: Oh, people are very romantic. People have a great tendency to be romantic. It's a way of deciding that life was easier for your fathers than it is for you, which is always an essential human need.

ST: So when did, you were writing for the Chicago Tribune, what were the magazines that you were looking at that time?

DG: All of them, you know. Art in America, Art News, Art Forum.

ST: Was Art Forum, primarily, was it on the West Coast then?

DG: No, it already moved to New York. And the person who established it was a strange man of English culture called John Coplans, who was an abstract painter in his time. I remember the name in the past, he was a white South African. He got hold of Art Forum and made it what it was and we were very good friends with John. And I learned a lot from him.

ST: Were you writing for Art Forum then?

DG: No. Didn't want to.

ST: Okey. How focused were they on N.Y. and to what degree did they cover Chicago?

DG: He took charge of it when it went to New York.

ST: It went from San Francisco, to LA to New York.

DG: Yeah, yeah. John got fired from Art Forum which is one of these great stories which shows the creeping power of money that come to dominate all the important decisions. I think the Longbeach Museum got taken over by collectors and stopped being a public not-for-profit. And John wrote a great article explaining it. And they had lots of money. I think Charlie Cowles who owned Art Forum at that time got to be a dealer. The price of not bringing a lawsuit was to get rid of John Coplans.

ST: So he was gone.

DG: So he reverted to being a photographer. And he was a very good photographer. Anyway he went to Ohio and he was in charge of the Akron Museum and his big patron died. He got stranded in Akron so he returned to New York and lived out his life as a photographer. But again, this was my education. And it was all reality and aesthetics and being able to swap opinion without getting into trouble.

ST: When you got to Chicago and you started to encounter work like the Hairy Who, the Imagists had you been familiar with that work in the U.K?

DG: No. It hadn't traveled.

ST: What did you make of it when you first encountered it?

DG: Well it had its own dynamic and I'm not suggesting they inherited influences but then you had Funk Art out of California and it was a manifestation of being interested in images that you derive out of popular culture. Now it had a Chicago twist, which is to do with Chicago which California didn't have.

ST: Its interesting that Imagists and Funk never really got shown beyond those cities. It wasn't being shown much in London during that period.

DG: Well, there wasn't enough money to be made out of it. Art only travels when money gets put into it. You know that better than I do. Given your history. I've always been an outsider. I've always looked at the Art world through binoculars.

ST: That's interesting because I remember you mentioning to me that when we met before that the New Art Examiner and I think you alleged that had a circulation 2nd only to Art Forum at some point in North America.

DG: A key point in the Examiner which is a bit lost in history and the reason its lost is also very interest is Jane and I were unofficially blacklisted. We couldn't even get a job in Chicago.

ST: Blacklisted, why?

DG: Unofficially. But nobody would give us a job. Not even part time.

ST: What was your sense of why that was happening?

DG: Jane knew Chicago society very well and she made a great statement once, she said you don't have to go too far up the social ladder before you see the walls start to slip in other words the pyramid acts quite quickly. Chicago is not known for independence, its not known for intellectual adventures. Its true the Imagists happened in there but I wouldn't call it exactly an intellectual adventure. Chicago calls itself the Second City. Which means its insanely jealous of New York. And it feels permanently bullied by New York. And

it is permanently bullied, like Manchester is permanently bullied by London. It's the problem of any regional urban center that has enough of its own culture. Nelson Algren will tell you all about this, have you read City on the Make, well that will tell you the whole thing,

ST: What was your interest in Chicago cause it doesn't sound like …

DG: We had a niche in the Art world and we started publishing. So we were having our adventures. Just like anybody.

ST: When did you start publishing?

DG: October 1973.

ST: That was the first issue of the NAE.

DG: And it had no money and it was only done in the community. It was just a newsletter. And somehow we hung in which is an epic story. But we had to leave town to survive the NAE. So we took the absurd decision, was we'll go to D.C. But we kept the office in Chicago. And we controlled it from D.C.

ST: Why was that?

DG: Because it was integrated into the community.

ST: Community in D.C. or community in Chicago?

Chicago.

ST: Why weren't you in Chicago?

DG: Because we couldn't get a job.

ST: I see you were working from D.C, but publishing from Chicago.

DG: No we had an office in Chicago but we started collecting writers from D.C. It was a two headed hydra.

ST: Why did you have an office in Chicago at all?

DG: Because it was fixed there and we had Chicago subscribers, advertisers and there was a cash flow. That would have dried up if we pulled the magazine out of Chicago.

ST: Where was the cash flow from?

DG: Advertising and subscriptions and grants.

ST: Who was advertising?

DG: By that time a number of people started to advertise.

ST: Galleries?

DG: Yes.

ST: I'm intrigued because you position yourself as an outsider and yet you also talk about being supported by Lanyon, meeting Blake, Tilson about having advertisers.

DG: I haven't spoken to you about the problems, I've indicated there were problems.

ST: Umm, tell me about the problems.

DG: Well, they are just normal human problems.

ST: I don't understand.

DG: People tend to get friendly with people if there's mutual admiration societies. There are not many societies that are intellectually free. I, not being an educated person, I had the working class fantasy that when you got to be an artist and I read the Wasteland, I remember the great line, "women walking to and fro talking of Michelangelo." So I had this picture of Bloomsbury, where it was full of nice people being sensitive and being sensitive to each other's sensitivities. But its not like that. But I had to make my own.

ST: And that's what you were making with the NAE.

DG: And that's what I did. With Jane was highly educated. So we were our own kind of little society there. As we included other people, I quickly learned something. The real test of any person and this is an old fashioned idea – you got to publish, talk is not enough. Because when you cross the line to the public domain something happens. And that is a very important line.

ST: In the early days of the NAE, what were you publishing?

DG: Jack Burnham, have you every heard of Jack Burnham?

ST: Yes, he wrote the essays Systems Esthetics.

DG: Yes, and he wrote *'Beyond Modern Sculpture'*. Which was the first... Jack ... now Jack loved us. And he was writing for us when were were scruffy nothing. In fact one of the great articles we published was him. And it was called 'Gotterdamerung in the Guggenheim'. And it was on Beuys. It was one of the best articles ever published on Beuys. But you see we were never important enough to get anybody to archive us.

ST: Do you have the full..I mean how man issues?

DG: We have the... we did 29 years of publishing. It's a Hollywood story but its very hard for me to tell it.

ST: How long were you in D.C. then?

DG: I had 15 years in Chicago and 15 years in D.C.

ST: Okey, and so for the latter half of the magazine you were running it from D.C.

DG: We got ill and retired back to Cornwall. I kept a low profile. And had a nice place and was quite happy to look at the trees. I returned to painting. And Jane got ill and so there was strife with that. When Jane died I was invited back by a friend to be a visiting artist and it was a small campus down south, so I went there and visited one or two other little local campuses. Anyway I went to these places and I was treated with great respect. I did not know that the Examiner had become integrated into the extended arts society and every little campus I went to, there was at least one or two staff members who were keeping the NAE for teaching. And that was only because we were ahead of the game and we were doing early talks on feminism or gender or whatever, whatever. And I, Jane did too ... we realized that the artist is deprofessionalized.

ST: When was this?

DG: I suppose I got the idea when I was in St. Ives when I was a kid. Aha, the artist has been deprofessionalized now.

ST: No, they haven't.

DG: Really? What do you mean? No, It depends what you mean by professionalism.

ST: I would mean MFA as the kind...

DG: No, I don't think that the way to professionalism. That's one way but I don't think its...

ST: But if you were to let me finish I would have said....

DG: Sorry,

ST: Up until two or three decades it was by no means common for the MFA to be the terminal degree and now there are some hundreds of thousands MFA's being produced in North America every year.

DG: Its nonsense.

ST: So I would argue for that's not a good thing or bad thing I'm suggesting that's a mechanization of producing professionalism.

DG: But I have a different idea of professional other than the kind they call professional.

ST: That may be.

DG: I probably have a Romantic idea. But I think it means to have the confidence to think. And that has been hammered out of most graduates. And if that's professionalism, I call it Eton finishing school, which doesn't give the intellectual confidence to think about the Visual Arts with its history of implications and all factors that feed into it.

ST: Yeah, I mean look I completely agree. What I think though is its pretty clear to me in the last 15 or 20 years is one of the major stories

about the production of Art is the story of professionalism in the art world.

DG: Who's talking against it? Not many, there's one or two. Now class warfare, usually filters in the culture, one way or the other. Either side, I'm not making a moral judgment. So it tends to give people a cause. So whatever the cause on the right or the left overrides certain considerations and it becomes a safety net because you belong to a certain kind of evangelism. Now my whole life I have only fought for freedom of expression, the right to have an opinion and if you are going to have to share your opinion you have to be absolutely honest and tell people why. To me, that's what a critic is. I don't see many critics around anymore, they are not allowed to be around any more. Because our culture is waning. Our culture…

ST: I would agree.

DG: Our culture is getting paralyzed.

ST: If we could go back a little bit, take few steps back, you mentioned Jack Burnham, I think you mentioned you published Peter Scheldahl, who were your people who were your most regular contributors over those years?

DG: Janet Koplos who is now writing the history. Eleanor Heartney.

ST: Who is Eleanor Heartney.

DG: Eleanor Heartney has written three books and I think she is a very good art critic, she was from the Midwest. You see, we only had Midwest people that we would meet, now we had an awful lot of people, there are various names but they are now academics, all over the place. But you wouldn't know of them because they are not on the five star level. That kind of changed a little when we went to D.C. as D.C. is only three hours from New York. So I could go up and down during the month.

ST: So you were visiting N.Y. regularly during the 80's and 90's. What do you think was going on in N.Y. at that point?

DG: I was there when the whole SoHo thing happened. New York now is spinning in on itself. Its losing itself, its become trendy and… Jerry Saltz, was I think we were the first people to publish him when he was a kid in Chicago.

ST: Okey, but you were talking about N.Y. and soho

DG: Well, it was like trendy, you know. It was a surge.

ST: To what degree do you see the NAE as being focused on Chicago or the Midwest or to what degree was it international publication?

DG: We were like a franchise.

ST: In what sense?

DG: Well, we liked the idea of local editors. And this is why, we can talk about this later because this is to do with Cornwall and Daniel. I think there's a very interesting relationship between good criticism and making Art. Its very close if not, symbiotic.

ST: Could you expand on that a bit?

DG: I remember what Herbert Read said once, I quote from memory, he said the critic is not like the Art historian who dissects the cadaver. The issues are dead. The critic has to be a poet and dream and share the dreams with poets, with artists.

ST: Is that still a definition of the critic?

DG: Well, that's his definition and I'm quite happy to quote it for the moment. I don't make definitions, but I know when I have interesting conversations. One way and the other I have picked up some academic friends who are highly qualified who like having conversations with me.

ST: You mentioned about regional editors, what do you mean by that?

DG: I think artists have to assume responsibility for being involved in criticism. St. Ives was made not because it was a beautiful place which it is beautiful, its because there were writers here. And Ben Nicholson in his own way, he churned out more letters and he was involved in thinking and Herbert Read was down and Heron was a very important critic and Bernard Leach of course was a great writer.

ST: Sidney Graham?

DG: He was a poet, I've got good stories about him as many do he was a poet, he would verbalize but I don't think he published any criticism. It was all part of the freewheeling conversation that went on. Now its laced through with testosterone own culture but that was of the times but there were conversations and I don't know if that's still true today. I can't get it, maybe its cause I'm old and I intimidate people but I can't find uninhibited conversation about Art. I think that's the whole downside of how the system is working. I think its intimated artists

ST: It certainly seems to me there's a sense of let's say, the collegiate or the consensual looking back at the criticism of the 60's, 70's, 80's when there were still very vituperative critics who were really kind of divisive and.

DG: Well, so was Harold Wilson and so was McMillan.

ST: But in terms of just to stick with art criticism I ...

DG: But they were no different than the language of the time. I am slightly balking at the idea that it was just the art critics.

ST: I wasn't making that point at all

DG: I was just making sure it was a broader context.

ST: Perhaps we should turn a little bit to these two interim issues and what you hope to do with the NAE.

DG: We are starting from zero, now I know how to start from zero cause I did it before. I have a group in Chicago and we have a University that's going to sponsor us in the Fall.

ST: You mentioned that.

DG: And I don't quite know what that means except that it means that for the first time I'm not living on the razor's edge. And there will be enough support so that we can become a little bit professionalized rather than flying by the seat of our pants.

ST: What's the University?

DG: I can't tell you cause its not public yet.

ST: So they will be providing some kind of support.

DG: Oh they will be providing an office and support staff and God knows what.

ST: So, you will have an office in Chicago but you'll be based in Cornwall.

DG: No. I can travel.

ST: But you are living in Cornwall.

DG: Well, we'll see how it goes.

ST: So you might move back in Chicago?

DG: No, its not either or.

ST: I'm just asking where you are running the magazine from.

DG: Well, I have an editor in Chicago and I have an editor in Cornwall.

ST: Okey, where was this published?

DG: It was published here.

ST: That's what I was asking.

DG: Yes, but it depends what you mean by being published.

ST: Where is the printer?

DG: No, that's not the publisher.

ST: I well understand what a magazine is Derek.

DG: Yeah, yeah, I'm sorry, sorry I ... Its printed here but it could be printed there, I don't understand the modern technology because now you can get magazines on demand. It can come out, you don't have to go to a printing house anymore, so my mind as to explain myself to you, as I moved to

Washington and I didn't live in Chicago but I was the publisher living in D.C. I had the last word. Now it doesn't alter the fact that there still has to be editors because editors are the local people who interact with the community.

ST: I absolutely agree.

DG: Now writing for people who don't see the exhibition is a different kind of writing than if you are writing for someone who will see the exhibition And that is a big, big problem.

ST: What do you see the problem as being?

DG: How to write about something that people have no idea what they are looking at. And how to explain the local context to them.

ST: And so what is the local context for the NAE today? Because the photo on the cover looks like from somewhere around here.

DG: Yes.

ST: But it still has connections to Chicago. So what's the kind of if we are thinking of a community of writers or readers, what's that community?

DG: What's the community for Art in America or Art Forum?

ST: I would say Art Forum is still overwhelmingly speaking to primarily the community they regard as New York. It rarely goes beyond that.

DG: Well, I used to know the circulation figures of these magazines. I also know their budgets. And I also know 90% of their income comes from advertising. And I think that is a bigger determinant than who reads them.

ST: Bigger determinant of what?

DG: The content.

ST: Yeah, perhaps.

DG: And I want to get away from that because I want to make room for people that don't have money but have a brain.

ST: And so how are you ... this is being supported by a university?

DG: No, its not.

ST: I thought you said it was.

DG: I said it will be.

ST: So how is this being supported?

DG: By Daniel and I.

ST: But it will be on a subscription model rather than be beholden to advertisers.

DG: Our budget was never more historically than a third. By advertising. And I think that was a reason we were balanced. Your life as a curator you know you have to think about money and where to get money, who to ask and all that kind of stuff. We don't talk about that when we talk in the Art world and I think this is one of the reasons the Art world is dead. This is one reason I think its not professional. Because your average artist doesn't understand the nature of selection and maintenance that goes on in the Art world. And that is why they are deprofessionalized.

ST: I'm not sure who I would understand to be an average artist. I'm not sure when you talk about money either ...

DG: Well I'm sure they talk about it but they don't understand it. Look, I've learned to be a quasi insider because I'm old and I've been in the Art world ever since I was young and because I published a magazine I have certain access due to all the information that crosses your desk. But your 25 year old graduate student from a local Art Department doesn't know any of this except what gossip they pick up. If they are at the Royal College they are more likely to get better gossip than if they are at a local art school.

ST: Yeah, but I'm not sure that's the case anymore and I'm not surprised when I'm visiting places outside the traditional centers and via the Internet people are as much and in some cases better informed because they spend more time online.

DG: Your right, regionalism produces another kind of awareness because you are not in the maelstrom which is the same reason I decided initially when I went to America to go to Chicago because I didn't want to be in the hothouse. I knew what the hothouse was like because I lived in London and Paris and I knew how it affected people.

ST: Yeah. Yeah.

DG: So I wanted to be hip to not being in the hothouse of the country. But regional hothouses are no better or worse than urban ones.

ST: Maybe so, maybe so.

DG: Ethics are consistent everywhere.

ST: So I have another meeting at 4 o'clock so I'm going to have to wrap up in a moment, so maybe we an just talk briefly about how many issues you are hoping to publish a year of the new NAE.

DG: Well it's touchy feely

ST: You are seeing how it goes.

DG: Yeah. What else, you know, I can anticipate to a certain extent how many will sell. I can make that projection because of my experience, but then what I'm going to do is what we did before, whatever the revenue is from each region they will go toward deciding how many pages of coverage goes in the magazine.

ST: So the amounts of magazines that are sold in a given region will determine, may or may not determine, coverage.

DG: And also grants and also advertising. So that is the way of professionalizing the local editor.

ST: And so in this early stage with these interim issues what's your kind of speculative sense of this. Talk me through the kind of coverage you have in this issue.

DG: Well, I mean I have a Chicago constituency and fortunately Leon Golub and Ed Paschke are showing in London. So we responded. Now, so that's a nice coincidence.

ST: Sure, sure.

DG: I understand Hepworth is going to be showing in the Tate, so we are certainly going to think about that in the future.

ST: Just opened last week. Yes. Is Jim Nutt another Chicago guy?

DG: Yes.

ST: He's having his first ever London show later this year.

DG: Is he really?

ST: Yes.

DG: Oh well then we'll think of that obviously. You just reminded me of a story, can I lead back into..?

ST: Go right ahead.

DG: Would you please look in the essential NAE and read the story on the Imagists going to the San Paolo Biennale.

ST: Yeah, sure.

DG: That was the article that Jane & I wrote and that was taken off the galleys of Artnews because Chicago advertisers pressured them into taking it off. That is where I learnt the power of money. Now if you read that article now you will see that it was ...oh then I was in London and I sold the article to Studio International. No problem. So its not a question lf professionalism it's a question of paying your dues. And I'm afraid the Art world is so much into that at the moment. And it's a difficult problem.

ST: Let's hope you can counteract some of that

DG: Let's hope you can help me. (Laughter) You're an insider, I'm an outsider.

This interview was transcribed from audio by Managing Editor, Annie Markovich. Two sections of video may be found at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZtRnv6noJBzBPPr3Og7QPQ

If you have comments on this and any other articles please write to:

letters@newartexaminer.net

We publish all letters received

Fiber: Sculpture 1960–Present

Mat Greiner

This traveling exhibition is curated by Jenelle Porter of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. The Des Moines Art Center presentation is organized by Senior Curator Gilbert Vicario.

The revolutionary politics of Fiber: Sculpture 1960–Present are alive and valuable but their presence is hard to read as more than a historical artifact. This dual position of vitality and preservation—the critique laying in state—uses suspended animation to prop itself up for equal parts of intellectual intrigue and broad appeal.

The entry of the show is unapologetically pragmatic. It situates fiber amongst the expected forms of modern art. Nets of color abound. Jean Stamsta's large and playful Orange Twist (1970) is in every way a sculpture of the 70s. If not for its scale and position it could be a macramé wall hanging. Alan Shields has three fine works here. Two Untitled pieces from 1970 are suspended, painted lengths of yarn that are impossible to divorce from Barnett Newman's Onement zips. Nina Got it for 100 Francs (1971) is a lush color field of open weaving. Paint is inextricable from the faint dimensionality of its weft, but stringed beads are laced in and throughout, ensuring that any Greenbergian flatness is a playful allusion to a past best left behind. It implies narrative and rhythm without resolving either. Diane Itter's captivating miniatures are knotted thread in patterns without a backing fabric, neither painting nor sculpture.

Two of the strongest works in the show are Faith Wilding's Crocheted Environment, or "womb room," originally made for 1972's influential Womanhouse, and Sheila Pepe's site-specific Put Me Down Gently (2014) commissioned for this travelling show.

Wilding's recreated Environment is knobby and web-like, simultaneously unsettling and profoundly comfortable. Its tangles and bumpy protuberances are a child's secret woodland fort made of found scraps with molds and worn magazines. Environment is inventive, dangerous, or gross in a way that immediately confers intimacy and self satisfaction.

Pepe's Put Me Down Gently is installed throughout all three floors of the Des Moines Art Center's Meier wing. Impactful and potent, it is generous with surprises. Cords dangle seeking new places to root as they penetrate the hidden crevices of the interior's perforated architecture. At home on the moon as anywhere else, a Meier building is wealth disinterested in context. It declares itself like globalized contemporary art pioneers emerging markets. Put Me Down Gently invades the Meier in a manner precisely reversed from, say, Sam Taylor Wood in Johannesburg's second biennale.

Both works sprawl and tangle and easily assume power. One does so in a sanctioned and controlled room, intended for viewers to inhabit and absorb. Beginning from a more advanced platform, Pepe's

work explodes and grows, sending tendrils to seek new ground for its empire like a spider plant.

Much of Fiber is stunningly beautiful. This belies its second conundrum. High craft is itself potentially disrupting in the current art climate, but it opens a fallback on derisive and historically cruel comments against a medium tied to women's work and minority positions. Specifically, much of it can comfortably end its reading as decorative. Individually the works indict the under-representation of fiber as a potent sculptural force. Its practitioners are sophisticated and radical. Yet the cool grandeur of the 1968 Pei wing causes the full installation to read like a world-class Pinterest board. The incitement of spectacle is not to overthrow but to consume. Less inherently political, Francoise Grossen's Inchworm I lays on the floor, almost purely an intrigue of form. This is not to say it doesn't suggest an artisanally knotted jute rug from Design Within Reach or CB2.

Perhaps it is their synchronicity. Sheila Hicks' 2013–2014 Pillar of Inquiry/Supple Column (an astonishing and enormous rainbow column of spilling fibers) and Magdalena Abakanowicz's 1969 Abakan Violet are individually fresh and astonishing, yet dated in this space. They are signifiers of self-congratulation for moving beyond a previous generation's problems. We are only asked to be the already-enlightened thumbing through an Emory Douglas anthology and 'liking' a post supporting Rodney King or Chris Brown. This is an enormous contribution to the advancement of women in the arts, and we are on the verge—as close as we have ever come—to electing the first woman President of the United States, yet there is nothing urgent. No hotly felt call to action. It feels, instead, like a display of assurances towards continued wealth and prosperity that almost no one can reach.

Rosemarie Trockel's Untitled (2004) is the single piece in the show that I can't shake free from. Positioned like an afterthought in the slightly empty-feeling lower Pei it is overshadowed by Xenobia Bailey's beckoning Sistah Paradise's Great Walls of Fire Revival Tent (2002) and Ernesto Neto's melodically touchable and traversable Soundway. Despite its exuberant hook and latch foot-long yarn upholstery and green legs Trockel's work reads exactly like a covered Barcelona bench. It is created to frustrate function, to inspire crafty re-creation, to collapse kitsch, mass-market materials, luxury goods, and art.

This is the resting place of fiber in 2015. It is a confluence of art and craft, politics and commerce. It demonstrates the limits of beauty and scale. Assembled in an overdue history, it holds many of contemporary art's knottiest problems.

Preserved revolution makes Fiber a paragon for contemporary museum shows. Often spectacular, it draws unlikely museum-goers into its party, hoping some are caught, altered, and released. Still, revolutionary work in a contemporary museum rings like bells in Petrograd.

FIBER: SCULPTURE 1960 – PRESENT
May 9 – August 2, 2015
Des Moines Art Center, Iowa

Last Day at Port Eliot Festival

Examiner's UK Editor visits Port Eliot, St Germans, Cornwall, seat of the Earl St Germans.

Three Speakers, One Message

I arrived late to the bowling lawn in Port Eliot Estate, one of Cornwall's large inherited earldoms, due to the lack of professionalism of their press officer. I missed the opening remarks from the Director of the Tate Gallery, Sir Nicholas Serota and introduction from Chris Stephens, Lead Curator, Modern British Art at Tate Britain, presently running the retrospective of the subject of their talk, Barbara Hepworth: Sculpture for a Modern World 24 June – 25 October 2015.

That behind me I sat listening to a suave public relations machine from the Tate Britain talking about the single-minded British sculptor Barbara Hepworth. Alice Channer, the preferred post-modern sculptor sitting between Sir Nicholas and Chris Stephens, did the required work of commenting on her idea of Hepworth's *Single Form*, commissioned for the United Nation's Plaza, New York, being vulnerable. It is in fact the largest public commission she ever created. Channer observed that *Winged Figure*, set on the side of the John Lewis store in Oxford Street, is in three pieces to mimic the structure of a corporate entity. Hepworth's later bronzes she saw as an extension of human experience now people can picnic sitting against them. When she mentioned pieces change shape as you walk around them and seem to breath in and out, her anthropomorphism was complete. Hepworth herself said, "My works are an imitation of my own past and present." No one mentioned this which is a shame because unpicking it would have been illuminating.

Chris Stephens excellently tracked her career accompanied by a slide show. He progressed through Hepworth's life mentioning how she felt safe and embraced by the St Ives harbour. Although he said the lack of exhibitions of her work post her death since 1975 would never have happened had she been in the USA, we were left wondering why?

Maybe the question was an open one inviting the audience to accept she should have a greater reputation.

The desire of this discussion ... was to sell the idea of Hepworth as an international star not the reality or her obsession with herself.

Hepworth, and her second husband Ben Nicolson, came to St Ives to escape London in the Blitz. They stayed because through Nicolson's, Herbert Read's Patrick Heron's and Bernard Leach's writings the St Ives School prospered. There is a wider reason why she dropped off the radar. Pop Art dethroned the St Ives School and her own character cut people off who might have taken her up, but they didn't accept her and her aesthetic orthodoxies as brilliant.

The desire of this discussion with only three questions taken from the floor, was to promote the idea of Hepworth as an international star not the reality or her obsession with herself. Ego kills the artist stone dead. Hepworth's 'present', to allude to the quote above, is an attempt by Tate Britain to reclaim for the St Ives group what was lost.

It is without question that St Ives was a major centre of the British avant-garde and that Hepworth was a key component.

This discussion and exhibition in the Tate tries to answer in the affirmative, 'Is the work enduring?'It fails. But this is an important question that was returned to later that afternoon.

Hannah Rothschild

The second session in the afternoon was a two-way interview between Hannah Rothschild, Chairman of the Trustees of the National Gallery, and Sir Nicholas Serota. Hannah's read from and talked about her new and first novel, The 'Improbability of Love.' The novel is about the purchaser who buys a Jean-Antoine Watteau painting for £75 and is enamored and delighted in its authenticity and profit. In telling the painting's story the author uses the device of the painting speaking to the reader about its history.

Hannah Rothschild said she chose Watteau as little is known about him and that made writing about him easier as it opened up varied possibilities for her book. It was the first time I have seen Sir Nicholas interviewed. Hannah Rothschild inquired about some contemporary artists, suggesting they are good for their time and vanish without trace. She asked what he thought of the idea that the Emperor has no clothes. These observations and questions did not elicit a full response from Sir Nicholas. He agreed the artists were good for and of their time but he offered no judgments on who would last and who would not. He sidestepped any investigation into whether the market is rigged at certain points, though Hannah writes in her novel about the practices that suggested it may be. The buying back of an artist by a gallery in auctions to maintain prices to take one example.

Sir Nicholas turned Hannah's uncomfortable questions to him into his further questioning of her.

Three extracts by Hannah from her book contained a good joke based on the main character Vlad, a Russian Oligarch trying to buy into culture and London society for prestige, not understanding English. Vlad had problems in perceiving Damien Hurst's originality at all. The third point that Hannah emphasized was her construction of the idea that Old Master paintings spoke. Serota aptly referred to this as her 'conceit' in the literary sense, could have been interesting if she let the painting quote what it had heard from the art professionals past and present who had stood in front of the picture.

Perhaps Hannah Rothschild, who, last year, became the first woman chair of the National Gallery Trustees, will find stronger ways to voice her knowledge and inform the public of the ways in which public and private finance have become enmeshed to the detriment of our visual experience.

Perhaps Hannah, who, last year, became the first woman chair of the National Gallery Trustees, will find stronger ways to voice her knowledge

Amusing by turns but never biting this interview reminded one member of the audience of Gilbert and Sullivan. Hannah is a sensitive thinker whose aesthetic has been finely tuned since childhood through her family's collections. So much so that in the 1980s she discovered some 3,000 paintings were stolen from her family by the Nazi's and she wrote about the looted artworks and researched the meticulous records kept by the looters.

Her emotional bond with art was forged when she was a child living inside and with great works of art. Her commitment to the public as strong. She knows more than she is telling.

ukeditor@newartexaminer.net

RADIANCE AND RHYTHM SONIA DELAUNAY

Frank Corrigan

A towering unsung figure in the birth of early modernism, Sonia Delaunay and her husband developed early abstraction to remarkable maturity. Their aesthetic theory of simultaneity made abstraction plausible by focusing on pure colour and structure as the focus when looking at work.

For the Delaunays, the early 20th century required new forms to suite the new pallet developed over the last hundred years. Chemists had given the world a bold and brilliant new array of chroma which was found not just in paint, but in the manufactured world around - in signs, posters, objects, and the glass of coloured electric light. The Delaunays theory was about a way to capture this vibrant new world and the new ways of living that it emblemised. Simultaneous contrasts of colour create a rhythm and dance of movement and a disruptive pace of experience that was to capture the spirit of the age. Their aesthetic writing mirrors that of Maurice Merleau-ponty, who stressed two qualities of beauty that are everywhere in this show - radiance and rhythm. The design of Sonia's paintings, fabrics, costumes and clothing are instantly recognisable to anyone familiar with 20th century abstraction. Concentric circles of radiating light are smashed into the syncopated rhythm of the new cities. Later, shattered mosaics of clashing colours resolve into cleaner minimalist patterns. An iconography of modernism will find all the tropes present here in chrysalis. Edgy nudes give way to cubist angles, later ticker tape minimalism in patterned fabric, then bold monumental geometric abstraction. What's astounding though is how few duds there are. Sonia is good at everything - she dances freely from one discipline and style to another.

In the geometric work we see mysticism and monument to rival Kandinsky and Malevich, (it's hard to see clearly who's influencing who, but I would guess that Delaunay's work is as often as not the original) the fabric patterns are timeless, and even the early Matisse and Gauguin pastiches are engaging.

The polished rhythm colour series stand out - a room of whirling circles and semi circles that phase the entrance the viewer like the Second World War 'dazzle' camouflage used to disorient rather than disguise. Here the world is blended in a brilliant vortex and just as enemy submarines would be unable to find a frame of reference so we lose our reference points as figurative painting finally succumbs completely to abstraction.

Early in the show is a blanket made for her infant son - this is the piece for which she is called 'the mother of abstraction' and is the best candidate for the first piece of abstract art. The quilt contains so much of later abstract work: A close inspection finds every asymmetric patch has been carefully established - the final effect is a fundament of 20th century abstraction: the irregular shapes are sewn together at once randomly and carefully chosen so that the hint of symmetrical pattern challenges the eye and leaves us mesmerised. The line between symmetry and asymmetry is followed like the hints of discord that disrupt the ease of early modern music.

A key to showing works of early modernism is often to effectively conjures the quasi-religious sense of artist as holy man - able to penetrate the mysteries of 'significant form' and the like. These shaman - ultimately snake oil salesmen used this fervent self belief to produce marvellous things - and Delaunay's paintings at times have the bombast of early modernists declaring their theories and work as discoveries rather

than creations. The notion of simultaneity is at once a typical modernist aesthetic, with platonesque aspiration to uniquely penetrate the nature of 'significant form', yet for Delaunay simultaneity was a transient model, one suited particularly to the new age, which described the pace, dazzle, and transfixing quality of electric light and automated machines. The idea seems to have been impressionistic - to capture a shared experience but not one universal, rather one that is momentary and particular.

The modernist's optimism is lighter than many of her peers. The Delaunays claimed that we have 'triumphed over the sun'. But this is more about having the glow to dance the night away than the orphic destiny or a brave new political and social landscape. And so whereas Malevich's triumphalism about the new soviet future gave way to the terrible remorse and searing despair of a man who put his name to evil, Delaunay has no great folly to forgive. That's not to say the work is thoughtless or flippant - it's not all airy jubilance. There is just a hint of the modern world's fearful vertigo in the half moon geometric paintings and the Yellow Nude sits in the glare of a new age that is not all progress and liberation.

For some it may be gauling that while Picasso was hanging 'Guernica', Delaunay was painting 'Tango Dancers'. And while the work isn't obviously politically engaged, it would be pompous to argue that it is absurd or naive or irresponsible to do joyful painting during the First World War. The notion of the artist as architect of history and the claim that art is always political, doesn't possess Delaunay in the same way as her peers. The need to be the centre of things doesn't seem to have troubled Delaunay yet she clearly was.

The overwhelming sense though, is of a 'proper' painter, one who paints all day, carries a room, and was an uncontrived architect of her world's visual landscape. Therefore the feminist angle to the exhibition is very much on point. There is no hint of feeble, one dimensional political work here, buoyed by excess essay. While the catalogue does have an impassioned and strong critique of the culture that excluded Delaunay, argument is really superfluous. That the body of work carries room after room of rich and engaging, and more often than not prototypical work, is searing enough indictment: clearly Sonia has been done an injustice by the art world men's club and deserved this show a long time ago.

The EY Exhibition: Sonia Delaunay Tate Modern: Exhibition 15 April – 9 August 2015

Images

Opposite page;
Top: Simultaneous Dresses (The three women) 1925 © Pracusa

This page:
Top: Syncopated rhythm, so-called The Black Snake 1967 © Pracusa

Bottom : Prismes electriques 1914 © Pracusa © CNAP

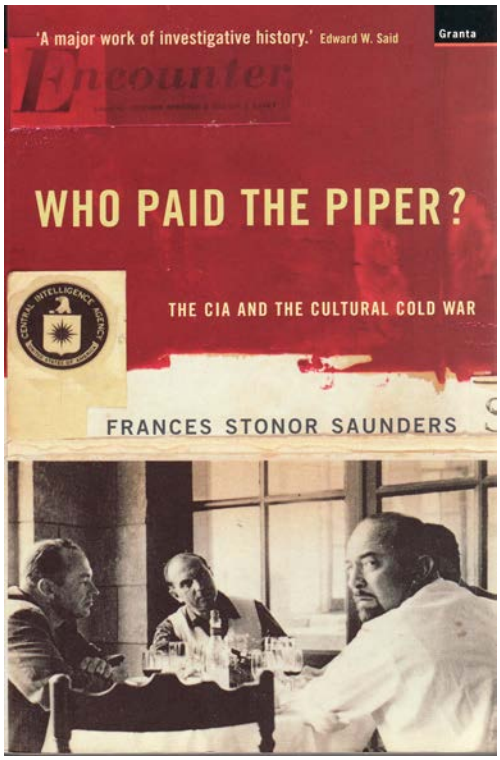
REFLECTIONS ON GEORGE TOUCHE'S REVIEW OF

WHO PAID THE PIPER-THE CIA & THE CULTURAL COLD WAR - BY FRANCES STONOR SAUNDERS

Roland Gurney

A response to George Touche's review on Who Paid the Piper - the CIA and the Cold War in the June issue of the New Art Examiner

Roland Gurney was a Cambridge History Scholar and is a law graduate with 32 years experience as a financial adviser. He has a special interest in world literature and world history and is an award-winning poet.



With elements of a new Cold War – interspersed with irregular hot wars and even a re-run of the medieval Crusades against rampant Islam in the guise of ISIS occupying half Syria and a third of Iraq in just one year, and a rejuvenated Al Quaeda in the form of Jabhat Al Nusra very much a reality, it is-a good time to reconsider the relationships between power, society and culture. This thought was triggered by a review of ~~a~~ this book which examines essentially the cultural Cold War - 1946, starting with Churchill's famous Fulton, Missouri speech proclaiming the Iron Curtain between the Soviet Union and the West and ending with the end of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European Bloc in 1991- as opposed to the political, military and socio-economic aspects that dominated headlines and general consciousness over that period. It should never be forgotten however that the Cold War also triggered conflicts in which multi-million civilians died (3 million in Korea and 4 million in Vietnam both wars in which overwhelmingly the killing was done by US B-29 & B-52 bombers, a point highlighted by Harold Pinter in his Nobel Prize in Literature acceptance address in 2005.)

Saunders' focusses on CIA activity - originated in the National Security Act of 1947 and the CIA Act of 1949 - both open and covert. It should be born in mind that the CIA is involved mainly in overseas activity, like its UK equivalent MI6 as opposed to

The CCF was funded and controlled by the CIA but also fed funds through various philanthropic arts such as the Carnegie, Ford and Rockefeller Foundations

domestic surveillance carried on by the FBI, like the UK's MI5 and to some extent Special Branch. The covert activities involving cultural and psychological warfare were carried out through a multiplicity of complex networks focussed on the multi-faceted Congress for Cultural Freedom.

The CCF was funded and controlled by the CIA but also fed funds through various philanthropic arts organizations such as the Carnegie, Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, institutions all dedicated to directly or indirectly promoting the 'American Way', as propounded by President Truman in his Truman Doctrine speech of 1948 after his unexpected election triumph over Dewey. It was of course the CIA which over the next 40 years covertly sponsored or engineered the overthrow of popularly elected democratic regimes in Central and South America and also in Indonesia in 1965 resulting in a massacre of 1 million so-called Communists by the new pro-American military dictatorship of General Suharto.

From 1954-74 the CIA's OISP trained 771,217 secret police officers and secret agents in 13 overseas territories.

Directly or indirectly the CIA manipulated financial aid and controlled contributors to all media within the ambit of the CCF so as to align Western Europe in particular with the Americans and counter Soviet propaganda and cultural influences on an area which was itself massively financed by Marshall Aid. This was when, in the early stages at least, Communist parties were particularly strong in France and Italy. Greece had a long civil war (1944-48) and Germany was divided between East and West.

Even Britain which had run up $31 BN in lend-lease debt to the US had a Labour government which had won a landslide victory in 1945 and indulged in significant nationalisation of private industry. So the two superpowers the USSR and the USA slugged it out during the Cold War (with the possibility of nuclear Armageddon always in the background and nearly implemented in the Cuba Crisis of 1962), each attempting to impose their own nasty brand of un-freedom masquerading as the exact opposite in every area they could wield their influence.

It seems the CIA was responsible for backing Abstract Expressionist art (Jackson Pollock and Barnett Newman followed by the American equivalent of Piet Mondrian Mark Rothko, who is on photographic record as having visited Cornwall when St Ives was at its peak, against the perceived Soviet art form of so-called Socialist Realism. Ironically the early Cold War also saw an unprecedented consumer boom (1955-70) and not coincidentally - Pop Art with Andy Warhol's 32 Campbell Soup Can paintings (all different!) creating perfect reproductions of iconic branded products and Roy Lichtenstein's paintings did takes on teenage comic strip romances complete with conversational bubbles.

Frances Saunders touches only marginally on the main UK area of CIA-funded CCF activity which was centred on the highly influential journal Encounter. This magazine was effectively CIA-funded from the start but astonishingly the co-Editor from 1954-1966, Stephen Spender discloses in his Journals 1939-83 that it was only in 1976 that he found out the CIA-connection with the CCF and therefore indirectly Encounter. He and his successor Frank Kermode then immediately severed all connection with Encounter, having been CIA dupes for its Anti-Communist crusade for the hottest part of the first stage of the Cold War. There is incidentally no mention of this CIA connection in the official biography of Stephen Spender by Professor John Sutherland (Penguin Books 2005).

The extent of CIA covert activities is astonishing. As early as 1960, the year President Eisenhower attacked the predominance of 'the military-industrial complex' in America in effect 'The Power Elite' analysed by the sociologist C. Wright Mills in his seminal - and it still prevails right across American society and institutions - the CIA had secret files on 430,000 individuals and organizations. In the earlier post-war period this was paralleled by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) with its mass investigations of Hollywood and other US cultural and artistic areas generally to the detriment of the people concerned. Under the Kennedy brothers (President JFK and Attorney General Robert, assassinated respectively in 1963 and 1968) the CIA launched 163 covert campaigns in 3 years. From 1954-74 the CIA's OISP trained 771,217 secret police officers and secret agents in 13 overseas territories. The extent of all these activities was revealed by the publication of the Pentagon Papers in 2007 and of course by the recent whistle-blowing activities of the Guardian and Mr Snowdon, currently holed up in the Ecuadorean embassy in London.

The 9/11 Twin Towers terrorist attack in 2001

launched additional security organizations and funding, notably the Department of Homeland Security (budget $15BN) now featured in its own TV series starring Daniel Craig alias James Bond. The UK equivalent MIG tripled its numbers from 1,000 to 3,000 immediately after the 7/7 attack in London (2005).

Unlike the US counterparts there is no evidence of MI5 or MI6 having either the inclination or the resources to support any institution in the UK like the CCF or to try to indirectly promote the British Way of Life. Instead, there is the interesting issue of funding for the arts in the UK through monolithic institutions such as the Arts Council and the Tate and their equivalents of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. This is discussed by the current chairman of the Arts Council in a recent paper. The message is loud and clear that official sponsorship and funding is on the wane (down 37% in 10 years) and joint projects and new types of public-private partnership will have to be found. The example given is a new Arts Impact Fund with a princely backing of £7m, coming from a mixture of the commercial sector, charities and the public purse. The outlay will involve repayable loans up to £600,000 not a penny in grants. The one positive aspect is that there will be for more funding for community arts and areas outside London with the capital city's slice of the cake falling from 30% to 25%.

It has been remarked that 9/11 has produced no significant artistic response although an anti-Iraq War installation won the Turner Prize in 2005 and the Occupy Movement (in response to public outrage at Banker's Bonuses and over-the-top executive remuneration which appears to correlate with business non-performance or even outright failure), looks like delivering something of import on both the literary and artistic fronts. Certainly we live in an age of high-tech exponential change co-existing with equally exponential polarisation between the haves and the have-nots.

A recent figure was that the richest 100 people in the world have more wealth than the bottom 50% of the world's population. The USA has 20% of global GDP and 4.4% of the world's population. This is the long-term outcome of the kind of activities described in some detail in the book and review and the source-books I have used for these reflections.

As a final thought I would like to cite two quotations from art critics that recently caught my eye. One is from Donald Kuspit, art professor and a contributor of in my view the best feature in "The Essential NAE" anthology:

"Aesthetic experience transforms alienation into freedom and adversariness into criticality."

The other is from a leading work on modern art, 'Art Since 1960' by Michael Archer((Thames & Hudson 2002):

"Art is a continuing reflective encounter with the world in which the work, far from being the end point of that process, acts as an initiator of and focus for the subsequent investigation of meaning."

Sources: Stephen Spender Journals 1939-1983(Faber 1985)
Chris Harman : A People's History of the World
Oliver Stone & Peter Kuznick: The Untold History of the United States(Ebury Press 2012)
Norman Stone: The Atlantic & Its Enemies(A History of the Cold War) (Basic Books 2010.)

VerbiArt - Wordish phrases carrying little meaning, in contemporary art writing.

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THEOBALD'S ethnographic specificity reflects the glissando-like shifts between individual and society that bear upon identity."

FRIEZE June 2015 no 172 p 130. Jonathon P Watts

Adrian Stokes (1854 – 1935), *The Harbour Bar,* 1889, oil on canvas, Leeds Museums and Galleries

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