

NEW ART examiner

Est. 1973

The independent voice of the Visual Arts

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Give me your tired, poor, huddled art critics, the wretched refuse of a corrupt art world. I lift my lamp beside their

RESIGNATIONS!

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SPEAKEASY

THE CHANGING
TREASONS by Darren
Jones

ONE WAY TO THINK
LIKE AN ARTIST by Ken
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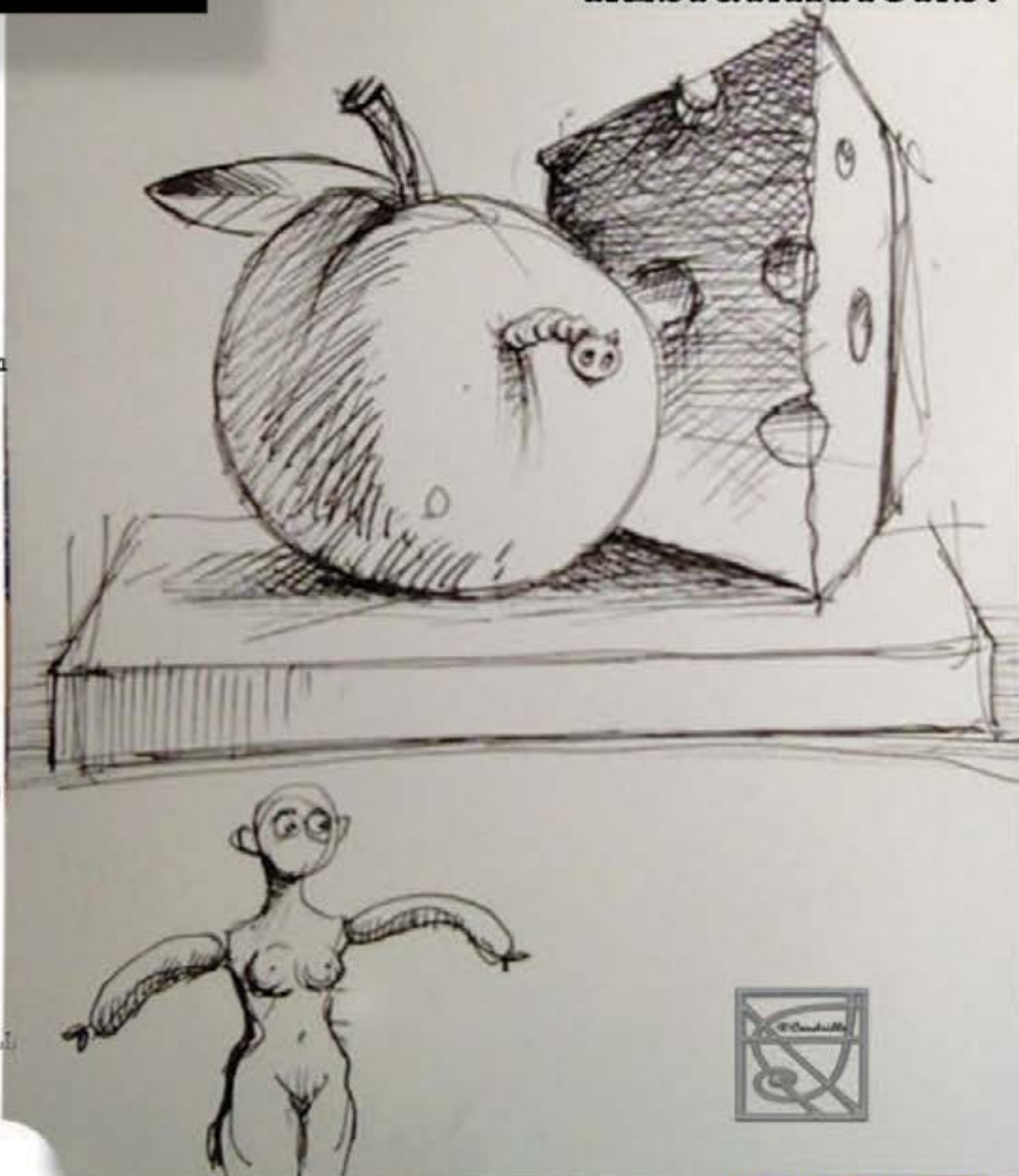
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gave up the detached
authority that gives it
the freedom to succeed
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MARTIN PURYEAR
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KERRY JAMES MARSHALL

Our partnership with
Plymouth College of Art:
three student reviews:
Penwith Society Show
YOUKI HIRAKAWA 'Secret
Fire' at Anime-Mundi, St
Ives



With Extracts from



THE
JACKDAW

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.

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.

You can participate directly by sending letters to the editor which are published unedited.

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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.

Dear Tom,

All of us at the Block are very appreciative of the coverage you facilitated for our exhibition on Charlotte Moorman in your March / April Issue. Rachael Schwabe's insightful article captured the ambitious scope of the show, and the compelling questions we wished to raise.

We were thrilled to hear of your work to give new life to

The New Art Examiner, and look forward to reading it and to hearing of your ongoing success. The Examiner has such an important role in the history of arts criticism within Chicago, and we are glad to have you as a colleague.

With Many thanks

Lindsay

Editor,

Days like this make you realise how great it is to be in West Cornwall. From a visual arts perspective it's great to have an institution like Tate St. Ives here, much missed presently but back before we know it, with truly exciting and expanded potential ahead. The fantastic Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange who have offered so many exciting progressive exhibitions to experience free of charge.

Art centres like Kestle Barton on the Lizard. The wonderful Tremenhoe Sculpture Gardens with world class exhibits, thriving proactive studio complexes like Porthmeor Studios, CAST and Krowji to name a few.

A wealth of artist-led activity, occupying spaces like The Fish Factory, Back Lane West and CMR Gallery. Independent curators like Jesse Leroy Smith and Sam Bassett putting on shows in disused spaces. Historic gems like Penlee House Gallery & Museum, and the ever popular Falmouth Art Gallery. Numerous commercial art galleries showing work at all levels offering space to artists at all career stages, venues like the newly opened Newlyn Filmhouse, showing independent cinema and supporting local film makers.

Falumni Falmouth leading the country for arts education and Newlyn School of Art and St. Ives School of Painting offering a wide range of courses for all abilities.

That's not to mention the wonderful Summer festivals of Golowan Festival Official Page and Lafrowda Festival, a wealth of musical richness and diversity, exciting theatre, good food and drink etc ... etc... I could go on.

And of course we at Anima-Mundi will continue to work hard too as an important cog in a pretty exciting machine. I honestly believe that this is a great place to be looking forward positively and excitedly, not just backwards respectfully. Of course its hard fought in a place like Cornwall, so turn out show your support and appreciate the output, I think we are very lucky indeed.

Joseph Clarke, Anima-Mundi.

Editor,

If the NAE is to stand on any notion universally accepted, it must align itself with the nature of art as an integral act of human activity, apart from any agenda or intended commercial or political use, which is not to say under the intentional auspices, that valuable bad art may still appear. Rather art should be seen, if helpful in understanding the art itself, apart from it's context - the actual work in itself.

The paradox arises when art cannot be de-moored from its context; the historical or political or commercial context inherent in the understanding of the piece itself. Art is often kidnapped for various intents, money most of all) hence forgeries, investments or ego on down. This is often how the work is uncritically valued, i.e. its price upmost. This is corruption at its lowest ... forgeries, copies, boosted art from a critic or corrupt museums, artists, galleries, etc. Practically the last consideration a faulty critic faces is often the work itself ... not its inference or implication but the core of the work within itself as free standing ... impossible as that might be.

If a work transcends it's context it often exposes it as it tears the context open, revealing the innermost of what is neglected or over looked, this is often missed in critical consideration. And that transcendence into the higher is a language the critic must be sensitive to. Think of the difference of cave painting, an art of intense reality so important to them to take the time to do the images might have meant

they did not eat that day ... and life of the modern makers of graffiti, that is disposable and says absolutely nothing {often} except that it's rebellious and an egotistical temporary pathetic quick mark of impulse.

Al Jirikowic

Daniel,

First of all we need to be sure that we are talking about the same things. Newlyn Orion is a name that was superseded by Newlyn Art Gallery Limited back in the mid eighties. That is if it is the gallery that you are referring to. The Newlyn Society of Artists (NSA) and its members are a separate organisation, all be it with a long and very close relationship with the gallery. Indeed, between the inception of the gallery in the late 1800s until some point in the seventies the gallery was run by the society. The gallery was built for the uses of the artists of Newlyn who quickly formed themselves into the NSA and the way it worked meant that the two were effectively one organisation. The beginning of the schism came when the NSA could no longer run their lives as artist and run a gallery like the Newlyn in the modern age. This led to the appointment of an independent director, John Hawkes, who had been running a large gallery in Penzance called the Orion Gallery - hence the name Newlyn Orion - an amalgamation of the two gallery names. He was very supportive of the NSA and committed the gallery to 3 major 4 to 6 week shows per year for the society in a programme that came to include major travelling shows from the Arts Council and elsewhere.

To cut a long and detailed story short, with the winning of Arts Council funding for the gallery, a gradual process of increasing distance between the NSA and the management of the gallery could be perceived. However, up until about 15 years ago the 3 exhibitions a year were fully agreed and maintained although efforts were made to modernise the content, focus and curation of the shows. This was not a problem in my view as, having been a member since the mid eighties and I often found the NSA shows to be repetitive and without much real ambition.

Emily Ash, director from about 1988(?), to

her credit set about instilling some zip into the shows and innovated a new working relationship with the NSA which really did have the potential to develop into an ongoing and lively set up. From discussions with ex NSA committee members of around about 2000 (after Emily Ash had left) onwards however, it is clear that the management wanted to shift the relationship into something more distant. Discussions continued but without any clear direction as far as I can make out.

It all came to a head when the Newlyn Art Gallery was closed for some time for refurbishment and the Exchange building in Penzance, acquired by the gallery, was being converted for use as gallery and studio space. This was round about 2007. I was living in Japan at the time so my connection with the details of what then happened is only second hand. But once the gallery was opened again, the 3 shows per year had been scrapped and the NSA was left to bid for exhibition space and time under the same conditions as anyone else.

For a while this went OK but the number and type of exhibition had changed irrevocably. Shows had to be themed and tightly curated (not a bad thing maybe), but absolutely no acknowledgment of the historical connection between the NSA and the gallery was from that time on ever acknowledged. (Contemporary management mantra - there is no such thing as history).

Indeed the current gallery management will not even acknowledge that such a relationship ever really existed - about 4 years ago they held a small exhibition of the history of the gallery at Newlyn and did not once mention the role of the NSA in the gallery for over 70 years. Getting any ideas for shows accepted became increasingly difficult. The society was effectively excluded from the gallery though the director will always say that no one is excluded.

Returning from Japan 5 years ago I was elected on to the committee of the NSA and immediately became chair. At that time the society was tearing itself apart over this issue and there was much vitriol in the air. We set about trying pull the society back together and to reestablish a good working relationship with the gallery so as to find a way towards something that might bear a connection to what the NSA had there in

the past. We were effectively and consistently brick walled, and have been now for over 4 years.

We have tried on many occasions to create opportunities for the society in terms of well thought out exhibition ideas that would be tightly curated etc, but to no avail. Most recently we had two new members of the committee (without baggage) engage in discussions with the gallery. Ultimately their frustration over being given the run around again lead them to conclude we are wasting our time and effort. Without ever committing themselves to an emphatic "NO" the gallery management have effectively closed the door on the NSA. Using the tactic of endless procrastination they have successfully locked us out. There are many of us who suspect the Arts Council

hand in this in the we have often been confronted with the view that it is untenable to expect a publicly funded gallery to give any kind of special priority to a private organisation like the NSA.

The NSA is now engaged in close discussions with Tremeneere Sculpture Gardens near Penzance where a new gallery space of similar scale to the Newlyn Art Galley, is about to be built. We are confident that this will provide the opportunity for the society to rise from the ashes. It may be a leaner, more dynamic group different in many respects from the old NSA ,but it will be all the better for that I think.

Phil Booth

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Force Feeding in Guantanamo'

Derek Guthrie 2015



Shoal Shadow
Jan Phethean



The Birth of Abstract
Expressionism in Cornwall,
(set of 2)

Jonathon Xavier Coudrille

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The future is with us.

With this issue, the New Art Examiner marks its first year back following a thirteen-year break. Our return, which began at Expo Chicago last September, has not been easy. We have managed to publish six forty-plus page issues with minimal advertising or subscription income. We have survived on pure faith and art-fed fumes. We owe a great deal to the dedication of past contributors and a new crop of young, idealistic contributors. However, a brighter future, news of which we intend to announce shortly, lies ahead.

Since our last appearance, the publishing landscape for arts journalism has turned bleak, nationally and here at home. The Internet and social media revolutions have decimated the publishing industry. Both Chicago papers have fired their art critics and what passes for arts journalism online is a Babel-like cacophony lacking critical authority. Many posts are little more than silly listicles that only seek eyeball clicks and ad traffic.

Our editorial team and writers believe that the need for an informed art voice now is greater than ever. We intend to restart a more

intelligent conversation with new and past readers and the local art community. We call on Chicago's community of dealers, collectors and art lovers to also play a central role in this vision through their advertising support, readersubscriptionsanddonationsrespectively.

A long-lasting, unfortunately true, local legend holds that, while Chicago hosts many rich collections (witness the recent donation of the Stefan Edlis-Gail Neeson collection to the Art Institute), its collectors have overlooked emerging artists in favor of brand-name figures. Many younger artists thus flee to the more hospitable art scenes of Los Angeles and New York. The current issue of New City, notes that artist Michelle Grabner, who co-curated the prestigious Whitney Biennial in 2014, and her husband relocated their Oak Park exhibition space, the Suburban, to Milwaukee.

Join us on our mission to report on Chicago's vibrant art scene in its museums, galleries and alternative spaces. We invite your attention, writing contributions and financial support.

Tom Mullaney, Chicago Editor

Humans can only create corrupt systems

The regular refrain about the art market being overpriced, overblown and an anchor weighing down creativity in our culture won't go away. Ever. The reason is quite simple and anyone who has researched patronage even briefly, and the monetary system itself will understand: money panders to ego, vanity and power. So can art.

The inherent corruption of money is not in the monetary system itself but in humanity who created such a system. The system runs well when ethics are not included. Reagan and Thatcher broadly fought for a Free Market where the rigours of supply and demand govern everything. The problem with this and the monetary system as a whole is that many human beings think and money doesn't. The Art Market is no more inherently corrupt than the Dow Jones, central governments or any concourse where money matters are transacted.

We have generated a system where people worship rich people. Not because they are clever, wise or ethical but because they have money. No other reason. The Art Market knows those rich people who want, as many always

have, to display their wealth to the people through the visual experience. They build modern palaces, today called skyscrapers, they leave museums in their own names for posterity, they exchange notes with other rich collectors and live off the fat of general opinion amongst those who discourse about art.

The artist, creating because they want to, because they feel they must, is a child of another god. As human but utterly disengaged from the art market. The personality that does well in the art market is not that of an artist but of the entrepreneur, giving the people what fashion dictates they give. In other words 'what sells'. Theirs is the work of those who want to take advantage of their times, not define them. Their celebrity of course, catches the headlines and seems to define the times but when their celebrity burns away with passing years what is left in the burnt out remains is the history of art. Who becomes a footnote and who becomes favoured is always decided by successive generations.

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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:
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SPEAKEASY

Raymond Salvatore Harmon



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

The Context of Creation

For the course of 20th century art the narrative of the art world has romanticized a particular set of variables in regards to the creative space of the artist. The picturesque idea of the high ceilinged loft/industrial space in which the artist creates has, over the past century, been instilled in both the general public and the institutional art world's imaginations.

Driven in part through the cinematic portrayal of the working artist in film and codified in the Soho lofts of the 60s and 70s the idea that an artist must have a working space that is impressive, that is cavernous yet rough/industrial looking, has become a fetish within the art world. The size and style of your studio says as much about you as a creator as your work does to the average curator and dealer.

When they come to see your work they expect a kind of space that is pre-imagined, these romantic architectural notions instilled in their mind. If the space in which you work doesn't live up to their imagination of what an artist's space should be like they immediately lower their expectations of you and your work. In their minds the massive industrial loft is the *de rigueur* context in which an artist works, and anything less means inferiority and amateurism.

However a quick look at history shows that most of the historically important artists worked in a variety of spaces, from Turner's extra bedroom, to Bacon's South Kensington mews; Joseph Cornell's basement workshop to Pollock's unheated woodshed, spaces were as idiosyncratic as the artists themselves, often humble and

cramped affairs.

When we look back even further, before the 20th century, we see that artists tended to work outdoors, either directly beside a studio structure, or entirely out in the natural world. This was due, in a practical sense, to both the lack of artificial lighting and the ventilation provided.

But working in the natural world, under the sun and clouds, feeling the breeze as one works, has an effect on the artist. As creators we become part of that natural world, our mood its mood, tempest to scorching, misty to chilling. Beyond the capacity of sunlight, when we are outdoors we are able to dig into who we are as creators in a way that can never be achieved inside the four walls of a studio. We become linked to some great other that guides our hand, that invites our gestures and movements, gives form and idea to our work.

Yet in the contemporary art world there is a contempt for anything that breaks the romantic notion of the artist as urban-dwelling, loft-living, industrial-space factory worker. An upturned nose or a listless bored look is all you will get out of the museum curator or name dealer who comes and sees your cramped studio bedroom, your garage space workshop, or your paint splattered garden.

As artists I think it is time we call bullshit on the studio loft. Overpriced romantic notions of ill lit real estate buffoonery have become impractical in the capitalist metropolises of the world. Our distance from the natural world as creators has led to a fatuous banality within the art world, reduced to well dressed shit throwing

monkeys paying too much for a stage set on which rich collectors can project their fictitious narratives of what an artist is and where they work and live.

We must resist this notion, and return to the root of human creative practice – the natural world. We must find in the out-of-doors that very thing that drove the first humans to make marks on stones. We must become again a part of the world, and know again its capacity for both nurturing creation and violent destruction. If we are

to find the edge of what we do as artists we must break free of our studio prisons, throw down our factory badges and go wandering lost in the wilderness once more. ■

Raymond Salvatore Harmon is an American painter, media theorist and artist living in London. His work straddles the boundary between the physical and digital realms of creative practice. raymondharmon.com

The new, art readers need more from an art publication than critical assessments of work. They need a professional publication, in print and online, with information on available jobs in visual art-related fields, exhibition opportunities, and spaces to rent or purchase. They need information on who is doing what in the field and the state of the art market. Most of all they need a forum in which they can personally respond to events and issues in the art world. Each issue of the Examiner contains feature articles on topics of major interest; coverage of metropolitan and regional areas across the world; informative and amusing art world snippets 'found online'; short reviews, classified ads, job and exhibition listings and regular columns of photography and books. Each issue will print letters without editing and one Speakeasy.

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The Changing Treasons:

IT'S TIME FOR NEW YORK'S LEADING CRITICS TO SURRENDER THEIR CROWNS

by DARREN JONES

IT'S A NY THING

'Be A Part of It' Darren Jones 2015 Vinyl

It is an astonishing peculiarity that in New York there is just one newspaper setting the tone of cultural opinion: The New York Times. There are others, of course, but they haven't a fraction of its influence. There is no audible counter-argument. Conversations on the street rarely begin, "Did you see that thing in the New York Observer?" Even national papers, such as the Wall Street Journal and USA Today, are unable to penetrate the shield that the New York Times has formed over the city, despite those papers outselling it. The extraordinary absence of an alternative equal has positioned the Times as a cultural dictatorship, placing it at odds with the vibrant multi-facets that constitute one of the greatest cities on Earth.

In stark contrast, Londoners consume no fewer than five major newspapers, currently or formerly in broadsheet format — though these are national publications as opposed to the ostensibly regional New York Times. For the purposes of this article it is worth noting how many of these publications have art critics. The Times (the 1785 original) employs Rachel Campbell Johnston, with Waldemar Januszczak at the Sunday Times; the Guardian/Observer has Adrian Searle and Jonathan Jones; Richard Dormant and Alastair Sooke are at the Telegraph, with Andrew Graham Dixon writing for the Sunday edition; the Financial Times has critic Jackie Wullschlager; and

until a recent monstrous cull of its arts section the Independent had Charles Darwent, though the paper does still cover contemporary art. Additionally, the London Evening Standard — which will always be identified with outspoken critic Brian Sewell — currently retains Ben Luke, while in Scotland, the Scotsman relies on Duncan MacMillan and Moira Jeffrey.

UK newspapers are increasingly moving writers from staff to freelance positions — an important distinction — but the larger point is that there remains a democratized journalistic field of national art critics producing varied discourse — between rival newspapers and readerships — healthy competition, and choice. While the Telegraph enjoys the highest circulation, the perception is that no newspaper vastly outsells the others in terms of cultural real estate. The benefit to artists is the breadth and depth of intelligent coverage, the expanded possibilities of being reputably reviewed, and a certain liberation from any one of these papers bestowing its critical largess as a defining gold star of approval.

In New York, the city's hallowed conclave of top art critics who are read by and beyond the art world, are restricted to the New York Times and one or two revered magazines. The Times' current murder of critical crows is headed by co-chiefs Roberta Smith and

The insufficient number of influential critical positions in New York renders those few extant jobs more important than they ought to be.



The Writing Is On The Canvas

Holland Cotter. Smith has presided over New York's artistic kingdom by covering the subject for almost three decades at that newspaper. In terms of monarchic rule, hers would be the 14th longest reign by a living sovereign just ahead of Mswati III of Swaziland and just behind Sheikh Humaid bin Rashid al-Nuaimi of Ajman (United Arab Emirates). Smith has steered her critical barge with a reliable hand as standards have sunk around her due to marauding online opinionaters (as everyone is now a photographer, so too is everyone a critic) and her writing remains insightful. Holland Cotter and Ken Johnson are by virtue of their writing and their positions at the Times, held in esteem, although Johnson has recently been the subject of some controversy.

At the New Yorker, Peter Schjeldahl was installed in 1998, and his cartridge appears to be running low on ink. In a recent review of the exhibition 'The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World', he declared it understandable but "too tiring" to resist some of the most appalling sewage to stain MoMA's walls in years. If ever there were a time for him to do his job and repel such effluence, it was then.

And mention ought to be made of the seemingly terminal literary decline of Jerry Saltz, critic at New York Magazine, whose

infantile rantings include a fanatical expletive-laced diatribe against British artist, Banksy, and a disgusting Twitter tantrum about a fellow Acela passenger who displeased him. As the Pied Piper of self-promotional idiocy his antics are an arrant disgrace to New York's critical field, displaying utter disrespect to the artists and art writers of later generations who work so hard to remain here and whom he, by his regrettably high profile, indirectly represents. With his recent suspension from Facebook, Saltz's readership must see the deteriorating writing on the wall—and Banksy isn't the culprit.

But quality is not the issue. The

As a reflection of the constant evolutionary brilliance of this city's art scene — and as it is the most widely-regarded arts section — all of the Times art critics ought be rotated every five years or so, and perhaps also at the New Yorker.

insufficient number of influential critical positions in New York renders those few extant jobs more important than they ought to be. It is the excruciating longevity that these people have clung to in their current and previous roles that sets such a dangerous lock-down on cultural privilege. Perhaps some of the British newspaper critics have been in their positions overlong, but their quality lessens the issue.

It cannot be for one person, or a knighted few, to be exalted into such positions for decades. Remaining in place with such disproportionate sway for so long conveys breathtaking egotism from them, and total complacency by their employers. There are many younger voices capable of taking up these rare and mighty quills.

As a reflection of the constant evolutionary brilliance of this city's art scene — and as it is the most widely-regarded arts section — all of the Times art critics ought be rotated

WORDS are the SWORD

'Words and the Sword' Darren Jones 2015 Vinyl

every five years or so, and perhaps also at the New Yorker. The suffocating presence of Smith, Cotter, Schjeldahl, et al. represents a sepulchral blockade to new ideas. In addition to Smith's stunning duration, Cotter has been at the Times nearly 25 years, Johnson is coming up on two decades, and Schjeldahl is approaching his 20th year at the New Yorker. Add to that their time at other publications and collectively these life members of the cultural one percent have been writing for over a century with generations of artists required to parade beneath their calcifying watches. (A note of criticism regarding his well established peers came recently from Yale School of Art dean, Robert Storr, but considering that he sits within that advantaged authority himself, his tone sounds dated, and his words lack urgency for the present or future, reading as a mere 'storm' in a teacup over a pinch of 'saltz'.)

The art world today is one barely recognizable to the one these writers entered so long ago. Now the largest private galleries possess greater floor space than major museums, whose exhibition programming apparently follows in these galleries' outsized footsteps; money trumps all to a towering and damaging degree;

internet transactions and social media disseminate new art and discourse — of varying relevance — at breakneck speed as artists, exhibitions, and trends rise and fall on daily tides of relentless information. Experience can ultimately be no match for the vigor and stridency of such change, especially in a city built upon it.

These critics now are as stubborn caps on the wells of artistic roil, keeping geysers of enlivening commentary under the rigid containment of their own preferences. The monopolistic taste-making dominance of the New York Times is hardly these contributors' responsibility, but the well-being of the art scene they preside over is; the incumbents have more than earned their retirements. If there is ever to be a healthy injection of alternative commentary into these, the city's most revered critical houses, then this cannot continue. New York's artists deserve far more diversity at the highest levels than they have thus far received. Such positions are the great bridges of the art world, conveying criticism to the general public. New critics adept and accustomed to the machinations of today's artistic landscape must be offered the task of driving the constancy, flexibility, and integrity of those choicest highways.

In Scotland — as a reminder of their proximity to the people and to remind them of humility's merit — monarchs are not referred to as "Your Royal Highness," but as "Your Grace." It is time for the crowned heads of New York's critical court to show some humility now, and abdicate their thrones. ■

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Quote: Émile Zola

"If you ask me what I came to do in this world, I, an artist, will answer you: I am here to live out loud."

Night Divides the Day ...

The Doors in *Break on Through*

John Link

The desire for high-class oddities is nothing new in sophisticated society. The educated have always loved this stuff. The eighteenth century English constructed "ruins" in their gardens that they viewed through smoked glass, making them seem older and more romantic. Gentlemen carried human gallstones to social gatherings to use for starting conversations. The French introduced high class kink when they gave us the Marquis de Sade who, twisted as he was, reeked of education and cultivation. Other times have responded to this craving in similar ways. What is new in our time is that the odd and freakish, when they conform to mannerisms laid down by Marcel Duchamp more than 75 years ago, receive greater notice than any other manifestation of visual culture.

Toughness is one facet of modernism that even postmoderns accept. Everyone understands that when consummate skill and control are over indulged, they tie art up in knots and prevent it from going major, as in Harnett and Cornell. Anything that looks "difficult" seems to have an edge, a bravery, a courage, both moral and aesthetic, which puts it ahead of its competition. Slickness and polish are anathemas, leftovers from the late French Academy and minor figures such as Bouguereau and Guys. When refined taste is confronted with a profusion of objects that are artificially sweet and sentimental, the very act of perceiving toughness gives relief from the saccharine stimulation.

Yet that same liberating toughness, carried into sheer silliness, has created unexampled pathology in our culture, a fact middlebrows mistake for a sign of advancedness and originality. Toughness without limit pressures art to go ugly, searching for newness and intensity in the world of the bizarre and the defective.

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Pollock's alleged urinating in Peggy Guggenheim's fireplace had nothing to do with his art, but the idea of it set the tone for the "high" vulgarity that has spread throughout the most refined levels of civilization. Rudeness is taken as a sign of seriousness, so we applaud Vito Acconci masturbating in the gallery and Joseph Beuys filling a museum with decaying fat. These acts are so singular that timid taste can feel certain they are "original." Ours is the first advanced culture to give such a high place to the picayune, rude or otherwise.

The early European avant-garde had used social and political agendas as part of its means. Taking this as a prescription, Americans began to view art and any worthy agenda as the same thing, adding a certain moral righteousness that comes from our puritan heritage. Educated people, including Motherwell himself, began discussing his *Elegies*, for instance, in terms of the artist's moral stance, as if that was their artistic content, and Pollock's all-overs, as if his social problems were their ultimate meaning. The art world was pleased that it could finally explain its most advanced stuff in terms that validated its importance to society, but failed to notice that these terms are as relevant to bad art as good.

Morris Louis's stain paintings, for instance, still get short shrift because they

are too pretty for advanced middlebrows to take seriously. They question his value because his intention was so out of touch with any issue except beauty. His work looks too museum oriented, too comfortable in that cloistered environment. Originality, supposedly, should transform how life is lived in the streets, not in the shelter of a museum. When beauty excludes any value but itself, as it does in Louis Morris, it is suspect because its only possible validation is itself. Middlebrow taste presumes that art, like everything else, must justify itself in terms of life as lived.

Just as painting a picture with words often results in doggerel, so also does forcing a picture to tell a story or examine a problem. When one medium emulates another it loses its nerve and generates inferior products. Joseph Conrad's Marlowe said to make the meaning of a tale glow you surround it with everything except "meaning." But today's most highly regarded artists fill their "works" with unequivocally labeled heroes and villains, like the worst morality plays of the middle ages. The government, Wall Street, social structures, and the like, are all easy targets. The universal hero is the artist him or herself, predictably positioned as the noble antithesis to the scapegoat de jour. There is no inner glow because everything is thickened with obviousness. The artist's intention is everywhere explicit, directing traffic so that "the point" cannot be easily missed.

Progressively more incongruous articles come with each new wave of increasingly freakish art. Most remain silent when these writers tell us that monstrosities are what an advanced culture is expected to deliver, that nonsense is profound. Who will say in public that Barbara Rose's lovingly illustrated essay about Orlan's plastic surgery is simply a potboiler for pseudo-cultivated art junkies? Who will say publishing her article was a waste of cultural resources? Who will say the true critic's vocabulary is validated by art that has muscle, and not vice versa? Everyone is scared stiff by the power of the professional art media.

After art places its premium on issues and prestigious acceptance, it gives up any claim to the detached authority that gives it the freedom to succeed as art.

After art places its premium on issues and prestigious acceptance, it gives up any claim to the detached authority that gives it the freedom to succeed as art. Once you start into how much of a chauvinist Matisse was about the way he painted women - and he was - it is hard to see his pictures as the great works they are. The distance necessary to experience his nearly absolute aesthetic authority sinks under the weight of his perceived disrespect for those who have been "marginalized." But Annie Sprinkle, who is as interesting an anti-artist as there ever has been, comes off as holier than her audience when she takes a douche in public, thanks to the "purity" of her intention and the clarity with which she presents it. She addresses our society's confused attitudes about sex and hygiene. Her success in the didactic realm diverts the audience's attention from her failure as an artist. Everyone is too timid to say that the douche as anti-art is no more valuable than the douche as non-art because in the "performance context" her douche emulates the art of theatre, and pushes theatre towards a place it seldom ventures. That her excursion into theatre is so boorish scores additional marks in the confrontation category. Art-as-confrontation and art-explained-as-confrontation feed off each other in a circle as eerie as it is polite. Sprinkle meets today's arty expectation and gets applause. Matisse could not get a show in New York if he were one of today's young artists. A new, "higher" type of kitsch has defeated today's Matisses, whoever they are, by serving the needs of our decadent middlebrow cultural structures. Instead of borrowing the products of high culture to dilute and distribute for the sake of profit, high kitsch campaigns against high culture itself. It replaces work of serious quality

with eccentric facsimiles that are interesting only because of the manner in which they twist seriousness, a twisting that always complies with the Duchampian schematic.

Never before has art that conforms to a prescription been so tricky and chameleon. It seems innocent, by virtue of its history of audience-abuse, of trying to maneuver anyone. Yet its agenda for art is bigger than any other in our cultural history. Radical kitsch is kitsch for the ages, achieving immortality by assaulting sensibility absolutely, so that it will remain forever rude, forever ugly, and forever unacceptable to the cultivated taste of any time or any place. It is kitsch made over and made up to look like universal eternal art. No longer just for profit, it is kitsch for glory.

Mannered "openness" to ugliness and risk imitates the seeming vulnerability of high culture, adding a new dimension to academicism, clothing its repetitive nature in an aggressive look it never used before. Radical kitsch is the ultimately successful Alexandrianism, one that shrouds its timidity in the trappings of vehemence, putting down taste so that it can be all things to all people, while excusing them from developing their own taste, punishing them if they do. This abuse of taste numbs its response to beauty, just as abusing children numbs their response to love.

Taste that is undergoing deeper and deeper isolation aches for anything that can penetrate its quarantine. Clearly, the

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art scene sees the gutter as a fertile source for subjects that can get anyone's attention, no matter how bored, no matter how numb. Just as Sprinkle got respect for doing in public what others reserve for their private lives, everyone went for Salle's nudes even though sex in Salle's pictures is sex at the distance, superficially raw, but wholly intellectualized and consequently quite dry and sanitary. It is sex stripped of sensation, sex presented exactly like the Victorians planned it, cut off from everything you feel, hear, smell, and see when you get laid. His crudely divided pictures injure the eye so thoroughly that their pornographic content seems positive by comparison. That someone might get off on them compensates for their impossibility as art. It is a case of redeeming anti-social uncertainty, where an infinitely valueless art is saved from censorship by its reference to a merely probable lack of social value - the sort of "art inspired" speaking in tongues the literary minded mainstream holds so very dear.

Despite finding charm in the gutter and a predictable hatred of censorship, radical kitsch is probably the most puritanical cultural phenomenon in our history. Because it cannot differentiate sentiment from satisfaction, it avoids them both, demanding that art violate taste, not satisfy it. It opposes the sensual pleasure that is the center of aesthetic life, suggesting that denial of aesthetic value is the ultimate aesthetic act, which makes no more sense than a claim that celibacy is the ultimate sexual experience. As profound as this may sound to enlightened middlebrows, it is daydreaming as only the over-educated and under-cultivated can practice, a romanticized attempt to perceive art through the intellect. Their attempt is so



A is for Apollo

Plainly, the fabric of a culture weakens when its educated members cease to function intelligently. Our culture has experienced dark ages before and we seem to have started another, an episode of barbarism cleverly disguised as enlightenment.

serious, so heavy-duty, so self involved. If only it were funny it might not be so pathetic.

But the void this daydream creates has won the battle for culture. It resists everything that is not deadened by Duchamp, and it has made that resistance stick with a thorough vengeance. Just as the abused child becomes angry in the face of love, abused taste becomes furious and vindictive in the face of even mildly successful art. Its fury takes many forms, including an almost obligatory denigration of Clement Greenberg, but the power punch that has been most effective is simply to ignore beauty, to keep it out of the light until it wilts. Angry middlebrow taste is why we don't know if there are any emerging artists of the caliber of Matisse. Angry middlebrow taste may be the reason there are no emerging artists of the caliber of Matisse.

Apollo never speaks to this absurdity, never shows us a path through this muck and mire, never takes the mainstream to the task it so richly deserves. Even the great Greenberg retreated from this mess for the last several decades of his life. Today, any ambitious artist who waits for some higher authority to come in and set things straight, like the young Olitski longed for Picasso's Kahnweiler, must wait in the dark. Our savior, if there is a savior, takes the side roads and lets things just get worse and

worse. Art, like life, is not fair.

Apollo's light may part the emptiness from time to time, yet it has not diminished the void's shadowy grip on our cultural resources. Light may outlast the darkness, but it cannot nullify the effect of darkness because darkness is nothing, and therefore not subject to further negation. This suggests that Apollo may be the lessor of the two powers, a suggestion that haunts our most ambitious artists. They are trapped in a long, melancholic tryst with a nebulous destiny that barbarism keeps from their sight.

Plainly, the fabric of a culture weakens when its educated members cease to function intelligently. Our culture has experienced dark ages before and we seem to have started another, an episode of barbarism cleverly disguised as enlightenment. Kitsch for the ages is an eternal dead end; once entered, it appears to allow no exit. Clearly it wants to destroy our most ambitious artists because they are its only natural enemy. Ironically, the chance these artists have at greatness has declined under the "protection" of a free and democratic society, where cultural decisions are more and more under the influence of the educated but tasteless masses.

Sorry to say and devastating to admit, the good stuff has simply been outvoted. The ground Apollo must walk upon to address this scandal is scabrous and stinking, if he is willing to walk at all. The hardness of art requires those who still want to have their go at the heights to do so in isolation, as it has since Impressionism. And now - seemingly - with no help at all from the forces of serious art. ■

John Link, Painter, Emeritus Professor of Art, Western Michigan University, Professor of Art and Department Head, Virginia Tech, Michigan Editor, the original New Art Examiner, one time member of the New Art Association Board.

Quote: Edgar Degas

"Art is not what you see, but what you make others see."

One Way To Think Like An Artist

“Our heads are round so that thoughts can change direction.”

Ken Turner

Thinking about ‘thinking’ is one way of paying attention. We can look, think, envision, gaze, fancy, ponder, dream, reflect, stare into the distance, imagine and/or remember things as they swim into our minds. It is doubtful any one of these ‘methods’ could result in a new thought. To be successful we need to be ‘outside’ ourselves so that we can observe ourselves thinking.

If it comes from ‘outside’ we are able to observe and speculate from some other discipline of thoughtfulness, rather than fall into mere habit taught from education or our culture. If achieved, the thought will be surprising and perhaps dangerous. How can we recognize a completely new thought and why does it happen, or need to happen? A new and often startling thought requires a new thinking process; it is not something that happens naturally.

The normally understood idea of thinking for rational human beings is that our brains are embedded in systems regulated by a hierarchy of knowledge. This poses such questions as: what system are we using? How is this hierarchy established? What is the rationale, if any? Is it ever possible to have a genuine original thought, even if we recognize usage of language systems as an exhaustion of meaning? Where can we find that thought, *sui generis*, that advent, opening up further thought into an unknown territory?

Francis Picabia, painter and Dadaist, once said, “our heads are round so that thoughts can change direction.”

In order to try and penetrate the idea of what this means and what thinking is, I want to equate thinking with drawing. In other words to look at what seeing and thinking means in terms of what our perception of the world is founded on, what happens when we see? and what do we see? More philosophically perhaps, through

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phenomenology, I want to investigate ideas of seeing and thinking that might bring to light a different kind of world.

The obvious authority on the subject of phenomenology is Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s book ‘The Primacy of Perception’, which mainly deals with painting and how we see. Edmund Husserl in ‘Ideas’ however, deals with thought: both these books interrelate.

James Turrell, the light artist, was once asked what influences guided him and his practice. He said:

“We are often unaware of how we perceive, and so we’re unaware of the fact that we have a strong part in creating what we behold”.

The world consists of height, width and length but also depth. In other words, as Herbert Read said, “thinking is experiencing the experience.” Cubism for example is an idea of extra dimensions, both sensuously and cognitively.

Hopefully my correlation of drawing and thinking will find fertile ground when it comes to thinking differently and being aware of William Blake’s observation that “we become what we behold.” Paying attention with intention to thought processes describes an approach where consciousness is not as we normally conceive it. Seeing what we see when drawing implies the notion of thought as contingent to drawing but the two are interwoven, coupled as one through decision and rejection, a process every drawer knows.

This process of thinking and drawing may

“... thinking is experiencing the experience.”

produce something different if the thought process is developed in pursuit of the reality of the subject seen. That is, we begin to see more, the more we look, and the more we think. Thinking about thinking in itself, changes the look of the drawing. This happens, leading, possibly, to no end to thinking and drawing, and we find ourselves at the edge of impossibilities, where new territories happen that we had not been aware of at the beginning, and find ourselves beholding something strange, risky, seemingly crude or frightening, often elevating: the Turrell work practice.

Allen Ginsberg talked about selectivity of words as ‘un-selective’, but nonetheless as selective in the sense of caring about where those thoughts came from. Conversely, to make distinctions between different kinds of thought with a view to another’s mind is dangerous; as we know, taking somebody’s mind often results in stale thought. Paradoxically and importantly, Ginsberg also spoke of the “first thought is the best thought”. In this case this must depend fundamentally on where you’re coming from, what your philosophy of intentionality is, what is already a sedimentation in your mind, this all being part of your skill and purpose. Perhaps,

My concerns are with the poetics of drawing as a means to thinking.

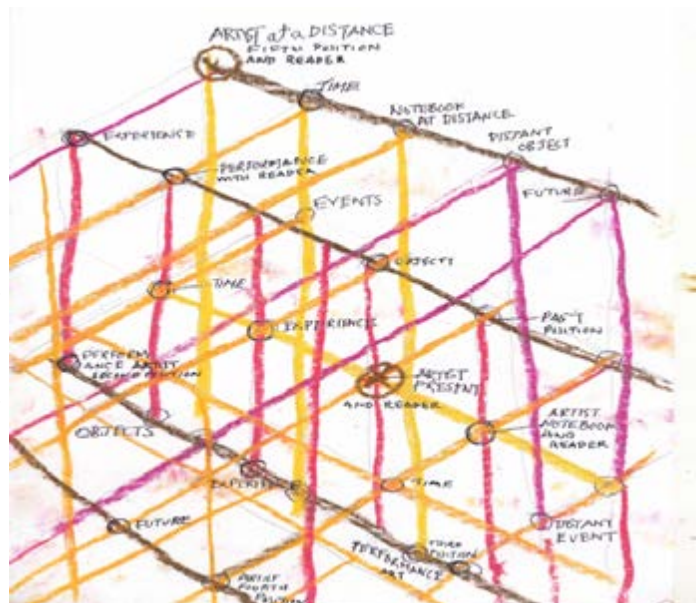
with those first flashes you can be all encompassing: catching yourself at your first open thought.

My concerns are with the poetics of drawing as a means to thinking. In the philosophy of aesthetics and the language of form, the ethical consideration is also of importance. What we make, what we do, rests on an assumption of ourselves as thinking beings. Artists and creative people generally set themselves within a crucial mode of action and thought that resembles

a representation of themselves. When we are asked to explain ourselves what do we say? Whatever it is, we disclose ourselves, that is, who we are, where we come from, where we might be going. Ask yourself also why you do what you’re doing. These are crucial questions and relate directly to how you think. “Why do I do what I do?” should be asked of every contemporary artist and/or thinking being.

Physicality of the body is also important. How we root the body in relation to mindful thought that sets its sight on topologies from which the world is never the same; where that which we once knew and held as firm, is now seen as ruin. Thinking around the circularity of ideas and the search of the sensory within the sensibility of thinking we expand ourselves as points moving into directions of increasing dimensionality of distant levels and planes of perception (see drawing below). Sometimes we lose points or paths of directions; nevertheless points of endless beginnings can be found in thinking afresh.

This is where I need to emphasize the possibility that a reflexive, cognitive perception, one that is allied to an aesthetic. This can reach out not only through the boundary of convention but actually find, within the space of drawing and thinking, into another kind of dimensionality, one that is almost beyond comprehension and certainly outside worn out conventions. However, we often start with the known,



but we hope that the known is always beyond or outside the last point, one that is based on ignorance of what we think we know.

Often it's a matter of thinking without knowing, it's a kind of thinking without thinking where we put ourselves outside the comprehensible. In that world we are then in a world of the extra-dimensional environment. This is when it becomes exciting.

Works of art are about thought processes. They are about ideas of the future. In this sense, form, in art and thought, is often revolutionary. The history of art evinces this. We should also find this in contemporary life and art. Hopeful futures in art are also hopeful ideas in life. This is where art and life come together.

In the social/political world today something crucial is taking place. I doubt at this moment whether physical protest is a viable action. Also, critical expositions are probably ceasing to be effective; written theses on alternative thought no longer are actually thought through into action. We are in need of a diametrical reconstruction and also deconstruction, if we use the word in its proper sense, from its base of philosophical knowledge of experience; a practice of enquiry into many layers of interpretation on the same object or thing. The question is, did philosophy go wrong in discussing consciousness, immanence and the transcendental? The artist is in the position of power in the sense of always remaining outside conventionality and the academic, as are individuals working from a different sense of education. Therefore we need to look to the artist/individual in education, to comprehend future constructs of thinking, as another way of seeing the world.

I'm talking about a change in perception of thinking itself through seeing. In looking at the world as we think we know it, to a new manner of difference in interpretation; to open an investigative approach concerning a more speculative approach to reality.

Look anew at the world as an object full of

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objects and include ourselves in this approach. Now we can begin to separate one object from another. Thus, a separation begins to happen within thought. Speculatively, objects are then seen as things 'living' outside thought, and also thinking as a thing in itself. As an artist, I would put this experience not only of consciousness, but also of a geometric dynamic into a dimensionality beyond three dimensions. This means that cognitive and intellectual approaches are necessary in thought and image.

Surprisingly perhaps, this approach has its own poeticism of expression in which the emotional is contained in intellectual ideas. Thankfully, artists and thinkers are in a position to strengthen an opposition to the process of commodification and corruption of culture.

The drawing (page 17) is an indication as a kind of speculation on how new thought can take place from other dimensions and further to distancing oneself from the world as known. The trick, as I have indicated, is to look at the world as a system of separate objects outside thinking. I don't think this is fantasy but is a way of thinking when drawing. That is, drawing involves looking not once, but many times and the object changes in perception. Drawing, thought and life can thus be correlated in the sense that they all have to do with the way we see the world, and also in this sense the world can change, become different socially and politically, through art. ■

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The Degeneration of the Avant-Garde into Fashion

Edward Lucie-Smith

The Times – God bless its little cotton socks – has just been celebrating the triumphal return of the 1990s as a creative force. “Suddenly contemporary art” it crowns, “was part of popular culture. The Royal Academy’s landmark Sensation show in 1997 was a turning point.”

It was so indeed, but not exactly in the terms the article intends. Here in Britain, Sensation marked perhaps the very last moment when it was possible to talk about an avant-garde in the visual arts with any appearance of authenticity. The show was widely hailed as the beginning of something – as the moment when the visual arts in Britain turned over a new leaf, as the moment indeed when British artists surged to the very forefront of innovation, displacing both the French and the Americans, who, each in turn, had carried forward the baton in the race to create what was entirely and indubitably new.

Looking back now, the exhibition seems, on the contrary, to have marked the instant when the hands of the clock moved on, and the whole notion of avant-gardism ran out of steam. To quote the Times once again: “The beginning of the decade was all about exhibitions in abandoned warehouses and empty office blocks. By the end, thanks to Damien Hirst and his gang of barricade-storming rebels and Charles Saatchi, the ad-man-turned-art-dealer, it was more champagne and cocaine and exploding auction prices.” Only a little further on was the day when Tracey Emin RA, once high priestess of the YBA Movement, would celebrate her 50th at Annabel’s, London’s most establishment nightclub, in the company of Princess Eugenie, granddaughter of H.M. the Queen.

The avant-garde came late to Britain, and

Art ... was characterized by its relationship to what already existed in the recent past. This impulse has been further defined by the fashion for ‘appropriation’ – that is, for making exact copies of images that already exist as a paradoxically innovative act.

imploded late. Long before 1997 there had been signs that the impetus to innovate was beginning to falter. It is, I think fair to say that most of its energy was already exhausted towards the end of the 1970s, when the terms Post Modern and Post Modernism came into vogue. Art was no longer defined by its urge towards novelty, by its eager embrace of some definition of the new. Instead, it was characterized by its relationship to what already existed in the recent past. This impulse has been further defined by the fashion for ‘appropriation’ – that is, for making exact copies of images that already exist as a paradoxically innovative act.

It is possible to look at the present situation in the visual arts using several different perspectives. One is the immense expansion of the contemporary art world. The old avant-gardes were confined to Western Europe and the United States, with perhaps an acknowledgment of what happened in Russia in the first two decades of the 20th century, and a dim consciousness of certain developments in Latin America. This expansion owes much to modern communications – first to the fact that colour printing became radically cheaper,



which led in turn to the birth of the musée imaginaire or museum without walls. Secondly, to the digital revolution and the birth and rapid growth of the Internet, which has made possible the immediate diffusion of images from a huge variety of different sources. Google, and ye shall find.

This means that it is increasingly hard to see any clear direction in the general progression of art. If we are looking for the proverbial 'shock of the new', it often seems that the shock of the exotic (something unfamiliar, coming from a culture very different from our own) will do just as well instead. It is, of course, necessary to acknowledge, when saying this, that the original 20th century avant-garde made free use of certain exotic sources – look for example at the relationship between Cubism and what Picasso described as “l’art nègre”.

Of course there is yet another paradox here, which is that the appeal of African tribal art to Picasso and a group of his artistic contemporaries was precisely its (to them) hermeticism – the fact that they in fact knew little and cared less about what the tribal artists were trying to express. Now we not only see too much – we are also in a position to know too much. Just go to

... go to Google, and ask the right questions. It is impossible to resist asking, knowing that the answers are within such easy reach. Today there is really no such thing as an innocent eye.

Google, and ask the right questions. It is impossible to resist asking, knowing that the answers are within such easy reach. Today there is really no such thing as an innocent eye.

Another important factor here has been the influence of official institutions – in particular museums of modern and contemporary art. These offer one of the main channels through which contemporary art now reaches a mass public. One may argue that television and the Internet are in practical terms just as important, but the fact is that these institutions see themselves as being entitled to govern the agenda. Their priorities are set by two things.

First, those in charge of them (though they may vigorously deny this) see themselves as the high priests of a cult. A lot of the more characteristic manifestations of contemporary art, as presented by official organizations, now quite openly call for the response, “Lord, I believe – help Thou mine unbelief.” Or, in more demotic form, “I believe you – thousands wouldn’t.” There are, notoriously, often no objective correlatives that can be used as measures of quality, or even of interest.

Secondly, museums – not surprisingly – feel a strong sense of responsibility towards those who supply their funding. The problem here is that the givers of money often tend to measure success in brutally populist terms. How many people are coming through the doors? What is the demographic breakdown, in terms both of generation and of class. Are a full range of taxpayers getting their money’s worth?

The result has been a rush towards supposedly populist forms, chief among them performance art and video. The

problem here is that what museums deliver using these media, often in spaces not very suitable for the purpose, compares unfavourably with what the audience gets from better established forms of artistic expression that overlap – i.e. with theatrical performance (nowadays often very radical and imaginative, in addition to being a great deal more disciplined), and things seen in cinemas and on television. In addition to this, where film is concerned, the technical resources available outside the museum or fine-art context are often much richer and more sophisticated. Money talks – this is why the best television commercials often far outstrip, in terms of technical finesse, anything presented as ‘artist’s video’. It is no wonder that a number of artists who made their reputations in that field have now made the transition to being career film directors. The recent career of Sam Taylor-Johnson offers a case in point.

It is worth noting, in this context, that looking at painting or sculptures is, in general, a different kind of looking from looking at video or even at performance. Video demands that you look from a fixed point of view, and the same is true of many, though not absolutely all, examples of performance art. Video and performance both impose a fixed time span on the audience. With paintings and sculptures the situation is different. You look from the angle and distance you choose. You look for

Fashion designers also, as it happens, have much less self-consciousness about ‘appropriation’ than today’s would-be avant-gardists. Fashion designers have always been magpies

a moment, or for a much longer span. You are free to walk away, then look again from a different viewpoint. Both physically and psychologically it is a very different kind of experience.

In this connection it is perhaps worth noting that Tate Modern’s current director, Chris Dercon, is due to leave the institution in 2017, to become director of the experimental Volksbühne theatre in Berlin. In recent months, Tate Modern, having made a big deal about providing new spaces for performance art, has gone rather quiet on the subject. One wonders if its enthusiasm for this art-form will survive Mr Dercon’s departure?

A conspicuous feature of the contemporary art world as we now have it is its close alliance to the fashion industry. To a large extent, this is something inherited from the earliest phases of the Modern Movement. One thinks in particular of the huge impact made by Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes on the Paris fashion industry. The impact of the

Ballets Russes on the leading pre-World war couturier Paul Poiret is well known, but the influence was more general than this. Maison Paquin, for example, hired Leon Bakst, one of the chief Ballets Russes designers, to sketch ensembles for its collections. Chanel had a Russian phase, with outfits that echoed the shapes of Russian peasant tunics.

During the past year, probably the most successful exhibition staged by any major London museum has been *Savage Beauty* at the V



Installation view of ‘Romantic Naturalism’ gallery, Alexander McQueen Savage Beauty at the V&A (c) Victoria and Albert Museum London

& A, a retrospective devoted to the work of the designer Alexander McQueen. More than 480,000 people saw it, and special late-night showings had to be laid on for the two weekends at the end of its run. Public enthusiasm for the event is, in current circumstances, not surprising. The fashion industry commands powerful PR. It is also much less bound by theories and intellectual constraints than the art world and it certainly has no inhibitions about luxury, and no shame about the money required to support luxury. Yet fashion is conservative in this sense – it gives you something to ‘see’. However ridiculous some of its visual inventions may be, fashion design never neglects the purely visual effect.

Wear it if you can afford it. Wear it if you dare. And you can be damn sure that people are going to look at you and that they will probably remember what they saw.

Fashion designers also, as it happens, have much less self-consciousness about ‘appropriation’ than today’s would-be avant-gardists. Fashion designers have always been magpies – they borrow without shame and recycle without inhibition. The point, for them, is to give what is borrowed a new twist. If the audience doesn’t recognise where a particular idea or effect originated, so much the better. With appropriation-art the opposite is the case. You have to know what is being so sedulously copied, otherwise you’re out of the loop.

One refuge for avant-garde aspirationists, lacking visual inventiveness, has been to take refuge in supposedly radical politics. The visual arts have had an uneasy relationship with politics ever since the French Revolution. It was particularly strong in France during the first two-thirds of the 19th century, and reached a kind of climax in the days of the Paris Commune. This involvement, and the price that could be paid for it, is illustrated by the career of Gustave Courbet.

There was certainly political involvement between some elements of the visual arts avant-garde and the political left during the first half of the 20th century, but the

relationship was always uneasy, as the history of the Surrealist Movement amply illustrates. One still gets a great deal of talk on this subject today. The current Venice Biennale, due to finish on November 22nd, features continuous readings from the three volumes of Karl Marx’s *Das Kapital*. Whether anyone will pay attention to the words of this text – anymore than most of the traditionally religious pay attention to the actual words of the Mass when recited in Latin – must, I think, be seriously in doubt. In fact, left wing events, safely quarantined in museums, are now a familiar form of preaching to the converted. A good example, here in London, was Mark Wallinger’s installation, *State Britain*, which won the Turner Prize in 2007. This was a faithful reconstruction of the Peace Camp by the late Brian Haw, which existed for a while out in the open, directly in front of the Houses of Parliament. The Tate Britain web site rather smugly notes that: “Mark Wallinger’s work is noted for its succinct social commentary and political resonance.”

Yes, indeed. And forgive my asking, but if this now almost-forgotten work ever had any real political impact, in which location would that have been more likely to happen?

The avant-garde, as we once knew it, is as dead as the proverbial dodo. It is not going to rise again like Lazarus. It’s time we looked for something else, even if we don’t yet know what that is. London is now, for better or worse, a world metropolis. It is full of bright young artists from everywhere you can think of, all enthusiastically making work – much of which can be at least loosely described by the two nouns ‘painting’ and ‘sculpture’. Definitions can wait. Forget the museums. Go to the bustling galleries in Shoreditch and take a look. ■

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Post-Modernism – its origins, features and relevance

Roland Gurney

‘A new world began in 1910’ said Roger Fry who organized the Post-Impressionist art exhibition at the Grafton Gallery in London that year. The new world in question was modernism in art, and the arts generally, which was effectively launched by that exhibition which included not only the work of Gauguin, Van Gogh, the Pont Aven School and the Fauvists but also artists such as Pablo Picasso in his early Cubist phase and George Braque.

Modernism in Anglo-American literature started a bit later, arguably with the publication in 1922 of both T.S. Eliot’s five-part poem *The Wasteland* (with its hyper-modern cut-and-paste techniques and parody of earlier work with simultaneous references to Buddhist religion and philosophy) and James Joyce’s novel *Ulysses* (with its pioneer stream-of-consciousness approach and rejection of narrative and characterisation) - later to be taken even further by Finnegans Wake (1939) a Post-Modernist novel combining stream of semi-unconsciousness in a dream-world with a new meta-language unintelligible except to polymathic multi-linguists). In architecture modernism came along even later with the Bauhaus school in the 1920’s curiously influential on modernist artists such as Kandinsky and Klee, then the brutalist architecture of the 1940’s to the 1960s regarding housing and office-space as machines for living and working in. In music modernism began shortly after the Post-Impressionist exhibition with Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912) ridiculed in Vienna and Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring* (1913) which was jeered and catcalled on its premier in Paris (at that time the home of the avant-garde in everything) and ridiculed by the uncomprehending critics. Such popular rejection has arguably become a touchstone of Modernism and Post-Modernism ever since.

Modernism has been such a dominant force right across the arts, fine and applied,

... some argue that Post-Modernism is itself a mythical concept without any real meaning and that Modernism is still an ongoing prevailing influence on the arts and society

literature and culture, over the past century with its rejection of tradition, rules and conventions accompanied by many successful experiments in form and language that some argue that Post-Modernism is itself a mythical concept without any real meaning and that Modernism is still an ongoing prevailing influence on the arts and society (Malcolm Bradbury in *Modernism*, contra Leslie Fielder who goes for the full Post-Modern pitch). However, starting with architecture it seems clear that Post-Modernism does have definable features and characteristics and is therefore a relevant concept to be used, with caution, in contemporary discourse on art, the arts and culture.

Modernist architecture emphasized functionality above artistic expression by the architect and demanded ultra-modern materials, notably glass, steel and concrete, while rejecting any kind of ornament and decoration. A classic example of modernist architecture was the Seagram Building (1954-58) in New York, a glass and steel tower designed by Mies van der Rohr, famous for his aphorism ‘Less is more’. Post-Modern architecture rejects the basic tenets of Modernism and aims to replace the severe functionality of Modernism with a dazzling mix of hybrid designs including reversions to Baroque and even classical elements, mingling columns with modern materials and the brightest colours. So pastiche, parody and playful references to the past became the new norm. James Stirling’s *Staatsgalerie Stuttgart* (1980-84) combines classical allusions with polychromatic



Staatsgalerie Stuttgart (First photo)

marble and hi-tech details. It seems good and bad taste fly out of the window – a feature that will later become prevalent right across the arts. The architect Robert Venturi proposed Las Vegas as the archetypal modern – or rather Post-Modern- city as a place of signs and symbols, expressed in its illuminations, with no depth or meaning beyond what is visible. So in Post-Modern design form does not express function but positively undermines it.

In music Post-Modernism is expressed in Benjamin Britten's War Requiem and Philip Glass, whose musical epics seem to last an eternity if not actually expressing it, and combine modernist elements of atonality and twelve tone method with the capacity of free-form jazz and classical Indian sitar music to expand outwards without any concept of development or conclusion.

A classic piece of Post-Modern music is John Cage's work 'Silence' 'performed' by an orchestra assembling, sitting and departing, for 4 minutes 33 seconds without playing a single note. Curiously the modernist composer Satie had his Post-Modern moment when his work 'Vexations' although composed in 1893 (to express his view that 'Love is a sickness of the nerves') was finally premiered by John Cage being performed 840 times at the piano for 18 hours in New York in 1963. A successor is Damon Albarn, a pop musician creating monumental works in this style such as 'Marco Polo'. John Tavener composed post-modern music with throwbacks to Gregorian Chant and Greek Orthodox services of which he is a

personal adherent.

As regards literature, Post-Modernism kicks in with such concepts as early as the mid-1950's 'nouveau roman' in France pioneered by Camus with his novels of the absurd 'The Outsider' and 'The Plague' coinciding with the 'New Wave' in French cinema. Another is 'Hiroshima Mon Amour' where narrative is either distorted or abandoned altogether. Its European equivalents are the 'anti-novel' in such works as Samuel Beckett's 'Malloy' and 'Malone Dies' and his play 'Waiting for Godot' which is actually a classic work of the Theatre of the Absurd. Harold Pinter's whole dramatic output from 'The Birthday Party' (1959) to 'The Homecoming' and 'Mountain Language' (1993) involved Post-Modern distortions of language and manipulations of reality with attributional pastiche. Camus, Beckett and Pinter were of course Nobel Laureates. Other Post-Modern dramatic developments include 'happenings' where drama unfolds without any preconceived ideas or script or attempt at characterisation or planned denouement and 'street theatre' where organisations or communities can do their own thing with or without any audience and as part of a greater festival or otherwise. Whereas modernism had a formal and aesthetic constituent, it is arguable that Post-Modernism repudiates this and looks for a choric, community aspects, which, in a strange way, hark right back to Greek drama over 2,500 years ago. As a sixties leftish guru once said 'Revolution is the festival of the oppressed.'

Post-Modern novel innovations included William Burroughs and his cut-outs (a fiction equivalent to collage in art) incorporated in his seminal work 'The Naked Lunch' (a viscerally explosive junkie memoir) and B.S. Johnson's 'Trawl' which was loose-leafed for the readers to re-arrange as they would. Such gimmickry has not produced any kind of serious literature and the major American novelists of the Post-Modern era-Saul Bellow, John Updike, Gore Vidal, have not bothered with this stuff but stuck to the mainstream inhabited by their predecessors Faulkner and Hemingway.

In world literature terms, however, the



Plans for a building, an installation or the building itself...you choose

'magical realism' of South American novels such as 'One Hundred Years of Solitude' are loaded with Post-Modernist elements already highlighted. On the other hand, the Booker Prize for literature, which is a literary equivalent to the Turner Prize for art (both in prestige and in monetary value) has, unlike its art counterpart, a positive distaste for literary works outside the mainstream of narrative fiction. Nothing experimental has ever won it since its inception in 1970 (strangely coincidental with the birth-pangs of literary Post-Modernism.)

Equivalents in poetry are 'concrete poetry' which has random shapes of letters without any kind of form or meaning, 'light poetry' where the words are spelled out in the dark to an audience who are kept in the dark once the performance ends and there is no permanent text of any sort. Performance poetry which emphasizes spontaneous improvisation without written text although rap poetry – by far the most successful and popular of performance poetry – actually has a Post-Modern ironic reversion to a fairly demanding rhyming pattern, albeit with irregular lines combined with completely streetwise urban patois and younger generation lingo, abbreviations and references. It is noteworthy that European poets who have won Nobel Prizes such as Derek Walcott (whose epic poem 'Omeros' celebrates two St. Lucia fishermen in a long narrative written entirely in terza rim), a the strict metre used by Dante in his Divine Comedy, and Seamus Heaney, whose work is mostly strictly structured in the tradition of his great predecessor W.B. Yeats

who won the Nobel prize in 1923, have shied away from Post-Modernist poetic practice.

On the other hand such literary theories as phenomenology, which tries to find intrinsic meaning apart from language and structuralism and post-structuralism which seeks to find meaning in the textual analysis alone have not impacted on Post-Modernism in contemporary literature (Professor Terry Eagleton's book on Literary Theory does not even mention Post-Modernism once.) Rather post-Modernism finds further justification in feminist, Marxist and neo-Marxist and psycho-analytical approaches to literature and literary interpretation. These purport to explain the barbarism and destructiveness of the twentieth century in the age of mass-media and multiculturalism with a strict relativism, deeming strict standards such as have been applied in the past impossible under such conditions. Such an attitude suggests poetry is impossible after Auschwitz (whereas Primo Levi's work shows that poetry is possible even in Auschwitz) and rides on the back of Walter Benjamin's dictum 'There is no cultural document which is not also a document of barbarism,' although again there are plenty of works to contradict this.

Post-Modernism in art and the fine arts looks rather different. Its origins start with the institutionalism of art and the arts, the iconic event being the building of the Museum of Modern Art in 1929. The first Director Alfred Barr immediately set about creating a massive store of modern art value both publicly and privately funded. This (plus the massive upheavals of WWII) led to the replacement of Paris by New York as the centre of global art both in terms of monetary value and practitioner prestige. The results were Abstract Expressionism (Jackson Pollock's spontaneous splashes and Mark Rothko's Post Piet Mondrian vast monolithic and almost monochrome squares) in the 1950s and then 1960's Pop Art (Andy Warhol's Bake Bean Cans and Marilyn Monroe silkscreens and Roy Lichtenstein's large-scale jazzy comic cartoon figures and couples complete with bubbles) set the Post-Modern stage as part

of American cultural imperialism's constantly expanding its boundaries reaching its present day domination of social media (Facebook's 1.2 billion users, Twitter with its multi-million followers all addicted to the total trivia of the everyday lives of popular cultural celebrities and U-Tube where the public upload endless films and clips at the rate of at least 100000 a day).

Since then Post-Modernism's new orthodoxies (replacing any concept of an artistic avant-garde as in early modernism) have created a vacuum filled mainly by curator-inspired concepts and Turner prize judges of what is important in art and fuelled by an auction-dominated art market which is once again in one of its periods of manic excess (as in the 1980s and 1990s before the dotcom crash and again in 2001-2007 before the financial meltdown). The top price for a work of art now exceeds \$200m. and recently the record price for a Cubist Picasso nude reached \$43m.

So the Turner prize has now been dominated for over 15 years by so-called installation and conceptual art. Relatively recent examples include the Iraq War installation near Westminster, a room with a light going on and off (the creator said 'all I can say is the light goes on, the light goes off'), Boat-Shed-Boat which was a wooden boat which the next day reverted to a wooden shed and then back to a wooden boat again, a disposable small-scale 'house' and this year's winner which was an architectural collective whose creation had for its centrepiece a wooden dining table and chairs. Another recent winner made a CD of her singing self-composed songs and another was a kind of community video. These are all evident examples of Post-Modernist irony at work. However, what is manifestly clear is that the Turner Prize has effectively relegated painting to the 'dustbin of history'. Arguably the three greatest British post-war artists Francis Bacon, Lucien Freud and Frank Auerbach never won it and no painter has in the current climate any chance whatsoever of winning it. The one bright light as far as painting is the BP Portrait Prize, as valuable if not as

However, what is manifestly clear is that the Turner Prize has effectively relegated painting to the 'dustbin of history'. Arguably the three greatest British post-war artists Francis Bacon, Lucien Freud and Frank Auerbach never won it and no painter has in the current climate any chance whatsoever of winning it.

prestigious as the Turner Prize, which gives some social and monetary value to painters even if in only one area of their craft. While modernism in art between 1905-25 spawned dynamic movements from Fauvism, Cubism, Imagism and Vorticism to Constructivism, Futurism, Expressionism and Surrealism and at the same time produced an astonishing array of artists and body of work such as Cezanne, Matisse, Monet, Gauguin, Picasso, Kandinsky, Mondrian and Klee, Post-Modernism has not done this. If anything its biggest achievements have been outside the fine arts, notably in drama.

This leaves us with the Saatchi BritArt legacy from 1995 onwards, focussed particularly on Damien Hurst and Tracey Emin. Hirst was a pioneer installation artist. His pretentiously but Post-Modernly named 'The impossibility of death in the mind of something living' was in fact simply a monster full-size formaldehyded dead shark floated in a solid glass case. He followed this up with a mother and daughter take based on slaughterhouse products namely a bisected cow and calf housed in a glass box. He (the richest artist in the UK and possibly in the world) and Jeff Koons (who has made kitsch cool through his Post-Modern structures and 'paintings') are now evidently the most celebrated artists on the globe and pop-singer Madonna has been heralded as the most Post-Modern performer on the planet because of the way she dresses and presents herself on-stage. Consequently, as

Donald Kuspit has suggested, 'artistic creation' is now increasingly replaced by 'aesthetic management.' Even Tracey Emin has moved from the world of BritArt with her Margate Beach Hut, her 'Unmade Bed' and her 'Tent' embroidered with the names of everybody she has ever slept with (127 names at the time) to Professor of Drawing at the Royal Academy.

Generally supposed to originate from the aftermath of the totally unprecedented traumas of the two world wars (with total deaths in excess of more than 75 million and successions of other successive colonial and post-colonial wars. Post-Modernism is put forward (by Frank Kermode et al) as a consequence first of cultural attempts to come to terms with those catastrophes and then more latterly to express the twenty first century's prevalent 'incredulity towards meta-narratives' i.e. a loss of belief in the great belief systems of the past including a failed Communist system in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and in history, progress and truth themselves apart from science and technology especially in the so-called civilised western world. It should be noted that there are still over 1 billion Catholics, 1.5 billion Moslems and 1 billion Hindus and Buddhists in the world who do not share such loss of belief.

This has coincided with exponential communications explosions such as the Internet and its associated social media. So

we now have a hyper-real world of Marshall McLuhan's 'global village' befuddled by a constant bombardment of images of dreams and fantasy fed by television, cinema, streaming channels, the universe of video-games, shopping malls and Disneyland. In this context Post-Modernism has an essential role to play in criticising and dissecting the extremes of mass-consumerist society and contemporary multi-cultural mass-media and putting forward the kind of art which can have lasting appeal and some relation to its predecessors in the great tradition (including the great Impressionist, Post-Impressionist and Modernist artists) and speak to the quintessentially human condition with form and content that is accessible and meaningful and does not require curatorial sponsorship, explanation or apology. Such art might even have a chance of reflecting something of beauty and truth in its expression and redemption in its outcome (the classical ideals revived by Renaissance artists) so as to stand 'for all time' as Ben Johnson, Shakespeare's contemporary correctly foretold. ■

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LIVING OFF, NOT WITH, A LEGACY

The Dilemma of the Penwith Society

Chris Smith

The Penwith was formed in the late 1940's when the members were truly avant garde,. It has enjoyed 25 years of St Ives Modernism under the likes of Hepworth, Nicholson, Lanyon, Berlin et al. That history has no bearing on its future. It has gone.

Once St Ives had over 150 artists' studios. It has now become a premier holiday destination. Commercial pressure has reduced the studio stock to just 35. The art community replaced the fishing industry,

sail lofts making perfect artist studios, and now those same lofts make perfect holiday accommodation. Whilst there are between 1500 and 2000 artists in the Penwith Peninsula, there appears to be little by way of artist communities, meeting to exchange views, ideas and challenge opinion. The reduction in the number of artists working in St Ives has probably resulted in the Penwith no longer being a social hub for the art community.

Historically, Art Societies are often created by a group of like minded artists, who are probably excluded by the art establishment at their time. Therein lies a problem, as the reason for a Society's creation will cease to be relevant over time, as their art becomes accepted. Similarly, Art Societies tend to focus their activities around their own members to exhibit together and that may limit the viability of a Society, as the individual aims of successive generations of members start to take priority over the collective aims of the Society.

The apathy of members leads to Societies being run by a handful of members who may fall into the trap of putting personal interest before that of their Society.

Perhaps the structure of a Society is no longer the right vehicle for promoting artists. That is almost certainly the case for the younger artists. They may consider that their own aims are best aligned with like minded artists, forming loose groups to exhibit together, sharing the costs and management of each exhibition, and then moving on, the groups in a constant and invigorating state of flux.

When the Penwith Society was formed, its members had lifetime membership. The number of members was restricted with the intention of ensuring that only the best Cornish Modernist artists became members. That process still remains today. Only time and the hand of the grim reaper is likely to change the current membership, so there is little room for new blood. The members themselves may, understandably, be adverse to change, particularly as one of the major benefits of membership is a right to exhibit through the year in a prestigious gallery for a modest annual subscription.

Whilst there are many outsiders who think the Penwith Society has become moribund, who think they could do better, the reality is that change can only come from within the Society. Only its existing members can bring about change.

Every now and then Societies need to ask the question "What is the current and future purpose of this Society?" This needs to be an open discussion with its members,

associates, users, community and other interested parties. Nothing should be excluded, all possibilities should be discussed, no matter how radical. From this should form an embryo of what the future looks like for a Society. That embryo then needs to be broken down into a renewed statement of purpose, a defined structure, and an assessment of financial requirements – essentially a business plan. All these decisions rest with the Members.

Once St Ives had over 150 studios. It has now become a premier holiday destination. Commercial pressure has reduced the studio stock to just 35.

Art Societies need to be very clear about how they are going to finance their activity. If the plan is to just have a space to exhibit artists work, without reliance on sales, then the members of that Society must wholly fund the Society through subscription. In the early days, staffing may be covered by enthusiastic member volunteers but that enthusiasm will wain over time and then staff will need to be employed and managed. The costs may become greater than the members are prepared to cover. The Society then has to consider bringing in some commercial aspects to fill any shortfall. It would be fair to say that most artists lack the skills of finance, sales, and marketing that would be needed to manage a commercial operation. That inevitably means either employing people with those skills or relying on volunteers. In both cases the Members may feel marginalised as they will no longer be at the helm. It is possible to re-assure Members by frequent and relevant communication about the current state of the Society. Silence is not an option.

The Penwith Society prides itself on its independence from funding by a public body such as the Arts Council. As many Societies have found to their cost, funding from a public body comes with terms and conditions that can be restrictive, and

The Penwith Society prides itself on its independence from funding by a public body such as the Arts Council.

ultimately can be terminal for the Society.

The Penwith Society is more fortunate than most, as it owns outright, part of the Penwith Gallery complex.

The remainder of the Penwith Gallery complex is owned outright by the charitable company, Penwith Galleries Ltd. Being a charity its aims are directed towards the development of subsidised studios and providing gallery space to educational establishments and artists. The aims of the Company are therefore different than those of the Society. The Society is devoted to promoting the art of its members.

Historically, the Company has managed the entire gallery complex so that effectively there is only one "commercial" operation. However, the Company and its board of Trustees are required to abide by the rules set by Company and Charity Law. That should not be an issue where the majority of Trustees are external and not connected to the Society but where the Society members have become the majority, as is now the case, there is a serious risk of conflicts of interest. My understanding is

that this matter is being addressed but, according to data in the public domain, nothing has yet changed. This is a serious issue that should be rectified urgently. There may even be an argument for the Company to cease managing the entire complex, returning control of the Society's property to the members and the Company pursuing its own charitable objectives as an independent activity under the management structure actually embedded in its Memorandum and Articles of Association. This would further minimise the risk of personal conflict of interest. External Trustees, with the right skills, are a valuable resource and that, coupled with the art knowledge within the Society membership, could form a force to be reckoned with.

The Penwith is unique, it once had a world renowned heritage, and could become a significant force in the art world again. However that rests solely with the members and Trustees. It's their choice, carry on without change and potentially wither on the vine, or grasp the nettle, and create a Society and Art Charity embracing the future. There is no half way house. ■

Chris Smith was mentored by the renowned Plymouth figurative painter, the late Robert Lenkiewicz. He became a full time painter and printmaker on moving to St Ives 2013. He is an Associate of the Penwith Society and a Member of the Porthmeor Print Workshop.

The Sky Above, Earth Below Redux

Jac Kuntz

One hundred and twenty-three years ago, the world set its gaze on Chicago. Would this new city of one million citizens, only 22 years removed from the Great Fire, pull off a world's fair, the grand Columbian Exposition? To the surprise of everyone – including those promoting the initiative – the city did.

A major challenge was finding housing to house and entertain the fair's more than 27 million visitors. One such place was the Chicago Beach Hotel (1892-1927), an Art

Deco-style resort located at 1660 East Hyde Park Boulevard. The hotel's developer reportedly brought up sand from the bottom of Lake Michigan to extend the shoreline. Years later, that shoreline was pushed eastward and South Lake Shore Drive was paved.

The hotel was located quite close to the Hyde Park Art Center's (HPAC) current location. HPAC's newest installation pays homage to that lost shoreline. For *Shoretime Spaceline*, textile and installation artist,

Karen Reimer, also dredged and imported sand into the gallery—40 tons of it.

This relocated mass of shoreline now fills HPAC's front room. One could hear the clunk...clunk of people's steps echo on the boardwalk that encircled the large mound. The wooden planks were mixed with local lumber and preserved wood came from trees which predate Lake Shore Drive – a contribution from artist and environmentalist, Bryan Saner. The space's garage-like door opened, facing east toward the lake; an apartment complex and its parking lot now shield the view that the work commemorates.

Above the sand hung a tapestry that quivered with the wind of the open air. The patch-worked sky resembled stained glass, sewn together in cool hues of blue, azure, sea foam and indigo. The fabric was pulled taut, showing the material's fibers: overlapping pieces of cotton, silk and linen, thatched, embroidered, and tie-dyed. The pieces were different sizes, fit together in both gridded and radial patterns, like city neighborhoods and the ripples in a pond.

Rarely do pieces provide the opportunity to be viewed from below and above. Upstairs, viewers could examine the canopy from above, the fabric coming to meet one's feet like lapping lake water. The woman who collaborated with Reimer to color the fabric stood on the balcony while a family of swimmers discussed the temperature and color of the lake's water that morning, when they earlier went for a dip: "It was more this shade today," one said, pointing at a square of steel blue.

Below, visitors walked along the boardwalk and around the sand, hesitantly gauging how to interact with the work. Slowly, they began to participate, taking one step to press a shoe print into the sand,



Karen Reimer Installation Courtesy of Spencer Bibbs.

then eventually kicking off their socks and shoes altogether to walk through it. Families were soon taking pictures as if documenting an enjoyable day at the beach. Children began sliding around in play, up to their knees in sand, kicking around dirt. An older man strolled along the boardwalk, head cocked back as if counting clouds, and began to whistle.

On the surface, *Shoretime Spaceline*, which was on view at the Hyde Park Art Center May 22 to August 13, was so easy to take pleasure in that few probably felt the melancholic undertones as

I did, ambling slowly through the sand. The typography of the work shifted and changed as people began to engage with it—make it their own—just as this great city has. Displaced shoreline, displaced people. Sand, dirt roads, pavement, and steel. Over a century later, few of time's remnants remain the same.

Reimer's work revealed the city's lost essence, but one needed some knowledge of the neighborhood and history to understand this. Whether or not the audience took the time to read the accompanying wall text for the jolt back in time wasn't clear, but they certainly were immersed and enchanted.

Art need not always shock, preach, or hypothesize. A dissection of theory or the power of a political statement need not be the sole mark of success. Sometimes a work can simply capture and make incarnate something we can't control. Reimer's work embodied this city's only two constants: the Chicago sky and its lapping lake below.



Jac Kuntz is a writer and artist from Atlanta. She holds a painting BFA and recently graduated with an M.A. in New Arts Journalism from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She is currently working on a journalistic project on contemporary art in the South.

Not So Secret Avian Icons

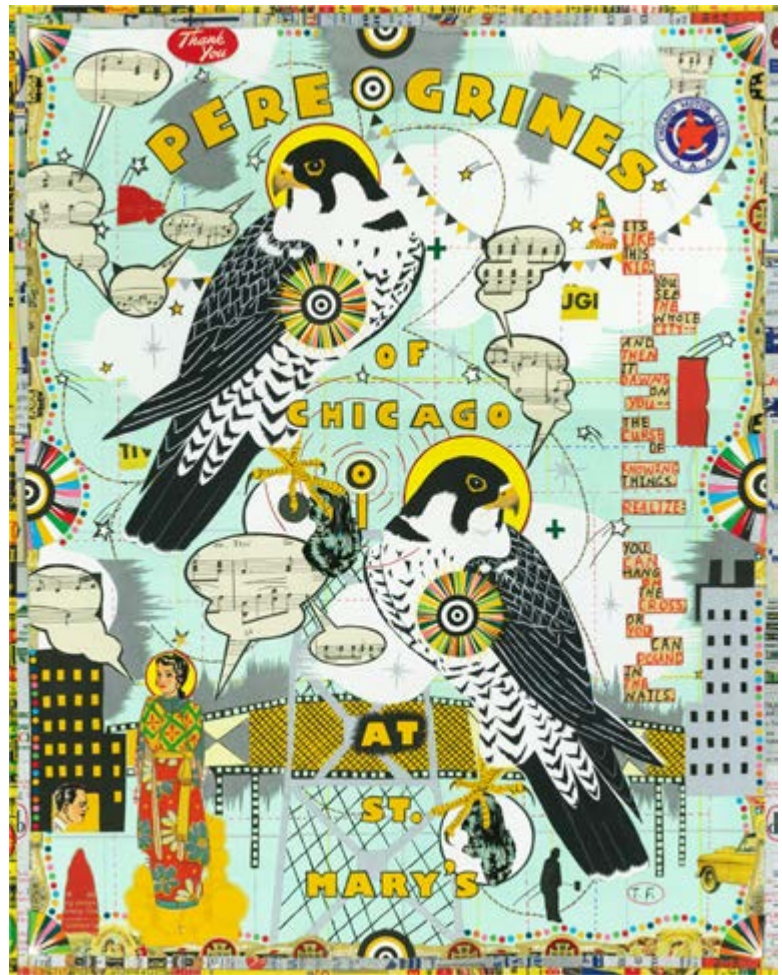
Michel Ségard

Walking into DePaul Art Museum's exhibit of Tony Fitzpatrick: *The Secret Birds*, on view through August 21, one confronts the artist's collection of colorful collages. A bird lies in the center of every work. Each depicts a different species and each bird is surrounded by imagery drawn from pop culture. Most pieces have a border of cigar bands, matchbook covers and magazine cut-outs. What does this observance of the everyday all mean?

Fitzpatrick uses everyday urban imagery and a common man's naïve, even comic book style, to express the role religious faith can bring to a common man's life and to one's art. In these works, birds serve as the main symbols for a variety of spiritual ideas, much the way the Catholic Church employs saints.

The exhibit is divided into two parts. A smaller room houses earlier works, part of DePaul's permanent collection. These pieces reveal the influences on Fitzpatrick's work. *The Music of Slaughter*, 1999, is a black and white drawing that recounts Chicago's slaughterhouse history while, at the same time, alluding to Picasso's *Guernica*. *Ghost of a Chicago Fishshack* from 2006 hints at Chicago artist Notley Maddox's Great Dark Bird series of the mid '70s. And *Baby Doll* from 1999 is an image of a shapely woman "entertainer" viewed through a keyhole—a clear homage to Ed Paschke. (Fitzpatrick is also a poet and has published a number of books, one of which is dedicated to Paschke.)

The more recent work is housed in the larger gallery. There is a strong ritualistic feel to this group. Working in mixed media, including collage, he starts with a subtle, almost invisible, grid on which he adheres



his imagery, almost always a border cobbled together from bits of magazines, cigar bands, or other printed material.

In the image's center is the main subject, always a bird. And in the center of the bird's body is a collage variation of the Catholic "Light of Christ" symbol. In Christian iconography, this symbol is sometimes depicted as rays of light emanating from behind a dove (symbol for the Holy Spirit). Fitzpatrick uses it to identify the bird as a spiritual entity (a little like a nature worship spirit or even a Catholic saint). Sometimes, he even adds a halo behind the bird's head to reinforce the metaphor. The result is that the works feel very much like Greek Orthodox icons—items of veneration.

Fitzpatrick's Catholic upbringing permeates the images in this room. You

will find churches, church bells, crucifixes, etc, judiciously sprinkled here and there in the backgrounds of his images. Fitzpatrick also includes lines from his poetry within each image. Perhaps the most pointed in this collection are the two lines: “You can hang on the cross, Or you can pound in the nails” included in *Peregrines of Chicago (the Guardians of St. Mary’s)* from 2014.

In a particularly poignant piece (one of a few without a border), he pays homage to 13 famous female singers in *Lunch Drawing #37 (City Bird)*. He cites their names, starting with Edith Piaf (“piaf” is French slang for sparrow) at the top, continuing with Czesha, Kelly Hogan, Amy Winehouse, Etta James, Emmylou Harris, Janis Joplin, Billie Holiday, Joan Baez, Aimee Mann, Aretha Franklin, Neko Case, and finishing with Annie Lennox at the bottom.

The piece is festooned with musical notation within cartoon speech bubbles, bits of empty crossword puzzles, and the ever-present grid of fine lines. In this piece, the “light of Christ” symbol on the chest of the bird begins to resemble a CD. Fitzpatrick’s grandmother was a strong influence on him and this particular work alludes to her saying about birds: “for the price of a crust of bread you can hear God sing.”

Fitzpatrick’s blending of religious sources and surrealist inclinations are clearly evident in the earlier piece, *Trojan*, from 2006. The central figure is a gladiator with a horse’s head mask making him resemble a minotaur. The figure holds lightning bolts in his hands (symbolizing Thor or maybe Zeus) and is pierced with arrows like St. Sebastian. In the background, a war is brewing with fighter jets and exploding bombs filling the sky while, on the side, a house “weeps” over the carnage. Is the figure the aggressor and are the jets trying to bring down this Mediterranean Godzilla?

One pair of images from 2014 makes the point about the universality of religions. *Lunch Drawing #58* represents Palestine and has a green long-beaked bird as the central image on a pink background with the

Palestinian flag in the upper right. In the background is an outline of the Dome of the Rock. Fitzpatrick’s two lines of verse read: “The birds gather greenly, and fearful, bathed in ghostly rocket light.” The phrase “May peace be upon you” appears in Arabic along the bottom.

Lunch Drawing #59 has a black and white, short-billed bird on a field of blue. The Israeli flag is in the upper left and the verse reads: “She flies from Tel Aviv to the wall, moving the silences tree to tree.” The bottom of this image holds the same phrase in Hebrew. But this image’s background is filled with starbursts and skulls that conjure explosions rather than spiritual light. Sadly, neither image is particularly peaceful and the phrase rings a little hollow, like a closing prayer that no one really expects to be answered.

I have one quibble with the installation of the recent works in the larger room. These pieces are rather small, averaging around 9 x 12 inches. They require close inspection and careful contemplation. But several of the pieces are nearly seven feet up from the floor. No one but a few basketball players can appreciate those.

Fitzpatrick is clearly a product of Chicago’s Imagist aesthetic. But he combines the preciousness of Cornell boxes with the gritty toughness of Nutt and early Paschke, creating a narrative style that is poetically stirring. His gritty style is in part a result of his being a tattoo artist for a time. And the fact that he is self-taught endears him to Chicago collectors, who tend to be very fond of outsider art. But don’t be fooled. Fitzpatrick is not an outsider artist. His thinking is deeply philosophical. He is also an accomplished draftsman when he needs to be. His naïve style is just that—a style. ■

Michel Ségard is a past reviewer for the New Art Examiner and a freelance author and designer of exhibition catalogs. He taught desktop publishing at the School of the Art Institute for 11 years.

Between Certainty and Doubt

Evan Carter



Between the Ticks of the Watch, installation view, 2016
Photo: Tom Van Eynde

The Renaissance Society has been a forerunner of the contemporary avant-garde since its founding in 1915. Over the past year, it marked this legacy with a series of centennial exhibitions, panel discussions, film screenings, and performances that displayed the Ren's customary confidence in its role as a grounded bastion for creative exploration.

Weighing the celebration of the Ren's history and renowned reputation against the contemporary cultural moment, it seems fitting, as well as wise, that the subject of its first post-centennial exhibit should be the notion of doubt.

Between the Ticks of the Watch, exhibited at the University of Chicago from April 24 through June 26 features works by an ensemble of artists that, in one way or another, reflect on the notion of doubt in their making. This is neither an attempt to define the word nor assign any kind of hierarchical value to a space or situation where doubt may be generated. Rather, these works offer up an array of aesthetics

revealing how doubt can shape perceptions of identity and influence choices we make vis-a-vis our world.

Walking into the gallery, the space feels sparse and open. One's attention may be easily drawn to a set of sculptures by Kevin Beasley entitled *Your Face is/is not Enough* (2016) which take command of the room and confront the viewer. The sculptures reference to the figure is made most obvious by the fact that they are topped with gas masks adorned with complex

forms that are simultaneously whimsical and grotesque.

The gas masks, already loaded with connotations of authoritarian violence, are humanized through the addition of paint, foam, and fabrics of both bright and muddy colors. These colors and forms make reference to handmade clothing one might recognize from various world cultures while some of the forms play with pop culture iconography like one gas mask adorned with Mickey Mouse ears.

It is in this pastiche of multicultural schemes and the accompaniment of megaphones that the authoritarian iconography becomes absorbed into a kind of global people's army. This does not feel like an exclusively liberal call to arms against authoritarian oppression but rather a consideration of the potential complicity with power structures that conflicting social strata must negotiate in the 21st century.

A questioning and dismantling of social

constructs is even more clearly investigated in two series of photographs from the 1970s by Martha Wilson. In *A Portfolio of Models*, the artist performs in costume for the still camera a set of feminine archetypes such as 'the housewife,' 'the working girl,' or 'the goddess.' Each photograph is accompanied with text that presents the horoscopic dilemma of each figure's state of being.

Wilson's work is both the most legible and possibly the most challenging to social convention. Like much of the work in the gallery, it appears modest in scale and production value but draws viewers into an intimate space where one quickly realizes that there is much more to be read here than one might expect at first glance.

The line of questioning is expanded upon further by the other three artists' work in the space. Peter Downsborough's text-based installations are subtle but do not go unseen. They are the invitation and decoder for this exhibition. Walking into the gallery, we are flanked by wall text in a work titled *AS A PLACE SET (2016)* in which those very words line the edges of the wall. Reflection is feigned by having the text appear backward on one side placing the viewer in the middle of the false reflection and activating the entryway as a space.

Similarly, *AND AS THERE (2016)* offers a perceptual rubric by connecting a line of black tape on the floor to a black rod hanging from the ceiling that barely touches the floor where the taped line ends. What appeared to be one line in space is actually two distinctly different objects and gestures that tell us "indeed, things in this room are not so simple in their nature."

With that invitation, we can delve into the abstract realms of Goutam Ghosh's paintings and assemblage constructions in which familiar materials take on an esoteric poetry. In works like *Nuri* and *Further Border (2016)* abstract marks, evocative of text and schematic sketches as well as modernist figuration, inhabit tattered un-stretched canvas and what could be a sack of dry goods hinted at by some purple printed text. When asked to question not only the origin of the materials but also the subjects

of the drawing/painting we can return to a pluralistic narrative where ritual meets authorship and commerce meets expression.

These conflicting modes are further present in pieces by Ghosh such as *Hug Me* and *Worm Pool*. Constructions of found materials are arranged in mechanical forms that look as though they could be kinetic. It is in these works that mechanics and physics play into a painterly hand and eye. They are in a particular dialogue with Falke Pisano's video and sculptural work, which engages questions of scientific and mathematical truth across cultures and practices.

All these works again cast doubt on what we take for granted. What is most interesting about this exhibition is how the work stands in as a kind of conduit to an immaterial experience. This can be said of most artworks but this curation seems more cognizant of this idea and deliberate in its instigation of an art experience that exists more fully outside of the object itself.

Looking back nearly half a century to Minimalism, artists like Robert Morris and Donald Judd were rethinking the language of objects. A legion of artists began creating works that engage the viewer's sense of space while challenging their established notions of form and representation.

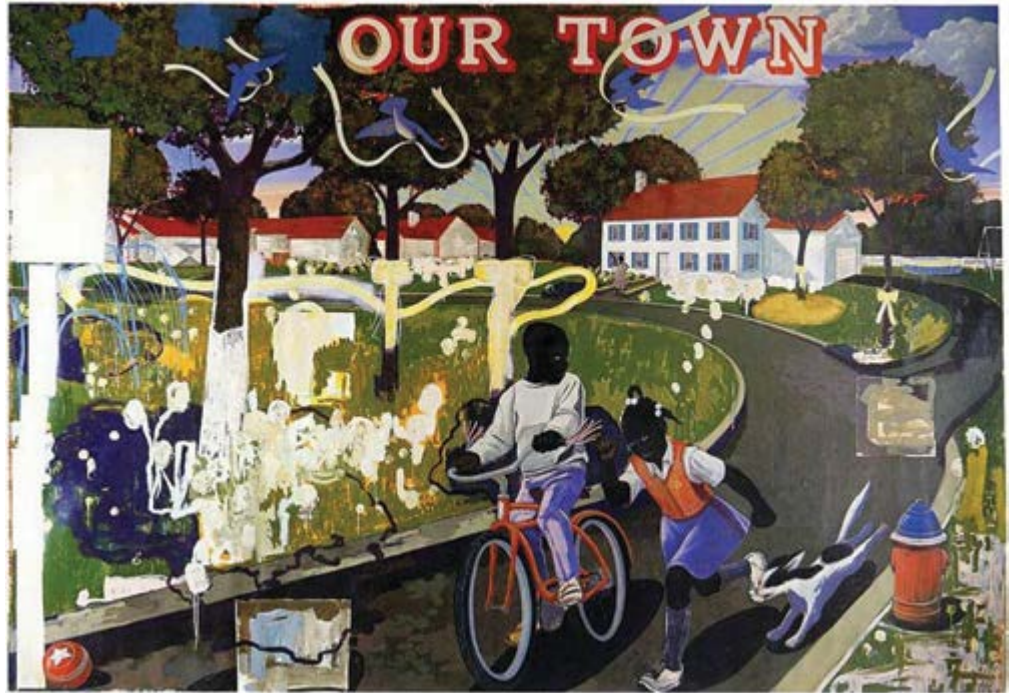
It is in *Between the Ticks of the Watch* that we see this language taking on subjects and generating further questions about established constructs in our world. There is beauty in the notion that nothing is assumed but everything is considered. It is rare to encounter work that tackles the nature of subjectivity in such a curious and productive way. With this first glimpse in its second century, we can rest assured in the Renaissance Society's continued commitment to critical inquiry. ■

Evan Carter hails from Worcester, Massachusetts. He studied Painting at Mass. College of Art in Boston and is currently an MFA candidate in the Department of Visual Art at the University of Chicago.

Black Faces Matter: to Kerry James Marshall's Art History

Kate Hadley Toftness

There can be no shying away from the lofty aspirations of *Mastry*, Kerry James Marshall's aptly-titled retrospective now on view at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, through September 25. It then travels to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.



Kerry James Marshall 'Our Town'

To say that the show is epic merely describes the scale of storytelling that unfurls across the vast pictorial narrative that Marshall has created. We are in the realm of history painting. We are in the "School of Beauty, School of Culture."

Marshall's oft-stated objective, in his catalog essay and an opening seven-minute video, is to make black figures evident in art museums. Marshall claims that his paintings are not a form of self-expression; they are created "exclusively as platforms for an idea." The idea is visibility.

In the exhibition's opening gallery, two of the smallest paintings in the show are offered as touchstones for the larger project. "A Portrait of the Artist as a Shadow of His Former Self" is a mere 8 x 6 ½ inches, for which Marshall used a classical medium of egg tempera on paper, creating perhaps the smoothest surface of all the paintings on view.

With slight gradations in pigment, Marshall painted a black man with a black

hat and jacket on a grey-black background. His eyes, teeth, and a triangle of his white shirt are fixed starkly within this dark shape like flickers of light within a shadow. Marshall was inspired to create the work after reading Ralph Ellison's novel, *Invisible Man*. He points to the book as his key to a way forward in painting.

Most of the works in the show are figure paintings and the figures, without exception, are rendered in uniform black paint. From these first barely-discernable bodies to forceful tableaux of African American life and unabashed nudes in later galleries, *Mastry* is an exercise in visual literacy. We are challenged to read the paintings with the imprint of art history behind our eyelids while, at the same time, we are encouraged to see them anew.

Marshall's Garden Project series, a group of large paintings that represent scenes from public housing projects, draws on an image bank that includes Disney bluebirds and Italian frescos that depict Adam and

Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden. These paintings are often described as everyday images of African American life, and yet they are layered with codes, fragments and distortions that disrupt the idyllic landscapes.

"*Many Mansions*" is particularly haunting. Three young black men tend to flower beds where colorful baskets, filled with stuffed animals, have been placed. The abstracted dark ovals, representing their shadows, seem to possess a kind of gravitational force. It is as if these men were tending to graves, perhaps their own. A line of text on red ribbon, "In my mother's house there are many mansions," ties the frame.

Biblical references by way of halos, sometimes wings, adorn numerous figures in Marshall's work—later in the exhibition, a dimly-lit side gallery is reserved for religiously-inflected works. The dark red walls (used nowhere else in the installation) traffic in the familiar tones of galleries devoted to sacred works such as illuminated manuscripts and reliquaries. The curators are signaling the artist's own exploitation of traditional museum practices that lend power to certain works.

Marshall's paintings are a form of institutional critique, says Helen Molesworth in her catalog essay, challenging the idea that encyclopedic museums are neutral artistic ground. He does not take the artist-as-curator route more commonly used in contemporary art but rather focuses on painting about painting in "the grand tradition of the artist as a chronicler of social truths." Marshall makes his point: until black faces and bodies are familiar sights in museums, art history will remain incomplete.

Marshall is working from within the system. This approach is most clearly illustrated in his recent series of artists' portraits in which black painters hold court at their easels before in-progress self-portraits, filling in their images via a paint-by-number outline. Nevermind that the patterned textiles of their clothing defy the regulated colors. Oversize palettes in their hands, flaunting saturated colors,

confront the viewer as if smaller abstract paintings were inserted into the larger portraits. These paintings are nesting dolls that reveal the full range of the artist's technical prowess.

One of the artist's portraits in this series is currently absent from *Mastry*, per Marshall's request, because it was loaned to the Met Breuer's current *Unfinished* exhibition. Marshall's painting is considered there alongside works by many so-called Old Masters such as Rubens, da Vinci, Dürer, David, Hals, Titian, Turner and Rembrandt, exploring the question of when is a painting finished. In fact, Marshall's work is complete but it begs the question of when his artistic mission will come to fruition.

While Marshall has vaulted into some higher order of artists given space on hallowed museum walls, every canvas he makes is conscious of the propaganda and privilege embedded in those same walls. The absolute blackness of Marshall's subjects and their formal play between visibility and visibility calls to mind the phrase Sojourner Truth printed on her *carte-de-visite*: "I Sell the Shadow to Support the Substance."

That phrase acknowledged the technology of photography and her understanding of the complicated power of selling her own image. As a former slave, her assertion of copyright over the photograph was a further movement to reclaim control of her body and its circulation.

Visitors who read the MCA exhibit's paintings as either Marshall's personal vision or his experience of black America miss the carefully-executed references to established art history that structure the works not only as expressive documents, but precise arguments marshaled against the highest echelons of visual culture that have long neglected depictions of black lives. ■

Kate Hadley Toftness investigates collection-based teaching and public programs at museums and alternative spaces with permanent archives. She holds a B.A. from Yale University and an M.A. from the University of Chicago.

Society Defined in Shapes

Annie Markovich
Managing Editor, Chicago



Face Down, 2008. Courtesy of the artist. © Martin Puryear, courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery. Photography by Jamie Stukenberg, Professional Graphics

Martin Puryear has penetrated the art world hierarchy in a subtle, courageous journey, carving through the corridors of power to reveal a highly sophisticated message about Art. He also offers the viewer a message that explores racism in the U.S. — a rare expression of moral outrage whispered in masterfully skilled and beautifully constructed sculpture with metaphor, whimsy and deep commitment to visual art in these times.

While researching for this article I found in-depth analyses going back to the 70's in Art Forum by Judith Kirschner and John Ash. Puryear's work exists on several levels. One is the abstract imagery superbly crafted with metaphorical references to African huts and totems, primitive utilitarian objects like baskets, cooking and planting tools, and imaginative constructions that shelter. Another is the playful characterization on the Black experience in a White man's world.

While the drawings and prints are in and of themselves Art, they are also the artist's way of working out his sculpture. In them we see the marks, mistakes, erasures, and multiple ideas translated onto paper.

Martin Puryear's "Multiple Dimensions,"

the recent exhibition held at the Art Institute of Chicago is about the soul felt love of material and human life. It lifts the veil of hypocrisy about a free country for all in America. Puryear's drawings and sculpture remind us of a time before political correctness, diversity, racial discussions were popular culture.

With the skill of a master, Puryear transformed wood into sculpture as he experienced the life of people in Sierra Leone while working for the Peace Corps in 1978. In the first rooms are 20-plus careful contour drawings (rendered on napkins and brown wrapping paper) of women, men and children that Puryear met in Africa while teaching English and Biology. There are two ways of looking at these works: the initial drawings (figurative, botanical, framed Western style renderings describing a human face, a child, shelter and trees) and the abstract, mysterious, haunting sculpture which came after the drawings. They represent two worlds of seeing, two ways of approaching reality, sometimes in opposition but always successful as works of Art.

In 1966–68 Puryear studied at the Swedish Academy of Art. Woodworking skills used in boat building that he learned there are employed in many of his works on view today. Rune Stone, commemorating Puryear's walking trek through Norway and Sweden in the 70's harks back to Scandinavian memorial stones. Shaped like

*... the emotional content shouts out
and leaves this viewer stunned at
one man's depth of commitment to
major contribution to the history
of art, artistic excellence and social
justice*

Martin Puryear's "Multiple Dimensions", is an experience aside from the soul felt love of material and human life that has lifted the veil of hypocrisy about a free country for all in America.

earlier heads of his work, these heads reappear throughout Puryear's oeuvre. *Phrygian* looks like soft sculpture, it could be foam, or hollowed out wood, even the folds in the cap look natural. Closer examination reveals the solid red cedar meticulously shaped like the cloth it is meant to evoke. *Phrygian's* grand entrance appears in the painted red cedar from a distance. Surprisingly it is possible to view it in this gallery.

During my second visit to the exhibition, I overheard two men talking about the books enclosed in a glass case — the Jean Toomer books that are difficult and important reading for a white person, like me. "What did you pay for yours? ...At one time you could get a Puryear from her... I called her yesterday, ...not a chance. Do I have to look at this?" he asked referring to the books by Jean Toomer. Toomer won the highest literary achievement of the Harlem Renaissance writing a masterpiece of African American writing, a blend of fiction, poetry and drama set in rural Georgia and Washington, D.C. "Cane" is a tragic story about Becky, from the South, a white woman who carried and bore a Black man's child. Toomey's stories are memorials to women who bore the brunt of racial discrimination in the deep South.

Puryear would come to sculpture from his drawing, for they were his way of developing an idea, working it out on paper. He said it was a different way of incising, "a kind of carving that got me to how things are made." Certainly the impeccable craftsmanship present in his sculpture belies being called only craft. They are raised to a level of Fine Art reminiscent of the time before the industrial revolution



Untitled, 2009. Courtesy of the artist. © Martin Puryear, courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery. Photography by Jamie Stukenberg, Professional Graphics

when utilitarian objects were made with careful unselfconscious imagining — when the dichotomy or the digression between Art and Craft was unknown or suffered. Exhibiting the openness of ideas, Puryear enjoys working with opposition and the fertility of co-existence between oppositional forces like gravity and weightlessness.

Jug drawings, drypoint with brush and gray wash, are eerily reminiscent of *Shackled* and *Face Down* in their head shape. *Quadron*, a soft ground etching and aquatint, refers to a mixed race person, a historically charged notion. This piece suggests submission, sacrifice, abasement and, for all its masterful execution of materials, terror. The drawing for *Bearing Witness* later becomes a welded bronze plate, on permanent exhibit at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center, in Washington, D.C.

In the final stage of development, although what meets the eye looks perfect, they are not, as Puryear said. Given the nature of some of the wood the artist employs, rosewood, cedar and tulip poplar, it is the artist's conscious intent not to highlight his maverick workmanship.

Puryear's work is easily absorbed into the mind as they are reminders of something unnamed. What is difficult to digest is the content of works for Becky, whose story is poetically told by Jean Toomer. ■

Marion Taylor and Kerry Harding, *There And Back Again* at the Penwith Gallery, St. Ives.

Kerry Harding's, *Pink Plough 2*, had an impact with muted tones but a strong feeling of landscape so much so I found myself in the place, making several returns to this piece to see what it was it evoked. Other pieces from her work, *Beacon Gorse 11* and *Glimmer* also raised images of my own feelings for the atmosphere and response to similar landscapes and the emotional pull it can raise. Harding's painting had a feeling that they could be expanded further with even bigger atmospheric landscapes which would allow you to enter her space and embrace what drew her to these images in the landscape. I felt I wanted to see more. Marion Taylor's orange and black background to her opening piece in the "Toxic Dark Waters series" captured the real atmosphere of a busy seaport at night. I appreciated the technical skill in keeping the drama of the piece but not over painting it, to add more detail. In "Early morning across the Thames" she captured the atmosphere that an early commuter would feel as they surveyed the Thames. (Price range of work £300 - £4500) Mounting the show cost £2,400. *Review by Karen H Saxby, Plymouth College of Art*

Through June the Penwith Gallery is hosting an exhibition of new paintings by Robert Jones, alongside Kerry Harding and Marion Taylor's show, 'There and Back Again.' Robert Jones's atmospheric and distinctively styled oil paintings of coastal seascapes and motifs (prices range from £420 - £4200.) benefit from having their own separate space - The Studio Gallery. There is a problem however - a paucity of information; the visitor is left in the dark as to what is going on; there was nothing that obviously and clearly delineated or introduced either the members' work, or Harding and Taylor's exhibition. The main room and café area feature an eclectic, high quality, often classical, mix of members' paintings, sculpture, prints and ceramics. Much is reasonably priced; e.g. £48 for an unframed Susi Gutierrez screen print, 'B'; in fact, there are quite a few affordable, sometimes quirky, gems on offer. At the high end a beautiful Chris Buck bronze, 'Only Ordinary Men' (£3,350) or Luke Frost's cool 'Pale Brilliant Blue Volts' (£3400). Marion Taylor's 'Toxic, Dark Water. Hong Kong' paintings (£1100 - £4500) accurately evoke their title; they sit alongside her 'New Zealand Journeys' installation (£6000, or, £300 per panel), which strikingly utilizes the artist's photographs of New Zealand as supports for oil paintings. Kerry Harding's haunting, often both ethereal and surreal, land and seascapes, many of which reference the local area, provoke unique imagined narratives in the mind's eye (£1500 - £4000). *Review by Guy Barkley-Smith Plymouth College of Art*

Youki Hirakawa: 'Secret Fire' Anima Mundi, St Ives. Through a mix of video, video installation and still image, this collection that obliquely explores themes of time and transience, inviting the spectator to enter a reflective world. Time slows down, senses sharpen, calm prevails and we are prompted to ponder the passage of time immemorial and mortality itself. Meaning and deference to the spiritual permeate Hirakawa's work. Beautifully presented drawings, drawn in charcoal mined by the artist himself from a former coal mine near Leipzig - 'The Grain of Woods' (x 9) - delicate and just plain lovely; and then, a single edition video installation - 'Vanished Tree - Teufelsberg' - hypnotic and poignantly sensual. (Prices range from £300 to £16000.) This is clever art; modern and unequivocally spiritual. Also, of particular note is 'Fallen Candles' - a single line of 24 synched videos in a darkened space, of burning, fallen candles, which mesmerises. The video installations, respectively, 'Shadow of a Frame - A Man Drawing on a Wall' (£3600) reminds of an animated Malevich 'Black Square' and 'Burning Second' - is sad and bewitching.

My only criticism is that in places the lighting impeded full appreciation of the still images and the positioning of the monitors showing the 'Secret Fire' and 'Lightning Tree - Bonfire' videos, at uneven floor-level, leant against the wall, was throwaway and detracted rather than enhanced. If possible view with an understanding of Hirakawa's ambitions and concerns, and an awareness of the found materials used - read Joseph Clarke's Introduction and ask questions of Lauren, who mans the gallery most days and helped Joseph and Youki hang the exhibition. *Review by Guy Barkley-Smith Plymouth College of Art*

1 WHAT'S ON IN CORNWALL AWARDS 2016

The initial round of voting for What's on in Cornwall Awards saw 32,000 individual votes cast to select four contenders for each category in the 2016 event. Co-hosted in Eden by What's On editor Lee Trehwela and the Cornish comedian Jethro. Tate St Ives won best gallery As Jo Clarke of Anima-Mundi said on his Facebook, "The good people of Cornwall obviously prefer their art galleries closed. Perhaps visit and cherish some of the open ones you numpties. Anima-Mundi, The Exchange and Kestle Barton in particular are all working hard to bring you very good progressive stuff to wake you from your slumber and doors are open wide to welcome you still."

2 BOLIVIA CHANGES ARCHITECTURE

Bolivian architect Freddy Mamani Silvestre has been changing El Alto over the last eight years, giving the city's buildings a decidedly psychedelic and even oddly futuristic appearance. Bolivia's indigenous Andean and Aymara culture is all about odd combinations of geometry and color. Mamani is building these structures as mansions for the burgeoning Aymaran trader class. These buildings are mixed use, so they feature shops, entertainment spaces, apartments, and penthouses. Regardless of the financial origins of this New Andean architecture, the designs are unique. Odd window groupings beside odder facades and the interiors look like casinos colliding with carnivals.

3 HOW WONDERFUL FOR CORNWALL

We may not be impressed by the money spent on the European Union but we can feel truly blessed as a county and as nation to have Falmouth Art College, now University. Anne Carlisle, the vice-chancellor, now has pay, including performance-related pay and pensions contributions of £285,900 in 2014-15, a 25.1% increase, in a county where the average pay is £17,340. Falmouth University has about 4,200 students and Ms Carlisle's rise means she earns more than the £271,000 paid to Sir Timothy O'Shea, principal and vice-chancellor of the University of Edinburgh, which has 35,500 students. How blessed we must be to have her here because they must be lining up all over the world to pay that much and more. Well done Cornwall. (information from BBC news website on 20th May 2016.)

4 BEING CREATIVE IS A DYING ART

John Newbigin, Chair of Creative England, wrote in The Guardian, UK "What's really hard is being creative – and that's going to get a lot harder in a global economy that is itself becoming more creative – and more competitive. That's why the Chinese government have made it a central part of their strategy to "move from made in China to designed in China". They see where the real money lies along the value chain ... But here in the UK, the number of students doing design and technology at GCSE has declined by 50% – that's 50% in just over 10 years. And the figures for arts, drama and music, though not quite as shocking, are all pretty dire – and all going the wrong way.

5 ARRESTED UK POLICING

"All of us who work in arts and culture cherish the principle of freedom of expression. But presenting controversial work can, in practice, be extremely challenging." When dealing with the presentation of controversial artworks, in the past there has been variation in how different police forces around the country have interpreted the potential threat to public order.

In too many cases the public's ability to experience art (however controversial and difficult) is being restricted.

From Arts Council website. Comments?



Volume 30 - Can you Believe What You Have Missed?

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We visit the Venice Biennale with the co-founder of the Eden Project, Jonathan Ball. Derek Guthrie is interviewed by Sam Thorne, director of the Tate St Ives. US Editor Tom Mallaney, discusses art in the digital age.

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