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NEW ART examiner

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The independent voice of the Visual Arts

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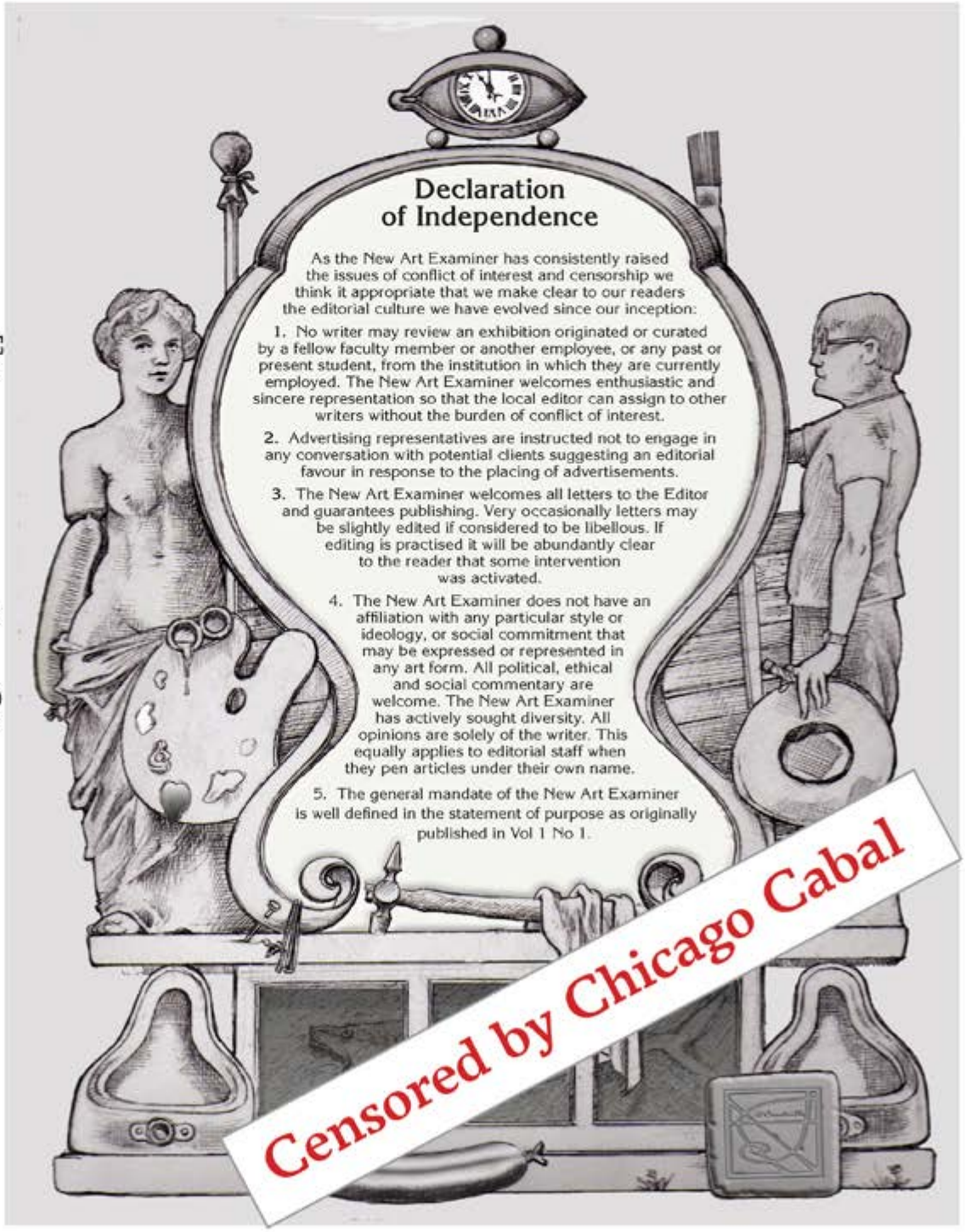
With Extracts from

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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Dear Artist make your girlfriend or boyfriend happy, and the New Art Examiner, send a few love words which will cost no more than 3p a word or tell the local art critic / curator what you think of them or write a letter for free to the Editor.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

TOM NAKASHIMA on 'Thoughts for a Manifesto'

CHRIS CUTRONE on 'Relational Aethetics'

Our Flâneur Rachel Shteir

Extracts from The Jackdaw and Neoteric Art

... and much more

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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.

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QUOTE:

"If this is the best he can do, Hirst is in trouble. His items look strangely feeble to me. The kind of thing that would appear in a children's film. 'It is not even an original idea. There is an underwater sculpture museum in Cancun, Mexico. It will be interesting to see whether he can inject some longevity into his failing career with this exhibition, but I doubt it." (David Lee on Damien Hirst's *Shipwreck*)

Chicago is still 'Theatrically Corrupt'

Derek Guthrie, Publisher

Dear Reader,

A word of explanation is required to accompany our decision to publish the cover. Our Declaration of Independence. The Art world is composed of many bubbles and we all exist inside our own bubble. Including the New Art Examiner which is a journal of critical opinion.

After the recent election in the US and the Referendum in the UK it is quite clear issues of identity have surfaced with much dismay, and questioning the new status quo is coursing through public opinion. Centre stage in the current concern is the role and the influence of media. The ethical questions circulate around fake news, propaganda, PR and the matter of informed, or not so informed, opinion are paramount.

The NAE cannot escape these concerns. so we decided to share with our readers our own code of conduct. It is, of course, an ideal that we have evolved since inception in October 1973 in Chicago. Sometimes we fail as we do not have the resources to control all circumstances.

The basic issue is censorship. The controlling of opinion and the problem of free speech is the major issue in today's world. In particular, the Art World that is seen as corrupt and hijacked by money, with Big Brother in place. To paraphrase George Orwell and Animal Farm, "we are all individuals but some are more individual than others" - here lies the fantasy. An illusion that drives the art world no matter what bubble the artist or art lover resides in. The comfort factor is, in many cases, a retirement from the fray.

The New Art Examiner was born as a resistance to censorship. A long story from the past, but the issues are even more pressing today. That is the reward system that the Art World runs on. Who is in? and who is out? and how does the money run? including grants, residencies and teaching positions offered and to whom? and why? Censorship whether absolute or in part are forms of political coercion or in extreme cases professional assassination.

The New Art Examiner was born as a resistance to censorship. A long story from the past, but the issues are even more pressing today ... The co-founders of the NAE simply refused to be disappeared by the Chicago Art hierarchy. The NAE survives today supported by two teams. One in Chicago USA the other in Cornwall UK.

The co-founders of the NAE simply refused to be disappeared by the Chicago Art hierarchy. The NAE survives today supported by two teams. One in Chicago USA the other in Cornwall UK. There was a good faith understanding that each team generated its own editor copy to be published without interference or agreement from the other team. Unfortunately, arrogance once again reared its ugly head and the copy submitted from the UK that had the approval of the UK editor and publisher was deliberately sidelined and downgraded by the Associate Publisher Michael Segard in Chicago. This decision was part of a conspiracy to take over the NAE and defy its nature and status. The mutiny has failed as our writers have rallied to support the integrity of the NAE.

This highlights a larger question of the purpose and role of critical discourse, or art criticism. The NAE is very aware of the danger and problems of independent opinion. Simply, everybody wants to gather favorable opinion. There is not a perfect or safe answer to this dilemma. The NAE alone and uniquely along with a tendency to side with issues of artists, offers to all artists the opportunity for expression and the opportunity to start any dialogue by writing to the editor. All letters accepted automatically. Most artists in our society are beaten down into passive creatures. Fear is paramount, proving the unpleasant truth. "some individuals are more individual than others'. The NAE wants to believe in artists and wishes to avoid the hucksters and gatekeepers and other flunkeys who wait on Big Brother. or the wizard of OZ. ■

Letters

Brexit and Art Education Loom Large in your emails ...

Dear Editor,

A New Statesman article last year reported that 'The Creative Industries Federation, a membership organisation that represents the views of the UK creative industries, states that 96 per cent of its member's support remaining in the EU…'

A major reason for this was Creative Europe, a €1.46 billion fund set up by the EU for the cultural and creative sectors, which, in its first two years, 'supported 230 UK cultural and creative organisations… with grants totalling €40 million' according to the Arts Council.

A summary of findings from The UK Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee on the impact of Brexit on the creative industries described Creative Europe as a 'highly effective programme supporting the UK's creative sector' and warned that if no replacement was set up by the government '…the creative sector's capacity to flourish and realise its international potential is likely to be diminished both to the detriment of the sector and to the detriment of UK citizens access to diverse cultural works…'

The programme allows for non-EU countries to access its programme 'under certain conditions' so the UK could continue to benefit after leaving the EU, but nothing is certain. Promises have been made about funding…but we all remember that bus 'promise' of NHS funding. Concern was also expressed regarding international students and 'their future rights to study, work and stay in the UK after graduation' and the impact this could have on 'keeping artistic talent within the UK'.

UCAS has already reported a 7% drop in applications to universities from EU students. This will undoubtedly mean a loss of diversity amongst students and consequently a culturally poorer UK.

Matthew Clemo, vice president of Erasmus Student Network, said that 'our generation is on the verge of being taken back to the dark ages of closed borders and intolerance towards others.'

In this current political climate of potential closed borders, travel bans and walls, when it appears that intolerance, suspicion and segregation are being encouraged, and openness, exchange and free movement are under threat, it is perhaps our duty as creatives to reach out beyond our local community to open up lines of communication, exchange and collaboration internationally, and offer our wholehearted support to initiatives already set up to do just that.

Art has the potential to transcend borders, cultures and languages… the onus appears to be on us.

Meryl Hopper, Plymouth College of Art

Dear Editor,

Your feature in the last issue was gripping, a real page turner. Right from the off, the history of early academies and Renaissance schools was succinct and fascinating yet, (knowing your work), with a hint that all would not end well. Progressing through the intervening centuries to post World War II changes I began to feel agreeably discomfited as you pause together the strands of what proved to be my own experience. I could relate the content of your article to my own teachers, then tutors, school and art school experiences… Although having attended polytechnics from 1969 onwards I always refer to my training having been at "art school".

I am an unapologetic modernist who still believes in and is fired by abstract painting and my last year of teaching foundation students one day a week I revel in teaching analytical drawing and tell the group that when they, for example, draw the skeleton it must convince a doctor of anatomy completely or it's a waste of paper. I was taught by similarly stringent methods and as I approach retirement I now attend life classes and sketch from nature as a foil for my abstract work.

I can't however forget the thriller the 60s and all that went with the "fearless experimentation", (jackdaw quote), that I first saw at Leicester pre-dip in 1969 maybe that is bound up with so much nostalgia that I can't separate it objectively and I did eventually complete a full freed the Paloma at Manchester later when drawing was taught with rigour and we had visiting lecturers Bruce McLean 's and Adrian Henry's to add a change of diet.

Portsmouth Polytechnic was where I was given the

opportunity to continue the journey to abstract painting and whilst this was not always an easy transition it is proved to be the most satisfying thing in my life.

Tim Rushton

(First published in The Jackdaw, March 2017)

Dear Editor,

Your feature on art education brought back troubling memories to me. I once took an "advanced diploma in painting" at the Central School of speech and drama, an award given by the open University. We went to nights a week and all day on Saturday – above us we could hear the screams and yowls of the young Thespians.

We started with painting and drawing taught by someone who were trained in illustration. Then in the second year a new teacher was introduced as work involved throwing down balls of her hair onto the floor. "If I catch you painting still life again you will fail this course," she said to me. "This is 1998 not 1898." She didn't like me at all but I kept going as I learned a lot in the course, not about painting but about critical theory and post-modernism, as dictated by Marxists in the University of Paris's. It was almost like a Marxist art course, bent on defying the "politics of ownership", which meant no painting and a rejection of bourgeoisie aesthetics. I had to keep writing essays and bringing in the Heidegger all the time. We also had to attend endless meetings. The teacher kept getting rid of people in the year behind us, including a young Nigerian lad who kept painting his home village. Eventually there was not enough people left in the year after us for them to carry on the course. It imploded. I think the college sticks to acting these days.

I went on painting still life in secret, never managed an installation and received the worst marks of anyone on the course. I was upset at the time but learned a lot by doing it, not about painting but about the art world.

Jane Kelly

(First published in The Jackdaw, March 2017)

Dear Editor,

You raise important issues in your comprehensive and thoroughly researched article "what happened to art education?" I have a few thoughts and observations.

In the spring of 2007 I wrote a letter to Art monthly Outlining some of my main concerns regarding the decline in the provision and standards in undergraduate fine Art education. The jackdaw immediately reprinted it there are about 1500 responses, all overwhelmingly endorsing my analysis.

My observations were based on the experience of 40 years; seven years as a student, the remaining 33 is a practising painter and part-time lecturer, and, finally, eight years as Prof of painting at the Royal College of Art

During those eight years I chaired the entrance exam and over that time I oversaw an expansion and applicant numbers whilst simultaneously witnessing a decline in the standard of undergraduate work, both practically and intellectually.

Last year, after having been approached by frustrated overworked and bullied teaching staff at the University of the arts, London, I wrote a piece entitled "the Blind screwing the blind". On this occasion I simultaneously submitted the text to the jackdaw and Art monthly. The jackdaw published it immediately and an edit Art monthly chose to ignore it, confirming a climate of fear.

Towards the end of your article you hit upon the paradox of accreditation. To enable students access to loans, all institutions that seek to offer degrees have now to be accredited. This is where the "agenda" is enforced. I've witnessed small, independent institutions being "brought into line" by large institutions (institutions that deliver thoroughly unsatisfactory courses) when seeking degree accreditation. The message is "do as we tell you" or else.

You rightly point out there is no real hope of breaking the cycle because of the current requirements for teaching and employment more generally.

The dissolution of the CNAA was a disastrous and retrograde step. It opened the door to the fall's and mean-spirited corporate model which now permeates higher education like a cancer. At the risk of repeating myself – certification has replaced education.

You also raised the thorny issue of teaching. For far too long is been a matter of approval or disapproval on the part of the lecturer. This outmoded and authoritarian method has to cease. A more intelligent, creative and empathetic approach has to be embraced.

What's even more depressing is that corporate behaviour, like rising damp, has reach postgraduate

schools such as the Royal College of Art with disastrous effect. Already some of the best academic staff are leaving as ambitious exiles from UA (L) start to assume senior management posts causing student unrest.

I have two reservations about your analysis. The constant reference to conceptual art is mistaken as all art has a conceptual component to some degree. I also find the term "figurative" painting somewhat coded and opaque.

We mustn't lose sight of the fact that the lowering of standards in education is politically motivated. Over the last 10 years I said pretty much all I've got to say – but no one seems to care all to be listening. And out right boycott is the only solution as it'll threaten revenue, followed by a comprehensive review. That – and a fresh start – one that involves studio apprenticeships..

Graham Crowley

(First published in The Jackdaw, March 2017)

Dear Editor,

With reference to your latest editorial (has the arts Council betrayed its origins) your last paragraph credited TS Eliot with the foresight he showed in the 1930s.

I would like to draw your attention to something Constable said in his last lecture given on July 25, 1836 to the library and scientific institution in Hampstead which I used while commenting in my own writings about State Art in my book Portcatho: portrait of an artist's colony (Halsgrove 2006).

He said, "the first impression and a natural one is at the fine arts have risen or declined in proportion as patronage has been given to them or withdrawn, But it will be found that there has often been more money lavished on them in their worst periods than their best, and that the highest honours have frequently been bestowed on artists whose names are scarcely now known."

Chris Insoll

(First published in The Jackdaw, March 2017)

Dear Editor,

There are issues in "what happened to art education?" That demands serious consideration.

The government has undermined the art base at secondary school level. When I complained about this I received a reply from my MP, Rebecca Powe, stating that this is not the case. She wrote: "the new progress eight will measure pupil progress in eight subjects, five ebacc and three others which could include creative although occasional subjects. The ebacc will not be appropriate for a small minority of pupils and we have committed to an alternative expectation, the plans for which we are seeking views." There are no plans to insist upon art for all pupils, and many secondary school heads are now too indifferent to risk art being taught. That, coupled with poor levels of provision and resource seeing, means that figurative art will continue to wither away in state secondary school education, but not in public schools. As pointed out in "what happened?" The real long-term problem is the fact that university art departments teach little or nothing. I have recently encountered young artists who travel to Florence and the US to work alongside mature figurative artists in ateliers in preference to a UK university course; and expensive model that seems to be growing in popularity. It seems to be the only way to acquire basic handling skills, apart from the excellent Prince of Wales' drawing schools.

Any artist to browbeat is a student into conceptual art knows nothing of art education theory and philosophy, and there are those whose arrogance is based on no more than despotic unquestioning faith rather than knowledge. With BA provision, there may be three ways forward but there is, it seems, little or no will to reform the status quo.

1. to stick with a system that will continue failing and eventually fade away

2. to reform education entirely from school to Ph.D.

3. to redesign the current higher education system using a revised analysis of visual disciplines for the future

Maintaining the system has demonstrably failed that the quality of artists produced. It thrives on short-term promotion because its prime impetus is financial. Musicians do not have this problem and it is forced to assert that it achieves its fiscal objective.

The success of YBAs was down to the self-interest of Charles Saatchi, rather than artistic merit. The assumption that you can address the making of an artist through state educational provision is also a pretence. It is pragmatic to accept that you can only move the horse to water, so a practical alternative learning model is required that will demand very hard thinking about excellence. Particularly, there is no inherent requirement to address social and political distractions such as racism, equality or all dominant identity politics. These belong to the affective domain of art making within the artist's

personal practice and they are completely irrelevant to art education practice.

This leads to the question of what kinds of knowledge artists engage with, because this is where art education has real-life justification that the taxpayer can pay for. This has never been in the affective domain. The need for life drawing is based on an empirical demand for drawing any image. You cannot depict what you do not understand. All figurative art develops this form of implicit knowledge, which encompasses everything in the visual world. The worse thing Duchamp did was to debase the retinal. Any detection contains empirical evidence from the eyes and brain and there is no art without this to draw a cultural analogy cognitive dissonant's rules Western thought because there has been a very successful political project to destroy the use of the Socratic argument as a birthright in education. It has been replaced by a rational continental philosophy. When we lose contact with empirical values we enter a dark realm where pseudo art, cultism and kitsch are accepted as truth. This has no justification in art education apart from a feat indulgence. This leads us to consider the philosophical issues combining beauty morality and ethics.

There is a way forward which could maintain and reinstate these concepts into the learning process by teaching aesthetics. This means destroying the identity politics that Grayson Perry expressed in Playing to the Gallery when he said, "to judge a work of art on its aesthetic merit is to buy into some discredited, fusty hierarchy, tainted with sexism, racism, colonialism and class privilege."

A bipartite system could be created were all University arts faculties are divided into designated figurative or conceptual bias in their teaching this distinction exists on a 50-50 emphasis could revitalise the entire system – all education is a subtle balance between innovation and conservation. Getting the balance right would be a good place to start, reasserting enlightenment values as opposed to identity politics. There would have to be a rule that students remain free to move between the two as they find their needs dictate. There would have to be clearly articulated judgment and assessment of skills for both halves. This could mean that the current conceptual tyranny could have its social engineering challenged and would need to justify its existence. Far far fewer fine art students would then acquire some real-world skills because they would have to achieve a demonstrable competence in both areas. Those departments that taught well would rise to the top, and the week would wither. The key would be radically reducing the number of students by emphasising their all-round quality (as the Coldstream reforms had intended). This would mean a return to real world sound judgments and criteria. It would also mean removing "sports direct" contracts with tutors and returning to the value of tenure by artists who have studied both aesthetics and education and are seeking excellence. Business ethics have no justification in university education and students are absolutely entitled to consistent teaching of sound demonstrable values. I know that I did get the courtesy of Mr Coldstream.

John Nutt

(First published in The Jackdaw, March 2017)

Dear Derek,

Few people have the experience, training of art and the guts to say what they feel and think about art as Derek Guthrie does. How he became displaced in Chicago is a mystery to me. Granted he may be difficult to work with but by nature, intelligent people are. Derek demands not giving in to the convenient norm or mainstream thinking of out art distribution system and it's cohorts. Be that as it may, art often comes attached to various agendas --whatever the purpose-- be it political, economic or something else altogether. The NAE, given it's valiant history, attempts to cut through all that and look at the art it self- a tall order in this over mediated and messaged world. This is a painstaking task, one that artists and critics would rather forego for the most part. The Examiner often expresses unpopular ideas, ideas that people do not want to hear for fear their masks are ripped off. Pity those who cannot bear expressed ideas that are there for discourse, discussion, and discovery. This tendency to go along to get along is rampant in our society and highlights the passive disposition not to think. This largely why our society, on both sides of the world, is going to hell. There, I just made a value judgment that we have to make. If you think otherwise, I would welcome your response as the Examiner would --whatever you think...I would not be intimidated or put *off. This is life in a process that the Examiner takes on over and over again. I do not think the Chicago crowd is up for this, because it is too daunting. That hardly matters. Daniel and Derek are in a positive mode and are functioning in the UK, something I look forward to. And so should you.*

Allan Jirikowic in DC

CAN YOU HELP?

Janet Koplos has recently been awarded an Andy Warhol Grant to research the history of the New Art Examiner.

She is looking for original material dealing with the Examiner - letters, journal / diary entries, photographs and the like from 1973 to 2002.

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SPEAKEASY

Rachel Shteir

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.

1.

Several of the women in my family seem to have a sour tooth.

I learned this when my aunt confided in me some years ago that she preferred lemons to pie.

And then I remembered that when I was a child, my mother spread marmalade on her toast, which someone (maybe her) said was an acquired taste. Now I like it. And Now, I don't know, I think this predisposition to bitterness is either hereditary or temperament.

Pucker up, I like to think. (to myself).

That explains a lot, I also like to think. (also to myself)

Both sides came from Russia a mere two generations ago. Out the back door while the Cossacks came in the front door is the phrase I have heard used to describe what happened on my father's side, in 1917, I believe, one hundred years ago this year. It is hard to imagine.

Once, maybe in the 1980s, when people used cassette tapes, we did an oral history of my grandmother's journey. Which has been lost.

And then to wind up in Washington Heights or Trenton, New Jersey. They were fond, that generation, of phrases like "if you get on the wrong train you get off at the wrong stop."

And yet so many of them did. There is no way to romanticize that. At least one of the women in that generation continued to flee. But the rest of them stayed put and did what they had to do.

2.

Even with global warming, April is often still wintery, blustery, a disappointing month weather wise. I remember years ago, as a college student, trotting across the Midway and ruining my velvet shoes in the snow.

These days, I don't wear velvet shoes much and I certainly don't trot. I sold my car two years ago and so I ride the bus. It's not much of a hardship.

Generally speaking, Chicago is not a good city for flaneuring, flatness notwithstanding.

Oh sure, there are people I see around who seem to be posing as flaneurs. One wears a beret. I am suspicious of the hours he keeps.

The reasons that Chicago is not good include:

The weather. It is too spread out.

The geography: Too much is unvisitable or desolate. Because the city sprawls out on a giant grid it is more difficult to get lost in the desired manner of some of the European cities. The boulevards are made for cars.

Certain streets, certain blocks present possibilities, such as dignified Elm Street from Rush to Michigan. Fulton Street, where you can smell the chocolate from the factory if the wind blows the right way. The cemetery on upper Clark Street.

Generally I like those because they remind me of other streets, other neighborhoods, elsewhere. A better way than walking, anyway, to get around in Chicago, is perambulation by bus. It's not exactly flaneuring. Or if so, it is the moto-variety.

God forbid you should actually try to get anywhere quickly, that is maddening. Then for God's sake take a cab. (I hate public transportation, a rich friend of mine said, as though that distinguished her.) But as a perch from which to view the city, it will do. Different angles. Sometimes I circumnavigate it and on a clear day and from the right place, I can see downtown from forever.

A few days ago, on the #9 headed South on Ashland, we drove over the rust-colored bridge just South of Fullerton. To my right the dirty greeny browny river and semi-industrial wasteland. To my left the skyline shooting up from the prairie.

The #151 cruises along. Some times of day, if not enough passengers are riding, we coast the asphalt waves, the Lake shimmering Caribbean colors.

Sometimes the drivers misinform you about the route or forget your stop as if they had watched too many thrillers. That's part of bus flaneuring's sinister charm. Sometimes the bus picks up so many people that it seems like the clown car at the circus.

I have seen several blind women. A few days ago

one of them got on. Toothless, she smiled and smiled at no one in particular and talked to herself until it was time to get off.

Another time, a slouchy woman panhandler hit everyone up.

Some tourists conversed about their stroller.

More people are rumpled than not.

If you tear your eyes from the other passengers or the view, you can read the posters celebrating the city sponsored by an apartment rental firm. "I adore Chicago. It is the pulse of America," is one attributed to Sarah Bernhardt during one of her mega tours here in the nineteenth century.

I will say this: My parents, particularly, prized comfort over almost nearly every value.

Here I find myself thinking of a different sort of consolation: exile.

Or lemons.

Rachel has lectured widely on popular culture and theatre. She is the recipient of six Yaddo residencies as well as MacDowell and Ragdale Colony residencies. Rachel has also written for American Theatre, Bookforum, The Daily, The New York Times, Slate, The Guardian, Playboy, The Los Angeles Times Magazine, Chicago Magazine, The Huffington Post, The Chicago Tribune, (the late) New York Newsday, (the late) Lingua Franca, The Nation, Tablet, Theatre, The Village Voice, and The Washington Post. Rachel also writes "The Rahm Report," a column about Rahm Emanuel for Tabletmag.com.

When More Words Aren't Needed

Daniel Nanavati, UK Editor

At the Whitney Biennial 2017 an image was exhibited by the American-born artist Dana Schutz that depicted the open casket funeral of 14-year-old Emmett Till, a boy who had been lynched in Mississippi in 1955 after being falsely accused of flirting with a white woman.

The original photographs of the boys' face after his brutal slaughter have never been for the faint hearted. I have not seen Dana Schutz' image but I have read the reports of the 25 black artists who asked for it to be taken down, destroyed and expunged from memory because,

"It's not acceptable for a white person to transmute Black suffering into profit and fun,"

Everyday, throughout the world, races are dehumanised and belittled by bigots of all colours. From being the butt of jokes endlessly repeated across generations and vile misrepresentations born of ignorance of others' traditions to outright pernicious lies which aim to promote physically hurt.

No one has the right to tell an artist what they can and cannot portray be that artist a painter, writer, musician, sculptor or any other. And while I would agree though Emmett Till is dead his pain continues, it is not Black pain alone, it is all our pain for everyone of us has it within themselves to be Till or any of his murderers.

Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto means 'I am Human so I think nothing human is alien to me'. (my translation)

Think about that for a moment. Every experience of every human being on this Earth is the inheritance of each one of us. Every act of kindness and every act of inhumanity is our inheritance. In this regards everyone of us is Black, everyone of us fascist everyone of us is Jesus. None of us escapes being human.

Artists know this. It is their one abiding attribute that we should treasure. At the same time we should ask ourselves why art has been traduced in the minds of others to nothing more than 'profit and fun'?

If this is truly where contemporary art exists all of it should be burned. But it is not. Artists are still sincere enough to portray the human condition, to describe our lives as unfinished, our societies as works in progress our nations as first attempts. Because they all are.

But only fools want to ban art. Take your hurt and make what you consider to be a better piece of art. That is the only answer an artist should ever give.

The Avant-Garde and the Delusion of American Exceptionalism

Three Essays on the Limits of Postmodernism after November 2016

by Jorge Miguel Benitez

Third Essay:

The Will to Ignorance: The Role of Academia in the Postmodern Debacle

In the late nineteenth century, Friedrich Nietzsche asked and answered a question that still haunts the developed world: "'What is the task of higher education?' — To turn a man into a machine." (*Twilight of the Idols, trans. R.J. Hollingdale.*

Decades after Aldous Huxley and George Orwell published *Brave New World* and *1984* respectively, Nietzsche's self-answered question resonates with frightening power. Does higher education turn the person into an object disguised as a subject?

Contemporary education provides unprecedented amounts of quantifiable data. Unfortunately, data is not knowledge, and knowledge is not wisdom. Without critical thinking, without connoisseurship, without the discernment that separates education from ordinary training, the student graduates without the means to separate fact from fiction, reason from irrationality, and culture from kitsch. Such a person knows plenty of data yet finds the world incomprehensible. Again, it pays to revisit Nietzsche: "One has to learn to *see,* one has to learn to *think,* one has to learn to *speak* and *write:* the end in all three is a noble culture." *(IBID p76.)*)

Unfortunately, a "noble culture" is no longer a fashionable aspiration, but it should be, if for no other reason than survival. The lessons of twentieth-century totalitarianism should serve as evidence of the suffering, destruction, and death that emerge from the failure to see, think, speak, and write. Art is essential to a "noble culture."

> ... the will to ignorance is a quest for certainty.

As Albert Camus wrote: "It is not surprising that artists and intellectuals should have been the first victims of modern tyrannies, whether of the Right or of the Left. Tyrants know there is in the work of art an emancipatory force, which is mysterious only to those who do not revere it." *(The Artist and His time: Create Dangerously, in Resistance, Rebellion, and Death, trans. Justin O'Brien)*

Since it is disturbing to think that modern liberal democracies could fear the arts, is there any evidence that the arts are in danger? In the United States alone, the arts appear to be thriving. There have never been more galleries, artists' spaces, *blockbuster* shows, art fairs, and assorted arts gatherings, including literary events. Indeed, the art scene seems vibrant and healthy. Regrettably, it is often a delusion. A closer look at the work and conversations with many of the artists soon reveal a profound lack of canonical understanding,

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aesthetic depth, or genuine vocation. Behind the façade of postmodern erudition, replete with its incomprehensible jargon, lie ignorance, confusion, solipsism, and a mercenary mix of social consciousness and naked careerism. The contradictions become clear when an exchange with a star graduate student reveals not only ignorance of basic art history and theory but hostility to the suggestion that they may be important and useful. When the university itself supports the student's anti-intellectualism as an expression of "relevance," it becomes clear that the institution is invested in something other than the arts or even education. Only then does Camus' dark observation assume a democratic guise. Perhaps the "emancipatory force" of the arts threatens *free* societies as well as authoritarian regimes.

Within the modern university and its art departments, the will to ignorance does not necessarily result from illiteracy, a lack of information, or an absence of technical knowledge. After all, even the most educated are doomed to ignorance. No one can know or master everything.

The problem, therefore, is not the ability to acquire information but the lack of understanding that should, in turn, lead to an endless series of open questions. For the arts and humanities, definitive answers risk becoming ideologies that can degenerate into dogma. in that sense, the will to ignorance is a quest for certainty. Artists, in particular, must distrust the allure of certainty: they must keep their questions alive without losing their historical and cultural perspectives. Only an understanding of historical precedent can mitigate the arrogance of contemporary relevance. A willful dismissal of the past breeds ignorance and false originality.

Under the postmodernist umbrella, a contradictory mix of pluralistic relativism and absolutist intransigence has come to dominate fine arts graduate programs. Still, it would be unfair and historically untenable to blame postmodern theory alone for the current situation. The debacle is postmodern only in the sense that the theory coincided with social, political, and economic changes that led to the appropriation of ideas that could be applied to the refinement of a more efficient, controlling, and, above all, profitable institution.

It is important to remember that many of the older administrators in today's art schools emerged from the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s to become stalwarts of the *system* they once pretended to loathe. As bourgeois veterans of the era, they grasped that the revolutionary rhetoric of their youth could be packaged, branded, and sold as an ethos of personal identity and freedom. Furthermore, they realized that the observations of social activists such as Saul Alinsky could be adapted to capitalist ends. They also understood that Frankfurt School critical theory had enormous exchange value. Marx himself could be commodified along with Che Guevara and Patrice Lumumba. The quest for social justice and the liberation of the marginalized could be offered as consumable pedagogical products.

Eventually, the arrival of smartphones and social media would combine with the Patriot Act and the expanded powers of Title IX to produce an amalgam of Foucault's panoptical society, Huxley's soma-fueled dystopia, and Orwell's nightmare of "groupthink" and "newspeak."

Victimhood and revolution became hot items along with the psychotropic medications that by the 1990s were proving their worth as tools for the control of children and would allow educators to keep students under a tight leash. Eventually, the arrival of smartphones and social media would combine with the Patriot Act and the expanded powers of Title IX to produce an amalgam of Foucault's panoptical society, Huxley's soma-fueled dystopia, and Orwell's nightmare of "groupthink" and "newspeak."

Within academia, what Saul Alinsky had criticized as the society of "consensus"*(Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals),* had replaced the "conflict" he described as "the essential core of a free and open society." *(IBID p 62)*

Thus the university was able to consolidate power and maximize profits while projecting a progressive

image. The "free and open society" gave way to an environment of fear, suspicion, and self-policing where the exercise of academic freedom could result in expulsion for faculty and a pariah status for students who questioned the dogma of their peers. Repressive speech codes, the denigration of Enlightenment values, and the celebration and elevation of personal dysfunction granted the institution a level of authority and profitability it never enjoyed when it was openly traditional. Power and greed could now hide behind the pursuit of social justice while tuition and administrative salaries rose to unprecedented levels. Only the sports coach, that beloved paragon of collegiate parasitism, could challenge the nearly one million-dollar salary that some university presidents enjoy.

For the arts, the results were nothing less than a validation of mediocrity. Aesthetics surrendered to identity politics as the primary focus of art. Propaganda triumphed as the dominant genre in graduate programs where cookie-cutter installations and ever-duller performances unselfconsciously mocked the notion of an avant-garde.

A century after Duchamp's first readymades and the Dadaist revolt against a suicidal civilization, what passes for art is as formulaic as it was in the days of the l'académie des beaux-arts, but with a crucial difference: more often than not, it lacks the technical, art historical, and theoretical rigor necessary to surpass its limitations.

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Can postmodernism be held responsible—does it have the ideological cohesion to account for the debacle? In the same way that an entrepreneur studies Marx in order to be a better capitalist, a good administrator studies the postmodern analysis of power in order to exercise it more efficiently. Consequently, it cannot be said that postmodernism ruined the arts. Instead, its better thinkers unwittingly provided the analytical tools

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necessary for the manipulation of students, parents, consumers, and voters across the ideological spectrum. Michel Foucault never intended his understanding of the panopticon to be used for its expansion, but it nonetheless aided in the creation of an increasingly surveillance driven society.

Jean-François Lyotard never meant for his concept of the micro-narrative to be an invalidation of history and the canon, yet it still served to justify the erasure of historical memories for the sake of mass control.

Tragically, the postmodern questioning of modernist certainty became a self-fulfilling prophecy about a world in which *uncertainty* would serve the interests of corporate and political entities devoid of self-doubt. Art schools could not escape the trap. They eventually became the tomb of the avant-garde: a place where the illusion of progress killed and buried the remnants of the rebellious and inquisitive spirit that defined modernism. Systematically denied the means to see, think, speak, and write, the art student graduates as a neurotic and ignorant machine trained to parrot radical slogans for a revolution that will never be.

Under the circumstances, it is fitting to revisit Camus: "The first concern of any dictatorship is, consequently, to subjugate both labor and culture. In fact, both must be gagged or else, as tyrants are well aware, sooner or later one will speak up for the other."*(IBID p95)*

*T*his leads to a troubling question: at a time when "labor and culture" are both in doubt, who will speak for whom?

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The Relevance of Critical Theory to Art Today

by Chris Cutrone

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The scholar of Benjamin's and Adorno's work, Susan Buck-Morss provided a pithy formulation for defining the tasks of both art and criticism in the modern era: "[Artists'] work is to sustain the critical moment of aesthetic experience; our job as critics is to recognize this." Two aspects of Buck-Morss's formulation of the work of artists need to be emphasized—"sustaining the critical moment" and "aesthetic experience." The subjective experience of the aesthetic is what artists work on, and they do so in order to capture and sustain, or make available, subjectivity's "critical moment."

Adorno, in his 1932 essay "The Social Situation of Music," analogized the position of modern art to that of critical social theory: The role of both was to provoke recognition. Adorno further warned that there could be no progress in art without that of society. His posthumously published but unfinished monograph Aesthetic Theory can be considered to have at its center, organizing the entire discussion of the modern experience of art, the theme of the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of art. In this, Adorno was elaborating in the aesthetic realm his thesis in Negative Dialectics, that philosophy and critical theory were both necessary and impossible, simultaneously.

What does it mean to practice art in an epoch of its impossibility and continuing necessity? A clue can be found in Adorno's claim in Negative Dialectics that "philosophy lives on because its moment of realization was missed." Adorno's treatment of philosophy and art is modeled on Marx's treatment of capital. The potential for a dialectical historical transformation, in which capital would be simultaneously realized and abolished, became for Adorno the question of what it would mean to simultaneously realize and overcome the aspirations of modern philosophy and art. What would it mean to overcome the necessity that is expressed in modern practices of art? The Hegelian thought figure of art's attaining to its own concept, while transcending it through a qualitative transformation, was mobilized by Adorno to grasp both the history of modern art and the desire to overcome its practices.

What does it mean to practice art in an epoch of its impossibility and continuing necessity?

Photograph taken in Heidelberg, April 1964,[1] by Jeremy J. Shapiro at the Max Weber-Soziologentag. Horkheimer is front left, Adorno front right, and Habermas is in the background, right, running his hand through his hair. (Image: wiki-comons)

The Hegel scholar Robert Pippin, in his response to the journal Critical Inquiry's 2003 forum on the current state and potential future for critical theory, described postmodernism as a repetition of the "Romantic recoil" from modernity. Specifically, Pippin pointed to modern literary and artistic forms as derived from such Romanticism, of which postmodernism was the mere continuation, but in denial of its repetition. And Pippin pointed out that such repetition is in fact a "regression," because consciousness of the historical condition of the problem had grown worse.

Hegel posed the question of the "end" of art. He meant by this not the cessation of practices of art, but rather the ability of those practices to make the activity of "Spirit" appear in a self-contained and self-sufficient manner..While religion had been superseded by art, art had come to be superseded by "philosophy." By this, Hegel meant that art needed philosophical interpretation to be able to mean what it meant. Art needed criticism in

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order to be itself. This was a specifically modern condition for art, which Hegel addressed in a rather optimistic manner, seeing art's need for criticism as a hallmark of enlightenment rather than a disability or liability.

But Adorno took this Hegelianism with respect to art and turned it from an explanation of art's historical condition to a critique of those historical conditions. Like Marx who had turned Hegel on his head, or put Hegel back on his feet, Adorno inverted the significance of Hegel's philosophical observation. Where Hegel had, for instance, regarded modern politics as the realm of reflection on the state, and by extension the self-objectification of civil society in the state, Marx regarded the modern distinction between state and civil society as expressing the pathological necessity of capital, in which the self-contradiction of capital was projected. Adorno similarly addressed the complementary necessities of art and criticism as expressing a self-contradiction in (aesthetic) subjectivity.

As Adorno put it, however, this did not mean that one should aspire to any "reconciliation" of art and philosophy, nor of theory and practice. Just as Marx critiqued the Left Hegelians for their Romantic desire to merely dissolve the distinction between state and civil society, so too did Marx and Adorno alike regard this separation as the hallmark of freedom. In a late essay, "Marginalia to Theory and Practice" (1969), Adorno attacked "Romantic socialism" for wanting to dissolve the distinction and critical relationship between theory and practice, maintaining that, by contrast with traditional society, the modern separation of theory and practice was "progressive" and emancipatory. So too was the separation in meaning between art, as non-conceptual knowledge, and criticism, informed by theoretical concepts.

Adorno, like Marx, looks forward, not to a return to a pre-modern or pre-capitalist unity of theory and practice, nor to a reconciliation of form and content, as had been the case in traditional culture, but to a qualitative transformation of the modern division of meaning in art and criticism, in which each would be simultaneously realized and abolished as presently practiced. The problem is that, rather than being raised to ever more acute levels, there was already in Adorno's lifetime a retreat from the productive antagonism, the dialectic of theory and practice, or in this case art and criticism.

Adorno drew upon and sought to further elaborate the approach of his friend and mentor Walter Benjamin, who argued in his 1934 essay "The Author as Producer" that no art could be of correct "political tendency" unless it was also of good aesthetic quality. Furthermore, Benjamin argued that every great work of art "either founds or dissolves a genre." ["The Image of Proust," Illuminations, New York: Schocken, 1969] As Benjamin put it, the work of art that fails to teach artists teaches no one. Artists do not "distribute" aesthetic experience, but produce it. New art re-works and transforms, retrospectively, the history of art. Benjamin argued that there could be no progress in society without that of art, for necessarily involved in both is the transformation of subjectivity.

The history of modern art, as Benjamin and Adorno recognized, presents a diverse multiplicity of practices, none of which has been able to come to full fruition. Benjamin described this poignantly in his Arcades Project as "living in hell." Benjamin and Adorno's thought-figure for such historical consciousness of modern art comes from Trotsky, who pointed out, in a June 1938 letter to the editors of the American journal Partisan Review, that the modern capitalist epoch displayed the following phenomenon in its historical course:

New tendencies take on a more and more violent character, alternating between hope and despair. The artistic schools of the [first] few decades [of the 20th century] – cubism, futurism, dadaism, surrealism – follow each other without reaching a complete development. Art, which is the most complex part of culture, the most sensitive and at the same time the least protected, suffers most from the decline and decay of bourgeois society.

This was because, as Trotsky put it,

The decline of bourgeois society means an intolerable exacerbation of social contradictions, which are transformed inevitably into personal contradictions, calling forth an ever more burning need for a liberating art. Furthermore,

a declining capitalism already finds itself completely incapable of offering the minimum conditions for the development of tendencies in art which correspond, however little, to our epoch…. The oppressed masses live their own life. Bohemianism offers too limited a social base. [Leon Trotsky, "Art and Politics in Our Epoch"]

Trotsky said of art that,

"a protest against reality, either conscious or unconscious, active or passive, optimistic or pessimistic, always forms part of a really creative piece of work. Every new tendency in art has begun with rebellion." [Leon Trotsky, "Art and Politics in Our Epoch"]

And not merely rebellion against existing conventions of art, but against the conditions of life in capitalism.

But what, then, would be a "liberating art?" Adorno addresses this in terms of the aspiration for "artistic autonomy," or the self-justification of aesthetic experience. This is related to how Kant described the experience of the beautiful, in nature or art, as the sympathetic resonance the subject experiences of an object, which thus appears to embody "purposiveness without purpose," or a telos – an end-in-itself. Except, for Adorno, this empathy between subject and object in Kant's account of aesthetic experience is not affirmative, but critical. In Adorno's account of the modern experience of art, the subject recognizes not the power of experiential capacities and the transformative freedom of the human faculties, but rather their constraint and unfreedom, their self-contradictory and self-undermining powers. The subject experiences not its freedom in self-transformation, but rather the need for transformation in freedom. Adorno emphasized that the autonomy of art, as of the subject, remains under capitalism an aspiration rather than an achieved state. Works of art embody the striving for autonomy that is denied the subject of the modern society of capital, and thus artworks also embody failure. Hence, the history of art furnishes a rich inventory of failed attempts. This is why this history remains unsettled and constantly returns. Modern works of art are necessarily failures, but are nonetheless valuable as embodiments of possibility, of unfulfilled potential.

The constrained possibilities embodied in modern art are, according to Benjamin's formulation, approached by the subject with a combination of "desire and fear." Modern artworks embody not only human but "inhuman" potentials—that is,

Walter Benjamin

the possibilities for the qualitative transformation of humanity, which we regard with desire and fear. They thus have simultaneously Utopian and dystopian aspects. Modern artworks are as ambivalent as the historical conditions they refract in themselves, "prismatically." But it is in such ambivalence that art instantiates freedom. It is the task of theory, or critique, to register the non-conceptual while attempting to bring it within the range of concepts. As Adorno put it, the aspiration of modern art is to "produce something without knowing what it is." In so doing, art acts not only on the future, but also on history.

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Modern artworks find inspiration in art history. This is the potentially emancipatory character of repetition. Artists are motivated by art history to re-attain lost moments by achieving them again, but differently. Artists produce new works that, in their newness, unlock the potentials of past art, allowing us to re-experience history. But this work on history is not without its dangers. As Benjamin put it, "even the dead are not safe" from the ambivalent "progress" of history, because this history unfolds in capital as a "mounting catastrophe." The history of modern art, like that

of capital more generally, furnishes a compendium of ruins. The simultaneously progressive and regressive dynamics of history find their purchase in this: that historical forms of experience and consciousness inform present practices, for better or worse. It is the work of critique to attempt to better inform, through greater consciousness, the inevitable repetition in the continuing practices of art, and thus attempt to overcome the worst effects of the regression involved in such practices.

In the Hegelian sense adopted by both Marx and Adorno, the greater consciousness of freedom is the only available path for freedom's possible realization. Consciousness is tasked to recognize the potential that is its own condition of possibility. This is why Adorno and Benjamin addressed works of art as forms of consciousness. Art can be ideological or it can enlighten, provoking consciousness to push itself further.

The dialectic of art and criticism is necessary for the vitality of art. The self-abnegation of criticism, on the other hand – the disenchantment of consciousness that characterized "postmodernism" – has clearly demonstrated the barrenness of such abdication of responsibility on the part of critics and theorists more so than artists, who were thus left at the mercy of poor, unclarified concepts. The challenge posed by modern critical-theoretical approaches to art has been warded off rather than engaged and pushed further.

Artists' work continues to demand critical recognition, whether the critics recognize this or not. What such critical recognition of the work of history taken up by art would mean is what Marxist aesthetic theorists like Adorno and Benjamin pursued, and from whose efforts we can and indeed must learn. For a new condition of art has not been attained, but only an old set of conditions repeated, without their repetition being properly recognized. The relation between art and social modernity, or capital, continues to task both art and theory. Art is not merely conditioned by, but is itself an instance of the modern society of capital. But, like society, for art to progress, theory must do its work. ■

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Classifieds

A Brush with John Berger, Hiroshima and the Kitchen Sink

by Ken Turner

Meeting John Berger was not a problem; we lived in the same street in Hampstead. So one day I went across the street to show him some drawings of mine. We were exactly the same age, and it was in the year 1954. Nine years earlier the H-bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima: ten years later, Berger initiated the Kitchen Sink Movement.

I found John eager, fervent and enthusiastic about my drawings. He suggested that the Beaux Arts Gallery run by Helen Lassor as a possibility of showing the work. So some days later, clutching my portfolio of drawings under my arm I entered the gallery in Bruton Place, just off Bond Street, prepared for a criticism and nothing else. After all this was my first attempt at venturing into a West End gallery with a view to exhibit. To my joy the drawings pleased Helen and she offered me a show there and then. However a few days later my enthusiasm cooled slightly because she had found other artists with interesting work in drawing: probably better to have a more varied show with a better probability of selling work, so my work was exhibited with other artists of like mind.

Berger had first come into my view when he took over the job of art criticism at the New Statesman in the early 1950's. Previously, Patrick Heron, the painter from St. Ives, had been in this post. The flat painting of the American School led by the critic Clement Greenberg heavily influenced Patrick's writings on art. At that time Greenberg pointed out that art of the theatre or that of sculpture is, by their very nature, three-dimensional in form. Painting, however, is applied to a natural two-dimensional surface, and modern artists had begun to embrace that nature rather than trying to defy it. It was in response to this idea of flat painting and Heron's insistence on the American approach that Berger wrote questioning and fervent letters to the editor of the New Statesman until he was offered the job in place of Patrick Heron. I seem to remember that his letters to the editor were very detailed and attacking in nature, that is, in answer to the waywardness of a critique derived from the current fashion in painting. The content of Berger's writing was, so it seemed to me at the time, more to the point of art being closer to life's rawness and cutting through the elitism of Bond Street galleries. Perhaps I felt this because of my experience as an Army conscript and also being a Bevin Boy working in the coalmines of Nottinghamshire, thus quickly, taking me directly away from the art school environment to meet the world outside. This new world felt extremely real as the boots hit the parade ground and the coal dust entered my nostrils. I also drew in the mines and wrote poetry, just as Henry Moore had done. In context Berger later taught drawing at Chelsea school of Art alongside Moore.

Hiroshima.

Berger had somehow got hold of massive wall sized drawings of the horrific results of this criminal act, presumably done soon after the attack. Interesting to note that the Americans to this day have almost erased the event of Hiroshima from their history books.

On August 6th 1945 the Atomic Bomb was dropped on Hiroshima killing 240,000 people and maiming thousands more with burns and radiation. I mention this, not only because of the horror and act of terrorism but also because Berger had somehow got hold of massive wall sized drawings of the horrific results of this criminal act, presumably done soon after the attack. Interesting to note that the Americans to this day have almost erased the event of Hiroshima from their history books. What I remember of these large drawings, as does my wife Mary, was their rendering of the horrific results of the bomb and this drew me to Berger and his writings. Berger in his lifetime, to my knowledge, has never mentioned this exhibition that was shown in a non-institutional building. At the time it received little mentioned in the art press or general news, and seemed to escape notice

One of the hundreds of drawings that poured into the offices of the Japanese Broadcasting Corporation (Nippon Hoso Kyokai)

anywhere.

However, Art rears its triumphant head. Thirty years after the Bomb was dropped on Hiroshima the Japanese Broadcasting Corporation sent out a message about remembrance of the Bomb. To their surprise they were inundated with 975 works on paper. They then published a book of 104 of these drawings by Atomic Bomb survivors who by then were 70 years old or more, and although they weren't professionally trained artists the drawings were extremely vivid, horrific in content and unforgettable, horrifyingly effective as art in documentation that no photographs could ever surpass.

The title: *Unforegettable Fire.* (spelling intended)

John Hersey the author of the book wrote: "Unforgettable Fire is tremendously moving - more moving than any book of photographs of the horror could be, because what is registered is what has been burned into the minds of the survivors"

In his essay "Hiroshima," John Berger examines the bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. On looking through the pages of the book 'Unforgettable Fire'. Berger forms his opinion on the tragedy. He concludes that Japan was a victim of terrorism. However, unlike most terrorists who are from small countries, Japan's attacker was the most powerful nation in the world: America.

www.theguardian.com/world/ 2002/ jun/29/usa.japan A searching article on war by John Berger as it is seen today in relation to the A-Bomb on Hiroshima.

Kitchen Sink.

In 1952 Berger organized an exhibition at the South London Art Gallery of realist artists called 'Looking Forward'. They became known as the Kitchen Sink Painters that included Jack Smith, Ed Middleditch,

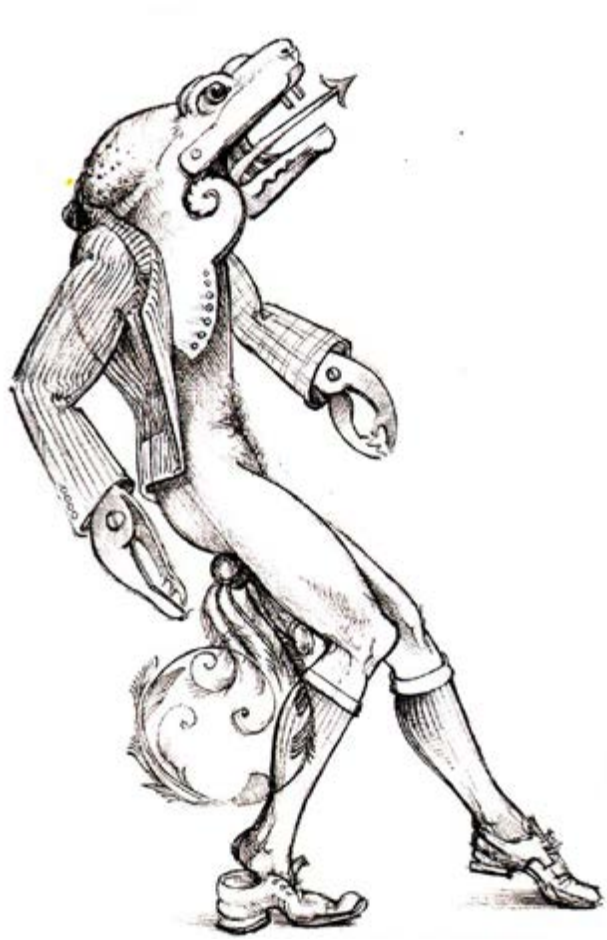
Derrick Greaves, John Bratby, and Peter De Francia amongst others. Kitchen Sink was most likely derived from Smith's painting of 'Mother Bathing Child', a child being bathed in a kitchen sink, wrought in stark contrasting monographic tones. At that time Mary and I ran a bespoke framing business and were framing Derrick's kitchen Sink paintings. It was again pure chance that our workshop, in Belsize Lane, Hampstead, was near to where Berger then lived. He was sharing a house with his girl friend and Peter De Francia. When we visited Berger, De Francia used to say jokingly, "Here come the artisans". We visited a few times and as always the atmosphere was overwhelming in its detailed attention to international politics that at times flew over my head. But Berger also loved down to earth stories about everyday life. One recounting Mary's grandmother's rude habits on the street, he found hilarious and then turned quickly to concerns relating politics of the day to the state of contemporary art. In this atmosphere De Francia would call me a mystic, I did appeared a little dreamy at times, but Berger was kinder, particularly about my status as an artist.

The Partisan Coffee House, 1958

The Partisan was a radical venue of the New Left, at 7 Carlisle Street in the Soho district of London. The Partisan was established by historian Raphael Samuel, supported by Stuart Hall in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis, and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and closed in 1962. The food was excellent and international in flavour with coffee at 9p a cup. Amongst its clientele were Doris Lessing, Raymond Williams, Quetin Crisp, Christopher Logue, and Lindsay Anderson and many other radical left wing artists and intellectuals. Talks and music were events in the basement area where one could linger all playing chess and meeting friends. Here we came to meet up with John Berger again. His visits coincided with the exhibitions held in the main upstairs area that Mary and I organized, one being centered on Political Satire and another on 12 Painters that included Greaves, De Francia, Herman, Ayrton, Middleditch and myself. Berger was not too pleased with the Universities and Left Review, the magazine that initiated the coffee House with offices above. The exhibitions also came under his scrutiny with his Marxist eye and thought that we could do better. Harold Wilson however, approved whilst offering me a cigarette.

Curiously perhaps, the next encounter or brush with Berger was from a distance. A friend of ours living close by Berger's house, part of a commune in Mieussy, an Alpine village in Western France, spoke to him about Action Space and Mary and me in the summer of 2016, as being the instigators behind building a new inflatable air house as part of a film by Huw Wahl. This film concerned the 1960's project of Action Space, and Berger on hearing this news broke into a broad smile. Huw, my son, had been in contact with Berger in 2015 while researching for his film on Herbert Read, and was interested to hear Berger's views on Read whom he had met in the 1950's. ■

Mary and Ken Turner ran Action Space from 1968 to 1978 in central London and Mary then went on to run Action Space Mobile until 2016. Both organizations involved communities and the arts through play and education. Books available through Amazon: 'Crashing Culture' by Ken Turner and 'Action Space Mobile' by Mary Turner. Huw Wahl has made films on Herbert Read and Action Space amongst many others. His last film entitled 'Everything Lives', on the life of an artist. www.hctwahl.com www.imaginativeeye.co.uk



"Rose Hilton and Friends: Fifty Years in Cornwall"

by Sue Davis

There are three reasons to celebrate this exhibition. The first of course is Rose's work but there are also her generosity in sharing with her friends, and the wonderful new gallery at Tremenheere.

The upper floor, which is flooded with light from the roof, holds a retrospective exhibition of Rose's work, ranging from very early figurative pieces through a changing wealth of images to a later bolder abstraction. The skill that she shows in a self-portrait from 1976 is used throughout the show but instead of becoming a formula for repetition it moves in many different directions. Apparently investigating and searching for new ways to express her ideas, for me this is the true nature of an artist.

In observing a life study called "Evening", femininity in her use of colour is apparent - only to turn around to be faced with "Favourite Things", which is a dark powerful piece from 1997, interestingly with elements of the softer colours lurking in corners. This versatility has to be admired, and the placement of a Jason Wason ceramic lidded vessel, which is probably owned by Rose, enriches that transition in feeling. The gallery constructed, so that there are no long stretches of works, makes it easier to focus and concentrate on the paintings. The last two sections use this feature to great effect. Three pieces, which are not for sale, I feel probably have a big story to tell, and are followed by two large canvases using the same bold reds but exuding a fresh new confidence.

Rose is experiencing much success and recognition but she has not forgotten about her friends and is sharing the bottom floor of Tremenheere Gallery with them. The show on the ground floor reminds one of the intellectual world Rose must have experienced in her youth when many passionate artists were making their way in St Ives. Nuggets of interest, old and new, feed the imagination and curiosity with the surprising early pieces of now well-known artists showing early stages of development. Who knows where influences come from when creativity is rife, and does it matter as long as there is energy and interaction? "The White and Orange Table Cloths" by the younger Alice Mumford embraces similar colour to these Rose uses in her softer work, both possibly influenced by Pierre Bonnard. Indeed Patrick Herons "Untitled" brings to mind "Spring Interior, a work by Rose which is in the upper gallery.

The massive oak timbers which the gallery is constructed from reach high into the roof, breaking up the area but retaining a sense of lofty space. Opposite the main door I was immediately struck with a powerful statement by Sandra Blow, "Zen" from 2001, flanked by "Metrospace VII" 2016, a fresh recent work by Jeremy Annear and on the other side what must be an early Trevor Bell. In these overall joyous exhibitions there are moments of pure laughter with "Man in the Iron Frock" an assemblage by David Kemp. A quiet contemplative moment from John Wells 1972 is disturbed with an intriguing hermaphrodite sculpture of a woman in bronze by Jo Wason, which is placed in front of Johns work. The mix of friends challenges the emotions all the time and a dark corner which is dominated by "Monument", a fine Peter Morrell which exudes subtle control and sensitivity, is contrasted by a dark but rustic piece of Ken Gills from the "New York Icon Series", and punctuation through the lower gallery is provided by small linear works of Rose's, "Lady Godiva" 2017 being the most notable.

There are as many female artists featuring as there are fine pieces by males. Many of these women would have lived through a time when it was considered that females would have to put their ideas of being an artist aside to fulfil their role of caring for the family. The notion that softness and gentleness could not be forceful and focused or lead to accomplished artists has been questioned and the counter-evidence is here in many forms. It has to be acknowledged that the feminine brings a different perspective and together with the male contributions it makes this a show of huge interest housed in a wonderful new space.

Rose Hilton and Friends: Fifty Years in Cornwall Tremenheere Sculpture Park 29th January – 26th February 2017.

Sue Davis is an artist who works with unbound abstraction. Her visual concern is not with an object but its residue. This gives a freedom of thought to both the artist and the viewer, a perpetual state of becoming, like life itself.

The Last Rose of a St.Ives Summer

Derek Guthrie (DG) interviews Rose Hilton (RH), last of the St Ives Group, in her home in Cornwall.

DG: So when did you first come to Cornwall?

RH: I came - um - in 1960 first on a visit.

DG: Yes:

RH With Roger. I did come without Roger in '59 with - er - with a friend, a painter friend called Stella Sargant but we didn't stay for long but my first real visit was in '60.

DG: Why did you come in 1960?

RH: Well I had already formed a relationship with Roger

DG: Yes

RH: And he had a cottage in Nanchedra and we just -er- I just came down on holiday with him because he was separated from his wife and he was looking for somebody else to be with and that turned out to be me (laughs).

DG: He'd lived here before?

RH: He lived in London but he had a holiday house here. It all started because he was great friends with Patrick ...

DG: ah

RH: Patrick Heron so he came down on Patrick's invitation ...

DG: I see

RH: ... in about 1956 something like that.

DG: Okay

RH: Yes

DG: So –when you came down 1960 were you intending to stay when you visited them?

RH: Not really. He had by that time got this place in Nanchedra which he just used at holiday times it was very primitive it wasn't on the mains - the water mains - or anything so we just used it to come down in the summer

DG: Yes

RH: And then - um - we set up in a flat in London and then he decided he wanted to move to Cornwall and in 1965 he bought this place (motions to her house)

DG: Previously Roger had lived in Paris for a while right?

RH: Yes. That was when he was ... I think ... from when he was 21 to when he was 30.

DG: So his artistic development essentially took place in the Parisian context?

RH: Well he wasn't there all the time but he made prolonged visits

DG: Yes

RH: Over there ...

DG: but ... but he was

Figure in the Sun Room - Rose Hilton

RH: And he went to an academy over there.

DG: So he learned a lot in Paris.

RH: He did.

DG: Yes

RH: Yes he did. He learned a lot. I think it was very good on technique, Roger

DG: Yes

RH: He knew how to use his paints so when he became an abstract artist he certainly had the techniques to go with it.

DG: The step into abstraction for him took place in Paris, right?

RH: I wouldn't say that no. I don't think so. I think it was when he came back and came out of the Army

DG: Yes

RH: Because he was a prisoner of war, then he -er- became friends with Terry Frost and he knew Victor Passmore so I think it was when he came back from the Army and started taking up painting again.

DG: So Passmore and Terry ...

RH: Yes

DG: .. were the close friends in that evolution of him as an artist?

RH: Yes I would say so

DG: And I understand from Terry that his great school that he went to was also in a POW camp cos he was mentored the by Adrian Heath.

RH: That's true, yes.

DG: So we have a convergence of Parisian thinking

RH: Yes

DG: With English sensibility.

RH: For Roger you mean?

DG: All of them.

RH: I think Roger was a very different artist Terry.

DG: Yes he is very different

RH: Yes. I mean Roger -er- was a draughtsman. I'm not saying the others were not but Roger never let his draughtsmanship slip. I mean every morning he ... when he woke up, he would draw and draw and draw - figures everything, you know Roger would ...

DG: Yes

RH: ... You know when we lived down here

DG: Yes

RH: It was to -er- just get going so hence we had when he died a whole lot of his drawings were here

DG: What artist did he really admire when he was a young artist?

RH: He he -um- admired Matisse and um um I've forgotten the name now there was a sculptor he liked, begins with B ... I've forgotten his name now. A French one I think. His influences have always been French.

DG: Okay that's fine, and in a way that is true for Patrick to.

RH: I think Patrick was a writer

DG: Yeah

RH: I mean -er- he only later became a painter.

DG: Yes. My point is they dealt with the roots of Modernism that were essentially French in terms of their molding

RH: I suppose I hadn't really thought deeply about what Patrick's influences are. I don't know if they are French really what would you say?

DG: When I look at his paintings

RH: Yes

DG: I think very much of the School of Paris

RH: Ah you do, yes

DG: I do Mannissier for example and Poliakov.

RH: I mean his argument was that we, all of them as British artists, took the influence of the French

artists directly, whereas a lot of people -other artists- felt that the Americans got there first and we took our influence from the American artists at the time like ... Clifford Still and all those people, but, really, Patrick maintained that wasn't so.

DG: But the American thing came – that came ...

RH: Well we did have a big show. I can remember. That was before I met Roger

DG: Yes

RH: In 1956 in London. I was still at the Royal College then

DG: Yes

RH: It was a big show of American abstract artists

DG: Fine

RH: And I think that really shook up the whole thing

DG: That was the first step ...

RH: Yes

DG: ...of the Americans into the London scene

RH: Yes it was

DG: Fine well ... so people after '56 were paying attention to what the Americans were doing?

RH: Yes

DG: But there was an argument about the nature of the influence, whether it was direct or indirect

RH: According to Patrick

DG: Yes ... yes ... but that was up to discussion

RH: Yeah

DG: Fine

RH: (smiles)

DG: I do remember well (both smile broadly)

RH: Yes you do

DG: Fine. So what do you think (pause) was the tipping point when the decline of the St Ives schools started?

RH: um

DG: When did it go off the boil?

RH: It changed –Patrick– what's his name Ben Nicholson

DG: Yes

RH: And Barbara Hepworth were kind of the main characters weren't they

DG: Yes

RH: And Peter Lanyon

DG: Yes

RH: And they fell out so it made a kind of weakness there -er- and I think then it was still going strong

DG: hmmm

RH: With people like Terry and Roger moving down here

DG: Yes

RH: And Patrick going on working ... I think it was really when Roger died and ... some of those older artists ... moved away I think that's when it that particular school ... started to die out and apparently there are young artists in Porthmeor studios now, younger artists but it hasn't quite got the same reputation has it?

DG: No I remember what I think was a crucial event I've forgotten the date but will find it (1962) BBC put out a movie and it was called Pop Goes the Easel

RH: (slight laugh) That's a good one isn't it?

DG: There was a response to the emerging pop art scene

RH: Yes

DG: And to me that was the date when you could say in terms of fashion, I'm not talking in terms of quality ...

RH: Yes

DG: ... was the beginning of the end because your abstraction / landscape was no longer a basic understanding because commercial art/urban landscape got to be the new world that the art world was into.

RH: Yes yes. People like, you mean, Peter Blake - that whole movement?

DG: That whole movement

RH: Yes

DG: Peter was ... Peter was an individual he was an eccentric until the Royal College.

RH: I was in the same year as Peter Blake

DG: Were you really?

RH: At the Royal College, yes.

DG: But ...

RH: He wasn't known then

DG: no no no he was an eccentric ... artist but Lawrence Holloway

RH: Yes

DG:... found the words to legitimise pop art.

RH: Did he? Yes

DG: He was the advocate for ...

RH: I see well he um well er so Roger came in for an earlier ...

DG: thats right I'm talking ...

RH: ... with Lawrence Holloway

DG: I'm talking about the waves that came in with the new ebb tide..

RH: He'd moved over to America by then

DG: Yes I know we had he'd gone

RH: Yes

DG: He got fed up with London

RH: Yes

DG: He thought London was very prejudiced against him

RH: I see so he was still able to support pop art from America.

DG: Oh yes. Oh yes. Talk to me about the present scene what do you think of it?

RH: Who?

DG: The present scene

RH: The present scene ... well it's probably not happening in St Ives

DG: No it can't

RH: No, it's probably the East End of London - well where the young artists are making out

DG: Yes

RH: You knows it's Tracy Emin and Damien Hirst and those people

DG: Yes

RH: So ... it's moved from here

DG: Yes

RH: People still come here because of the light and there's lovely studios but I don't think there's a huge respect for St Ives artists now.

DG: Let me ask you a more pointed question.

RH: Yes

DG: What do you think of the scene in Cornwall at the moment?

RH: ... There's not many artists that I can really ... you see, besides, I'm now in my mid-80s and so I rather lost touch I mean of that generation of younger artists. I hardly ever go there. Since William Barnes Graham died

Figure in the Sun Room - Rose Hilton

DG: Yes.

RH: And all those people... I haven't really kept up with what's going on over there

DG: Well whether you kept up or not are there any out there that you have any real hope for interest in - or you really respect?

RH: I'm still partly figurative artist and that's what I admire

DG: Yes

RH: That's what I ... I admire and what I like even, you know, living alongside Roger. He used to say I don't know why you still like doing that old-fashioned art

DG: Yeah. I know there is always a great deal of prejudice for what the other guy does but is there anybody in Cornwall at the moment that you think is doing interesting work figurative, abstract, or not - it doesn't matter

RH: um (thinking) but this is a bit unfair really to say I like Naomi Frears

DG: Okay

RH: I mean to pick up people... yes I do admire what she's doing

DG: okay

RH: I'm not sure what men artists there are now. Do you know any?

DG: Who?

RH: Do you know what's going on in the St Ives scene?

DG: I know a little bit

RH: Yes

DG: But to me the whole thing is kind of frozen.

RH: Yes you go to the Penwith you don't really see ... I quite like Rodney Walker's work

DG: Okay

RH: Yes and ... but really I don't get much from those Penwith shows

DG: I think the Penwith has become totally banal to be honest

RH: Yes and the poor old Newlyn Art Gallery has been taken over by two people who won't let us have shows there anyway you know?

DG: Yes well that issue is not resolved why the Newlyn Society was kicked out ...

RH: Yes

DG: By the current administration of the Newlyn Orion Gallery but I hear ...

RH: But why?

DG: Because (pause)

RH: I'd love to know

DG: People are mean, people want centre stage and there is a lust for power

RH: Yes

DG: It's that simple

RH: Yes

DG: But the legal issues may not be settled, as I hear on the grapevine

RH: Good, good I'm glad

DG: Yes

RH: Because we'd like our gallery back to show in instead of having, I mean the Newlyn Society of artists now have to show in Tremenheere ...anywhere they can get

DG: I know, well

RH: Nobody goes in to visit the Newlyn Art Gallery anyway

DG: Look they could have been left with one show a year, that wouldn't have harmed anybody

RH: No

DG: But it's just mean and vindictive

RH: Yes

DG: To chuck them totally out

RH: Yes

DG: They could have shared the space

RH: Do you ever go in and see what's going on there?

DG: Well I go in because ...

RH: You live there?

DG: Because I have to.

RH: Because you're on the committee?

DG: No no no no

RH: What?

DG: I'm not on the committee in Newlyn

RH: Why do you have to?

DG: Because I run a magazine.

RH: Oh yes (smiles)

DG: And I need to know what's going on (they both laugh) I want to believe in artists. I like art

RH: I see

DG: But the scene is ... I don't think the presence of the Tate has helped much

RH: Well it's been shut for ages hasn't it?

DG: Yes but it's mind is shut as well as the building is shut

RH: Yes

DG: The whole things got too political

RH: I agree there's not really much encouragement for working artists

DG: No there isn't. ■

We would like to thank Rose for her hospitality and the comfort of her home where this interview was recorded.

Born in Kent, Rose Hilton attended Beckenham Art School before going on to the Royal College of Art where she won the Life Drawing and Painting Prize as well as the Abbey Minor Scholarship to Rome.

Chicago's Expanded Exhibition

Gallery Weekend Chicago March 9-12, 2017

Bruce Thorn

John Preus at Rhona Hoffman Gallery.

The 2017 "Expanded Exhibition" iteration of Gallery Weekend Chicago offered 25 exhibitions by local galleries and curatorial projects all in one location. Expanded opened with a private preview party on March 8 and ran through March 12 at MANA Contemporary in the Pilsen neighborhood. I went to see the art and to learn about Gallery Weekend.

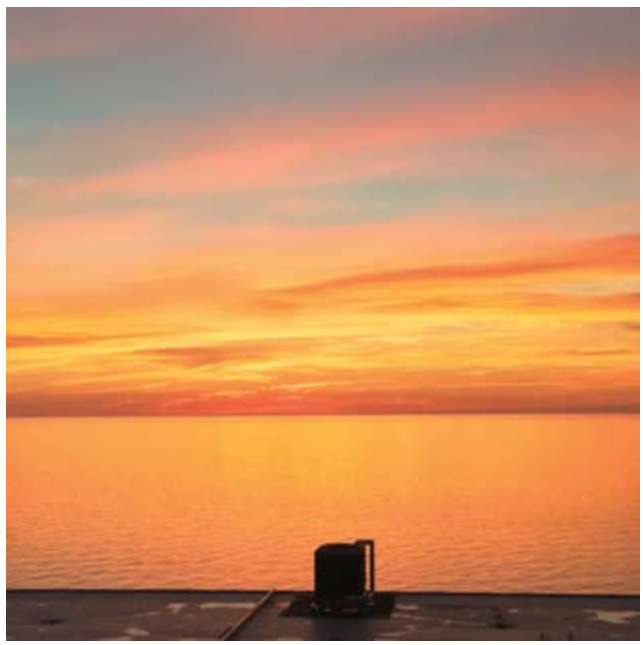
The first Gallery Weekend Chicago (GWC) was held on Sept. 16-18, 2011. GWC was organized by Monique Meloche and gallery director Whitney Tassie, working with an affiliation of several other local art dealers. The enterprise was modeled after Berlin's successful Gallery Weekend. Eleven galleries participated at Chicago's first GWC: Andrew Rafacz, Corbett vs. Dempsey, devening projects + editions, Donald Young, Kavi Gupta, moniquemeloche, Rhona Hoffman, Shane Campbell, Three Walls, Tony Wight and Western Exhibitions. Eight of the original galleries came back for the 2017 Expanded Exhibition.

In its first years, GWC was held concurrently with the much bigger, more established Expo Chicago. Now GWC has set itself apart by moving to a less competitive date. This seems appropriate. Expo Chicago is a blue chip playground whereas Expanded could be described as more contemporary, experimental and conceptual.

The question of what can be done to energize the social and commercial presence of contemporary art, on a practical community level, has crossed more than a few minds lately. The public has limited access to the art of the times, while many excellent and proven artists have no place at all to exhibit their work. Many galleries have been going out of business in recent years. Do we just live with this, along with so many other diminished expectations cast upon the times, or can anything be done about it? When non-stop griping eventually wears out its welcome, one can begin to look for ways to improve the situation. GWC Expanded Exhibition offered an opportunity to examine such questions while experiencing new artwork.

Gallery Weekend began in Berlin in 2004 as an initiative of Berlin galleries, curators, collectors and civic partners who all wanted to showcase their burgeoning local art scene. GWB has since grown and established itself as a leading event for contemporary art in Germany. The 13th edition of GWB takes place April 28-30, 2017 and involves 47 Berlin Galleries. There is a long list of sponsors and GWB has become an internationally utilized general model for organizing contemporary exhibitions. Original goals included: to serve as a point of contact for curators and collectors; to present the gallery as a space of exchange and discourse; and to present emerging and established galleries within the same context.

A fascinating aspect of the original Gallery Weekend Berlin model was that each gallery presented



Loyola_Condenser, Orange, 9-9-2016 at Lawrence & Clark

one show and GWB shuttled VIPs from gallery to gallery in sponsored black BMW limousines. Several galleries claim that GWB is their highest sales weekend of the year. That reminds me of paragraph in Andy Warhol's book "Popism" from 1980 wherein Warhol explained how he'd gotten all of those notable celebrities like Bob Dylan over to parties at The Factory by picking them up in limousines. A resident freak at The Factory had a gig driving a limo and few celebs declined the offer of a limo ride to Warhol's parties.

The success of GWB has attracted competition. The two major annual art fairs in Germany are Gallery Weekend Berlin and Art Cologne. These two shows have always been presented on different dates to avoid conflicts. In 2017 Germany's two most important art events will be taking place during the same week. Art Cologne has co-opted the same dates as Gallery Weekend Berlin, to be held April 28-May 1. It will be difficult or impossible for collectors to visit both shows because the two cities are a half-day travel apart. Galleries and curatorial projects must also choose where to participate. It remains to be seen how the conflicting schedules will affect business. Berlin is not happy about the change of date by Art Cologne.

Gallery Weekend Chicago, in partnership with MANA Contemporary, enlisted Vienna-based curator Michael Hall for the 2017 Expanded Exhibition. Hall has extensive contacts and experience within the Chicago art community. He founded the Chicago Project Room, a contemporary art gallery, in Chicago in 1996. Daniel Hug joined CPR in 1998. They moved the gallery to Los Angeles in 2000 and closed it in 2002. Daniel Hug is now the Director of Art Cologne.

The location is only a few miles from downtown but it's more accessible by car than by public transportation. Situated near a recently shuttered coal-fired power plant, the building is industrial and mammoth. Finding the 2017 Expanded Exhibition wasn't easy for newcomers to MANA Chicago. There were no signs for the exhibition in the parking lot, entrance or lobby. For a visitor arriving in the empty lobby, the only hint of an exhibition appeared when the large freight elevator came down and was opened by a liftman asking "what floor?"

The Expanded Exhibition was presented in an immaculate 20,000 square foot, fourth floor loft. Curator Michael Hall brought together 25 Chicago galleries and curatorial projects and suggested that each present a one-artist exhibition. As it was, two of the exhibitions were two-artist and one was multi-artist, all the rest were solo projects. Entering Expanded, one was immediately impressed by the un-crowded and minimal presentation. Temporary display walls set up for many of the exhibitors did not negate the open, naturally lit expansiveness because there were no walls in the entire center third of the space. This offered a shotgun view of the entire exhibition from each end. Large windows ran the length of the east and west walls and offered spectacular industrial views of the city through dirty and cracked windowpanes.

Andrew Holmquist at Carrie Secrist

The first display upon entering Expanded was by "trans-interdisciplinary artist" John Preus at Rhona Hoffman Gallery, presenting an encampment of whimsical furniture made out of materials salvaged from closed Chicago Public Schools. CPS closed 50 schools in 2013, all in poor minority neighborhoods. "Prussian Blue/Ground Floor Plan" welcomes visitors like a rustic ranch entrance to a hippy commune out West. Timbers forming the entrance were artfully fabricated from deconstructed bits of the furniture and architecture of classrooms. Even the blueprint of the school's floor plan is included. One might ask if this is what public education has come to, being ripped apart and transformed into expensive toys for art collectors. Close-up viewing of Preus' constructed furniture offers many visual treats.

At Lawrence and Clark, Instagram artist Loyola_Condenser (Lisa Barense) presented a series of photographs of the scene looking out of her apartment window on Chicago's north lakeshore. Like Monét contemplating haystacks, she presents the same view and the same format in each photo. The view is over the large flat rooftop of a shorter building upon which sits a 20-foot tall heating and cooling unit (a condenser?), looking quite small, past the rooftop, towards the horizon over the waters of Lake Michigan and up to the glorious sky. The same view looks quite unique in each image due to differences in time of day, lighting, colors, weather, zoom and mood, proving that there is still plenty to be gained from straight-forward observational work.

Carrie Secrist Gallery offered a large presentation of paintings, ceramics and works on paper by Andrew Holmquist, a recent graduate of SAIC (MFA 2014) who has already had four solo shows at the gallery and is included in the exhibition "Eternal Youth" at Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art. Holmquist produces a steady stream of predictably delightful abstractions. Narrow stage depth is a common device in this body of work. Interestingly, the brightly glazed ceramic works relate to forms within the paintings. The paintings look methodical, smart, relatively easy, cheerful and commercial. What would happen with more ambition, tougher challenges and less concern for prettiness?

Shane Campbell Gallery gave up their entire exhibition space to one single work by Chris Bradley. "Cinnamon Scent Machine" (from 2010) hung from the ceiling and performed a Whirling Dervish sort of loud mechanical dance every 5 minutes or so, powered by an orbital sander and making a noise that was audible throughout the entire exhibition hall. It made for one bizarre headshot: an exploded basketball Cyclops with a cinnamon stick neck that left powdered spice in its wake on the ground beneath into which visitors scrawled words and names. It's all very amusing indeed, for a few minutes, and loaded with easy metaphors. Like Edgar Allen Poe's "Pit and the Pendulum", Cinnamon Scent Machine turns one way, then the other, as inertia sets in.

At Kavi Gupta, we had Jessica Stockholder and James Krone. Both artists subscribe to the less is more approach to art. Krone offered a simple paint between the lines sort of picture of a parrot named "Francis." Next to this was a twin Francis painting made by pressing the wet painting against another blank canvas, producing, in effect, a monotype print. On the opposite wall was the intriguing, similar but larger "monotype" painting "Cus-Sub-Her-Vir-O Is Lim." Krone's pressed paintings offer more mystery than his cool, clean, paint by number sidekick parrot.

Jessica Stockholder, Chair of the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Chicago, considers her own art to be an intersection of painting and sculpture. Before U.C., she chaired the Sculpture Department at the prestigious Yale School of Art. Stockholder says that her work "developed through the process of making site-specific installations."

With the right idea, attitude, context, arrangement, manipulation, presentation and artspeak, almost anything can be art, right? That is indeed the zeitgeist of the times and Stockholder has received a freight train of accolades for adhering to the company line. Playful, yes; fun, yes; fill the museum like a party house, check; entertaining, yes; colorful, yes; universally acclaimed by academics, check; cute, check. Except, wait a minute, what about those of us looking for more than temporary amusement, hungry for art and ideas that might last longer than the dust that they collect? As much as I try to be

Chris Bradley at Shane Campbell Gallery

curmudgeonly about Stockholder's work, I can't help but enjoy it. That's pretty cool.

I like to take the time to experience art first before reading about it. Coming to Shane Huffman's work for the first time at 65GRAND, with no previous knowledge of his work, I sensed interests in metaphysics, poetry and self-discovery. Then, looking for titles, I found instead lengthy literary descriptions, like the caption on the next page.

James Krone at Kavi Gupta

Corbett vs. Dempsey Gallery exhibited two Dominick Di Meo paintings: "Personage" from 1971 and "Untitled (White Personage, 1970)". The powerful pairing looked quite contemporary despite the vintage. It appears that the same stencil masks were used on each painting for the legs and heads. There's quite a range of experimentation between the 1970 and 1971 versions. One personage sits above a pile of garbage, or is exhorted above the crowds like a general headed into battle, while the other is cozily jumbled up in a faded-out-to-white world, with legs detached, arm and hand reaching out.

At Patron, Daniel Baird's 2015 Capsule (the Malaise) offers allusions, signifiers and metaphors: driftwood, large screen television, international power transformers, all in the service of non-committal abstract reflections, a stream of consciousness visual poetry.

Iranian born Orkideh Torabi is a 2016 MFA graduate from SAIC. The works on display at Western Exhibitions are from his series called "The Heads." Working with fabric dyes on stretched cotton, Torabi is an exceptional colorist and subtle commentator. The Heads are too educated to be outsider art but share a similar sense of intense empathy.

Jeux D'Été exhibited a grouping of works by Montreal-based Valérie Blas, exploring different sculptural materials and techniques. Her work seemed to pose questions about female identity and human progress. An empty, hollow pair of woman's pants on a pedestal strikes a very relaxed, fluid pose ("Don't Be Shy"). Another female form made of Forton polymer, titled "I want to be everything you didn't know you were looking for" looks a lot like a headless, plump piece of plastic meat. "I see your nose grow" is a technically ambitious, double sided work on a thick slab of professionally shaped granite with very slick laser-etched image on each side. This two faced monolith sails on the floor like Stanley Kubrick's 2001 Space Odyssey through space, bearing images of clamping devices and a Neanderthal.

From the entrance to GWC Expanded, looking just past John Preus' works at Rhona Hoffman, one could see moniquemeloche's display of Brendan Fernandes' work, consisting of a grouping of institutional, orange and chrome coat racks on wheels. There were no coats hanging, even though it was still coat weather in Chicago. Nothing exactly visually rewarding there, hmmm, must be conceptual art. My photographer's eye went in close looking for an engaging shot and learned that the coat hangers (there were 1-13 hangers on each rack) were hand-pulled crystal. They are quite beautiful up close, like Cinderella's glass slippers. One could devise a lot of narrative from that and still ask "so what?"

Chaveli Sifre entertained notions of spiritual healing at Produce Model Gallery. Hanging fabrics were dyed to represent auras, coconuts were filled with healing tinctures and plugged with crystal corks, and a humidifier produced custom scents. Sifre is an MA student of museum studies in Berlin, and her enthusiasm keeps up with bigger dogs in the show.

One of the most endearing features of Expanded was the airy, sunlit, uncluttered presentation that made possible contemplation of each artwork within its own space, while maintaining a grander view of the whole shebang. Soccer Club's set up consisted of just one large album of photos on one large table. The photos are by Richard Kern and were

Shane Huffman at 65GRAND
Was our first vehicle a mother or a meteorite? (My son holding Uncle Robbie's bones in one hand and meteorites from the field museum in the other, pregnant woman's breasts).
Photo courtesy 65GRAND

all derived from a painting by Rita Ackerman from 2002 called "Restlessness and Angry Optimism." Violence and sex co-mingle and the women are dressed to kill, literally, as if for ISIS. The photos are all from the concurrent book release by Ackerman and Drag City called "Jezebels."

Goldfinch presented a strong selection from their flat files of works by several artists, including: Sherwin Ovid, Dianna Frid, Azadeh Gholizadeh, and Nazafarin Lotfi. Claudine Isé has a good eye and intends to offer quality original contemporary artworks at modest prices. Is price point a successful model for collectors or artists? There are probably a million answers to that question.

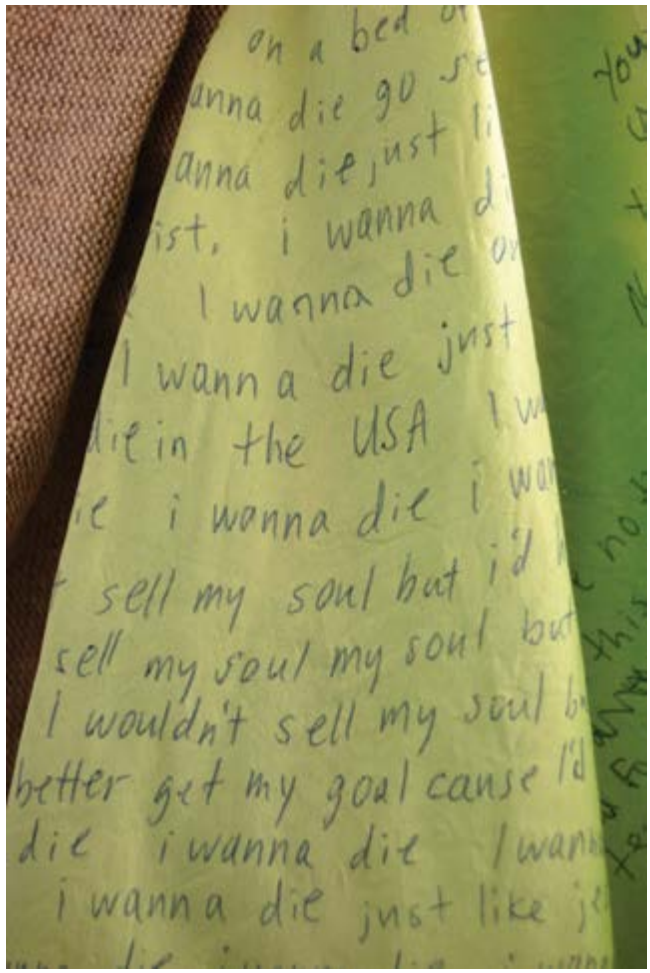
Regards presented a quirky mélange of works by Melina Ausikaitis, including: delightful child-like drawings, works made from stiffened items of clothing and gloves, lots of words, and song lyrics written in ballpoint pen on a lime green skirt ("Honey's Dead, 1992," 2016, canvas and silk skirt with the lyrics of Jesus and Mary Chain's 1992 album "Honey's Dead.") Ausikaitis addresses vulnerability, childhood and femininity through seemingly personal, biographic or autobiographic routes.

At The Mission, Jeroen Nelemans presented works that use commercial, backlit electric sign kits to produce clever light boxes that juxtapose environments and light sources. Nelemans has a Dutchman's mind for design. Also on view were a group of photographs from his "Scapes in RGB" series and a selection of ceramics.

At Weekends, a curatorial side project by GWC 2017 curator Michael Hall, Margaret Welsh covered the floor with two large, painted paper drop cloths, titled "Mother" and "Ideal Woman." Both were painted with seconds from home improvement stores and somehow ended up looking like vinyl.

At Efran Lopez, multi-layered and transparent plastic paintings by Monika Bravo complimented aluminum sculptures of twisted beams by Amalie Jakobsen. The Franklin presented Jaclyn Mednicov, a 2016 MFA recipient from SAIC and a promising painter. Mednicov littered the floor with carpet squares painted white-on-black with poetic, personal urban scrawl.

Much of the work in GWC Expanded was experimental and, like poetry spoken to the wind, was probably intended to be temporal and to promote a heightened sense of appreciation of the



Melina Ausikaitis at Regards

moment. GWC Expanded had the fun feeling of a graduate thesis show at an MFA program. It would be nice if something sells, but so what if it doesn't?

Donald Kuspit once spoke to me about being skeptical about everything presented as "art." Indeed, warning lights should go on whenever retired hedge fund traders and wealthy individuals position themselves as the defining mavens of culture. Whimsical, non-committal and nonchalant is non-compelling by nature. For good or bad, some trends of the times were observed at GWC: efforts to obfuscate and trivialize meaning, a lack of compelling conviction, and an overuse of metaphor and ambiguity. I found myself searching for jewels and mysteries hidden within the details of individual artworks. It felt like having candy for desert but skipping the main course. That's not necessarily good or bad; it's just a sign of the times.

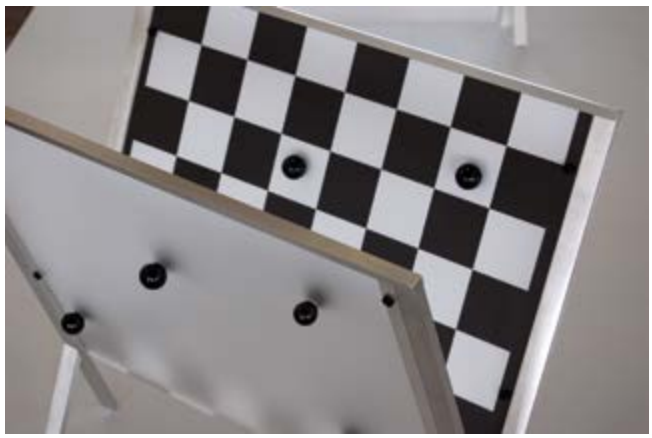
There was no place to sit down and talk shop at GWC. Maybe next time GWC will offer a guest lounge. Artists aren't the only people who appreciate the ethereal, fleeting moments of life. GWC Expanded was not intended to be everything for everybody, but it was an important and successful exhibition of contemporary artworks in a city that needs more of that. Curator Michael Hall organized an intriguing show. It was a beautiful thing, watching 25 galleries and curatorial projects work together to create an inspiring cultural event. ■

Also exhibiting at GWC 2017

Nick Albertson at Aspect/Ratio
Alison Veit and Jack Schneider at Beautiful
Clay Mahn at devening projects + editions
Sterling Lawrence at Document
Danny Giles at Andrew Rafacz
Jonathan Muecke at Volume

All photographs by Bruce Thorn unless otherwise noted.

Danny Giles at Andrew Rafacz



Sterling Lawrence at Document

Jonathan Muecke at Volume

Jack Schneider at Beautiful

The Lost Wonders of an Archive

The artist Jason Lilley talks about his work on the Penwith Gallery Archive

From an early age I have developed a keen fascination with the art and artists of Cornwall, especially those of St.Ives.

In 2013 I was made a member of the Penwith Society of Arts who own, and exhibit at, the Penwith Gallery. It was later in that year that I was delighted and amazed to discover that the gallery housed a very rich and largely undiscovered archive.

The Society (which has over the years included the membership of Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth, Peter Lanyon, Patrick Heron, Bernard Leach, Wilhelmina Barnes-Graham, Henry Moore and Terry Frost, amongst others) was formed in 1949 due to a disagreement with the more traditionally minded members of The St.Ives Society of Artists. This newly formed Society's aims were to be more inclusive of the new voices and issues which were filtering into the post war art world.

The Society was thought moribund within weeks of its inception, but here we are sixty eight years later and the legs are still twitching. Despite mass resignations, politics, personal grudges and envy, it still survives.

Kathleen Watkins (the keeper of keys for nearly 50 years, secretary, front of desk and general scary person who demanded 50p admission for entry to the gallery) passed away in late 2013 aged 80. In the chaos that ensued the archive became open for discovery.

I was given the task to check out a room in the gallery which had no lighting and was swimming in an inch of water from a burst pipe. Inside, there was a multitude of paper, books, magazines, the odd artwork and, on the floor, black plastic bags were strewn everywhere. It was in a complete mess. I inspected the nearest bag and pulled out two bits of paper.

Unbeknownst to me at that moment, this simple act was the start of two fantastic years working on archive material of real historical significance; something that could reawaken and re-invigorate the story of 20th Century art in St.Ives. One of the pieces of paper was a letter from Wilhelmina Barnes Graham in which she was lamenting the snow in Scotland and how she wanted to come back to Cornwall; at the bottom of her letter was a lovely sketch of her trudging through the snow. The other was a telegram from Peter Lanyon sent in 1950, which read, "Sorry I can't make the meeting this Saturday, could David Haughton please proxy for me? However if David cannot do it then anybody but Barbara or Ben." (Hepworth and Nicholson).

This was historical gold dust. Each refuse bag revealed more and more amazing letters,

Bernard Leach 'Leaping Salmon' Founder Member of the Penwith

Peter Lanyon founder member of the Penwith

catalogues and documents, in varying degrees of condition. I couldn't believe what was happening. The following two years saw the rescue and safe storage of the Society minutes from 1949, artists catalogues from 1947, photographs, press cuttings, correspondence and documentation, provenance and books (including Bernard Leach's donated library, with his and Shoji Hamada's drawings scattered within their pages). In all, 17 archive boxes, with another 40 boxes left un-catalogued, were saved. Sadly, there were casualties due to the water leak; a lovely John Milne catalogue was reduced to barely recognizable pulp, yet thankfully this was the exception rather than the rule. Nearly 200 etchings / lithographs/prints, nearly 200 paintings/sculptures, and over 100 posters were catalogued, photographed and researched. One of which was an unsigned ink drawing which my intuition told me was by Rose Hilton, and, purely by chance, Rose came into the gallery a week later, recognized it and signed and dated it there and then. Before leaving, Rose also generously donated it to the gallery.

The archive and artworks should be exhibited, devoured by academics, and their contents shouted from the rooftops. They have however lain dormant since late 2015, and sadly, to this day, the Society still don't know what they have or what to do with it all.

The Society members were clearly not as excited as I was about the archives. They were quite happy to inherit and live on the name of its past but had little respect or interest in the values and achievements of its founders.

To this day I am still unsure as to why whispered unfounded rumours started against me. Perhaps my enthusiasm for the archives and the gallery made them conclude that I was after the Chairmanship, however I see no kudos in titles, only in actions.

The archive and artworks should be exhibited, devoured by academics, and their contents shouted from the rooftops. They have however lain dormant since late 2015, and sadly, to this day, the Society still don't know what they have or what to do with it all.

Archives in the end are hard work and the Penwith's are definitely no exception. It really could have been a great opportunity for the Society to tell their own unique human story.

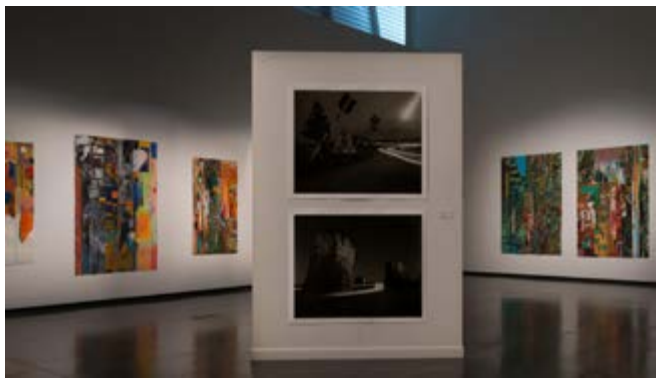
The Society could still be relevant today, but to be so, it needs to be much braver artistically and not content with purely surviving. The gallery is no longer unique; artworks are too familiar, with some found in nearly all the seaside gift shops/galleries throughout Cornwall. As a result of the Society's failure to find its own signature, amateurishly curated exhibitions and membership now acquired by nepotism, it may well be that the Society's legs might finally stop twitching

Jason Lilley is a member of the Penwith Society and exhibits his work predominantly with the Belgrave Gallery. Jason has curated a wide variety of professional exhibitions and works from his studio in St.Ives, Cornwall.

After 40 years Sowing Seeds in Academia

- a special art exhibition at RCVA, WMU, Kalamazoo, Michigan

by Lily Kostrzewa



(*Time. Location, Space: Curtis Rhodes and John M. "Jack" Carney.* On view at the Richmond Center for Visual Arts, Western Michigan University, February 16 - March 24, 2017. Photo by Mary Whalen.)

(Time. Location, Space: Curtis Rhodes and John M. "Jack" Carney. On view at the Richmond Center for Visual Arts, Western Michigan University, February 16 - March 24, 2017. Photo by Mary Whalen.)

Richmond Center of Visual Arts (RCVA) is a designated space for academia, community artists and international artists to exhibit. A beautiful 5,000 sq feet exhibition space founded in 2007 on the campus of Western Michigan University within the city of Kalamazoo, Michigan. I was invited by RCVA to review its 10th anniversary show "TIME, LOCATION, SPACE" presented by two retired professors John M. "Jack" Carney and Curtis Rhodes.

I often think teaching is a parallel course for many artists, providing a shelter environment for art making. On the other hand, many artists stop making art when loaded with academic responsibilities. However, the show struck me that they both regained their creative spark in art producing after retiring.

John Carney began teaching at WMU in 1966, and retired in 2000. During these close to 40 years, he taught Graphic and Foundation Design courses and established the Photography area's BFA and MFA degrees programs in 1972.

Curtis Rhodes also joined the art faculty at WMU in 1966, and taught Painting, Drawing, Printmaking and Art History. Retiring in 2004, he served as curator of the WMU print collection acquiring works by major national and international artists which today form the core of WMU's print collection.

"TIME, LOCATION, SPACE" is a grand exhibition featuring many of Carney's large photograph on carbon pigment print, Black and White pictures with interesting light from long exposure. Rhodes is featured with abstract paintings influenced by archaic pre-columbian motifs as well mystic modern rendering on large 6 foot watercolor papers.

Interviewing both of them I learned interesting tidbits which motivated their work.

Kostrzewa and Carney:

LK: Tell us the method of your photography.

JC: I don't print through Photoshop as a print engine(software). I print through QTR (Quad Tone Rip) and use the only "carbon pigment" by Epson inkjet. The reason is Photoshop gives B/W photos a very neutral gray but, the carbon print process allows you to get a very rich tones in B/W photography.

LK: Why do you build your own cameras and scan 4x6 inch film negative instead of using digital camera?

JC: For the amount of details in my photos, the best lenses produce the best images. I scan a 4x6 inch negative to get the higher quality. You cannot get such details in 35mm camera output.

LK: I heard you catch your film exposure from moonlight and you have a special way to measure the moonlight by its cycle?

JC: Yes, there is 29.5 days in a moon cycle. With full moon, there is a very clear night; with less moon, there is clear starlight. I like traveling full moon day until 18th day, half through the moon cycle. I use yardstick when I start exposure, then I know in how far the moon will move in one hour. It could take me one hour 55 minutes to get one picture exposure. That is how you see all the details on the

rock images of my photos.

LK: In "TIME, SPACE, LOCATION" you have works from 1988 to 2015. How has your work evolved over 30 years?

JC: Early on I built cameras, in fact six of them. I devoted each camera to a specific focal lens, so I didn't need to focus the lens when I was taking pictures.

In my second stage, I began to measure time exposure. When I opened the shutter I watched as the images evolved. I didn't know what would really happen until I processed the film.

Around the year 2000, I retired and I went on to my "theatrical production" stage. I am the producer. I select "SITE" to set up my stage. My actors are "TIME" and "SPACE", and they make their own play. Time and space are the ones that make the images. I exist in this time and space and watch them evolving. I would want viewers to experience the same excitement I went through and still go through as this process takes shape. I don't Photoshop any image.

Kostrzewa and Rhodes:

LK: I see your work gradually changing through the last 15 years. It seems to me your earlier works are motif-like shapes, but your newer works are more spontaneous with loose brush strokes. Can you tell me about it?

CR: My work comes from my experience and memories about my various travels in Australia, Peru and the Amazon jungle. I found many objects in the cultures of prehistoric periods, particularly the Inca and Mayan cultures. My earlier works are influenced by my time in Australia. My experience in the Amazon jungle also stay with me. I rely completely on my memories, and the pictures define my visual memories. All the work is about the locations and the time I spent in these locations.

LK: Can you tell me about your method of painting?

CR: I use Arches 300 lb of watercolor paper. I started with watercolor then went to pencil drawing, charcoal rendering, and finished with oil pastel. The medium is categorized as "mixed media".

LK: Why do you want to have this exhibition, I heard it was your idea. How do you see this show in your career?

CR: It was a desperate cry to have something to say. Reflecting the many years we have spent here and all the work we have done to take us here.

(Monument Rocks, by John M. Carney)

We dedicated our careers to build a strong art department. We spent our entire career here!

Reflection:

On my way back home, I thought about Rhodes' paintings, and I could actually see the bouncing of Klee, Miro, Klimt and Degas, a flick of their brushes, shapes and colors. I thought it was a beautiful exhibition, a short version of modern art history. It was definitely beyond any MFA thesis exhibit. However, it echoed an outcry for academic training. Is that all? They remind me of many dedicated art educators I have known. With much to say about the last often frustrating 50 years of higher Ed in art making. However, that would be another long article to discuss. After all, art is to speak human voice, and the only voice Professor John Carney and Professor Curtis Rhodes need is the the voice they have.

Lily (Lihting Li) Kostrzewa, a Taiwan born artist, earned BFA, MA, MFA degrees, has taught Drawing, Painting and Design at three Universities in the USA. Now a professional artist, she specializes in East/West cross-cultural painting.

"The longer you look at an object, the more abstract it becomes, and, ironically, the more real."

Lucian Freud

REVIEW:

Kestle Barton, the idea of Karen Townshend, Director and owner, relaxes comfortable across the Cornish Helston estuary enticing visitors to its gallery, accommodation and scenery.
Karen Townshend tells us that she tries to exhibit artists who have grown a connection with 'Kestle' and its surrounds. So this show by Jessica Cooper is her second there, the first being a group show in 2013.
Jessica Cooper described her work to a small audience as the making of anything into art. Her paintings taking their inspiration from plastic items she found on the farmstead while the video was her version of flicking through a sketch book.
Sadly she did not wish to talk about her relationship either to Conceptualism or Postmodernism when asked.
The one work sold, and used on the promotional material, is obviously the most interesting work in the show. The larger the canvas the more she is lost with what to paint upon them. She shows some vigour but seems to worry too much about what people will say and think rather than take her skill and be herself and not a copyist of so much other postmodern painting. Taking the emotion out of the experiences, as she said she tried to do, leaves the objects to speak for themselves and since everyone's experience of objects is different many objects will have nothing to say to many people.

Paintings range from £300 - £4,900. The Show 'Jessica Cooper .... but plastic is beautiful' runs from 8th April to 20th May 2017.

News Briefs

Prices for his 'art' are plummeting. His Bond Street shop has shut. And his new £50m shipwreck exhibition is being ridiculed. So is Damien Hirst sunk?

- Hirst's exhibition is called Treasures From The Wreck Of The Unbelievable
- It is said to have cost him £50 million to create and opened in Venice yesterday
- Hirst's exhibition features huge photos and a video of the 'salvage operation'

Prices are said to start at £400,000 for smaller pieces, rising to £4 million

"To drive someone like Erin Coburn out and see her undermined was very disconcerting to the whole department," said Paco Link, the digital department's former general manager of creative development, who had also worked with Ms. Coburn at the Getty.
Another trustee said, "Few people have spoken up in a meeting for about 40 years."
The recent discovery of a looming $40 million deficit that forced the institution to cut staff, trim its exhibition schedule and postpone a heralded $600 million expansion are signs that the system is showing cracks. (The MET has a $365 turnover) ROBIN POGREBIN NY Times 4.4. 2017

New Arts Council England - chair Nicholas Serota... announce(s) ... new research into creative education. "We must ensure every child can achieve their creative potential, whether that's as an artist, scientist or an engineer. Our strength as a society and as a competitive economy depends on it." Stuart Corbridge, vice-chancellor of Durham University, added: "It is part of our core purpose at Durham University to help people realise their full potential, something which is at the heart of the Durham Commission in examining how best we can ensure all children have the opportunity to experience a creative and cultural education."

Manarat Al Saadiyat in Abu Dhabi - Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, clowns, comedy television and theatrical performance were among the diverse subjects discussed during the first day of Culture Summit. The four speakers at yesterday's session talked about how the arts are capable of changing people and places at a basic level – for example to combat terrorism or involve people in politics – and to help social relationships

The REDWING GALLERY Crowdfunder raised £20k and their Grand Art Auction raised £1k. Roselyne Williams at REDWING tells us, "We've more fundraising planned, including an Art Raffle, a Book Sale and a Cornish Ceilidh. It is important that we raise £140,000 as soon as possible as potential developers are beginning to take an interest in buying. If they do, our project will have to vacate the building at short notice. We are searching for an alternative base but nothing has turned up yet."
www.redwinggallery.co.uk

AVAILABLE FROM :

UNITED KINGDOM

Arnolfini Books; Capital Books, London; Camden Arts Centre Bookshop; Charlotte Street News; Daily News; HOME; ICA Bookshop, London; Walter Koening Books, Serpentine; White Cube Bookshop; Tate Modern.

Cornwall: Belgrave Gallery, St Ives; Cafe Arts, Truro; Camelford Art Gallery, Camelford; Exchange Gallery, Penzance; Penwith Gallery, St.Ives; Anima-Mundi, St.Ives; Falmouth Art Gallery, Falmouth; Redwing Gallery, Penzance; Tate, St Ives; Terre Verte Gallery, Altarnun; Walter Koenig Books, Truro; Waterstones, Truro.

CONTINETAL EUROPE & ASIA

Athenaeum Boekhandel, Amsterdam; Do You Readme?! GbR, Berlin; Multi-Arts Corporation, Taipei; Pandora Ltd, Istanbul.

UNITED STATES

Chicago: Hilton | Asmus Contemporary, Corbett vs Dempsey Gallery, Firecat Projects, Kavi Gupta Gallery, Linda Warren Projects, Printworks, 57th Street Books, Martha Mae Art Supplies.

Can You Believe What You Have Missed?

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