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CHICAGO WASHINGTON LONDON CORNWALL

With Extracts from



THE
JACKDAW

DEATH OF DAMIEN HIRST IN VENICE

A NEW & BETTER CURRICULUM FOR ART STUDENTS

Jorge Miguel Benitez

UNDERSTANDING MODERNISM

Charles Thomson

A VERY MODERN MANIFESTO, GOYA 1792

Susana Gómez Laín

ART & POLITICS AFTER POST- MODERNISM

Chris Cutrone

“Becoming a brand name is an important part of life. It's the world we live in.”

Damien Hirst

STOP PRESS:
some circles have thin skins.

The publisher and UK Editor attended an opening of Sir Terry Frost's work at the Belgrave Gallery St Ives this evening (17th June) and as always it was pleasant and intense with avid discussions on art until the Publisher started to talk to Tony Frost, Terry Frost's son. On revealing he had recently rejoined the Penwith Derek Guthrie commented on the darkness that was in the Penwith. Tony Frost instantly became angry and demanded Derek Guthrie leave the gallery,

we can understand anger, We can understand not wanting to talk politics at your father's show, We can even understand calling a writer a trouble maker (we often are), but there is no excuse for manhandling an 81 year old man slow on his feet as he is leaving the gallery as requested TWICE. That is truly gauche, uncultured behaviour. The September issue will carry a review of the recent shows at the Penwith, including Public Hanging 2, by our Madrid editor Susana Gomez Lain. As this is already written it is not coloured by this loutish behaviour by one of the exhibitors.

The New Art Examiner has a long history of producing quality and independent art criticism. Chicago, Washington and Cornwall, as any art scene, need 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. All editions include the digital issue sent via e-mail. Subscription rates 6 issues print and digital:

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The difficulties of publishing an
art magazines in the time of Trump

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Keeping an Eye Open and Camille
Paglia, Sexual Personae

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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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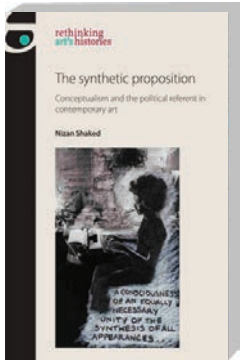
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The Synthetic Proposition

Conceptualism and the political referent in contemporary art

By Nizan Shaked



The synthetic proposition examines the impact of Civil Rights, Black Power, the student, feminist and sexual-liberty movements on conceptualism and its legacies in the United States between the late 1960s and the 1990s. It focuses on the turn to political reference in practices originally concerned with abstract ideas, as articulated by Joseph Kosuth, and traces key strategies in contemporary art to the reciprocal influences of conceptualism and identity politics: movements that have so far been historicised as mutually exclusive. The book demonstrates that while identity-based strategies were particular, their impact spread far beyond the individuals or communities that originated them. It offers a study of Adrian Piper, David Hammons, Renée Green, Mary Kelly, Martha Rosler, Silvia Kolbowski, Daniel Joseph Martinez, Lorna Simpson, Hans Haacke, Andrea Fraser and Charles Gaines. By turning to social issues, these artists analysed the conventions of language, photography, moving image, installation and display.

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Chicago can be Reborn from Community

Derek Guthrie, Publisher

The New Art Examiner was created as a resistance to censorship and the control of the Chicago art elite. It has a policy of zero tolerance for such activities. Chicago has never forgiven this act of independence, because it has its own hometown paranoia, which revolves around the application of power. Smoke and mirrors is the well-used metaphor; in which all the ideas of the freedom fighter and terrorist coalesce.

The art world, which houses the mighty and the humble, the celebrity and the down at heel, is not, and cannot be, regulated and so corruption, self-interest, and illusion abound. Dreams are born and fortunes gained, all on the backs of artists who make work that is called art, whether that is true or not. Charlatans, hustlers, trustees, curators, gallerists, gentle souls and dreamers are all found in the extended melange.

The NAE grew from an eight-page tabloid into the largest and most respected art magazine published outside of New York. In spite of this noble contribution, the NAE was never recognized or accepted by the art power-elite, because they could not control its content. Chicago has yet to adapt to the 21st century and relinquish its inherent anti-intellectualism, change the manner of its governance, reforge its culture, and, if possible, lose the anti-intellectualism that fuelled the American melting pot.

The NAE was revived in 2013 after a period of inactivity, by co-founder Derek Guthrie with the input and support from Daniel Nanavati in Cornwall assisted by previous colleagues in Chicago.

Two independent teams emerged on a volunteer basis who

shared a commitment to writing about art. Unfortunately the undercurrent of Chicago paranoia surfaced and the Chicago team lead by Michel Segard, Michael Ramstedt, Tom Feldhacker, and Tom Mullaney broke the honor code and tried to dominate and shape the UK contribution and remove the publisher. In short, they attempted to steal the NAE.

The law on intellectual property rights will frustrate this cowardly act. The reputation of the NAE is too large and international to be corralled by this gang of upstarts who do not have the intellectual weight or vision to carry the NAE into a future. Their vision does not cross the boundary lines of Cook County.

This current issue, July /August 2017, exemplifies sophisticated and authoritative art criticism, as opposed to the self-serving offering of the rogue NAE which wallows in sentimental sexual politics. Sexual politics, whatever the disposition, is not guaranteed to be cutting edge. The NAE anticipates a full blown revival of Camille Paglia, the well-established authority on these matters, with an extensive review of her book *Sexual Personae* in the next issue.

Positive support has appeared. Two new Editors have merged: Susana Gomez Lain in Madrid and Al Jirikowic in Washington DC. The Chicago cabal do not have the imagination to share the NAE with outsiders. This lack of imagination is not unique to Chicago. It includes "the feel-good comfort factor", the glittering ideal of bourgeois ambition which is no prize.

Some have suggested the NAE walk away from Chicago as

Chicago is not a productive ground for art criticism. The NAE with enough support will stay loyal to Chicago as there are many in Chicago who are not caught in the trap of provincialism. Chicago patronage usually demands a heavy price of compromise, restricting the essential freedom of thought in response to the visual arts and cultural events.

An anonymous donor has set up a trust fund of over a million dollars that in the near future will match the working budgets of the respective editors. The NAE will not die and is not an extension of the manipulated marketplace. In the Jane Addams tradition, it will work in the community. The Publisher **puts out a call to Chicago** for citizens to step forward to make a board so we can apply for grants to pay writers. A board only has to meet once a year to pass the budget presented by the editor and staff.

This writer, the Publisher and co-founder now of advanced age, keeps the optimism natural to a young immigrant in the New World. Destiny took me to Chicago in 1969. Chicago, in part, shaped my life.

I have little hope of any positive support from Chicago, a place described by Nelson Algren as a "City on the Make". We have nothing to trade as we only have ideas and we cherish freedom of expression for the "interdependent voice of the visual arts" has to tell the story honestly, as perceived.

I want to believe in artists. I think it is time for artists and writers to reclaim art discourse from the gatekeepers of museums, trustee collectors, and cowed academics. ■

Letters to the Editor

Winners Get Grants, Losers Don't

Dear Editor,

"... like any juried or selection process, there's people who can be perceived as winners and people who can be perceived as losers."

So says the executive director of a prominent D.C. non-profit arts organization in a recent article in The Washington City Paper.

He's right. There simply aren't enough public-sponsored venues and exhibit halls for every artist who wants to be seen. And it would be a losing battle even if D.C. didn't have the number of federally-funded arts institutions it has, all competing for the share of attendance and visibility local arts non-profits might otherwise expect. The MD and VA suburbs are bursting - and as is the numbers of artists who now work and reside there - all wanting to take advantage of the city arts opportunities and limited arts funding.

(Funny it is how the topic of D.C. Statehood is nowhere to be heard among those speaking of DMV arts and culture. As if there simply isn't any relationship - or if any attempt to define the difference between those with state representation and those without is offensive or irrelevant in a discussion of art and arts funding?)

What to do...? Concede to the sports analogy of "winners and losers"? Why can't D.C. become like a major-league player in the arts? Why shouldn't D.C. attract wealthy arts patrons like the big-league owners, and class-A administrators and curators with competitive salaries and seasonal contracts? Not to mention that D.C. real-estate development would be nowhere without quality arts and entertainment. No, we mustn't disappoint the owners, the developers, the managers, the team ... or the fans.

So it's a good thing that there are so many artists and performers (makers and creatives) in and around D.C. It "raises the bar".

Whose bar?

Another question I keep returning to is, "Since when did the arts become a competitive endeavor and why?"

Is the sole purpose of arts organizations to establish even more competitive arenas with more entrepreneurs and even greater stakes (and subsequently more "losers" than winners) in the pursuit of a more "refined" or "progressive" culture ...?? Awards, prizes, grants, exposure, sales are not what all artists want or need; but it is the only thing they've come to expect will ever be offered if only by some stroke of fortune or dogged placation that those who control the rewards of cultural labor might look upon them.

So despite what artists are being told they need and want, the last thing (...ask any artist) is to be informed that they are a "loser" and not among a select team of "winners". Not this time. But maybe next? Everyone receives his or her turn? Not likely.

What's the alternative?

(First it must be seen that there is a significant difference between visual and performing arts organizations, their audiences, as well as their function. There are a few similarities but I wish to focus on the visual arts as that is my area of knowledge and not attempt to draw too large a picture or create too many generalities).

Museums of contemporary art, arts institutions of contemporary culture, and arts organizations - that profess to support more community-centered arts and culture - but also serve for the promotion and marketing of contemporary global culture as an economic incentive. The differences between their vision to serve as education centers, as showcase venues for artists, and as arts advocates varies as much as those functions may be blurred or be said to overlap. As centers for arts education, organizations and institutions may be eligible to receive non-profit status and much needed tax deductible donations - even though the direct impact or supplement to school-based arts education is also be heavily abstracted - particularly where those centers for arts education are estranged geographically from the communities and neighborhoods they claim to serve.

The truth is that contemporary arts institutions and organizations are less educational than promotional in their programming - serving more as proxy venues for artist promotion and sales as well as training grounds for the careers of curators, administrators, consultants, assistants and the host of arts-professionals whose competitive salaries must be paid from an ever-increasing requirement for funding. Managing gallery and performance spaces is also very costly, contributing to a large percentage of an organization's overhead expense (and volunteer time) while serving only a small percentage of artists and a limited range of cultural views.

However, from the artists point of view (and similarly like any unobstructed lawn with a goalpost and bleachers becomes a potential playing field for sports enthusiasts) any public building with bare walls and lights becomes a gallery, or a performance space and a potential sales and promotion venue... or more to the point, a source of revenue to be "managed".

As there is never enough space for all of the art and performance that is produced, selective management becomes absolutely critical to its continued function as a viable space - choices must be made and curatorial standards and narratives must be devised to substantiate those choices - however dubious or artificial those choices, standards and narratives are to reality and

relevant to the community in which they are displayed. Hence, “winners” and “losers”; those who are assisted in selling their work or their brand, and those who are left to fend for and support themselves.

But what if ... arts organizations were NOT in the business of promotion, of giving support to some artists but not others? What if arts organizations supported ALL artists both equitably and more directly without preference to gender or race, style or substance? What if arts budgets went directly to the communities they represent to strengthen the cultural infrastructure, providing incentive for artists and cultural workers to remain within those communities, to thrive, and both preserve the native culture and provide for the unique cultural requirements with which the artists have an innate and natural relationship? What if arts organizations did not serve as a proxy for the commercial market as galleries and theatres to promote art and ticket sales or as a career platform for transient arts administrators, transient curators and transient non-artist professionals? What if arts organizations were not players in the cultural gentrification of communities but the glue that held those communities together to resist urban expansion and cultural homogeneity?

What would arts organizations do?

Perhaps the most effective, the most significant (and the least costly) thing arts organizations could do is to formally recognize the difference between art and artists; between culture and its potential for marketing. (Many of those who annually profess “support for the arts” could care less about the welfare of artists or community cultures. To them “the arts” are either a collector commodity or a refined source of entertainment that likewise must be codified, qualified.. to be entered into competition; to earn approval or disapproval through critical judgment.)

Rather, artists and culture share a living relationship, a symbiosis, by which one is not likely to survive without the other. For art to survive requires nothing more than a museum and those with the means to collect it. For artists and cultures to survive requires a great deal more imagination and committed effort.

“Art has no ‘dominion’ really – it just exists and sometimes in the unlikeliest places made by the unlikeliest people. [here](#)

Functionally speaking, arts organizations could raise money along with awareness to do little things that would actually help all artists thrive and by extension to build and secure a more vibrant, viable art community that the public would be proud to call their own and in a way that would set a newer, higher and directly productive standard for arts organizations everywhere.

How would they do this?

As an advocate for artists’ rights, affordable housing and studios, as advocates for fair practices, create job banks for artists, create emergency funding for artists and their immediate families when there is a serious medical need, fire, or job layoff, underwrite group insurance, to advocate for health safety in the arts workplace, as a representative for artists with the local government with regard to city planning and arts

education in the public school system, in conjunction with other arts organizations to advocate for artists in federal arts legislation, as an advocate for elderly and handicapped artists, as an archive for local artist’s documents such as with the Archives of American Art, as an historical library or repository of the Arts in D.C. or to assist artists with the compilation of their personal archives [here](#)

The truth is there are plenty of things that D.C. arts organizations could be that are fully inclusive that doesn’t presume to select one group of artists or selection of any individual artist over another; that doesn’t contribute to divisiveness, that doesn’t require a curator or even a scheduled exhibition space; whose budget isn’t merely self-preserving, and that doesn’t presume that the only need artists have is greater exposure (“people die from exposure”).

The idea that artists and the public must be educated to the latest trend in contemporary art or to the newest big-names in a list of this year’s emerging artists - or that artists are somehow uniquely gifted or visionary in voicing the needs and issues of communities while remaining silent with respect to their own issues of livelihood - and that somehow manifests as a cultural service - is not only short-sighted, it’s redundant and proven to be of little if any long-term effective value.

It’s time to stop seeing arts organization as arenas. Art is not a competition. Artists are not players. Culture needs to be served, not sold; it is its own reward, and a city with its diverse neighborhoods and cultures deserves to be treated fairly, unequivocally, with equanimity to all - that art and art practice might be the one human endeavor by which NO ONE LOSES. Ever

Bill Roseberry

(1)[here](#) (2)[here](#)

Banned from The Newlyn Orion Gallery

Daniel

I have processed your invoice and sent to our accountant - payment should be made next month.

We are currently reassessing books and magazines in the gallery shop - unfortunately titles that are not directly linked to our exhibitions really struggle to sell - including magazines as witnessed by having to return all 5 of the last issue to you. We are dramatically cutting back on the titles we stock. So unfortunately we are no longer able to stock New Art Examiner.

Many Thanks

Simon Jaques (Exchange Gallery, Penzance)

Editor’s Response:

There are other publications and books in the Newlyn Orion Gallery that are not directly linked to their programming; the Publisher considers this to be a form of censorship and if not censorship an example of institutional arrogance.

The Chicago Cabal as Buffoons, Interlopers and Thieves

Dear Editors of the real New Art Examiner:

The copyrighting and trademarking of the term “New Art Examiner” by a group called “Art Message International” is both buffoonery and a barbarism.

I once investigated trademarking the name of a commercial software product I wrote called SUPERPATCH. The lawyer, who specialized in intellectual property, trademarks, and copyrights (he had already secured copyright registration for my product) told me that, before he could proceed with any formal action with the US Trademark office, he would need to conduct thorough research with respect to any other entity either using “SUPERPATCH” or holding a trademark for the term. He would of course charge for that search. And should he find someone else using the term with respect to a product that overlapped with mine, the issue would be who used it first, not who applied for a trademark first. He said to proceed without this search would be a violation of his professional responsibilities. And to attempt to trademark my product’s name in the face of someone else’s prior use for a similar product would be foolish.

I guess, in the case of trademarking “New Art Examiner”, there was no need to do a search, since it is obvious that the term had been in use by a similar product for decades, and remained in contemporary use. Applying for a trademark in the face of such facts is so blatant it raises questions about whether the lawyer who prepared the application met his responsibilities as an officer of the court. The ruffians of Art Message International are also suspect. The fact they openly assert “Established 1973” as part of their co opted logo demonstrates they are conscious it came from some other source than themselves.

Thus, the Chicagoans are interlopers and thieves, attempting to steal from Derek a term he owns in order to drive him out of existence. Lawyers are not known for their great ethics, but I am surprised any lawyer would participate, on ethical as well as liability grounds, in executing such a theft. The “new leadership” simply stole the store from its owner.

While the foolishness of their action makes them laughable, they are nonetheless worth taking seriously. While stupid in business, they are good with art writing. If they continue to compete with the authentic NAE, the publication most likely to succeed, if either succeeds, will be the one that appeals most to readers.

The real NAE has some advantages: Name recognition and historical significance are the main ones (which is why the Chicagoans want to take your name and logo in the first place). Product manufacturers spend millions to achieve the recognition that the New Art Examiner has earned for itself over the past 40 years. Fortunately for you, the theft of your name and logo is unlikely to stand. You may even be able to recover compensation for the damage they have done to your reputation and

the advertising revenue they have received while illegally using your logo.

After that things could easily flip. There is an idea here of “America First” that has taken fire. It is not a right wing idea, as many suppose, but rather a part of human nature that the right wing is currently leveraging with great effectiveness. Derek and Jane bootstrapped the NAE in the 70s with an even more localized version of it - “Chicago First” - and they are hardly “right wing”. Their effort was unquestionably successful because it is a good way to position any project. So the Chicago group has the advantage of being the home team, as far as American and especially Chicago readers go.

Making art writing free and freely available is, unfortunately, the categorical imperative for most who would provide information about art to the public, if they are to have any impact. Both publications realize this, but the Chicago group is openly embracing it. Derek has been slow to deal with this issue, though the real NAE does, as I write this, provide free access to content through its website, which has been fully functional for a couple of years. The phony “NAE” has yet to put up anything, despite their enthusiastic stance about the importance of free access. You need to match their enthusiasm. Perhaps you do. You certainly have beaten them to the punch as far as delivery goes.

They are adopting a more “trendy” approach. There is no doubt that trends exist because of wide spread acceptance of them, and therefore focusing on them necessarily suggests there are potentially more readers who would be interested. They are deemphasizing copy which examines corruption in the art world, which is probably a good idea since there is little that can be done about it anyway. “Gender Politics in Art” is about as trendy as anything ever was, and has been bludgeoned to death in a nearly infinite number of venues, but it is popular because it is popular. I must suppose there remain many folks who want to hear about it and similar over-indulged topics. There are consequences associated with choosing to follow trends or to not follow.

Their design is more open, featuring more white space, especially around images. In the world of printed matter, white space costs as much to produce as any other space in a publication. On the internet, however, there is no difference in cost, and white space generally reads more pleasantly on a standard computer screen.

Breezy design and trend following are exactly what the New Art Association did with the Chicago based NAE at the turn of the century. Trendy topics, a more open look, and lots of color formed a package that closely resembled all the other art publications of the era. It looked like the obvious ticket to greater success, but it led to bankruptcy instead. As appealing as the “breezy” and “relevant” approach the Chicago phonies are taking seems, sites like ARTSY, HYPERALLERGENIC, and ART FAG CITY own this space, and own it big time. They struggle for money due to the inability to sell subscriptions that affects all art writing these days, but they do have funding, because they have an enviable record of impact in the trendy “niche”. Both versions of the NAE have yet to establish a beach head in their space.

Both the real and fake NAE need to do better with financing if either is to succeed. Monetizing a website works sometimes, but depends upon heavy traffic which, despite your gains in readership since you began allowing free access, is not yet up to that task, while their site does not even exist. In fact, funding appears to be such a major problem for both publications that acquiring it could wind up being the basis for whether either of them endure. Derek has been amazing in persisting for years without much money, but that can go on for just so long.

Chicago has the advantage with American readership because there are more of them, they live here, they want to focus exclusively on American content, and they seem gung-ho for the moment. Without Americans willing to do the legwork that the Chicagoans are doing for themselves, American readership is likely to fade due to lack of content that is of greatest interest to us. Workers are hard to come by if you don't have money to pay them, especially because your center is located on the other side of the ocean. This is a tough one.

That said, I think you should go further than merely "asking" writers to decide whether they want to publish in yours or theirs, even though the odds say some of them will choose theirs. The abject barbarism of what the Chicago folks did precludes friendly cooperation.

John Link

The Cornwall Associates Shame the Chicago Cabal

To the Editor, New Art Examiner

The Associates of the NAE collectively wish to express their displeasure at the actions taken by individuals in Chicago, in particular Michel Segard (Associate Publisher), in breaking the code of honour of the NAE, attacking the integrity of our publisher, Derek Guthrie, and the editorial independence of the UK editor and contributors. Chicago's interference caused the resignation of a key U.K. contributor and put at risk an important London launch.

We do not interfere in the affairs of Chicago and Chicago should keep out of ours.

We consider Chicago's actions in entering into a power struggle, banning Derek Guthrie from the New Art Examiner Facebook page, and breaking away from our publishers ultimate control utterly deplorable and in total breach of NAE's code of honour.

The Associates

Response to Chris Cutrone's 'An Incomplete Project'

Dear Editor,

Thoughts on reading Chris Cutrone's piece:

"An Incomplete Project" and "Jürgen Habermas's critique?"

The question on Modern / Postmodern concerns me less as an artist though perhaps a little more as an educationalist.

We are all aware of modern art's grand narrative of emancipation as an 'invigorating failure', while the "aftermath" of postmodern ignominiously stumbled into the realm of kitsch. My concern is how the 'universalism' of the modern came to a sad end, (or has it?), when really we have never been modern in the sense that capitalism ran ahead of art and in doing so torpedoed art and life.

Breezy design and trend following are exactly what the New Art Association did with the Chicago based NAE at the turn of the century. Trendy topics, a more open look, and lots of color formed a package that closely resembled all the other art publications of the era. It looked like the obvious ticket to greater success, but it led to bankruptcy instead

As an artist my concern arises out of feelings for things as objects in the world, and that includes us. Seeing the world is what we do as artists. What we see and the many different ways of "seeing" amounts to the culture of speculation. When every-thing is seen and thought through as an object standing there in the world, in a space, in relation to other objects, of time, of history, of sensual time and passing fancies where everything can be a dream with no standing force of grounding, texture or light, when reason itself changes, is interrupted, broken into illogical sections or diametrically cut into separate zones, then and only then does the notion of genre or style cease to exist and we may approach "reality" with a reasonably clear mind. However, the object-thing I am seeing and sensing always appears to retreat and not relate to any particular form. In this sense reality is never completely exhausted. (The history of art is full of retreating objects). Reality has within its state of being much more subtlety of mood and having many hidden facets of form as it faces the world and us, not only in itself as a form of life but also in the mind of the subjective self, moods and memories in other changing life-forms that we ourselves have. Such an event if achieved, can be frightening and at its best must be so because it goes way beyond any idea of aesthetic or critique. I'm saying here that what is being made, is not a matter of style, artistic movement, or whatever.

No it's not a style but a gesture, a mark, autonomous as an object/thing made for the world as an advent in the world brought from something hidden into something unexpected. "Object" and seeing the life-world as an "object" whether in music, writing, visual art, performance, society, a storm, a mass meeting or whatever is the means by which I can encounter reality, or a sense of reality. My knowledge of reality intellectually or

scientifically doesn't grasp the knowable of things in-themselves. I can have great knowledge of my paints and where they come from and their atomic form, and may think I know where to put them on a canvas, but not until they hit the canvas do I have a sense of experiencing/seeing them. The combination of brush, paint, canvas, arm, body, mind and spirit wrought into an experience of action is not only the search for reality, but in finding it. Critical writing, to be in the reality of the life-world, also has to be lived in the physical materials of language, experiencing reality as part of the action of writing. I am certain this is common knowledge to all artists (or hopefully so) I don't want to say the word creative because I'm not sure what that means when it comes to seeing "objects". More to the point is, how to arrive at "reality" and the practice of preparing for that "reality". For me, reality in this sense is a power. Maybe it's the power of natural forces, i.e., nature, and as being human is nature we must also take into account what we consider non-human as a part of nature: the object as made by humans. Perhaps it's easier to sense this as a visual act and perhaps more difficult in a critique of visual art. After all, a critique is nearly always a critique of itself! In fact I find critical writing often confusing, reflecting confusion by its "often fragmented and unfelt knowing".

Chris Cutrone cites Susan Buck-Morss's "sustained critical moment of aesthetic experience" like the one I have described above. Yes, the moment is sustained through many moments, what is being "built" in a sense is a homage to experience itself as a thing in itself. But then again, what is this thing called experience? In my world it is outside an idea of experience, that is, when experience itself concerns a reality in the world infused with the reality of the art it enters: once there the realm of something beyond reason into chaos takes place.

In terms of whether this so called experience is either Modern or Post-modern is of no consequence. What should be of consequence is the reality of the "object" as a painting. So that one has an Object in-itself and a Painting in-itself, also to question both as valid in terms of existing as life-forms. Whatever source of 'experiencing' life-worlds as form an artist brings to an event as an advent on canvas, a realization maybe being achieved of a glimpse into the kind of reality I'm talking about.

My view of Jürgen Habermas I fear is not good. In my reading, the idea of his understanding of a "dialogical process" leading to "communicative rationality" worries me. I'd rather turn to Jacques Derrida wherein deconstruction comes into being nearer to how an artwork functions on many levels through plunging into fathomless depths, widths, breadth and heights. I suppose that's postmodern, Hah!

In my view artists should be more concerned with education through ideas of seeing, not only in art schools and schools generally and humanity programmes, but more importantly, in the work of art itself. Performance Art once had this advantage! But not in relational participatory art forms. Art itself is essentially educational. Herbert Read's "Education Through Art" and Claire Bishop's reference to Félix Guattari's "How do you bring a classroom to life as a work of art" are very much to the point in teaching about the "object" as form and its evasiveness to human

sight and mind. Not to forget also the 'teaching' of Friedrich Schiller in his "On the Aesthetic Education of Man". A series of twenty seven letters written in the eighteenth-century during the French Revolution with its emphasis on play as part of his concept of reconciling the inner antagonism between sense and intellect, nature and reason.

Ken Turner

Penwith Society Bans New Art Examiner

Dear Editor (Times and Echo)

It has come to my attention that the Penwith Gallery in St.Ives, has banned the sale of the New Art Examiner magazine from its premises. This censorship and attack on the free speech of and critical discussion by artists and academics flies in the face of the original values of this once progressive and inclusive society.

I do not know why they have opted for this draconian approach, but surely opinion can be discussed, argued and conclusions reached without the archaic impulse of suppression.

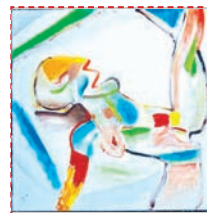
Hopefully, those responsible for this inartistic act will promulgate their reasoning. It will be interesting to find out as to why their skin has become so thin.

JASON LILLEY,

FULL MEMBER OF THE PENWITH SOCIETY OF ARTS



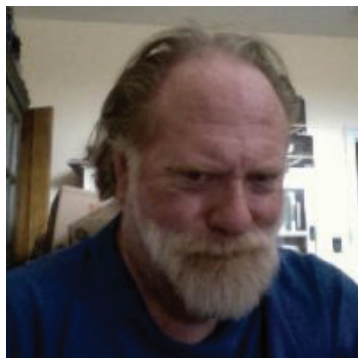
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(Shänne Sands, SUNFLOWERS)



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SPEAKEASY



Al Jirikowic

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.

To think that Washington D.C. is a major progenitor of the visual arts would be an incorrect assumption. Of course we are an art center and an international confluence of art passing into America from a global context – yes, given our embassies and museums and galleries and schools and of course, the Federal Government – we are important. But as a real incubator and scene starting focus of art generated **here**, we do not rank. We make no impact on the national/international scene or, if we do, it does not resonate. Ask your friends in New York.

We are, at best, a road stop for other shows and artists just passing through. They get the notice. As artists, we are daunted by the celebrity of New York and others. Many of us live in the past, in the shadow of the once pronounced Washington Color School. We make no splash as a homespun artistic identity. We get lost in our separateness and islands within islands. Washington languishes.

We do not have a cohesive artistic community, despite the hard work and talent that resides in this area. As an art community, there is simply no there “there”. There is no resonant artistic voice arising from Washington D.C. This is tragic and if you think the spirit of art is important for the capital of the United States of America, why, this **void** is unhealthy. For

many reasons, when it comes to “our artists” – this is our current lackluster landscape and most of you know it.

We at the New Art Examiner think this must change and can change – for the sake of our cultural future and potential. And we are coming.

The “condition” in the DMV is a smallness in “vitality shared” or distinct lack of identifiable focus. We are scattered, almost adrift. In a sense, and Washington is not alone in this situation, in the on going issue of being “stuck”. Artists and critics need to get the show on the road with intelligent, respectful dialogue and discourse that is tactful, sensitive but challenging in manner. The artist should have the last word – an on going process. We do not do this here and as a result, get cut off at the knees and consequently are pushed back at ever coming to grips with our identity crisis as an art community ... which at heart ... wants to **thrive**. The community needs to boost itself so as to **DEVELOP AND PROCEED**.

How do we work on this and admirably do so? This is not an easy proposition but it is necessary if we are to bloom.

In the next few months, and on into the future, the Examiner will be covering the Washington area. We are interested in the cultural health and vibrancy of the local Washington art world and it’s unlimited potential. Given the **dearth** of critical depth and cultural overview of our inherent scene by the so called local media and “others” [and of course, this opinion is widely reflected amongst artists here, no surprise,]

we relish the creative demand of “getting to work”. Given the everyday climate of our on going political and social calamity, – ok, my opinion – we really have no choice but to trust in the power of the creative process of ART. We must take this seriously. This is important. Many live for this and by this. We are human beings – many are involved, those of you who make art or what ever you may call it [an open question?] and those of you who depend on this, it is now time to show up and begin our new “buzz”, our ideas, our strengths shared and our, most importantly, our questions. We hope to move this along. This is really up to our collective creative beings as **artists**. Ultimately, it will always be up to and of the artists.

I cannot emphasize this enough. In our expression of our fears, our questions, our ideas, our differences in WORDS – this is the stuff of enhancing our identity as ARTIST HUMAN BEINGS. We often forget this, we become passive and dulled to our outcomes and circumstances. This is always a story of ebbs and flows, of dynamics and challenges. Time to break the habit and see what happens. The music is playing, a dance? FEAR NOT.

We welcome many differing opinions, different ideas and conflicts. To get this out facilitates growth. That is all our objective. The critical discourse among artists and artists and their viewers is the foundation of greater creative impact. And we certainly need that.

Welcome all!

Death Of Damien Hirst in Venice

Daniel Nanavati

“Money complicates everything. I have a genuine belief that art is a more powerful currency than money – that’s the romantic feeling that an artist has. But you start to have this sneaking feeling that money is more powerful.” (Damien Hirst)

“Becoming a brand name is an important part of life. It’s the world we live in.” (Damien Hirst)

In May 1997 New Labour, Cool Britannia and Tony Blair replaced the orthodoxy of Monetarism and the ineptitude of Major’s Government. Four months later Charles Saatchi mounted the Sensation Show, stamping his credentials on to what Cool Britannia meant for the visual arts – credentials which were the summation of the idea that anything and everything can be art and the greater the spectacle the better.

We all have our specializations and our particular set of talent. We view history from our own, unique perspective with whatever knowledge we have. Marketing men are no different from the rest of us. Their spin on history no less valid than anyone else’s, as spin. However, it is not nor never can be the full story. Judgments should rely upon the fullest story possible and not fall for the marketing trick that exploits the ‘impression’ one exudes as the key to how successful one will be. No matter that so many of us fall for this every day.

Spectacle has always been part of the visual arts. The Gothic

abbeys and castles, as centres of power, were built to dwarf their surrounds with armies of singers and soldiers respectively, but when they dug up ‘Laocoön and his Sons’ in 1506, Renaissance ideas received an amazing insight into the skill and dynamism in Greek sculpture that had been forgotten in the intervening centuries. It was not a surprise that this pagan masterpiece was first displayed in the Vatican, becoming the first exhibit in what is now the Vatican Museums. The church has always employed the spectacle of the visual arts, as a means of claiming

Even when the new is just the old hyped up the draw of the visual imagery is still overpowering to the human mind. We will still dance around the golden calf.

cultural tradition and displaying its authority over miracles. Deity and beauty have always been placed together, which is where kingship got its ideas of conjoining spectacle and deification with the monarch. Laocoön influenced artists from the first. Through prints the discovery had an impact right across Europe.

Perspective - the use of angles to fool the viewer into seeing 3 dimensions set onto a 2 dimensional space – which began with Giotto and Duccio in the 13th century was seen as a move towards realism, yet artists have always known you cannot, in every circumstance, paint exactly what you see in order to portray what

you see. The illusion perspective gave to art, birthed the centuries of artists who have tried to show nature in paint. The high Renaissance gave us decorations inside Christian houses of worship that were the Hollywood blockbusters of their day. Vaulting ceilings, altar pieces and municipal buildings cementing the marriage of painting and sculpture with architecture. They were there to inspire awe, they were there to demand worship. Just as in the ancient world. The Parthenon is, after all, a temple to ‘Athena Parthenos’, the patron ‘virgin goddess’ of Athens.

The Baroque took things to a sometimes ludicrous conclusion with huge paintings joining heaven and earth, filled with movement and colour and again, designed to be spectacular turning the crucifixion into a horror movie style blood festival (taken up again by mainstream Hollywood in 2004 with Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of Christ*.) But they pushed this drama to excess, and the public will pall of excess, but they never fail to be attracted to the new. Even



Charles Saatchi 2013

when the new is just the old hyped up the draw of the visual imagery is still overpowering to the human mind. We will still dance around the golden calf.

Marketing people, knowing this, thrive on the influence of the visual arts. Along with the manipulation and artifice of language (Fcuk) it is their lifeblood. They can see the ways in which people can be persuaded, societies can be managed, religions glorified, individuals magnified by what artists create, added to the impact created by the choice of exhibition space. There is nothing new about how power uses the visual arts or how powerful the visual arts are, but we tend to forget when we critique the gullibility of older generations and past times that the visual arts still work in the exactly the same way. The sensational nature of the visual experience is still with us. It is still the seduction of looking into the shop window at the feast entrepreneurs want us to enjoy. The dream of sitting in finery in the Castle.

Throughout all the centuries of art history, countries across Europe had a shared symbolic order. God was in heaven, Satan in hell, we all needed to be obedient to the monarch and only rebel occasionally. The Industrial Revolution was to do away with shared symbolism and change our peasant/patrician hierarchy into the modern class system. The Reformation helped science mount an intellectual challenge by giving a new order that was to become far less symbolic as they embraced scientific method, and the British Empire was to leave the world with a language in which working class people could begin to talk to working class people the way the elite had always spoken to each other – directly. Working class peoples from different countries, up to the last century, had mostly only ever met on battlefields.

There is nothing about

marketing to the masses we don't know today. Since Bernays published *Propaganda – How The Media Molds Your Mind* in 1928, and described the methods used. Since Orwell watched Communism with incisive eyes and we learned that there can be no news in news (*Pravda*), and no truth in truth (*Izvestia*). Lies, hyperbole, fantasy all play a part in the spectacular. The fashion for believing society is better than it is (we are all equals before the law), for accepting untruths because that makes one feel better (we are all free) for our fight always being on the side of right (this is the best country in the world.)

The reason why propaganda has always worked is because we

No one knows how Saatchi influenced Hirst or how far Serota influenced the YBA. What we do know is that without Serota and without Saatchi there would be no YBA as we know them.

are willing to believe, because we are seeking the safety net that makes our lives worthwhile, before we achieve anything. We are in god's image, we are not animals, Heaven gives us the chance to cheat death. This is why Saatchi called his show *Sensation*. And into this system of the spectacular, Cool Britannia and the marketing skills of Charles Saatchi, stepped Damien Hirst.

Known to Saatchi since 1988 when, while still at Goldsmiths his lecturer Michael Craig-Martin invited Saatchi, Serota and Rosenthal to his student show *Freeze*. A time when Hirst produced the *Medicine Cabinets* – stocked with the empty medicine packets used by his grandmother which, at his request, she bequeathed him on her death.

Conceptually Hirst was going for death but he was not subtle. The finest conceptual work delineates a thread of artistic thinking with the least material support to make that thinking explicit. Hirst was in your face. He would learn from Serrano about photographing death and the furore of the cultural wars in the USA under Senator Helms. His greatest conceptual piece was to become his own fame. In 1990 Saatchi bought Hirst's piece *A Thousand Years* – maggots and flies crawling over to get at a cow's rotting head only to be electrocuted en route. In 1992 Hirst was in Saatchi's gallery as a Young British Artist showing his dead shark. This was marketing at its vulgar and shocking best. A young man who had bold ideas had chosen the right art college to attend and been introduced to his future – which was his brand. The importance of branding is considered by Don Thompson,

“When an artist becomes branded, the market tends to accept as legitimate whatever the artists submit.”

Brands are enhanced by select auction houses, dealers, galleries and patrons.

Every artist has had to deal with the problems of patronage. Today the Arts Council is the major patron of hundreds of artists and organisations. Their funds pour out with a deluge of data to be gathered and maintained, audience figures, diversity issues, inclusivity ... none of which are germane to the creative process. A work of art, by its very nature, when it is complete, belongs to the world. Getting people to explore their own creativity used to be called education and even hobbyist, now it is a grant aided, feel good factor that has more to do with consumerism than art because patronage has a cost and the cost is to do what the patron requires in order to get the funds.

No one knows how Saatchi influenced Hirst or how far Serota

influenced the YBA. What we do know is that without Serota and without Saatchi there would be no YBA as we know them. And we know this because marketing men never let the public make up their own minds. Their skill is to make people believe what they are selling is what the people wanted all the time. Saatchi had the spectacle, Serota had the might of the tax-payer-funded Tate which, with the advent of the National Lottery, had access to all the expansion funding it needed. The YBA always had the media train ready. The Turner Prize has never been about the art works, it's about the money value and the publicity. We all know a gamer is going to win in the next five years, we can probably guess the college he or she will come from. It has nothing to do with discernment, taste, judgment or finding great art. It is advertising to the masses. This was one of Clement Greenberg's arguments against Duchamp, found in 'Greenberg: Late Writings':

"... the shocking, the scandalizing, the mystifying and confounding, became embraced as ends in themselves and no longer regretted as initial side effects of artistic newness that would wear off with familiarity. Now these side effects were to be built in. The first bewildered reaction to innovative art was to be the sole and appropriate one."

Sensibility is a strange creature. On the one hand it is little thought about, on the other it can be highly informed. It becomes taste. As we all engage in looking we all emerge as subjective critics. There is no other form of criticism than the subjective. But we all have taste, informed or not. In the wild world of Arts Council funding, Saatchi marketing and the omnipresent longing to be wealthy in a society that holds money higher than intellectual achievement or skill, the bullish, uncaring personality of Hirst did very well. Not for him looking at

the footage from the Holocaust of a head swimming in formaldehyde and realising that can never be art, not for him comments on the brutality of how we treat animals. No worries about why he chose a cow, why a sheep, why a shark? Would he have dared do a monkey? Would he have dared do the last individual of an entire species? He chose animals that were already enslaved, already dismembered in the imagination of the population and a shark – brilliantly feared. These animals can be brought into the abattoir of human indifference. Animal rights were irrelevant to making people see the outside and inside of an animal, in a huge specimen jar, as a work of art. And the press went along because Saatchi owned their psyche. Art was headline making not only because of the shock but because of the shock of the prices changing hands. Art became a commodity like any other consumer item.

As Hirst progressed he even set his own skills aside preferring, like Koons, to have a busy business employing other artists to create objects in a factory setting for the hungry market Saatchi had helped to create. For, as with many brands in the art world, the work does not have to be created by the artist but simply have their conceptual input and signature.

At the age of 32 he wrote his autobiography. Ever willing to make a fool of himself, he said to Rebecca Allison of the Guardian in 2002, "The thing about 9/11 is that it's kind of an artwork in its own right. It was wicked, but it was devised in this way for this kind of impact. It was devised visually." Here Hirst's thirst for sensation had driven him into overkill.

Cool Britannia baulked under the Iraq war with the UK serving the interests of the corrupted Bush Presidency. With real European blood flowing once again, tidying up the mess left by the British Empire, it was

harder to make headlines. He repeated themes and sold a cabinet of pills for a record sum in the European market. So he went for more sensation. A skull of diamonds in 2007, a Memento Mori titled 'For The Love Of God', was a human skull recreated in platinum and adorned with 8,601 diamonds weighing a total of 1,106.18 carats. The £50 million asking price attracted no buyers and the consortium that bought it included Hirst. In a capitalist world he thought everyone wanted to see what millionaires buy to adorn their castles. But castles are the seats of military power, millionaires are the beneficiaries of banks. The two are sometimes worlds apart.

He has often spent years working on an exhibition and Shipwreck in 2017 is no exception. Here is the YBA version of Koons – the theme park lying about its origins to give the full force of the spectacle a gloss of reality. Everything sparkling with its lurid engagement of the expectations of the TV generations. Pulling at the strings of antiquity like Laocoön, treasure hunting poured down the throat as everyone's dream of discovering hidden wealth, a huge statue to dwarf the individual, and the choice of galleries in Venice, one of the seats of the Renaissance. Hirst had learned a lot from Saatchi. They share the same taste if Saatchi's buying Hirst's work is a means to judge. But a theme park is there for fun,



Nicholas Serota



From SHIPWRECK by Damien Hirst © CNN

nothing else. If the works had been prizes for hitting moving ducks it would have had an honesty Hirst has always lacked. It isn't whether or not the glass is half full or half empty with Hirst, it is twiggling the fact that the core of the philosophy of his work is self promotion. But just as Sarah Lucas lost her footing at the Venice Biennale in 2015 receiving less than commendable reviews, so Hirst has shown he knows about promotion but nothing about how fashion has changed around him.

Surrounded by the money men, partnering with Saatchi and Serota he had a place to go – the place they set out for him. He has a name, people will take notice, he is culturally famed but his conceptual work has the emptiness of late capitalism. Money for money's sake has left millions of human beings feeling their lives are bereft of value. His fall from grace is not unexpected, it started in 2001 with his insanity of self-promotion going too far with the Americans. If you want to be a powerful figure in the art world you don't upset the city,

New York, that considers it owns the avant garde. You don't allow your passion for big things to become megalomaniacal, so that it allows you to applaud slaughter as a conceptual work of art.

But the fall was always going to come because the YBA are based on the fallacy that everything is art, which is a proposition they cannot prove, not a definition.

The consumer society, which we have come to inhabit, relies upon a willing public to receive, without question, the PR materials piping through phones, TV and news sound bites. But fashion has changed. People are questioning. The age of objection is here, the war between the age groups has hotted up, racism is rampant, inclusivity is being attacked and theme parks cannot give an answer to these changes. Everything is not art. The bigger the better is not true.

The new generation of artists deal with art history better than the YBA. Hirst was good for his day but today's students have begun to see that teaching them to be provocative is not

professionalising them. Painting is once again in the Turner Prize. The rise of the far right is changing the young artists. Hirst will continue to get reviews for shows and continue to put on his spectacles. He will devolve into a continual re-hash of all he has done before. His millionaire-consumer orientated works will no longer glitter.

It is the morning after the party. Overkill hurts. We are all living on debt, including the millionaire-consumers. Debts have to be repaid, even artistic ones. ■

(Quotes from The 12 million Stuffed Shark by Don Thompson)

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Art and Critical Theory: Five Course Objectives and Explanatory Commentary

Jorge Miguel Benitez

This article is an explanatory essay written, in the fall of 2016, for a graduate art theory course in which some students were subject to what I call the “tyranny of relevance.” Two particularly militant students insisted that a historical approach to art theory had no value because it was an exercise in oppression that reflected Western power relations. They believed that all Western disciplines were inherently “racist, misogynistic, and patriarchal.” After realizing that a rational exchange with ideologues was futile, I wrote an essay that not only addressed the following five points but also refuted the students’ misunderstandings of Western history, art, and philosophy.

Pedagogical Goals:

1.

To develop an understanding of the key theoretical, historical, art historical, and philosophical concepts and terms that are necessary to a critical conversation on the canon, contemporary art, and personal studio practice.

2.

To develop the means through which to think, speak, and write critically, clearly, and succinctly about art within the aesthetic and historical contexts from which it emerged.

3. To develop an understanding of the links between canonical Western art theory and its influence on twenty-first-century theory and practice in an increasingly pluralistic global culture.

4.

To understand the advantages and disadvantages of the application of theory in personal studio practice: for example, when does theory clarify an issue and when does it complicate it unnecessarily? When does theory serve as a tool and when does it become a paralyzing dogma? How can the artist discern between theory that elucidates and theory that traps the artist into making illustrations of the theory? When does theory cease to be explanatory and cross the line into ideology? Should theory precede practice or emerge after the fact? These questions have no clear answers, but asking them incessantly can

make the difference between a studio practice that is informed, open, and rewarding and one that is imprisoned in theoretical preconceptions and formulas.

5.

To grasp the importance of dialectical approaches that allow the artist to synthesize antithetical viewpoints into unforeseen outcomes.

Explanatory Commentary:

The modern term theory derives from the ancient Greek term θεωρία. It means to gaze upon or contemplate. Theory also derives from θεωρός, the ancient Greek word for spectator. It is no accident that both words are related to the ancient Greek word θεατρον, or theater. All are related to θεωσθαι, to behold.

In modern usage, the word theory is problematic. For one thing, it has different meanings and applications in different disciplines. Scientific theory is both observational and methodological. It provides practical guidance in the execution of experiments that prove the initial hypothesis or speculative question. Still, the observational element can take many paths. The processes through which Charles Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace developed their respective theories of evolution were different in kind but not in substance from those through which Dmitri Mendeleev arrived at the periodic table of elements. All

three scientists relied on empirical evidence gathered through the detailed collection of verifiable data. However, Darwin and Wallace saw the visible evidence in the flora and fauna they studied with their eyes. On the other hand, Mendeleev worked with invisible atoms. Their ensuing theories haven't proven their worth and validity over and over. Still, not everyone is convinced in spite of ever-growing evidence of their veracity. The problem lies as much with the public's ignorance of science as with its ignorance of the terms. Evolution and the elemental weight of atoms are no longer hypotheses. Yet in the case of evolution many dismiss it as "only a theory." Such scientific and linguistic ignorance has serious implications in the realm of public discourse on such life-and-death matters as climate change, an issue where the absence of rational understanding could damage the planet and potentially kill humanity. Fortunately, art is not subject to such high stakes.

There is nothing dismissive in stating that art theory is contemplation without causal dangers. When Rosalind Kraus attacked the "modernist grid," she spoke from a position of taste masquerading as philosophical insight. Her observations were not based on empirical evidence or scientific rigor but on personal opinions that cited precedent and contemporary sources for what amounted to political support. Her ideas may or may not be helpful to an artist. They are certainly interesting. They deserve to be heard. But, in the end, they are mostly meaningless because they have no bearing on the existential understating of the world. Like the romantic poems of a love-struck adolescent, they are little more than attempts at seduction, albeit intellectual ones. The same could be said of most art theory. Such a realization goes to the heart of Duchamp's infamous quip, "There are no solutions because

there are no problems." In art, the problems are contrived.

Postmodern Misreadings

As a contemplative activity, art theory should inform, but it should never dictate. Above all, it must never serve as a formula for the making of art. When theory crosses the line from contemplation to formulaic instruction, it risks becoming dogma without first being knowledge. Theory, at its best, should remain above utilitarian

In order to avoid the interpretative excesses of contemporary readings of art theory, we must first try to de-politicize how we approach it. De-politicization does not imply an absence of readings or discussions lacking in sociopolitical content. Instead, it refers to the need to refrain, as much as possible, from interpreting the texts exclusively through ideological filters and agendas.

applications, although it can guide them from a respectable distance. In that sense, theory must remain a spectator of practice who speaks only when the artist asks a question. If theory overtakes the artist, the practice dies.

In order to avoid the interpretative excesses of contemporary readings of art theory, we must first try to de-politicize how we approach it. De-politicization does not imply an absence of readings or discussions lacking in sociopolitical content. Instead, it refers to the need to

refrain, as much as possible, from interpreting the texts exclusively through ideological filters and agendas. Needless to say, this is not always easy. We are, after all, human beings with experiences that color our understanding. Nonetheless, we have an intellectual responsibility to read a text within the context in which it was written. As I explained at the beginning of the semester, one does not have to be a communist to have an appreciation of Karl Marx's analytical rigor. When read purely as insightful theory, Marx rewards the serious reader from any part of the socioeconomic and political spectrum. The same rule applies to Simone de Beauvoir. One does not have to be a feminist to appreciate and respect her brilliance. The finest thinkers throughout history transcend their identities and speak to us regardless of whether or not we agree with their assertions. In turn, we have a responsibility to respond in kind by making an honest effort to understand the contexts in which they thought and wrote. This demands a willingness to look at history with open eyes and a minimum of twenty-first century biases. The failure to approach the subject accordingly will serve only to trap us in our dogmas.

In order to enter a text successfully, we must first understand the meaning of the words as they were understood in the author's day. For example, when Georg Simmel wrote about "man" he did not refer to male individuals exclusively. In older writings, if an article or preposition does not precede the word man, then it is in all probability a reference to humanity. The word mankind is also a reference to humanity. It appears sexist, but that was not its intent. We cannot apply the psychosocial theories of phallogocentrism that Jacques Derrida and Luce Irigaray developed in the late twentieth century to pre-postmodern texts

without falling into a self-defeating discursive trap. Derrida was a very subtle and playful thinker, and Irigaray is a master dialectician whose games are deliberately intended to confuse her followers. Her approach to feminism is an assertion of personal freedom that serves both women and men by demonstrating the challenges of gender-based modes of communications. In lectures and conversations she is supremely rational. We shall visit her ideas during the spring semester.

Unfortunately, as any professor of French in the School of World Studies will attest, the Anglophone study of French postmodern theory is deeply flawed due to the binary tendencies that plague an American discourse that, from a European perspective, remains deeply puritanical. For example, when Derrida developed his ideas of “deconstruction” he did not intend them to serve as a platform for the denial of textual legitimacy or to induce discursive paralysis by bogging down the conversation with interpretative minutiae. Nor was it a denial of historical validity. His approach was nothing more than a cautionary game from a man who was painfully aware of his French-Algerian-Jewish roots thanks to the Holocaust and the Algerian War for Independence. As with many French intellectuals of his generation, he was fearful of totalizing approaches from both the Left and the Right.

This brings us to Michel Foucault, a crucial postmodern thinker who rejected the label and accidentally became the darling of his admirers in the field of queer theory. Foucault’s discourse on power is misunderstood to the point of uselessness yet has helped launch an entire industry in the study of power dynamics and marginalization. For example, he would have laughed at the twenty-first-century notion of adultism which the textbook *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice* defines as follows:

“The word adultism refers to behaviors and attitudes based on the assumption that adults are better than young people, and entitled to act upon young people without their agreement. This mistreatment is reinforced by social institutions, laws, customs, and attitudes.” (*John Bell, “Understanding Adultism: A Key to Developing Youth-Adult Relationships.”*). The definition reflects ideas that Foucault addressed in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*. Yet Foucault himself would have questioned the definition as a half-truth because it lacks context and leads to a totalizing dismissal of adult knowledge and

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experience. Instead, he would have approached the subject holistically by asking, “What do adults possess and lack, and what do children possess and lack?” Unfortunately, the ism in adultism presumes that all adults share an oppressive ideological position across time and space. Foucault would have rejected such an all-encompassing assertion for the same reason that, as a gay man, he distrusted the emerging gay liberation movement of his day. He knew from the painful lessons of French history that liberation did not always liberate. He understandably feared jumping from heteronormative oppression into homonormative oppression.

Yes, he supported equal rights for LGBT citizens, but he questioned whether or not such rights would not also entail new forms of oppression. He grasped, as did Hannah Arendt, that the challenge did not lie with the possession or absence of power but with the latent fascist inside everyone, including the oppressed. He also understood that historical contexts were subject to far too many overlapping and contradictory conditions to be reduced to a single factor. This also applies to works of art. Thus, while a particular postmodern reading of *Romeo and Juliet* could blame adultism or even patriarchy for the fate of the tragic lovers, another interpretation could see the couple as the absurd products of immaturity, inexperience, narcissism, and selfishness. Foucault probably would have addressed the absurdity of all parties, including the parents, but he would not have forced the play into an ideological straightjacket. He was too sophisticated for such a narrow reading.

Western Art Theory and Postcolonial Polemics

Over the past fifty years the terms West and Western have assumed the power of an insult. The West has become the Red Scare of the twenty-first century: something to be feared, resented, rejected, and eventually marginalized and forgotten. Interestingly, such a view did not originate in non-Western societies but among historically ill-informed Westerners who assumed a level of guilt out of all proportion to historical facts. Indeed, the so-called West is far from innocent. Yet the same can be said for all the great civilizations that preceded or co-existed with it. In truth, the West is a relative latecomer to the club of world civilizations. Furthermore, the West is now being absorbed into something far larger than itself. Yet polemical critics insist on Occidentalizing

the West into an exotic other replete with demonic powers out of all proportion to reality. A more informed approach would see the West as only one aspect of the total human experience that can now be shared with everyone across the globe. Such an approach is inclusive, holistic, positive, and open to hybridization. It allows Western ideas to engage with non-Western ideas in a dialectical process full of synthetic possibilities.

The West is much more than a cultural construction centered on Europe and whiteness. At its core the West is a composite without clearly delineated boundaries. Saint Augustine, a central figure to the development of Christian thought, was a North African Berber as well as a citizen of the Roman Empire. He was also a Westerner. Western Civilization is understood to have begun in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley and in Egypt not in Paris, London, or Berlin. We cannot overestimate the role of the so-called Middle East in the development of the so-called West. From the origin of the three Abrahamic religions to the transfer of alphabetic writing from Phoenicia (modern-day Lebanon) to Greece and Rome, we Westerners owe a debt that continues to this day. In many respects, the cultural, technological and scientific information that the West currently shares with the Middle East is nothing more than the second leg of a round-trip voyage that began in Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, and Alexandria over two thousand years ago. If we assume that our encounters with the region are somehow new and unfairly one-sided, then we are wrong on both counts.

If the notion of an all-powerful West is misguided, then the notion of a malicious, male-driven Enlightenment is equally misguided. While it is true that the Enlightenment is disproportionately associated

with male luminaries, a closer look reveals something very different. Throughout the seventeenth century and past the middle of the eighteenth century, highly educated women acted as information brokers who connected the leading thinkers of the day with one another. More importantly, many of those same women taught the men how to refine their writing style in order to make them more elegant, clear, succinct, rational, and ultimately accessible. The French salonnieres of the 1700s hosted intellectual gatherings in which they acted as referees who often steered the discourse in directions that the men had not considered. Such women played a crucial role in calling attention to the idea of universal rights, including the abolition of slavery, the rights of indigenous peoples, and universal suffrage. Their interests ranged from science and philosophy to politics, letters, economics, and the arts, in short, all the fields that were seen as exclusively male. True, the women of the period had few legal and social rights, but the more educated among them correctly saw the Enlightenment as the first stage of a series of questions that could someday lead to some measure of equality. Those same women saw reason as a valuable ally in the struggle against the ignorance, superstition, and bigotry that denied them their rightful place as free citizens in an open society and occasionally led them to the stake. Reason held the key to liberty and equality.

Regrettably, no amount of social, political, or property rights could contravene the biological injustice of pregnancy. Mary Wollstonecraft, the eighteenth-century writer of one of the first modern feminist tracts, died giving birth to Mary Shelley, the future author of *Frankenstein*. Wollstonecraft was 38 years old when she died from puerperal fever and septicemia. A few

decades earlier, the brilliant scientist and mathematician Émilie du Châtelet, also died in childbirth. She was 42. Both women were exceedingly well educated at a time when most people were illiterate, yet that did not save them from premature deaths. Pregnancy and childbirth remain among the main killers of women in the modern world. Under the circumstances, it is easy to understand why art theory was not high on the list of women's priorities. Men could afford such frivolities: women could not.

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Camille Paglia, an undoubtedly controversial and polarizing public intellectual, warns against romanticizing the preindustrial past and non-Western approaches. To that end she wrote, "Western science and industry have freed women from drudgery and danger. Machines do housework. The pill neutralizes fertility. Giving birth is no longer fatal [This is an inaccurate statement.]. And the Apollonian line of western rationality has produced the modern aggressive woman who can think like a man and write obnoxious books. The tension and antagonism in western metaphysics developed human higher cortical powers to great heights. Most western culture is a distortion of reality. But reality should be distorted; that is, imaginatively amended. The Buddhist acquiescence to nature

is neither accurate about nature nor just to human potential. The Apollonian has taken us to the stars." (*Camille Paglia, Sexual Personae*).

Whether or not we agree with Paglia is not as important as the fact that she raises a key point about the benefits and privileges of modern Western industrial life, especially for women. Both art theory and feminism are Western inventions, and both have given their non-Western critics the intellectual tools with which to challenge the West. The question for us lies outside the ethical complexities of the Western world, however we choose to define it. Our question is, "What can the West give me that is useful in my context?" That is the question that allowed Japan to

become an economic superpower after its humiliation in World War II. It is also the question that made China the world's second largest economy. Japan and China have not lost the essential qualities that made them unique. Instead, they simply added useful outside information to their native canons. The West did the same thing in the Middle Ages when it embraced Chinese technology and Indo-Arab mathematics. As global citizens and artists we have a responsibility to look at everything, contemplate everything, and think critically about everything. If the process begins with the study of Western art theory, it is only because the West wrote it first, not because it represents an imperialist agenda. When the West adopted the Chinese

invention of paper, it did so for utilitarian rather than ideological reasons. Art theory no longer belongs to the West. A century from now this class will incorporate theoretical writings from every corner of the world, and the original Western texts will be studied and respected not as a colonial imposition but merely as the primitive seed of a pluralistic human endeavor. ■

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CORNWALL'S ART EXTRAVAGANZA

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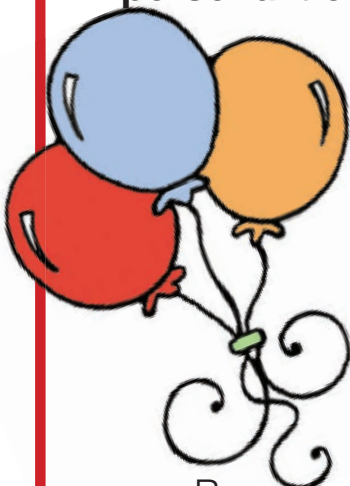
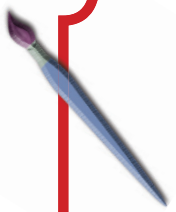
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A Useful Guide to Modernism in Art

by Charles Thomson

In a two part series Charles Thomson , co-founder of the Stuckists, looks at the history of Modernism. At the end of this article he introduces us to Remodernism. Next issue he outlines his thoughts on where Remodernism will lead.

*We have learned to whittle the
Eden Tree to the shape of a
surplice-peg,
We have learned to bottle our
parents twain in the yolk of an
addled egg,
We know that the tail must wag
the dog, for the horse is drawn
by the cart;
But the Devil whoops, as he
whooped of old: "It's clever, but
is it Art?"*

It goaded the German Expressionist, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, to falsify dates. It caused Andy Warhol to stop the art he was making. It made Damien Hirst so angry he smashed up a kitchen.

The cause was originality, or rather the perceived lack of it by those involved. Kirchner wanted to hide the fact that he had been influenced by Matisse and the Fauves. Warhol abandoned the use of Ben-Day dots when he found out Lichtenstein was already using them. Hirst's then-friend John LeKay reported that this was Hirst's reaction on discovering LeKay had been using meat in art for several years before him.

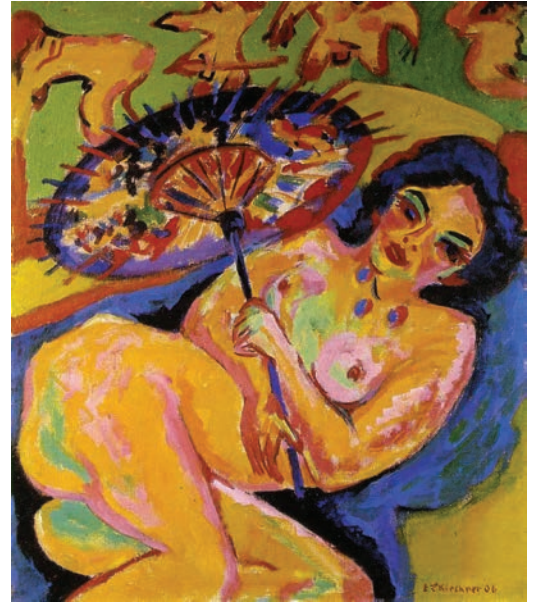
This fetishising of originality is not integral to art by default. Egyptian art and medieval icons had other priorities, as did the four centuries following the High Renaissance, when the Old Masters, particularly Raphael, were seen as models to emulate,

rather than precedents to be avoided or restrictions to be overcome.

In fact, originality elevated to this level is unique to Modernism, a twentieth century movement driven by twentieth century values, which are being extensively, even urgently, reappraised in the world at large, but still swing their diminutively-brained dinosaur heads in the world of art. I'll get to a definition of Modernism in due course.

The twentieth century paradigm – like every other paradigm or ideological system – has a complex of inter-related values which feed off and justify each other. Related unavoidably to the primacy of originality is a chain reaction of other key concepts of uniqueness, newness, exploration, invention, innovation, difference, radicality, the avant-garde, genius, celebrity, privilege, freedom, amorality, self-reference, elitism, status, kudos, exclusiveness, ego, superficiality, fashion, commercialisation, ephemerality, materiality, meaninglessness, nihilism, futility, failure and fear.

The list can continue. Of course, not all these things are exclusive to Modernism, but their particular configuration and emphasis are. We have come a long way from originality but the connections are there impelling



Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Girl Under a Japanese Umbrella, 1906

art helplessly like a ball bearing in a pinball machine. It is not that originality is bad per se. It is quite obviously often part of great achievement, but here is the key qualifier: "part of". Like all good values and activities, when pushed to an extreme, there is a change of pole from positive to negative, and what is normally a fruitful quality becomes a damaging one.

By definition, to be original, you have to do something that no one else has done before. As time goes on, and more and more people are original or striving to be so, there are less and less things that have not been done before, a corollary of which is that these things are also less and less worth doing – which is good reason why no one has done them before. It is like a pie with smaller and smaller slices being cut to give to more and more people a chance to own some of it.



Those smaller and smaller slices have to pretend to the same significance as the bigger slices, but they do not have it. Accurate perception and honest analysis go by the board and the poverty of achievement is masked by the smokescreen of theoretical verbiage. All of this does not invalidate Modernism, but it does shape a specific evaluation of its use as a reference point.

Modernism can be distinguished most easily by contrast with what it is not, in this case the art of the period which immediately preceded it, the Renaissance. The latter is characterised by a set of visual rules – most obviously in painting – which seek to give the illusion of the “real world”, through linear and atmospheric perspective, rational proportion with foreshortening, and naturalistic colour modified tonally to reproduce the effect of light on the textures of three dimensional surfaces.

Starting to evolve at the end of the thirteenth century from the flat, linear, patterned art of Medievalism, the Renaissance reached its high point around 1500, and maintained its visual constituents for some 400 years, until the art of the Post Impressionists – notably Van Gogh, Gauguin, Cezanne, but also Seurat and Toulouse Lautrec – initiated the real departure from it. The Impressionists who provided them with the tools were ironically the culmination of the Renaissance study of observed reality and had the intent to reproduce it more accurately than had ever been done before. The Post Impressionists initiated a trend of drawing and painting which used imagination as much as, and quite soon much more than, observation, or, perhaps more accurately, the focus of observation shifted its centre of

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gravity towards the psyche.

Matisse and the Fauves staked their claim as innovators in non-naturalistic decorative colour, although their drawing was steeped in the discipline of the Renaissance. Picasso was completely upstaged as an innovator – and Picasso did not



Matisse and Picasso via Cruickshank

like being upstaged. He attacked and literally fragmented the laws of drawing with Cubism, although interestingly he avoided the use of colour altogether by the employment of monochrome (mainly in browns). At that stage it would not have been possible for him to have done anything innovatory in hues that the Fauves had not already done.

One might say that now the pie had been halved – colour with Matisse, form with Picasso. However, both these artists and their associates had something strongly in common, despite their differences: they were figurative artists. Kandinsky found a gap in the market by dispensing with such tedious references in favour

of a purely non-representational or abstract art. If the pie had been split in two vertically left and right with colour and form, he divided it horizontally top and bottom with abstract and figurative and staked his own claim to fame.

Already the dynamic of Modernism was defined with the need for originality via difference, necessitating innovation and invention, which also meant inevitably narrower focus and increasing specialisation. This tunnel vision typifies the twentieth century paradigm (as opposed to a twenty-first century holistic approach), and can be seen clearly also in other fields (no pun intended), such as farming, where the zoning in on the immediate benefits of pesticides was not weighed in the context of their wider negative repercussions.

Modern Art recurrently has such selective vision. The truth of Kandinsky's thesis *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* that abstraction is spiritual is its greatest condemnation. It is a severance of the spiritual from the material, creating an invidious dualism. The spiritual is worse than useless if it cannot be integrated with and benefit our everyday lives.

In 1917, the word “surrealist” was coined by Guillaume Apollinaire. Surrealism managed to gain its own 50% slice with a diagonal division which gave it the monopoly of the unconscious, the dream and irrational, which by definition was at the expense of excluding the conscious, the waking and the rational. It is only by making use of the former attributes via their examination by the latter that anything can be achieved other than getting completely lost in a fascinating but meaningless maze.

The counterbalance to this was also manifested in 1917 with the Neo-Plasticism of the De Stijl movement, notably in the work of Mondrian, who reduced the universe to the rigid conscious control of a mathematical equation, namely rectangles and squares in white, red, yellow and blue, divided by horizontal and vertical black lines. This secured him a different halving of the pie (the half left out by Surrealism, one might say) by using the kinds of grids that traditionally underlay figurative painting (such as the golden section and rule of thirds) without bothering with the figuration, and by employing the basic colours which were traditionally squeezed on the palette to mix subtle hues but without putting in the labour of actually mixing them. It is the essence of art, rather like lettuce seeds are the essence of a salad.

The artistic hat trick in 1917 was a debacle over the proposed exhibition of a gents urinal in an exhibition in New York. This brainwave of Marcel Duchamp (or, alternatively, Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven) carves out its own 50% slice, namely the conceptual process behind art before the translation of that into the making of the art object, the latter chore being avoided by making use of something which someone else has made.

By now we have probably carved out as many big slices as are possible and start the tendency to smaller slices cut out of the big slices. The spiritual is never far away in Modern Art, in intent and concept, even if not in proper understanding, and it came back in a big way with Abstract Expressionism, literally in a big way, albeit that this very macho movement succeeded in demonstrating very successfully that bigger is not necessarily better.

The end result is not so much the realisation of spiritual essence or emotional depth as the potency



Dividing the pie

of muscularity, particularly in the swinging dripation of Jackson Pollock, whose mindlessly patterned repetitions, I am reliably informed, are a typical

manifestation of alcoholic insecurity. Barnett Newman's massive rectangles of red, yellow and blue make effective garage forecourt design, and Pollock's layered colours, when reduced to their proper size, make attractive Penguin book covers.

We have already had Abstraction and Expressionism, and also, since Malevich in 1915, paintings where a large proportion of the painting was a single flat colour. Drips came from Surrealism. What the American movement did from the 1940s onwards was to zoom in on these aspects and enlarge them, so that the drips are not part of a painting, but the whole painting, and a few brushmarks which might previously define a tree or the side of someone's head are pumped up into massive gestures that occupy the whole canvas.

As an aside, we might note that colour is an extremely fine tuned guide to emotion and has its equivalent in music, where different sounds accord with different moods. What is apt for a light hearted advertising jingle would be quite inappropriate for a funeral and vice versa. The colour in Van Gogh has subtle ranges that are evidence of his sensitivity and far-seeing vision. The colour of nearly all Abstract Expressionism in contrast is crude and finally, in Rothko, sombre, sloughing into suicidal depression. (If Van Gogh did indeed commit suicide – rather than being the victim of homicide – it was not because of the colour in his art.)

Another small slice was carved out as a rejoinder to the Abstract Expressionists by the eruption of Pop Art, refining and extending the precedent of commercial imagery established by Duchamp's found objects and Dada collages from around 1915, but now somewhat manically, not to mention mechanically, with repetitive Brillo boxes, repetitive soup cans, repetitive Marilyn Monroes, repetitive car crashes

and repetitive electric chairs by repetitive Andy Warhol and his merry repetitive assistants.

This movement – or rather Warhol's stance within it – revealed a significant difference to previous Modernist movements and marked a termination of some of the most valuable features to date whilst gorging on some of the worst. It inaugurated a phase sufficiently self-contained to merit its own name, Post Modernism, although it is, as the name implies, a continuation of Modernism.

Whatever else one might say about artistic efforts so far, there was an earnest striving in them for enlightenment, a sense of benefit to humanity, and sincere, albeit mistaken, belief in having with each new development at last reached a new enduring canon of art.

The fact that each movement's beliefs were fairly rapidly outmoded inevitably culminated in disillusionment with idealism and a fear of being deceived by it, the defence against which was cynicism based on irony and safe but vacuous values of celebrity and commercialism. "Making money is art," said Warhol, putting considerable distance between himself and Van Gogh for whom "there is nothing more truly artistic than to love people."

Production substituted for depth, and lucre for integrity. Originality spread like a cancer in the form of novelty and gimmick. This was an inevitable consequence of less and less



Repetition of Warhol
From photo: Jack Mitchell CC BY-SA 4.0

ground remaining available for exploration, as all the big worthwhile seams had already been explored. Veneration, acclaim, theorising and auction prices increased in inverse proportion to real artistic achievement. Minimalism literally achieved as little as possible and made a virtue out of its sliver of pie. Conceptual Art became the soft porn of the critic and the curator.

The generic term for this is "new media". The name itself is a lie, as the media concerned are not at all new, the only new thing about them being the fact they are called new and it is relatively new to show them in art galleries and call them art, as opposed to whatever they were previously called and which they are still called when they are not in an art gallery.

More recently artists have had one main recourse to stake their claim as original geniuses, which is to do something not previously classified as art and to call it art in a somewhat desperate and certainly deluded attempt to explore unexplored ground. It is a very peculiar approach to take something and call it something else, rather as if tennis were defined as a new form of cricket. I think by now there are no slices of the pie left. We are just pretending there are.

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Humpty Dumpty via John Tenniel

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Photography is part of the new media, which is puzzling as commercial photography was introduced as far back as 1839. Even film began in the 1890s, movie animation in 1899 and synchronised sound in a feature film occurred in 1927. Inexplicably, acrylic paint, which is much newer and was not commercially available until the 1950s, is not termed as new media.

Why do people aspiring to be artists use film and not put it out in the usual arenas such as cinemas, TV or film festivals? And why do directors with great achievements in commercial film not get entered for the Turner Prize? It boils down not to any convincing reasons, but only to the artificial constructs of contemporary art with its solipsistic neophiliac obsessions.

That is not entirely true. There is a difference. Mainstream film has to make sense and entertain an audience. Noted video art pioneer the late David Hall was the head of the Time Based Media Department at Maidstone College of Art when I was a painting student there in the 1970s. He observed that to appreciate video art it was necessary to break through the "boredom barrier".



Nicholas Serota and Charles Thomson

I once mentioned this to then-Tate director Sir Nicholas Serota whom I bumped into in a Tate Britain room showing Hall's work. Perhaps this encouraged Serota's own subsequent statement on the genre: "We are all sick of biennales where it takes 20 minutes to see every work." So that is the difference between normal films and art films: the boredom factor.

The crusade for new media seemed to have reached an apoplexy of absurdity in 2010 when the Turner Prize was awarded to someone singing songs under a bridge. Perhaps the Mercury Prize for music should be awarded to David Hockney. And they should both be judged by Humpty Dumpty from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*:

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." "The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things." "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all."

Humpty was certainly in charge in 2015, when the Turner Prize was awarded to an urban regeneration collective, who did not see themselves as artists, nor what they were doing as art.

This might all be passed off as amusing and of little import to the rest of the world, in which case it is worth bearing in mind where such tendencies can lead. In

2002, Damien Hirst commented (for which he very quickly "apologised unreservedly"): "The thing about 9/11 is that it's kind of like an artwork in its own right ... So on one level they kind of need congratulating, which a lot of people shy away from, which is a very dangerous thing." If there is a very dangerous thing, it is the kind of insular idiocy which could possibly lead someone to come

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out with such a statement.

There are fixed points to proceed from. The first is that the art establishment is hopelessly lost, so there is simply no point in trying to make sense of it. The second is that we are in a very advantageous position to address this problem. We have the benefit of a good century's worth of Modernism's adventure, innovation and exploration, and are in a sufficiently detached vantage point to make a viable assessment of it. The first stage of Modernism invented languages, but immediately discarded one for the next. A language strengthens and deepens in its potency only when it is developed over time. This is the job of the current phase of Modernism, which we can term Remodernism.

This job cannot be carried

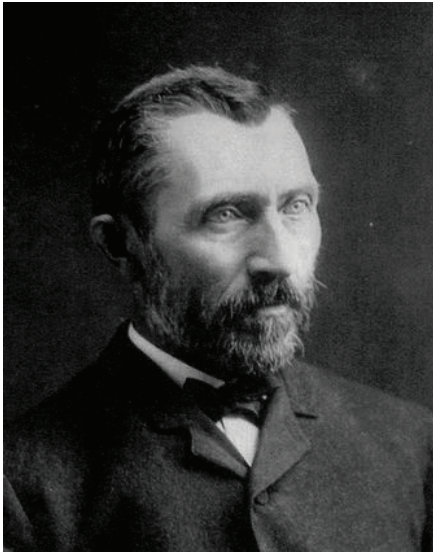
out properly until there is an establishment of proper values. There are some obvious ones to aim for. The first function of an artwork is a differentiation from mundane life. It should be apparent that we are engaging with the special space and experience of a created object, not just an accidental item from the supermarket or the back yard. The second function is that that object should have an instant communication on the most superficial level. The artist's subject should be apparent and make an understandable link with the viewer. If it does not, most people will simply lose interest immediately.

The next attribute is not so easy. The work should have endurance, which comes about through depth. That in turn is a quality of the artist, who has to face the truth of themselves and their life experiences with understanding and perception, which become manifest through the making of the work. It is both philosophical and emotional in force, and is enacted via the particular use of materials. Its test is time, and whether the work sustains its interest through the variety and vicissitudes of the viewer's life.

When my first marriage was breaking up at the end of the 1970s and I was in a deeply



Rembrandt, *Self Portrait at the Age of 63*, 1669



Van Gogh “coarse” and Damien Hirst “raggedy”.

Hirst photo: Luke Stephenson www.lukestephenson.com CC BY-SA 3.0

troubled state, Rembrandt's *Self Portrait at the Age of 63* unexpectedly materialised in my inner darkness and evoked a state of resolution, acceptance and understanding. I had previously admired it as an aesthetic self study; I now experienced it on a much more intense and profound level.

As just mentioned, such achievement can only be reached with the use of an appropriate medium along with a skill in the use of that medium, its language and grammar. Human minds and emotional responses have a vast range and sensitivity. An equivalent nuance of artistic stimulus is necessary to relate to and express this range. A found object has severe limitations in this respect. There is very little modification that can be achieved to reveal even the variety of inflections which can be detected in such a daily occurrence as saying “good morning” – from the cheerful to the depressed

with sarcasm, weariness, wariness, hostility, appreciation, congratulation and a whole range of other gradations to choose from.

A found object can compete with a painting only in the way that a vacuum cleaner can compete with a violin. It is why I finally settled on painting after going through multi-media, performance and installation art, in 1999 terming painting “the most vital artistic means of addressing contemporary issues.”

Charles Saatchi paid for Damien Hirst's shark in a tank in 1991 and sold it for a considerable profit in 2004, the same year his gallery launched *The Triumph of Painting* show, calling painting “the most relevant and vital way that artists' choose to communicate”. (He has continued with this theme including the 2016 show, *Painters' Painters*.) In 2009, Damien Hirst exhibited his paintings and stated, “I always thought

painting was the best thing to do” in contrast to “conceptual art, abstraction, they're total dead ends”, which prompted Rachel Campbell-Johnston in *The Times* to comment, “what now counts as radical is a return to tradition. Hirst has been painting.”

This is a common mistake, and gives the impression that the good old days of Raphael are with us again, when they are patently not. Hirst's work is Modernism or more specifically Remodernism (but definitely not Post Modernism), characterised by honesty, expression, communication and “a raggedy edge in these paintings, which is really important because there is a raggedy edge in me”. Or, as Van Gogh put it in 1882, “I want to reach the point where people say of my work, that man feels deeply and that man feels subtly. Despite my so-called coarseness – you understand – perhaps precisely because of it.” Remodernism is here to stay. ■

(Poem extract at start of article: “The Conundrum of the Workshops,” 1890, Rudyard Kipling)

Charles Thomson is an English artist, poet and photographer. In the early 1980s he was a member of *The Medway Poets*. In 1999 he named and co-founded the *Stuckists* art movement with Billy Childish (who left in 2001). He has curated *Stuckist* shows, organised demonstrations against the Turner Prize, run an art gallery, stood for parliament and reported Charles Saatchi to the OFT.

“We should be improving people's lives through art, we should be trying to create a world where art is living on every level, indivisible from life and for everyone to experience. Art should be about an attitude and about not being frightened of being thought of as uncool. It should be the antithesis of consumerism and aesthetic corruption that riddles the art world.”

Jimi Dams on the closure of his New York Gallery ‘Envoy Enterprises’ 2017

Thoughts On A Personal Manifesto

Tom Nakashima

Transcendence, transcendent, and transcendental are words that refer to an object (or a property of an object) as being comparatively beyond that of other objects. Such objects (or properties) transcend other objects (or properties) in some way.

transcendent [tran'sendənt]
Adj. beyond or above the range of normal or merely physical human experience : the search for a transcendent level of knowledge.

- *surpassing the ordinary; exceptional : the conductor was described as a "transcendent genius."*

- *(of God) existing apart from and not subject to the limitations of the material universe. Often contrasted with immanent .*

- *(in scholastic philosophy) higher than or not included in any of Aristotle's ten categories.*

- *(in Kantian philosophy) not realizable in experience. (Wikipedia)*

The status quo has a great talent for leveling our playing field. Membership to the club of 4.0 GPAs, high SATs or the Ivy League ensure one thing and one thing only -- that you are at the top of the ordinary. But eventually you must take a chance - a leap of faith -- to transcend -- or to fail. There is no safe way to achieve enlightenment.

The theologian/physicist John Polkinghorne said, "Novelty always occurs at the place where chaos and order come together." The examples are, of course, black holes in space and undersea volcanic vents. One must walk some kind of edge that separates chaos and order. Order is the

ordinary (the status quo) and chaos is all that threatens order. To the priest, order is good and chaos is bad - to the banker order is predictable and chaos is not.

For Sorin Kierkegaard, using the ordinary tools of philosophy always left certain questions unanswered -- thus the "leap of faith" (inspired by Abraham), which breaks the stalemate and takes a side -- a side that is not fully supported by reason and logic. It is a belief that aspires to transcend ordinary reasoning.

In Japan there is a saying Koketsu ni irazunba koji wo ezu (If you don't go into the tiger's cave you will not catch the tiger cub). In other words, if you are not willing to take a chance and endanger everything that you have struggled for -- you will always be limited to unexceptional results. You will never transcend "the ordinary". Artists who are called "even" (as a compliment by gallerists and writers) are almost never exceptional - they are high functioning ordinary at best.

To transcend is of a very high order in the realm of high expectations. It is not something that we do, but something to which we aspire. Even if one has never succeeded, there are markers that identify this quest, and the first of those markers is the leap. Of course mostly failed leaps -- but leaps nonetheless.



Study for Monument 2009

Philip Guston took that leap in his mid-career. Picasso took it again and again, fearlessly -- as did Louise Bourgeois who walked the edge for her entire life.

Am I a postmodernist or a modernist?

From 1991 to 2003, I showed at Bernice Steinbaum Gallery. She was a leading gallerist who prided herself on shows that shattered the glass ceiling. Many of those shows were about identity -- identity in the postmodern sense. In any historical context I would be considered a postmodern artist. But am I a postmodernist? I don't think so. I was raised Roman Catholic by a German Irish mother and a Japanese American father. I studied with Jesuits, Franciscan and other priests and nuns for 18 years. When I studied philosophy, it was mostly Aristotelian Thomism with a touch of Kant. I love reading almost anything about philosophy or theology. The awakening for me was Sorin Kierkegaard, who won me away from the security of Thomistic philosophy, opening for me the possibility that most of my beliefs were built on quicksand.

In the modern era, profound friendships existed between critics and artists. When poets saw that painters and sculptors were experiencing a renaissance, they stepped in to act as apologists for the zeitgeist of that time. Someone was needed to announce the genius was burgeoning because of a unique existential relationship between artists and their tools. Not that the painters were inarticulate -- modernism certainly included some very smart people. But someone was needed from outside -- a person who did not hold a brush or a welding torch, but a person who could comprehend these tools and their importance to the big idea of modern art. I began painting in 1964 at the tail end of all that excitement.

Somewhere around 1980, a fracture occurred that destroyed the harmony between artist and critic. My suspicion is that academia was in part to blame. It may have been the formal joining of art history and art criticism within academia that struck the final blow. Some would point the finger at Duchamp and his admirers -- John Cage, Jasper Johns, Bruce Nauman, etc. I personally would not lay the blame at the feet of any artists. It was the genius of Duchamp that laid out a riddle that could be deciphered (or confounded) into a brilliant art scenario for the next fifty years. A period that would not produce many new ideas, but would bury itself in an archive dedicated to a quest for figuring out what artist and critics need to do next, rather than spend time on the noble act of doing. The act of creation and wonderment was dismissed as passé, leaving to the artist the role of an actor in a performance imagined by Duchamp. These actions were directed by a cadre of academics, critics and intellectual mobsters who would police the enforcement of the status quo via critical theory. Added to all this was the power of an economic

environment that was no longer willing to permit the market to be subjected to the will of artists and galleries. Suffice to say, the market solved this simply by buying and dominating the art world.

So here we are today. Art is no longer about creativity and transcendence. It is a corporatized institution thru which a kind of pornography is produced to fulfill the demands of the rich and famous. It is not holy, it is not transcendent -- it is not even special. It is as expected at the high functioning peak of the ordinary. It is no different than fashion -- and like fashion it can (on an annual basis) control what it is that we are "allowed" to accept as hip and high ordinary. So --

Somewhere around 1980, a fracture occurred that destroyed the harmony between artist and critic.

using some very good ideas learnt at prestigious colleges, the cadre of the art mob maintain control by assuming that the masses cannot possibly comprehend their proclamations coded in the language of continental philosophy. However, the masses have understood the big idea -- the real idea that is contained within the seeds of German and French philosophy. The masses have always had a healthy distrust of academic and philosophic language. We, the real artists, are interested in the power of these languages and how they have controlled the world and the world of art and fashion for eons. We are aware that art historians study these ideas and that there is much validity and truth to them. We are also aware that the language that forms the matrix of postmodern philosophy in art can be used for us or against us. We are keenly aware of a genuine truth in the

hostile corporate takeover of art by perverting postmodern ideas to reverse the roles of form and content. It is clear that aesthetics has been sent to the back of the bus in order to allow content its seemingly rightful place in the front. On observing the intellectuals in their ivory towers, it seems so kind that they should allow us minorities to complain and call our complaints works of art. I must say that I too, like that part of the new world order of postmodern art.

I had this modernism vs. postmodernism discussion with the critic a few years back. He said something that proved enlightening to me. "You can't go back." Meaning of course, that while you may not like this thing called postmodernism, you cannot go back to modernism. You have been "enlightened!" The errors of modernism have been exposed and it was not so wonderful after all. Postmodernism has a track record that is even worse. So I proceed into the future like a modernist who has had a postmodernism epiphany. But no, I am not fooled by it.

I don't know many artists who will admit to being postmodernist. It is a moniker that is not easily worn by artists because it is usually assigned to them by the art mob. I don't think of it as an honorific, because in my mind it gives power to the written language that "discovers" the art rather than understanding that the real power exists within the work itself. The explanation of art is done by the brush and not by the mouth or pen. ■

Tom Nakashima is included in numerous collections including The Smithsonian Am. Art Museum and The Mint Museum. He has won numerous awards including The Joan Mitchell Award and AVA11.

An Incomplete Project?

Art and Politics in the new Millennium

by Chris Cutrone

What was postmodernism? – Habermas's critique

Postmodernism challenged the institutionalized modernism of the mid-20th century, offering more radical forms of social discontents and cultural practice. It meant unmasking the values of progress as involving ideologies of the political status-quo, the problems of which were manifest to a new generation in the 1960s. But, more recently, postmodernism itself has begun to age, and reveal its own concerns as those of the post-1960s situation of global capitalism rather than an emancipated End of History.

In 1980, Jürgen Habermas, on the occasion of receiving the Adorno prize in Frankfurt, predicted the exhaustion of postmodernism, characterizing its conservative tendencies. Habermas called this situation the “incomplete project” of modernity, a set of unresolved problems that have meant the eventual return of history, if not the return of “modernism.” How does Habermas's note of dissent, from the moment of highest vitality of postmodernism, help us situate the concerns of contemporary art in light of society and politics today?

In his Adorno prize talk, Habermas emphasized the question of the “aesthetic experience ... drawn into individual life history and ... ordinary life,” and “not [already] framed by experts' critical judgments”. Habermas thinks that such

aesthetic experience “does justice to .. Brecht's and Benjamin's interests in how artworks, having lost their aura, could yet be received in illuminating ways,” a “project [that] aims at a differentiated re-linking of modern culture with an everyday praxis that [would be impoverished by mere traditionalism] [a] new connection ... that can only be established on condition that societal modernization will also be steered in a different direction [than capitalism].” Habermas admitted that “the chances for this today are not very good.”

Instead, Habermas points out that, “The disillusionment with the very failures of those programs that called for the negation of art and philosophy has come to serve as a pretense for conservative positions.” This is how Habermas characterized postmodernism, an anti-modernism that was an ideology of the “young conservatives,” namely Foucault and Derrida (among others).

Habermas drew a parallel of the postmodernism of Derrida and Foucault to the “neo-conservatives,” for which he took the Frankfurt School critical theorists Horkheimer and Adorno's former secretary, in their time of exile in the U.S. during WWII, Daniel Bell, as representative. Bell had described the “cultural contradictions of capitalism” as resulting in what he called “antinomian culture,” which produced a nihilistic “*culturati*” in a “counterfeit” high culture of “multiples,” hedonism for the middle class, and a “pornotopia for the masses.” What Bell, as a self-

postmodernists implicitly agreed with the conservative diagnosis of such nihilism, for they explicitly abandoned ... modernity's “incomplete project” of enlightenment and emancipation. Postmodernism was a form of anti-modernity.

styled “conservative,” deplored, such as the “conformism” of a liberal “heterodoxy” that became a “prescription in its confusions,” postmodernists celebrated. But they agreed on what Habermas called the destructive aspects of the “negation of art and philosophy,” against which various hopeless “Surrealist revolts” had been mounted, as an inevitable result of modernity. Whereas Bell, for instance, explicitly called for the return of religion as a way of staving off the nihilism of modernity, the postmodernists implicitly agreed with the conservative diagnosis of such nihilism, for they explicitly abandoned what Habermas called modernity's “incomplete project” of enlightenment and emancipation. Postmodernism was a form of anti-modernity.

Critical art, liquidated

So, how does art figure in such a project of enlightened emancipation? The scholar of Benjamin and Adorno's work Susan Buck-Morss wrote, in



response to the postmodernist art journal *October*'s 1996 Visual Culture Questionnaire, that, "[Artists'] work is to sustain the critical moment of aesthetic experience. Our work as critics is to recognize it." Buck-Morss protested against what she called the "liquidation" of art in the move of "attacking the museum," "producing subjects for the next stage of global capitalism" by replacing concern with the "critical moment of aesthetic experience" with a discourse that "legitimizes culture." In so doing, Buck-Morss pointed out that failing to properly grasp the social stakes of aesthetic experience resulted in the "virtuality of representation," ignoring how, for Benjamin and the Surrealists he critically championed "images in the mind motivate the will" and thus have "effect in the realm of deeds."

Indeed, prominent *October* journal writer Hal Foster had, in the 1982 essay "Re: Post," gone so far as to call for going "beyond critique," really, abandoning it, for in critique Foster found precisely the motor of (deplorable) "modernism," which he characterized as consciousness of "historical moment" that "advanced a dialectic." Foster stated unequivocally that critical "self-reflexivity" needed to be abandoned because it (supposedly) "enforces closure." Foster called the Brechtian terms "defamiliarization" and "estrangement" "quintessentially modernist." But Foster remained equivocal regarding the matter of art's potential to "initiate new ways of seeing," even if he stayed suspicious of "the old imperative of the avant-garde and its language of crisis."

The crisis of criticism — driving art underground

But the concern, for Foster, as with the other leading *October*

writers (such as Rosalind Krauss and Douglas Crimp), was reduced, from social problems, to problematizing *art*: (in Crimp's words) "on the museum's ruins." But the museum is still standing. The question is whether it still houses art. As Buck-Morss pointed out, the museum is the "very institution that sustains the

As Buck-Morss pointed out, the museum is the "very institution that sustains the illusion that art exists." What this means is that, disenchanted with art, the "realm of deeds," in which "images in the mind motivate the will," abandoned by the critics, is ceded instead to the "advertising industry." The museum, lacking a critical response, is not overcome as an institution of invidious power, but, instead of sustaining the socially necessary "illusion" that "art exists," however domesticated, becomes an embodiment of the power of kitsch,

illusion that art exists." What this means is that, disenchanted with art, the "realm of deeds," in which "images in the mind motivate the will," abandoned by the critics, is ceded instead to the "advertising industry." The museum, lacking a critical response, is not overcome as an institution of invidious power, but, instead of sustaining the socially necessary "illusion" that "art exists," however domesticated, becomes an embodiment of the power of *kitsch*, that is, predigested and

denatured aesthetic experience, to affirm the status-quo: high-class trash. Art becomes precisely what the postmodernists thought it was. The museum has not faced the crisis of meaning the postmodernists wished of it, only the meaning has become shallower. In Adorno's terms, the museum has become an advertising for itself, but the use of its experience has become occulted, in favor of its exchange-value: the feeling of the worth of the price of the ticket. But the experience of art is still (potentially) there, if unrecognized.

For Buck-Morss, there is indeed a crisis — of (lack of) recognition. Criticism, and hence consciousness of aesthetic experience objectified in artistic practices, was in crisis in postmodernism. Critical theory ceased to be critical — and thus became affirmative, even if it was confused about this. This was the result, in Habermas's terms, of the "postmodernist" turning away from the "incomplete project" of modern art's critical response to social modernity: a conservative result, by default, even if under the "pretense" that it was progressive or even radical.

Against such postmodernist abdication and thus affirmation of existing "culture," Buck-Morss called for approaching art "emblematically and symptomatically, in terms of the most fundamental questions of social life," "bringing to consciousness what was before only dimly perceived, so that it becomes available for critical reflection." Otherwise, Buck-Morss warned that "tomorrow's artists may opt to go underground," and "do their work esoterically, while employed as producers of visual culture." We might also say that there is the option of continuing to make "art," but without recognition of its stakes by critics, impaired by a discourse of "visual culture" and supposed "institutional"

critique or opposition — that is, an institutionalized opposition to the institution (such as effected by the *October* writers, who have since entered the canon of academicism, for instance in the academic art of the postmodernist art school). This outcome represses, or drives “underground,” the concerns of artists regarding aesthetic experience, which, according to Habermas and Buck-Morss, following Benjamin and Brecht, are potentially “vital” and “fundamental” to “questions of social life.”

“Relational” aesthetics

The question of the more recent phenomenon of “relational aesthetics” needs to be addressed in such terms, for “relational aesthetics” claims to be about mobilizing attention to the aesthetic experience of the social for critical ends, in society as well as art.

Several important critical accounts of relational aesthetics have been attempted. Claire Bishop has addressed the problem of relational aesthetics raising the social at the expense of recognition of social antagonisms. Stewart Martin has questioned the relational aesthetics opposition of the social to the (autonomous) art object of traditional (modernist) aesthetics. But Martin has also interrogated the hypostatization of the social, whether considered either as a relatively unproblematic value in itself or as a zone of antagonism, as in Bishop’s criticism. Additionally, Martin has addressed shared problems of the late paradigmatic but opposed attempts on the Left to politicize aesthetics by Jacques Rancière and Alain Badiou. Martin has deployed a sophisticated understanding of Marx and Adorno on the commodity form towards these ends. Thus it becomes possible for Martin to address

relational aesthetics practices’ “naïve mimesis or aestheticization of novel forms of capitalist exploitation,” in treating art as a “form of social exchange” that advocates an “inter-subjective art of conviviality”, as well as address the potential political stakes of various approaches to art. — Conversely, it becomes possible for Martin to address what he calls the otherwise naturalized “commodity form of the political”.

Martin is concerned to be able to preserve a social-critical approach to what he calls the “arty non-art of late capitalist culture.” It is necessary, according to Martin, to avoid the “Hegelian trap” of “harmonious rapprochement,” through a dialectic of “anti-art and pure art,” resulting in an “artification of the world” that however “breaks” with attempts to “critique bourgeois culture.” Instead, Martin recalls Adorno’s recognition that art’s “autonomy,” its simultaneously “anti-social” and “non-subjective” or “objective” aspect, was inherent both in its commodity character and in its “resistance to commodification,” through “immanent critique or self-criticism”. It is this aspect of art, common to both “anti-art” and “pure art,” that, for Martin, “relational” aesthetics, with its emphasis on the supposedly “inter-subjective” character of the social, occludes.

Historical temporality of artworks not linear succession

John Roberts, in his recovery of Adorno, has focused as well on the “asocial” aspect of art as the potential source of its critical value. Roberts recovers the key idea, from Benjamin and Adorno, of artworks’ “pre-history” and “after-life” in history, in order to introduce the problem of the historical temporality of the experience of works of art,

Roberts discusses works of art as forms of “deferred action” in history, with which artists and viewers engage in new forms of art production and reception, which belie notions of successions of styles traditional to art history.

which is not reducible to their immediate aesthetic experience or the thoughts and feelings of the artists who produced them. Works of art are “objective” in that they are non-identical with themselves, in the sense of non-identity in time. In Adorno’s terms, artworks have a “historical nucleus,” a “truth-content” revealed only as a function of transformations in history. According to Benjamin, this is how artworks can gain stature and power with time.

The example Roberts uses is the late, delayed reception of early 20th century avant-garde artworks in the 1960s, which inspired artists. This is a very different account from the notion, common in postmodernist criticism, of artists rebelling against the preceding styles and art criticism and historical discourses of abstract expressionism. Artists may have remained innocent of the cloistered disputes of the art critics and historians, though their works were used as evidence in these disputes; and they may have remained more sympathetic to abstract expressionism as art than the postmodernist critics were. The pendulum-swing or grandfather-rule accounts of the vicissitudes of history are inadequate to the non-linear temporality Roberts highlights.

Roberts discusses works of art as forms of “deferred action” in history, with which artists and viewers engage in new forms of art production and reception, which

believe notions of successions of styles traditional to art history. This allows works of art to be understood as embodiments of objectified experience that change as a function of historical transformations, as potentially informing a proliferation of experiences unfolding in history, rather than, as Foster, for example, feared, forms of "closure."

Neo-avant garde or neo-modernist?

It is important that neither Habermas (nor Bell) nor Buck-Morss accepted the idea that gained traction in the 1970s of a division between modernist and avant-garde art. For neither did Benjamin or Adorno. (Peter Bürger's influential study, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, was, importantly, a critique of Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* on this score.)

What Martin calls the “dialectic” of “anti-art” and “pure art” has continued, though not necessarily in terms of opposed camps, but rather in what Adorno recognized as the necessary element of the non-artistic in artworks. Now that postmodernism has been exhausted as a trend in criticism (as seen by significant reversals on the part of its standard-bearers such as Foster), it becomes possible to recognize how postmodernism reacted inadequately and problematically to this dialectic, conflating realms of art and social life, and thus repressed it, obscuring its operations from proper recognition.

The emergence of “relational” aesthetics in the 1990s marked the exhaustion of postmodernism, as both its culmination and its negation (it is significant that Foster was hostile, calling it a mere “arty party”), but also a terminal phase of the recrudescence of the problem of the social and of politics, long wandering lost through the postmodernist desert of the 1970s and ’80s, during

which Adorno, for example, could only be received as an old-fashioned modernist. But, since the 1990s, critics and theorists have found it increasingly necessary to reconsider Adorno.

Today, which may be considered a post-postmodernist moment, art practices can be broadly grouped into two seemingly unrelated tendencies, neo-avant garde (such as in relational aesthetics) and neo-modernist (in the revival of the traditional plastic arts of objects such as painting and sculpture). The task would be to understand what these apparently independent tendencies in art have in common as phenomena of history, the society and politics with which art practices are bound up. Postmodernist art

... since the 1990s, critics and theorists have found it increasingly necessary to reconsider Adorno.

criticism has made it impossible to properly grasp such shared history of the present, hence its exhaustion today, leaving current art unrecognized.

But, in the midst of the high era of postmodernist criticism, Habermas sounded an important note of dissent and warning against this trend, reminding of what postmodernism left aside in terms of society and politics. For it is with respect to society and political ideology that art remained potentially vital and necessary, if under-recognized as such. In his Adorno prize talk, Habermas raised the problem of art as an

exemplary task for the “critical intellectual.” This is because, as more recent critics such as Bishop, Martin and Roberts have noted, art, in its dialectical transformations, allows for the recognition of *history*, the present as historical, revealing not only the history of art, but of modern capitalist society and its unfulfilled forms of discontent, as registered in aesthetic experience. ■

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A VERY MODERN MANIFESTO – GOYA 1792

AN UNKNOWN TREASURE

Susana Gómez Lain

Madrid Editor



*Cantan para el que lo hizo.
"They Sing for the Composer".
Wiki Commons*

It is little known that the Spanish enlightened-romantic master painter Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (1746-1828) wrote to inform Academics of his suggestions for a new curriculum, training students of the Arts. It was, in effect, a manifesto establishing the core need for freedom of expression in one's Art. At the time he was teaching at the prestigious Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando. He was already a pioneer in his subject. Later on, he became Painting Director but resigned from his post in 1797 due to his progressive deafness.

Years after, in the 20th century, many others have written about the freedom, subjectivity, anti-system and even the anarchy in art. Painters and thinkers like Kandinsky, Marc, Macke, and others associated with the "Blaue Reiter". Goya's suggested curriculum presaged the Dadaist

movement in their manifestos between 1918-1924 and André Breton and Diego Rivera, in their book "Manifesto for a revolutionary and independent art" in 1938. The great difference between these moderns and Goya, is that while he purely talked about Art, the moderns mixed the art questions with their personal vision of society, politics and the condition of humanity. Views that were understandably contextualized in living in a world after the First World War, while the raising of all colours of totalitarianisms percolated the second world war which consequently complicated the initial, simpler question which Goya answered so eloquently.

Nevertheless, living himself in turbulent times and being a witness to both the European War of Secession and the "War of Independence" against Napoleon's France, Goya's principles and credo led him to make a fierce critique on war in his famous paintings and series of prints "The disasters of War" (1810-1815). In these he, for the first time, depicted the real insane face of conflicts; the violence, the wildness, the famine, the disease, the tragedy and the death of the population rather than the political propaganda of heroism and patriotism that was typical at that time. With shapes and colors he publicly condemned in a way that wouldn't be permitted with words. That immediacy has always been an advantage of visual art.

He wrote, prophesying, that the noble art of painting should be completely free. No rules at all: different teaching for different people. The Academies should be just a shelter for those who wanted to learn. Students should not be compelled to learn geometry

and perspective in order to draw properly but left to develop their own practice and individual talent. Through hours of practicing they would learn slowly to solve the technical problems that arose, and would more easily advance in all other branches of art. The teachers should just be there to give general support, advice, tips and knowledge and not try to teach their own particular styles that history and experience has proved to be useless for others.

He added that the art of painting was connected with the Divine because it imitated all that God has created: the Sacred Nature; that the most gifted lecturer or artist could not give many rules helpful for others being such an intimate and profound personal experience of the world; that the most casual works could be much celebrated than the more accurate or careful ones, underlining the importance of copying directly from nature rather than from Greek sculptures, which are themselves subjective copies of nature.

He finished his exposition stating that the only way he knew to promote, enhance and boost the Arts was to protect and appreciate the good teachers and the gifted talents, giving the latter commissions to help produce works and help them to continue practicing. Above all and I translate literally, "to leave the genius of disciples who want to learn art run in freedom, without oppression and without the slightest change to their inclinations for this or that style in painting".

This was written on the 14th of October 1792. Does it sound familiar to you? ■

You'll Know it When You See It

John Link

But Rosenberg set the future course of art criticism, not his contemporary, Clement Greenberg, who had no tolerance for this viewpoint. *Fountain* proved to be a worthy stimulus for speaking in tongues.

The title of this comment “defines” art well enough, especially when the folly of trying to define it formally raises its perplexing head. When Marcel Duchamp is given credit, as he so often is, for making the definition of art an important issue, I roll my eyes. How is it we recognize the animal images adorning the walls of Lascaux as art when they were quite possibly created before there was any word like “art”? Duchamp’s “question” does not have anything to do with them or how they came to be. Questions about the “definition of art” were just as irrelevant to making art then as they are today.

Somehow “Is it art?” has become a big deal, one that, in designated circumstances, serves to make certain objects, such as Duchamp’s *Fountain*, more valuable than they otherwise might be. Curiously, this wasn’t the case in 1917, when the original object was proposed for exhibition. The Society of Independent Artists did not show it for at least two reasons, both rather reasonable and conventional, not controversial. They included: 1), the work was not submitted by any member in good standing of the Society because Duchamp had hidden his identity during the submission process; and 2), it was not submitted by the deadline. The “subversive” title associated with it today appears nowhere on the submission

label but rather was coined later by a journalist who wrote about the situation after it was disallowed. While real art must be experienced in the present to be felt as art, the fan-boys and girls of *Fountain* compulsively tie the “experience” of its artistic merit to the “facts” associated with its non-inclusion in this one show and its consequent “influence” on art forever after. Glyn Thompson wrote a telling article for the March/April 2017 issue of *The Jackdaw* that takes apart these many myths. Read it if you can.

Fountain was stored out of sight for the show and picked up afterward. It was never seen again in public and no one today knows what became of it.

When a semi-similar replica was “found” or otherwise procured in 1950 and exhibited by Sidney Janis, the art world had become increasingly more interested in intellectualizing about art as opposed to simply looking at it. Harold Rosenberg, in his 1952 “American Action Painters”, expressed this tendency well when he said, “*Criticism must begin by recognizing in the painting the assumptions inherent in its mode of creation. Since the painter has become an actor, the spectator has to think in a vocabulary of action: its inception, duration, direction-psycho state, concentration and relaxation of the will, passivity, alert waiting. He must become a connoisseur of the gradations between the automatic, the spontaneous, the evoked.*”

What could this possibly mean? Other than it’s a virtue to ramble on in a quasi-rational discourse detached from any reality in the art you are considering, I don’t know. But Rosenberg set the future course of art criticism,

not his contemporary, Clement Greenberg, who had no tolerance for this viewpoint. *Fountain* proved to be a worthy stimulus for speaking in tongues.

In the early 60’s, art world interest in the discarded *Fountain* rose to the degree that Duchamp had two editions of the object made. The first, in 1963, was not entirely consistent with Stieglitz’s photograph, but the members of the edition were still inscribed by the artist. The 1964 edition was clearly created under Duchamp’s supervision and follows the Stieglitz photograph closely. The 1964 versions bear a copper plate of authenticity stating “Marcel Duchamp 1964 1/8-8/8”, “FOUNTAIN / 1917 / EDITION GALERIE SCHWARZ, MILAN” (depending on the place in the edition occupied by a specific copy) and signed by Duchamp himself on the back of the left flange. There was also an artist and a publisher “proof”, as is typical in the tradition of editioned multiples that are original, and two more copies for the exhibition. *Fountain* had finally become the “real deal”, almost 50 years after it had been annihilated by the forces of happenstance and disregard.

Thus, the “evolution” of *Fountain* went from Duchamp hanging the 1917 rejected object over a doorway in his studio for a year, then discarding it before he went to Buenos Aires, to Andre Breton’s mention in his essay “Phare de la mariee” (1935), to Sidney Janis exhibiting something similar in 1950, to the commercially correct 1964 edition. This reflects quite a change in attitude regarding the importance of the original 1917 work. Art opinion, including Duchamp’s, went from ignoring

the thing, as if it were worthless refuse, to meriting making a respectable, commercially correct “art” edition, complete with authenticated provenance. It also reflects the capacity of the American art system to monetize just about anything. In 1999 Sotheby’s sold a copy from the “commerce conforming” 1964 edition for \$1.7 million.

Intellectuals have lionized the work with equal fervor. It was voted the most influential artwork of the 20th century by 500 enlightened British art world dignitaries, ahead of anything Picasso made, for one significant example. It is apparent that, by “influential” they meant written about, intellectualized over, understood and misunderstood, footnoted, and taught as part of art history. Indeed, they are probably correct. “Duchamp Fountain” gets more than 400,000 hits when googled. “Picasso Les Demoiselle” gets just 344,000, (though doing “Guernica” gets over a half million - likely a reflection of its political content). But the fact is, Picasso made pictures that were and are to be looked at, not theorized over, because of their narrow, “traditional” focus. *Fountain*, on the other hand, is so loosely constrained visually and vacant of any artistic discipline, that it can generate just about any kind of discussion, to the delight of art writers with all sorts of agendas. Its intellectual fertility has recently spawned numerous treatises “exploring” its relevance to gender identity, sexism, male privilege, and so on, to go with its long history of ontological speculation about the definition of art and the joy of offending vulgarians. Clearly, *Fountain* has triggered meandering word-smithing relevant to the ever present contemporaneous issue-of-the-day, just like bells triggered Pavlov’s dogs.

My late partner, Darby Bannard, dealt with the question of whether something is art or not in a couple

of ways. The most plainspoken was:

“A work of art in the dumpster is trash. A work of art in a museum at night is an inert object made with canvas or bronze or whatever. A work of art in an auction is an item of commerce. A work of art that I look at and get thrilled by is a work of art. In fact it is at that moment a good work of art. If I hate it it is a bad work of art. If you love it and I hate it we accept it as a work of art and we disagree whether is a good or bad work of art. Identifications are not reality, they are convenience.” ([Notes On Art And Culture #8](#))

If people believe that art can be explained to them they can be talked into anything.”

John Griefen gave us his take on the same question when he said: *“When people try to ‘understand’ or ‘have art explained’ there is room for a kind of fraud that undermines what art really is there for and what it has for us. If people believe that art can be explained to them they can be talked into anything.”* ([Art, Intuition, and Understanding](#)) Indeed, people CAN be talked into anything, including parting with \$1.7 million for an object that is essentially a conversation starter.

But to be fair, I’ve noticed one hiccup in the history of *Fountain* labelled as “bad-art-mistaken-for-good” and how it came to be so important to the intellectuals who provide the rules that control most of what goes on. Alfred Stieglitz’s photograph of the original object has the look of art about it, just as *Deep Throat* has the look of porn. There is no need to spin words about either of them and what they might be besides what they are.

And there is no question Stieglitz made a good

photograph. The argument has been over whether its subject is any good as art. Way back when I was a young guy, I looked at that photo and said to myself, “Wait a minute, there is something going on here.” Clearly, my clicker had been clicked. It still clicks when I look at that photograph; it’s quite compelling. Centered, but not quite. Grainy black and white, abstracted from everyday reality, but clear and formidable, thanks to the contrast of the muscular curves with the background. Was it the subject of the photograph or the photograph itself that turned me on?

The odd, sort of top down point of view created by the location of the signature was a contribution Duchamp could claim for himself, to be sure, but hardly sufficient to close the deal, art-wise. The official picture of the Tate’s copy from the 1964 edition is also on its back, viewed from the top, signature right side up. It is centered (perfectly this time), but the object simply looks like a male urinal on its back, competently lit and well-presented but not something to get one’s clicker clicked by. The signing by Mr. Mutt reminds me it is associated with the historical *Fountain*, but little else - a matter of my brain’s art history database, not what I long for when I seek art.

I am pretty sure it was Stieglitz’s talent for making a good picture that leveraged the essential mediocrity of *Fountain* into my consciousness - and perhaps the world’s. The haphazard object Duchamp acquired from a plumbing store was presented through the pictorial genius specific to Stieglitz. Was that enough kick to launch its potential as the conversation piece that dominated the last half of 20th century art writing? What if the only photograph taken before *Fountain* was discarded had looked like the blood-starved image distributed by the Tate? The answer is “there”, needing only to be seen. ■

Michael Williams

AT THE CARNEGIE MUSEUM OF ARTS

Throughout the history of painting mimicry has been an ever present strategy, from sourcing the natural world to the mechanical properties of photography. Now trending is computer as muse: either as a tool for the process of painting, ink jet output as the painting, or a combination of both. For Michael Williams' first solo museum exhibition in the United States at the Carnegie Museum of Art's 78th Forum series, April 21 – August 27, 2017, it is both.

The exhibition includes large scaled paintings on the first floor gallery, and many smaller notebook sized mixed media pieces in a separate gallery on the second floor.

He works with a matrix of imagery: a lacrosse player, a school children's chair, puzzle pieces, stylized shaped text, and an assortment of distorted faces and grid like passages. Some of the parts are reproduced from painting to painting via ink jet printing on canvas -- others are replicated through hand painting, these components are then combined with abstracted painterly passages. Although the works appear to rely heavily on improvisation, once the notebook sized drawing collages are uncovered on the second floor (an adroit curatorial decision by Eric Crosby), the connection becomes clear that the super-sized paintings are derived from these small scale models.

In *Purple Shebby*, 2015 oil, airbrush, and inkjet on canvas, 108" x 85", the setting is a classroom – 'Global Warming' appears on a blackboard in the upper right corner of the painting, along with a tiled back wall with puzzle pieces, two school chairs, the lacrosse figure and also a distorted bust facing the viewer

that looks like an abstracted Giuseppe Arcimboldo vegetable portrait. Filling out the rest of the painting are some abstracted impasto passages along with pipe like structures. The palette is comprised of a variety of greens, some yellows, tans, and a bit of lavender. In *Brown Shape*, oil and pencil on canvas, 114 1/4" x 77" there is a similar configuration of parts with repeats of the chairs, blackboard, in this case a stylized shaped text of 'Global Warming', puzzle parts, and another different distorted abstracted face near the bottom left quadrant of the painting.

In addition, there are hand-painted black bands at the top and bottom with an upside down mirrored CHASE logo hugging the bottom left corner. The preliminary model was literally made on the back of a CHASE bill and can be found in the second floor gallery.

Williams extends the language of gestural painting, bad painting, Pop art, and Neo-Expressionism in a post-postmodern mashup in these mundane narratives which are filled with abstracted, obfuscated imagery. The lack of commentary suggests a type of disengaged boredom and Truth about Painting 2, inkjet on canvas, 128" x 84 3/4" one of two paintings in the exhibition comprised solely of ink jet printing is the most telling example. Here the central focus is a squeezed paint tube whose CVS pharmacy label is a prescription for Jenkem, a supposed mind altering drug made from human feces squirting out the text 'the truth about painting'. Perhaps this reeks of another important part of Williams' process and best expresses his conscientious apathy towards our current milieu. ■

Scott Turri



Michael Williams, "Purple Shebby," 2015, oil, airbrush, and inkjet on canvas, 108 x 85 in., Courtesy of the artist; CANADA, New York; Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels; and Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich, © Michael Williams



Michael Williams, "untitled puzzle drawing," 2016, ink and photocopy collage on paper, 12 x 9 in., Courtesy of the artist; CANADA, New York; Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels; and Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich, © Michael Williams

DEATH EXPECTED

Al Jirikowic

Washington DC Editor

To decipher Paula Ballo Dailey one must immediately understand she was terminally ill.

From her diagnosis of cancer until her death in 2016, a mere two months passed. She had started on some of her work and consequently finished it within that time frame with great help from caretaker and artist husband, Brian.

Paula had accumulated a great deal of "thing-age" from her home area in the Shenandoah Valley, Woodstock Virginia. Her highly selective vocabulary "pieces" of yard sales, junk sale- antique objects implemented as "color words" in her constructions have a more poetic sense than that of a visual piece. This is no accident. She wrote volumes of note books. Her words of fear and hope and observations were discovered by her husband after her passing. He told me he would have encouraged her to publicize her writing. This was her inner self revealing its life-self to her conscious self, as if "hatching" personal ideas from which to "escape" with, then to be entrusted in her works.

A great many artists create a private language or vocabulary to reconcile themselves to this world, but Paula, she had a foot in the next one as well. This was a life long vision, as still and reserved and "inner" as it might be. Her work is about her self's movement from this station to what may come- this is how she had dealt largely with her death process ... by embracing it on her own terms. Calmly, not angry, not afraid. If we examine her piece "Lives Matter" we see two roosters ,one bottom left , the other top right, a framed bed of flower feathers and on that

a carousel of color wheel wound thread, in a circle of course ... a white thread attached to / from the bottom left rooster and a colored thread to the upper right rooster. The piece moves through the frame to the top to the more colored rooster—i.e. a higher state ... color is, in this case, the greater power or advancement or higher insight or greater position or the transcendence from which it evolves ... willingly accepted by the hands of a human in different positions, a trusted movement of herself. Paula was fascinated by birds and cages. This work implies work to achieve a higher view. The upper right rooster has more color, something that is gained by moving through the color feather garden. This is hope for Paula. There is travel. There is work. There is some sense of higher learning not of this dimension.

In *The Destination is Not Freedom*, we have another bird theme, i.e. the egg and another bird cage this time with Buddha sitting on a bed of nails inside the cage with an open door. Can Buddha stop suffering to get off



In the Destination is not Freedom

the bed of nails inside the cage and walk out? As painful as it is to be on Earth i.e. the cage he is in progress to be "hatched" - note the ostrich egg below the cage in wood—the wood is in Earth and the tools to

enlightenment—the scrips of spirit and the bowl of sacred herbs are just beyond the cage. Clearly he will, in time get off his bed of nails, flee the cage and enjoy enlightenment—freedom. To make sure this will happen, a tablet of Buddhist prayers is situated on the top of the cage—for his continued growth, progress, movement, journey, path. A certainty to Paula.

Paula identified with her cage.. the problems in this life as struggle and yet the power to transcend them in her "Self Portrait". Once again a cage and a cage door open, movement to be. A life on earth, within the cage—her own picture, a Renaissance Leonardo Mary— a classical Greek statue or is it a miniature Rodin? - a paint box, she acknowledges art, artfully, a doll and birds ... inside and out of the cage. The table the cage sits on has an open drawer full of old snapshots, memories, time passing. On top of the cage is a man's hat—God? What she knows is the open door, her launch pad from the Earth and her world here to a next, a woman in transcendence on the move to who knows where. ...? Paula's work prompts the sense of mystery in us.

Perhaps this is best expressed in her earlier work "My Rebirth". She sonically projects herself forward in space, the energy of the cosmos and clouds propelling her forward, at us, the viewers. She is fragmented, vibrating forth but powerfully, confidently, unmistakablyshe is on her journey. And we are invited to know this. The question is-- can we? ■

A YEAR AT CAPE CORNWALL: Neil Pinkett's Show at Cornwall Contemporary Gallery, Penzance, Cornwall, UK May 2017.

It is the privilege of the artist to create a world that no-one has ever seen before. If the work is weak we are not convinced, it is arbitrary, trivial. If the artist is good, however, there is that amazed or delighted shock of recognition however far the work of art is from our usual way of seeing. This is the effect created by Neil Pinkett's show of landscape paintings of the Cape Cornwall, St Just area.

We have 31 very free, atmospheric paintings, painted largely with the knife by a well established, traditional painter in Cornwall. There is the moody, muted colouring of "Cape Evening" with its falling sun, for example, or the umbers, ochres and blue-grey greens of "Wave After Wave", painted from sea level so that the cliffs tower above you, their tops out of sight.

In "Haze and Sun, Cape

Cornwall" with its green-gold tones, the fishing boats pulled up on the slip are almost swallowed by the haze. Again the works of Man are dwarfed by those of Nature. In "Heavy Cloud and Sun, Cape Cornwall" this sense of Nature's power is especially obvious in the painting's sweeping palette knife exuberance.

And in the hazy, wonderfully Turneresque light of "Botallack Sun" the world of Man might never have existed, so powerfully evolved are the forces of Nature,

Then suddenly sharper, smaller, as if to remind us that as a species we do still exist, we see the close-up detail of "Nets and Boxes". Here, fishing gear stands out against the rocks. But mostly in these works, nature is definitely in charge.

We can see a clear line of descent here from the so-called new Golden Age of landscape and

seascape painting in Cornwall in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century – Adrian Stokes, Algernon Talmage, Paul Dougherty, Julius Olsson etc – via Sir Alfred Munnings in his Lamorna days and the vigorous, outdoors-in-all-weather work of Peter Lanyon in the 1950s and 60's. Pinkett, like Lanyon a native Cornishman, shares the latter's intense concern with specific places and their history, not just landscape. Less technically experimental than such prominent landscape contemporaries as Kurt Jackson, he is far more personal. His Cape Cornwall series represents a triumph of powerful personal vision.

Prices range from £995 to £3,950.

Jane Sand is an artist living in Penzance.

The Studio and the Sea, Jessica Warboys Tate, St Ives – 31st March - 3rd September 2017

The Tate St Ives has always harboured a dilemma; how to live up to its remit to have a permanent exhibition of local artists from the St Ives Movement inside its walls. It has never solved this dilemma though it has promised it will with its new extension due in September 2017.

In the meantime it throws a lifebuoy to visitors, locals and critics through artists who use nature and the St Ives landscape to inspire their works.

In the opening show for the new season, Jessica Warboys displays canvases painted by the sea. The technique is to place paints on long canvases (they stretch from the ceiling and one partially across the floor) to allow the ebb and flow of the sea to make the painting.

Contemporary art has long

given itself over to the concept being more important than the finished work and one feels almost tired at having to even note the faded meaninglessness and inadequacy of these huge canvases that people should be allowed to walk over in their disgust at the weakness of form. We simply know the sea can do better than this.

This is an ancient, natural force that sinks ships, that rules our lives, that forces island nations to become seafaring. She is, in fact, our mother giving life to the whole of the planet. Is this really the best she can stretch to in our unobstructed postmodern condition?

You can look in vain here for her strength of purpose, her wisdom of the ages, her vision of the future, her commentary on the overfishing and pollution of

her oceans. There is no pain here, to mass slaughter, no injury, no floating plastic. A marine biologist would look at these works and see nothing recognizable of the depths of the sea at all.

It is a tragedy of indifference that the Tate did not ask Warboys to ask more of the St Ives coastal waters. As an opening show this was a chance to make waves, but it is another wasted opportunity that doesn't even ripple.

Better luck with the next tide

Daniel Nanavati

Do you have a gift for drawing cartoons? We would be delighted to see your work and discuss ideas for cartoons within these pages.

ukeditor@newartexaminer.net

**The Japanese House:
Architecture and Life after 1945,**
23 March 2017 - 25 June 2017
Barbican Centre, London.

In contrast to the sad home of Philip Larkin's poem, which "stays as it is left, shaped to the comfort of the last to go", the Japanese house, as perfectly demonstrated by this exhibition, is an ever-changing and ever-challenging construct that defies nostalgia.

Due, in part, to the geophysical nature of Japan and also to inheritance tax constraints that make it difficult for a home to be passed down within the family, the Japanese house is a relatively short-lived structure.

Home as a concept is imbued with an impermanence that does not resonate with our British expectation of comfortable familiarity and tradition.

The exhibition shows how the Japanese house is being constantly re-invented and the idea of home reconsidered by every new generation of architect. It has passed through many phases, on a fascinating progress that explores the meaning of home (can a coat with pockets containing survival objects be home?) and the relation of interior and exterior, through, for example, the interweaving of house and nature – one house has plants for walls, another takes the form of a series of self-contained

units separated by plans and trees.

The relationship of Interior and exterior is developed in the recreation of the home of an urban hermit. Here we see a man whose life is lived inside but remains responsive to the outside world by looking at the branches of a tree, exchanging greetings with the postman, reading perched on a window sill.

This thought-provoking exhibition has been beautifully put together and will inspire you towards a deeper value system to lift our homes away from anything mundane.

Susie Corrie studied Greats at Oxford and teaches Latin.

- March 14th 2017: Nielsen survey finds Sales of printed books rose 7% in 2016 while e-book sales fell as mobiles and tablets overtook dedicated e-readers.
- April 26th 2017: In a survey of 50 Chicago galleries, 40% answered in the affirmative: yes, they do look at unsolicited work. Final numbers were 30 said no and 20 said yes. (Michael Hopkins Neoteric Art)
- February 2017: About 20 people turned out to the Private View of the Full Members Exhibition at the Penwith.
- May 1st 201: Hendrik Folkerts has been appointed to the position of Dittmer Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the museum. Along with the appointment of Folkerts, two other additions to the museum's curatorial staff are Jordan Carter and Robyn Farrell, who will become assistant curators of contemporary art.
- May 1st 2017: Artist Theaster Gates and the University of Chicago intend to build a new \$1.5 million park located along Garfield Boulevard, which would include footpaths for pedestrians, areas for outdoor performances and movie screenings, and new lighting and fencing.
- May 15th 2017: Our wesbite www.newartexaminer.net has over 1,000 visitors from the United States, Great Britain and China, and 19 other countries in triple and double figures.
- May 23rd After President Trump released his official 2018 federal budget on Tuesday, May 23, which included sweeping cuts to domestic programs, the National Endowments of the Arts and Humanities are preparing to close.
- May 25th 2017: We have to announce the Penwith Gallery will no longer stock the New Art Examiner. Mr John Piper, over the telephone with UK Editor Daniel Nanavati, said the Gallery did not like our critical article which was libellous and they would be talking to lawyers. He did not take up the offer of writing a rebuttal or being interviewed to inform readers of the New Art Examiner of the good things happening at the Penwith we don't know about. He told the Editor the decision had been made by all seven Trustees, of which he is one.
- June 10th 2017 **Speculative Investigations - a free and open discussion group in Cornwall to meet monthly. Please let us know by email why you would be interested to attend**
dq@newartexaminer.net

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Cornwall: Belgrave Gallery, St Ives; Cafe Arts, Truro; Camelford Art Gallery, Camelford; Falmouth Art Gallery, Falmouth; Redwing Gallery, Penzance; Tate, St Ives; Terre Verte Gallery, Altarnun; STERTS Arts Centre, Cornwall.

Banned from The Exchange Gallery, Penzance, Penwith Gallery, St Ives

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