

The independent voice of the Visual Arts

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Frida Kahlo sacrificed to feminism

Jane Allen and Derek Guthrie on the legacy of Picasso

> Frottage's Progress

Monet's Tanks

Chicago's Hunger

Sleepy Washington

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TIMES & ECHO

The New Art Examiner is the product of the thinking and life-long contribution of Jane Addams Allen. We thank you in her name for reading her independent journal of art criticism.

If you have an interest in our venture, please consult Google, also Art Cornwall, for an interview with the publisher, Derek Guthrie, a painter who keeps his art practice private. The New Art Examiner has a long history of producing quality and independent art criticism. Chicago and Cornwall, as any art scene, needs writers to keep a professional eye on art activity. Otherwise, insider trading will determine success in this troubled art

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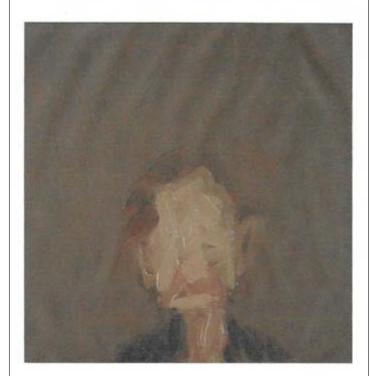
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#### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The New Art Examiner is a notfor-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.

**LETTERS** 

The Chicago Trademark Office awarded the New Art Examiner Trademark back to Derek Guthrie. The cabal in Chicago are asking for their default to be forgiven on the basis that they never received the letters from the Trademark Office telling them of Derek Guthrie's challenge. Now we have to wait for the legal process to finalize but since Derek Guthrie designed the logo and co-founded the New Art Examiner in 1973 with Jane Addams Allen, we are hopeful his intellectual property will be protected.

#### **STILL A NO-FLY ZONE** (MARCH/APRIL 2018)

Francis.

This beautiful article shouldn't stop here; it needs to be read by a larger public, not just by 12,000 paltry readers a month that you have here. All New Yorkers, all Americans and people overseas should be able to read what Frances Oliver wrote, as everyone was touched by 9/11 in one way or another. Our lives have changed radically since that day. It is shameful what they have done to Ground Zero – even a mosque would have been better than a shopping center, at least as a place to remember what happened there. I suggest we all circulate this article, in all the social media, to our friends, to our colleagues and most of all to our governments. Whoever can re-publish this (obviously asking for permission) please do so, so this very striking piece can be widely read.

> Alan Tennyson, 07/04/2018 (from webpage)

Alan,

I totally agree with you and am sending the article to my contacts now. However, I don't think a mosque was appropriate either. Kind regards,

Dott. Giovanni de Santis 08/04/2018 What about all the people that died there? Just numbers?

Jan Eriksson 08/04/2018 (from webpage)

Francis.

A cathedral to shopping; as we are faithless today, that is all we are able to do – shop and then shop.

> Margaret Corsen 08/04/2018 (from webpage)

Francis,

Perhaps with all that money, \$4 billion, they could have built a colossal anti-war museum of art. Sasha Kuznetsov 08/04/2018 (from webpage)

Sasha

I like your idea. What if the stores were removed and the place done over as an anti-war museum of art? Art instead of stores! I can't understand why the people of New York didn't protest this lack of respect for those who lost their lives there and afterwards of cancer from the dust. Their city was bombed, their monumental buildings were destroyed; thousands of people were killed, and what do they put in its place? A shopping center! It doesn't make sense. Park Jin 09/04/2018

(from webpage)

Hi Sasha.

I like your idea of an anti-war museum instead of a shopping center at Ground Zero. Can we start a petition? With all the thousands of readers here, maybe we create the momentum leading to something big in the social media. We need to ask for a re-use of the building space with an attached business plan for the museum and its management.

Jeff Diamond 25/04/2018

Francis,

I may live on another planet, but thanks to this article I learned what happened to Ground Zero. I find it a sacrilege. How could they even think of opening a mall there? can't understand the reasoning behind it, except for financial concerns, but even so something is wrong with a society that accepts this.

> Tanvi Laghari 08/04/2018 (from webpage)

#### I KNOW WHAT I LIKE

To the Editors:

The original avant-garde was opposed to what was then "contemporary art", the art of the establishment, embodied by the Academy, the art "everybody" thought was the most relevant, the best, and certainly the most certified by the proper art authorities. According to Greenberg and others, the Impressionists found the inspiration for their

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resistance in "old" art, like the relatively crude painterliness of Goya who, like them, would never have been admitted to a Salon show. Thus, the term "avant-garde" is somewhat paradoxical when applied to the Impressionists, in what turned out to be "the latest and greatest" of their time was rooted in the past and opposed to the dominate "latest". The dominance of "the latest" continued into the 60s, but reached the pivot point in 1973 when the Robert Scull auction demonstrated contemporary art is a worthy investment, a demonstration that has been reproved time and time again ever since. Money talks, loudly. Above all, money persuades. Today, the only art publication that reflects a general pattern of resistance to what is valued contemporaneously by our art institutions is the NAE. Some of the writers you have gathered seem to look more and more to what has stood the test of time, especially that part of it that looked good first, then performed whatever the temper of its time inspired second. Art hedonism, as I would call it. Autonomy, as Greenberg called it. "Avant-garde" is no longer used paradoxically. The stuff the institutionalized "avant-garde" produces is in fact "the latest", it just is not "the greatest" - exactly the same circumstance that applied to the late French Academy. Lacking what it takes to be great binds it solely to the conceits of "today" that it eagerly "explores", but when the relevance of "today" fades as it surely will "tomorrow", that portion of the current art glut that lacks what it takes to make it as art will fade along with it. That is to say, most of it. All art, good and bad, reflects the

temper of its times because it is a product of its times. What makes the difference between the good and the bad isn't something we can "know", but like the vulgarian in the street, I know what I like.

John Link 28/4/2018

#### **Bravo**

To: Managing Editor Re: New Art Examiner

I applaud your effort & feel your line of thinking is spot on accurate. This subject has had a devastating effect among outsider artists. Sales have plummeted for the traditional hand crafter in this country, but worse yet is the loss of all that creativity as it is no longer viable for many to continue. Great civilizations thru out the world & history are known by their creative works as humble as daily dishware, grave goods etc., as much as massive monuments. We are losing this to computer designed, mass produced disposable work that may have merit but won't stand the test of time

> sincerely, Bruce Cook 14/52018

#### Chicago Ethics, with beer

Hi Daniel.

Right, you don't understand me, nor do you know me in the least. We would probably get along just fine if we met. I like Derek and would probably like you. Life is a mystery, isn't it?

Look, I am just a poor painter. Derek personally asked me face to face to start writing for the NAE a year ago last November. I wasn't intending to start writing for anybody. Several people asked me. I started to write

in an effort to learn language skills

and better myself. Neither the NAE nor Neoteric paid anything.
Truthfully, the only people who read the reviews or even cared at all were the artists and their friends.
Derek asked me to write some reviews and then declined to publish them. He doesn't own me, if he didn't want the stories I'd go somewhere else with them. What would you do? If a gallery asked for an exclusive, I'd laugh. None of you own me and it is foolish to behave this way.

Look, I'm telling you both New Art Examiners can go to hell. Neither publication has a future, just a past that no one can seem to reconcile. But in person, I'll buy the beer. Cheers,

Bruce

(Editor: Our future is secure. 14,000 unique visitors a month, 600 comments, international advertisers and a growing number of intelligent, writers. But that's what happens when Derek Guthrie is at the helm.)

Editor's comment:

## Chicago Ethics, without beer.

In the last issue we carried a full page advert from Rona Hoffman Gallery in Chicago. It is a sad indictment on the gallery that they asked to pull the advert two days after we had printed because we were not the 'Chicago New Art Examiner'. When we explained what the cabal had done and that there was, and only ever will be, one New Art Examiner, they said 'the situation is complicated.' They have refused to pay us the \$500 they owe. This obviously has more to do with personal dislikes than professional stature.

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## **EDITORIAL**

Cages, prisons and walls are odd themes for an editorial. Each possesses subtle differences in meaning and while many innocent people are behind bars, there are many more in the wide world who have made their own "big houses." The "big house" is hood (ghetto) slang for prison.

In the visual arts conformity and exclusion play important roles within academia as adjuncts who must have at least an MFA to teach part-time. Lucky grads who get the temp positions juggle travel from one part of the country to another to work for a year or more without possibility of tenure. Tuition has skyrocketed since the 80's, leaving students tied to government loans, a ludicrous source of income for the federal government and a huge weight to carry for students. Where does all the money go? Art Academia once a bastion of authority where Art was judged and produced in relative comfort, where theories and fashionable modes of criticism captivate students ready to believe. Self-made cages or ones imposed by society often are unconsciously absorbed by citizens; they bind human thinking processes to thoughts that constrict creativity. Our society gives us culture miasma, an oppressive atmosphere to pursue transactional rather than relational exchange between each other.

A recent exhibition at the Beyeler Foundation in Basel Switzerland highlighting the work of Giacometti and Bacon, who led the modernist tradition, delivers unsettling, deeply emotional questions about relationship in modernity. Both artists face what happens or doesn't in relationship. Here is a look at figural painting and sculpture within a chained and automatic existence. In several of Bacon's paintings a metal bar encircles the dais where sexual performance as violence consumes. What looks like a metal cage surrounds the stage Inside these bars is a circus of darkness. Bacon had no reservations about revealing his sexual struggle between walls for connection in human relationship. Giacometti's sculpture walks uncaged and imprisoned within. The existential variety of experience leaves a residue of doubt about modernity as gouges, cuts and cages surround figures who move as automatons in opposition to the silent screams of Bacon's faceless nightmares in the bed. Conformity is the cage for Giacometti, shaped in bronze as a walking man; a robot in action, For Bacon prison is a tortured mental addiction.

Good Art has the power to rattle the mental cages of conformity.

Art must grow beyond parameters of the Academy, outside museum norms and auction house shams to include voices of continued on page 36



SPEAKEASY **FEATURE** 

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#### **QUOTE** of the Month:

Kahlo and Rivera were, perhaps, Mexico's first performance artists, and their casa-estudio was their very own gallery.

Valeria Luiselli The Guardian 11.06.2018

# Speakeasy Ken Turner

Each issue the New Art Examiner will invite a wellknown, or not-so-well-known, art world personality to write a speakeasy essay on a topic of interest



The cod often casts an eye on our behaviour with our propensity to take paths that lead to misery, both politically and aesthetically. So, in this instance, I feel that it's my duty to let the cod speak directly.

"To put it bluntly, how is it that you haven't sorted out the idea of your so-called postmodern period; that all started way back in the 1960's. Also, there is this rather annoying element of the 'enlightenment' as a way of thinking, that pervaded the modern movement, that, as Baudelaire put it, 'Modernity is to develop objective science, universal morality and autonomous art according to their *inner logic'*. That kind of thinking was in the 19th century, a move towards the emancipation and the enrichment of life. In art you called it progress through the metanarrative. All that appears to have been ditched. You're floundering in a mess of pastiche and kitsch in the arts in this present day.

It's time you saw that time and space have altered through compression of both. Space and time in art have become something different to the modern idea. You humans have not risen to the challenge completely. If the modern was drawn to the idea of reason through the enlightenment, where did it leave the freedom of the artist? Globalization, too, has to question the idea of freedom of the artist. What is freedom? Is it possible? If I come back again to look at what you humans are doing to resolve these important issues and you have not countered them intelligently I will have to do some more thinking."

I have to listen to my dear old friend or the seas will get even more turbulent. So, my next move, just in case Cod of Codswallop might break the silence, is to set up a collaboration connecting Codswallop with Falmouth University. This event is a performance of dancers, performance artists, a musician, two narrators and two surveillance cameras with projections, with drawings on the ground. The artists will examine postmodern ideas

in relationship with the enlightenment and the state of the arts today. They will form a microcosm of the world as it is. Trapped as we are in a cash flow of corrupted economics, cultural mimicry and a circulatory set of ideas brought about by the stench of reason and

I don't want to be here. The title of the performance signifies the desperation of the artist and their protest. I don't want to be here trapped in networks of control where values have no meaning except in whirling systems of profit and loss, greed, and exploitation. But as the performance indicates, we fight. We fight ideas of cause and effect, we fight for chaos and imagination against reason. We fight the border guards and heed the voices of the narration as they voice the adventure of not knowing. Not knowing where action will take us, or what kind of reality we will create, is our condition. We explore the realities of culture today to arrive at the 'Reality of the Trap'. We are sleepwalking into an abyss of our own making. What the Cod in Codswallop is saying is that artists have a duty and a responsibility to actively present the predicament not only of the cultural environment but also of our minds. The media slides like worms into innate values of human vitality. My material is in paint and performance, nevertheless I need to speak because I don't want to be here. The trap as a real place, the border guards are real, the surveillance cameras are real. We fight in the name of art through art. Time and space is still the province of the artist. Today the compression of both point to confusion. The need is to challenge the idea of a single and objective sense of time and space against which we can measure the diversity of human conceptions and perceptions.

Ken turner was one of the founders of Performance Art in London in the 60s and is a well-respected thinker and writer. He lives and works in St Ives.

**FEATURE** NANCY NESVET

## Frida Kahlo Self Made Feminist

Nancy Nesvet

The heroine of women painters, who championed the use of folk symbols to illustrate and elucidate self, surrealist painter, and merger of social realism and confrontational renaissance portraiture, is highly relevant to the present art scene. In painted self-portraits she surrounds her image with symbols of Mexican folklore and culture as in My Grandparents, My Parents and Me (1936), to exorcize her self and announce her heritage. She painted to self-treat the emotional and physical pain she endured throughout her life. Her body, once encased in plaster, held together with steel, replacing a natural with an artificial leg crossing the boundary between cyborg and woman, explored technology's impact on the human.

Kahlo painted her artificial leg and chest cast, adding creativity and fashion to medical necessities, bringing art to science and technology. She created a fashionable appendage and showed ways technology affects our lives and bodies, bringing humanism to our mechanistic society.

She studied Jewish authors and themes, focusing on studies of persecution including Alfonso Toros', met Chagall in Mexico in 1942, undoubtedly finding his surrealist folk images akin to hers, and studied and portrayed Mexican folk symbols intensely. She reconciled her Communism with an intense focus on the self and her mother's Catholicism and Diego Rivera's atheism by using the symbols and culture of Mexico in her art. She devised her own language, using symbol, sign and mark to found a feminist, Mexican language.

Guillermo Kahlo, a German Lutheran, whose first marriage produced two daughters, both sent to convent school, married Matilde Calderon y Gonzalez, daughter of a Spanish general and Michoacan. They became the parents of Magdalena Carmen Freida Kahlo on July 6, 1907. She joined two older sisters, with one to come after her. Her father, a professional photographer so excelled professionally that the Mexican government chose him to document colonial architecture in Mexico. His favorite child, Frieda accompanied him on his travels.

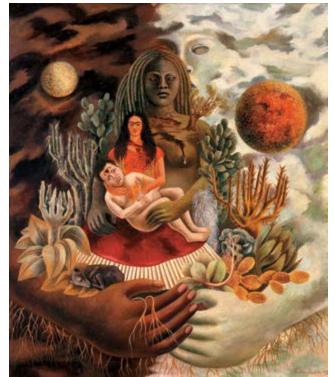
At the age of six, Frieda was hospitalized, allegedly with polio though no medical records document that illness, and it might also have been white tumor, with



Frida and Diego Rivera

resultant damage to her right leg. Home from the hospital, she was enrolled in a German elementary school, Colegio Aleman, where she was sexually abused, later earning a place at the National Preparatory School. There she excelled at her studies in botany, medicine and social sciences and began a relationship with Alexandro Gomez Arias, a member of the Cachuchas Student Group, devoted to Socialist-Nationalist ideas and literature

Acknowledging her Mexican heritage, thereby rejecting her father's German heredity in favor of Alexandro's identity and politics, Kahlo changed her name's spelling to the Mexican Frida, her birthdate to 1910, the year of Mexico's post-Revolution, and the day to 7 to reflect the deer in Aztec codex Vaticanus, whose number 7 also symbolizes the right foot. Oddly, she consequently made her birthdate 7/7, the date of the tube/bus bombing in London, that injured and killed so



The Love Embrace of the Universe, the Earth (Mexico), Me, Diego, and Señor Xolotl, Frida Kahlo, 1949 (c) The Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection of 20th Century Mexican Art and The Vergel Collection



Il suicidio di Dorothy Hale 1938 © Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust

many.

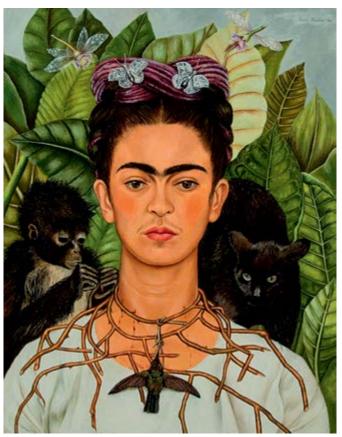
In 1925, the wooden bus Frida and Alexandro rode home from school was struck by an electric tram. Several people were killed and Frida suffered extensive lifethreatening injuries. Her pelvis splintered, her spinal column shattered, her leg broke in twenty-two places and a steel handrail pierced her pelvis exiting through her vagina. The accident proved devastating to her body, resulting in several operations, and an inability to carry a child. Her body image, a stunted right leg, damage from the accident and physical pain led to loss of body confidence destroying her ego, causing her to question her identity and form her own new self-image. Recuperating in the hospital, her mother gave her an easel and paints to occupy her. Her physical damage, long hospital stay and shunning by her peers fed her art in coming years. Her artwork; broken bodies held with arterial threads; spines exposed to resemble Greek columns, bodies in hospital beds mirror her suffering and remaking of body and identity.

In 1928, Diego Rivera painted the Creation mural in the ampitheatre of the National Preparatory School. Frida, admiring his work, wanted to meet him. A fellow member of the Young Communist League, Tina Mendotti, Antonio Mella's lover introduced Kahlo to

Rivera. Rivera was impressed by her artwork and encouraged her, maybe also because, although married, he liked the Frida he saw. In 1929, Rivera, at forty-three years old married twenty-two year old Frida Kahlo, his third wife. Already seriously exploring Mexican iconography and folktales, access to Rivera's collection of pre-Hispanic sculpture and artifacts and identifying with him led Frida to embrace and paint her Mexican identity.

As the Nazis advanced in Europe, her mother and Frida were threatened. This threat turned her work from self to family, reflected in My Grandparents and Me (1936). Although it has been written that her father was a nonpracticing Jew, of Hungarian Jewish roots, his family was Lutheran and German for several generations. She was friends with eminent Jews including Chagall and Trotsky.

However, the mechanized army overtaking the world cannot have escaped the notice of a young woman whose body had been ruined by a steel wedge going through it from an electric tram. The steel war machines overtaking the world must have reminded her of the steel she now carried in her body and the steel that had damaged her. That same steel of the conquistadores damaged her Mexican/Aztec civilization making the Mexicanness of her mother a reaction to this terrorism and an alluring **FEATURE** NANCY NESVET



Autoritratto 1940 © Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust,



Secc. III a.C./ II (Periodo Preclassico Tardo) Museo delle Culture

alternative.

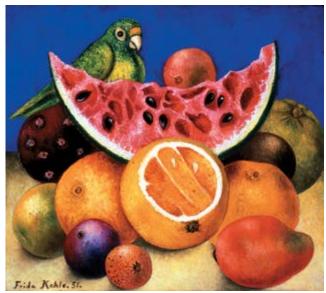
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Kahlo's life and work is important in the annals of feminist art history, teaching all women that we can make our own identity, that bodily image need not conform to prescribed norms, and that visual art need not reflect the idealized woman often portrayed by western male artists. Her appropriation of Aztec and Mexican Indian symbols formed her identity and produced a guide for those of various ethnic groups to be proud of their heritage and to pursue their own identification. From hereon she would use Aztec and Mexican Indian symbols to augment her self and family portraiture, and to illustrate her philosophical and sociological ideals.

Identifying with the painted, mutilated figurines in Rivera's collection, with their legs or heads chopped off, she painted The Four Inhabitants of Mexico City (1938), California private collection) and the now lost *The* Wounded Table. (1940) In The Four Inhabitants of Mexico City, Judas, a straw horseman on a straw horse, a skeleton, a clay figure, visibly pregnant and young Frida, sit on the ground. Clearly, the straw horseman only passes by, threatened by fire engulfing a building on the upper right of the market square. These are all threatened

figures, watched by Frida, in a Mexican zocalo, usually a scene of music and enjoyment. She fuses European figures with pre-Hispanic symbols to paint a work where the visibly pre-Hispanic straw horseman, threatened, stops before he is engulfed by fire. The metaphor is clear; the two sides of Frida Kahlo's cultural synthesis evident. The skeleton presents the alternative to life, the pregnant clay figure's glued-on head, clearly askance, draws a parallel to Kahlo's aborted first pregnancy, which her broken body could not support. She, like the horseman chose life over possible death. The Judas figure is also one of exoneration. Surrounded by cords to detonate fireworks, this Mexican Judas chases away evil and bad memories ridding Mexico of corrupt government figures. In the Wounded Table, layers of paint incorporate Mexican and Catholic signs, serving to bury (thus the skeleton) Kahlo's bad memories and exonerate her for the sins that she might have believed caused her physical injuries and subsequent need to abort.

She greatly wanted to bear Rivera's child, but regretted that she could not, in her physical state, having suffered miscarriage. Diego and Kahlo read Luther Burbank's work on selective breeding, considering whether she should bear a child with her history (father's epilepsy),



Natura morta con pappagallo e frutta 1951 © Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust,



Secc. III a.C./ IV (Periodo Preclassico Tardo), Museo delle Culture

with Kahlo later painting, Portrait of Luther Burbank in 1931. Holding a philodendron variety, monstera, he looks like a Germanic monster, legs covered by a tree trunk ending in roots standing on a skeleton, recalling Day of the Dead icononography.

Self-Portrait on the Border Line Between Mexico and the United States, 1932, carries the symbols of Mexico fallen in the sand; pyramids, clay figurines and poisonous plants including the pasque flower used to induce abortion. Factories and machines of the US with flag overhead rise behind her. Though devoid of people, the US side provides hope, activity and modernization absent from the sand and ancient artifacts of Mexico. Technology energizes the US side, but natural sources remain in Mexico. This is the divide of her life, medicine and its cures and advances versus the magic of Mexican culture; steel versus skin and human organs; humanity versus technology; Communism versus US style democracy. She traversed the border between old and new, north and south, ancient and modern. In the US from 1929-32, she exhibited with Julian Levy's gallery, as a surrealist with others who claimed this genre. Although she denied the label, her coded references to creation, and its faults link her to surrealism.

Memory or The Heart, (1937) shows Kahlo's European school clothes, Tehuana dress and the rail (from her accident) piercing her heart, fallen to the ground. She stands between masculine earth and feminine flowing water, negotiating gender. Two Nudes in a Forest or My Nurse and I or the Earth Itself (1939) begs us to decide who the two women portrayed are. Does this depict a lesbian

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affair or some other relationship? Providing alternate names, she may have alluded to her confused sexual identity and fear of announcing or acknowledging it. Frida Kahlo announced in her diary in 1932, the year of her miscarriage and her mother's death that she gave birth to herself, knowing she will only mother herself, illustrating it in My Birth (1932). As she created herself, women worldwide are seeking to do the same today. The issues we face today are those addressed by Kahlo.

In April 1938, Andre Breton joined Trotsky, Rivera and Kahlo lecturing at the Universidad de Mexico City. Insisting on art independent of governmental authority in his Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art, signed by Rivera and Kahlo, Breton rejected Trotsky's view that DeSade instigated the liberation movement. By 1941, Trotsky had been assassinated, Frida had returned from the US and remarried Rivera (1935), pursuing a platonic relationship with him. Her spine was successfully fused, supported by a metal rod, but exorbitant pain caused her drinking and depression.

In The Wounded Table, (1940), perhaps her most biographical painting, the table with four human legs contains all the signs and symbols of a Last Supper for Frida: the table, bleeding from cracks in the wood surface, the deer, looking away, the skeleton again, Judas, this time dressed in Rivera's clothes, to mark his recent infidelity, the pre-Hispanic clay figure attached to a cuff on Frida's arm, as if feeding her blood and her sister Christina's and Diego's children, Antonio and Isolda. Frida presides over all in Jesus' place. Her extensive use of the monkey symbol, and adoption of a monkey into her



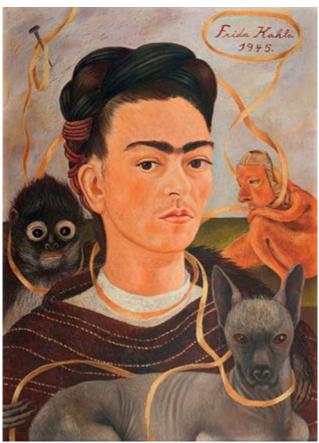
FEATURE NANCY NESVET



c A cotton huipil with machine-embroidered chain stitch, which can be seen in the V&A's Making Herself Up exhibition. Photograph: Diego Riviera and Frida Kahlo archives

house, might refer to the medieval convention of the monkey warning of the danger inherent in too much love, wherein the father monkey squeezes its offspring to death when carrying it. This so-called monkey love could well be the impetus for guilt in her later paintings, but is also a symbol of sexuality and licentiousness. Whether real or imagined, the monkey and the red strings, which like blood vessels bind her to the monkey, refer to those who love too strongly.

Wings and airplanes serve are recurring motifs in Kahlo's paintings, perhaps reminiscent of the Lilith myth: Adam and Lilith were God's first human creations, but when Adam wanted Lilith sexually, she refused and called on God to help her. God gave her wings to fly away and created Eve in her stead. In her earliest *Self Portrait: Time Flies*, (1929) an airplane overhead suggests the young girl's ability to fly away. In *Lucha Maria* (Fight Maria, 1942), the little girl is encouraged to fight rather than accept her situation. The face in the background cloud resembles her father, as two sun medallions, used in a ring Kahlo wore, Aztec symbols for the male/female union, juxtapose her two worlds. In *They Asked for Planes But Were Given Straw Wings*, (1938) a young girl in Tehuana clothes foregrounds an airplane, clearly



Self Portrait 1945

illustrating her desire to fly away, but only straw wings appear. Red ties, like umbilical cords, hold her to the land of Mexico, symbolized by two pyramids in the background.

As Mexico's economic health improved, Kahlo's began failing. In *Self Portrait with Bonito*, (1941) painted after her return to Mexico following the death of her father, the monkey is absent, replaced with a parrot on her shoulder. The parrot, native to Latin America and colorful, is included in this painting with caterpillars and butterflies, acknowledging her maturation. Her favorite ring, worn on her finger in *Me and My Parrots* (1941) displays the lingam, denoting male power within the yoni, the female circle. She is finally free to love Rivera, although their remarriage stipulates platonic love, resulting in *The Self-Portrait as a Tehuana* (1943) and the double portrait, *Diego in my Thoughts, Diego and Frida* (1944).

In incredible pain, thinking about the end of her life, *The Mask* (1945) shows Kahlo with the red Malinch mask, of Mexican lore attributed to Malinche, Cortes' mistress who had sex with Cortes and so brought death to the Aztecs. As we observe tears in Frida's eyes behind the mask, we know that the sexual, promiscuous image is a



Memory of the Heart, 1937 Private collection.

mask. During the platonic stage of love she now endures with Rivera, painting *The Wounded Deer* (1946), the animal Frida associates with lives in a green, pastoral forest, at peace with nature. The poem accompanying the painting indicates her desire to reincarnate as a deer.

By 1946-7, Kahlo was exploring the Buddhist concept, Karma. New bodies emerge from piles of bodies and heads, but she acknowledges her abandonment of Buddhism with *Ruin* (1947), with cracks in Buddha's head and the gravestone inscribed *Ruin/Bird/House/Love Nest All in Vain!* At this time, Rivera abandoned atheism after criticism of his mural at Mexico City's Hotel Del Prado following objections to his depiction of Mexico's history and the painted note, "Dios No Existe", (God Does Not Exist) held by a liberal Mexican reformer. Frida's catalogue essay for the mural calls Rivera strong and amazing.

Shortly after, Kahlo endured a year in a hospital, painting again in 1951 a portrait of her father from a photograph as a young photographer and *Self Portrait with the portrait of Dr. Farill*, the doctor looking away from her. In March of 1953, her friend and fellow artist, Chabela committed suicide. Frida, on Demerol and alcohol badly missed her, and again embraced Marxism,



The Two Fridas 1939 Museo de Arte Moderno Conaculta INBA Mexico

denouncing Trotsky and condemning her paintings as not sufficiently socially relevant. She turned from individualistic portrayals of those dear to and condemned by her to consideration of the greater, impersonal society, with her final paintings portraying Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. Her last unfinished painting features pink genitalia on a plate surrounded by Marxist-Leninist heroes. Neither politics, nor philosophy nor sensuality would save her or society. She gave up, with no desire for incarnation in any form, with her last written words, "I hope never to return", not in any form, not as prescribed by Buddhism or Mexican folklore, but finally, ascending, without even wings to nothingness.

Her life and work, of course, lives on. That is the wonderful thing about art: her symbols, her history, her wishes and thoughts, fears and philosophies, family and friends live on though her physical, damaged body is no more. She truly is a mother of feminist art, deriving her cultural identity, expressed in her paintings and surroundings from her mother and her mother's heritage, and making it clear that she, through art, could form her own self.

The present exhibition, opened June 16 at the Victoria and Albert Museum, in London, Making Her Self Up, corroborates her compilation of her cultural and personal identity. Showing the painted prosthetic leg and boot, the painted chest cast, her dresses, skirts and blouses, makeup, self-portraits and photographs of Kahlo and friends and family, this exhibition of artifacts from her residence in Mexico City, the Blue House, shows how Frida Kahlo made her self up.

**FEATURE** LIVIANA MARTIN

## The Pains of Young Frida

From the Casa Azul in Mexico City, where the artist Frida Kahlo lived for many years with her husband Diego Rivera, new documents have recently emerged that had been hidden away for decades in cases and trunks.

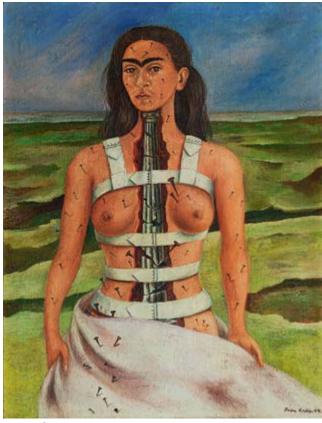
The discovery of this archive material sheds new light on the painter and has inspired, among other things, the exhibition, "Frida Kahlo - Beyond the Myth", at the MUDEC, in Milan until 3rd June 2018.

Over 100 paintings, photos, drawings, letters and everyday objects (divided into 4 categories: the woman, the earth, politics and pain) are on display, to dispel the myth of Frida as a pop icon, now so closely associated with the artist, and reveal her extraordinary technical skill, innovation and inherently revolutionary nature of her painting in which she anticipated styles and trends in contemporary art.

"There have been two grave accidents in my life, one in which a streetcar knocked me down ... the other accident is Diego". At 17, the artist was crushed in an accident between the bus on which she was traveling and a streetcar; the consequences were devastating. She had to have at least thirty operations that left her with permanent scars and in pain for the rest of her life. At the age of 22 she married Diego Rivera, one of the most famous Mexican muralists, bearing his many infidelities but always remaining tied to him.

Passion, pain, and Mexicanness are the elements of her art. Frida loved her land, a Mexico recovering from a bloody revolution, and like other intellectuals she enthusiastically dedicated herself to the reconstruction of the nation, joining the ranks of the communist party. But, while Rivera painted large frescoes that have the struggle and history of the Mexican people as their theme, Frida created small intimate paintings in which she is often portrayed along with the many dogs, monkeys and deer from the garden of the Casa Azul. This does not make her art less political: her own body becomes a manifesto of protest, anticipating the performative actions of contemporary artists. Her pain, intimate and so personal, is broadcast as a cry that reflects the suffering of the humanity. Her images, powerful and disturbing, create a sense of unease and anxiety in the viewer, who comes to face their own fears.

Reflecting colors, smells, contrasts of her land, her painting is alive, intense, oscillating between beauty and macabre, sacred and perverse, life and death. Privileging the self-portrait to prove her presence in the world, she painted as if she were to create a diary of images in which



La colonna spezzata 1944 (© Foto Erik Meza / Xavier Otaola - © Archivo Museo Dolores Olmedo)



Bimba tehuacana, Lucha María (Sole e luna) 1942 (© Rafael Doniz)

to record her obsessions. The "exposed" heart that appears in many of her paintings, together with the fetuses of her abortions, the scars on her body, the tears and the orthopedic appliances she used, seem to be a reference to sacred images or ex votos left by the faithful in churches after a grace is received.

The other dominant theme is Diego, portrayed repeatedly, always present in her mind. Just as the bodies are broken, shrunk or enlarged in an abnormal way, so "nature assumes geometric and skeletal cadences, marking the sense of a separateness and not of a reconciliation, according to the Baroque taste of the Mexican Hispanic tradition" (Achille Bonito Oliva).

The human figure stands on backgrounds populated

with dualistic symbols: suns next to moons, luxuriant vegetation in contrast with rough terrains and parched plains, empty landscapes or ones filled with animals or plants detailed in extreme minuteness.

"I hope the end is joyful - and I hope never to come back": at age 47 Frida found the way to the end. Officially, she died of pulmonary embolism, most likely due to a voluntary overdose of a painkiller.

Today the artist is rightly re-evaluated for her work, beyond the legend and her dramatic life.

> Liviana Martin Milan

## Dreaming with the Ancestors. Mexican Archaeology in Frida Kahlo's Art and Life

In the collateral exhibition "The dream of the surrounded by. In the self-portrait "The Wounded Deer" Ancestors" at the MUDEC - Museo delle Culture in Milan the artistic imagination of Frida Kahlo is revived through sculptures, moulded figurines and ceramics from the pre-Columbian civilization of Mexico. In search of her roots and the roots of her art in the Mesoamerican indigenous culture, the artist revived themes, myths and beliefs from that civilization in her painting. She is considered a part of the making of the modern, independent Mexico, and a symbol of the struggle to oppose the interference of foreign powers.

Frida dressed in the traditional garments and jewellery of the native communities, as appears from the photographs displayed and her self-portraits. In this way, she demonstrated not only her sense of coming from Mexican origins, but also her solidarity with the local populations who knew how to make exquisite handicrafts.

In the Casa Azul in Mexico City, where Frida and Diego Rivera lived from 1941, there was a sort of "Aztec pyramid", designed to gather the couple's pre-Columbian collections. Moreover, to host the almost 60,000 pre-Columbian artefacts that they owned, Rivera and Frida planned a museum that they called Anahuacalli, "the house of idols".

In addition to the artefacts, considered in their antiquarian and aesthetic value, other essential elements of Aztec culture influenced Frida's painting. In many paintings there were bleeding hearts, torn bodies, divinities appearing in the form of animals, such as a plumed serpent, monkeys and xolotl dogs that Frida was Frida paints herself with a deer's body, pierced by numerous arrows, memories of devastating operations



Messico (Stato di Guerrero o Stato del Messico)

that caused acute suffering and, probably, a reference to nahuatlism. According to this concept, every human being possessed one or more alter egos that were expressed in the form of an animal.

In the painting "My Nurse and I", Frida paints herself being breastfed by a pre-Columbian wet-nurse, who has the face of a funerary image of a nursing mother, which was part of the artist's collection. Along with milk, Frida sucks the pre-Columbian ancestral culture.

As a further example of her desire to belong to the

Aztec culture, for a certain period she signs her paintings with the name "Xochitl", which in the Nahuatl language (the Aztec language) means "the flower of life", with reference to the Aztec divinity protector of flowers and

The Aztec roots are entrenched in the story of Frida, roots that return to her works as a recurring motif, a connection with the earth and with her ancestors.

> Liviana Martin Milan

## Interview

Circe Henestrosa, co-curator of London's Victoria & Albert's exhibition 'Making Herself Up' talks to our European editor, Daniel Nanavati on 13th June 2018

**DN:** I would like to talk about her influences. Now we can't differentiate her from Mexico obviously, but do you see a lot of Freud coming through from her surrealist idea? Breton said she was a natural surrealist.

**CH:** Yes, her surrealism ... she kind of didn't align with the idea because she didn't feel she was surrealist because she said she would paint her own reality, you know like there are two....two aspects that will define your identity and ... so she had polio at the age of six ... Leaving her right leg considerably shorter than her left leg - you can see some of her shoes in the exhibition.

DN: Yes

**CH:** She describes how she used to wear 3 to 4 socks to level the legs and then ... she started wearing long skirts (© Foto Erik Meza / Xavier Otaola - © Archivo Museo Dolores Imedo) to hide the leg. Later on she has the almost fatal accident at the age of 18 when she is travelling in a bus and that she had a crash which she had her pelvic bone ... pelvic area perforated really by a metal bar and ... er ... in this she had to spend a lot of time ...um... in bed recovering and this is the beginning of the career of an amazing artist but also the beginning of the deterioration of her body. And ... in going back to your question I mean ... her mother set up like a mirror in the canopy of her bed for her to look at herself so when she said I don't think I'm surrealist because I paint my own reality. She was the subject she spent most time with. I mean she spent a lot of time alone; that's why she also makes many self portraits, as she was looking at herself all the time

**DN:** Yes. This exhibition as it states, it is the first time



La mia nutrice e io. 1937.

all these objects of her life are being shown outside Mexico. What is the relationship or is there a difference between fashion and art for her?

**CH:** Well for her I think she put both of them together, definitely. I think these dresses ... the way she dressed up and the way she created this hybrid persona helped her to deal with her very turbulent marriage,

**DN:** ... and ...

**CH:** With her political beliefs, ... you know with her mixed heritage and with her disabilities which she also did through art and dress.

**DN:** Amos you want to ask the lady a question

**AJ:** This is a question about the exhibition. What's the relationship with the music

**CH:** The music?

**AJ:** Is it ...

**CH:** No; no; no; it's just background.

DN: Ambience -

**CH:** Yes. We didn't design; the design was...was done by Tom Scott who is one of the young, up-and-coming stage designers from theatre, and when we started this project I spoke to my co-curator Claire Wilcox about, you know, the possibility of us engaging someone from theatre because they wanted a very different show to the one we did in Mexico. This show ... the first show in Mexico ... was designed by Judith Clark who is also a very important architect and fashion creator, and here I said well, if we want something different, let's create this kind of different ambience that is more theatrical. So, it was challenging and it was really our collaboration with designers that was amazing.

**DN:** I'm going ask you a terrible question. The show in Carlos Phillips. They Mexico in the exhibition here, do you have a preferences ... a feeling that one is better than the other rather equally as good?

**CH:** Well I think they are both very different because Appearances can be Deceiving remains like defining her ... to her disabilities; here of course we expand the wardrobe in the story as well because we are incorporating, explaining her mixed heritage; we are explaining more about the influence of the Mexican Revolution. We have the opportunity to show the relationship with her father because Mexico when you go to Blue House, you have all this; there you have all the context of her life in the place where all these objects were discovered, also where she was born, lived and died and then you see the wardrobe, so here we have to contextualise all the story ... in a very evocative manner to explain to UK audiences and we use a lot of archives which my co-curator Claire, she is passionate about photography. I can tell you I learned a lot - really - looking at all these objects with her because she knows her audiences very well and I was working with her on all these archives. I think the collaboration

worked really well. And I love them both; they are really very different.

DN: And do you have another planned soon?

CH: Well, this one will ... this one at the moment is the only time we can take these archives out of the country, so we are very lucky to have it here.

**DN:** These things are quite complex?

CH: It is quite complex; we really had the support of the Director of the Blue House, Hilda Trujillo Soto, and the Chairman of the Diego Rivera-Frida Kahlo Trust, were really instrumental to make this happen here.

DN: I think finally this is quite a difficult question for me as a man to ask, but here we have a woman who's been taken up by the feminist movement; my mother was a feminist, single mother. I just wonder how they managed to square that she put herself second to her husband so much in what she did to let him get away with blue murder.

CH: Well, I mean I

The gift shop kitsch converts art into therapy



Double eye necklace by Sophie Simon £325



Headdress by Philippa Craddock £245



V&A Felt cactus wall hanging 65x40x7.5cm £50.



Green and blue rebozo, Mexico

**FEATURE FEATURE** 



Self-portrait on the Border between Mexico and the United States of America, Frida Kahlo, 1932 (c) Modern Art *International Foundation (Courtesy María and Manuel Reyero)* 

think she has been adopted by the feminist movement, by popular culture ... I think what is important about Frida and the many women that she represents was she was a wife, the victim, the lover, the, you know, bisexual, addict. You know, that's why she speaks to so many people whether you are bisexual or you suffer from romantic conceptions or you have suffered an illness; she speaks to all of us in so many different angles that, you know, I don't think you know at that time I think, as I was telling you, through art and dress she found even then a space in a highly male dominated environment in Mexico by dressing up and creating her own art so she was very unconventional. I'm not sure she really allowed or let Rivera because she had as many lovers, and we want to move on from this idea of the victimisation kind of discourse ...a discourse from the 80s really, because I think today she is so relevant because we want to

celebrate her unconventional ways of being

**DN:** So she was really very much her own woman.

**CH:** She was; she didn't allow her disabilities to define her, and she defined herself in her own terms.

DN: I think we had our 10 minutes; thank you so

**CH:** Thank you; I hope answered the questions

Making Her Self Up is at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London 16th June - 4th November 2018.

## Wings to fly

I would have liked to write this review without knowing so much about Kahlo. she came from a well-off family, popular and involved in the Mexican society of the time, despite the many upheavals of the Revolution. She was the much beloved daughter of a renowned photographer of German descent who, despite her gender and her limitations, introduced her to the arts and mysteries of photography by making her his assistant. She met, married and remarried a much older legendary and physically unattractive Mexican painter. She had one leg shorter than other and had a near fatal tram accident at 25 that left her suffering pain, orthopedic corsets and leg, cut off toe boots, multiple surgeries throughout her life, and became incapable of having children. Her husband mistreated and tormented her and betrayed her with her own sister. She forgave him. She herself had multiple affairs. She made an art of her hair braiding, emphasizing her personality with a mono brow and a mustache to make her sexually ambiguous and a celebrity in a nation that was joining the modern age. She was empathetic to the revolutionary scene and knew Chavela Vargas, Trotsky, Breton and consequently supported the communists in the Spanish Civil War while still enjoying a posh international social life. Her first exhibition in New York was curated by one

of her famous lovers.

I know too much. I am simply not impartial anymore. Was she such a skilled painter as almost everybody thinks? Was she as feminist as many pretend she was? Her paintings are colourful in the tradition of Mexican culture, correctly painted depending on your level of requirement, much inspired by her husband's style and sometimes bizarre and surprising for their surrealistic features so trendy at that time, but not much more. She does not seem to care much about the surrounding world in general. While going through this exhibition I recalled Gala Dalí, another self-made character, though she was overwhelmed by the outstanding genius of

The scenography and lay-out are perfect and the intention mostly didactic. You will learn about a famous woman painter, her Mexican culture and her dramatic story and will come out with some pity in your heart and a smile on your face.

This exhibition in the magnificent Victoria and Albert Museum talks very little about art but a lot about the life of an icon. In the end she did it with or without wings.

Susana Gomez Lain

## Impression of a Boot

Cherry red leather, seventeen holes, mismatched laces (one silk, one cotton) and many decades before Dr the shape of the boot but rather to support the wearer. Marten's became the punk sole of choice.

Broadly, the exhibition retells the history of an artist, who has become an icon, but behind the act of presentation (slightly too much 'ambience' for me) the objects disclosed something profoundly humane.

The boot attracted my attention and that was surely the curators' intent. Brass bells are tied to it. Bells which must have announced her at ten paces if they had chimes, if they did not, then the embroidered Chinese dragons would command ample attention. This, worn in the last year of her life, is a confidant boot.

If it was untiled; you would be forgiven for assuming that that was it. It has a boot stretcher of some kind in it,

but just a boot. Except the stretcher is not there to hold

If I were to title this piece, I would change the emphasis from 'Prosthetic Leg with Leather Boot' to 'Leather Boot with Prosthetic Leg'.

"I am not sick. I am broken, but I am happy as long as I can paint" said Kahlo. This distinction encapsulates what is poignant about the collection. Simultaneously a denial and an acceptance but qualified by a confidence.

Thankfully, few of us will have to endure the physical misfortune that 'broke' Kahlo. If you did, would you face it so boldly? I certainly hope I would.

Amos Jacob

**FEATURE** JANE ALLEN / DEREK GUTHRIE

## The Genius of Pablo Picasso

Jane Allen and Derek Guthrie Chicago Tribune 15th April 1973, written overnight on the news of Picasso's death.

In Picasso the 20th century has lost one of its most cherished symbols of freedom. He proved the exception to every rule, and we thought until a short week ago that he might even elude the law of human mortality. Secluded behind the high walls of his Mediterranean villa, La Californie, he seemed to lead a charmed existence in a universe of his own making.

In the villa time was suspended and old age cancelled. Married to a young wife and surrounded by animals and children, Picasso's appetite for life seemed inexhaustible. Those peaks at the charades and games of La Californie which photographer David Douglas Duncan had given us in his pictorial essay, "The Private World of Pablo Picasso," have an almost demonic quality, so youthful does the aging Picasso appear.

Money had no meaning in that world either, for like King Midas, the maestro turned everything he touched to gold. The modern world paid tribute to his genius in the only way it could – by transferring his signature into a universal currency. At his death Picasso was more wealthy and more famous than any artist who ever lived.

But the quality which made Picasso into such an appealing figure for our age was his gift for the unexpected, for the about-face, for the magical transformation of something into its opposite. The philosophies which dominate the 20th century -Marxism, Darwinism, Freudianism, social anthropology - stress the inexorable march of cause and effect on the feebleness of the individual against his own particular destiny.

Picasso, from the beginning of his career, never left anyone in doubt as to who was in charge of his destiny. Time and time again, just as it seemed that success or age would force him into a mould, he broke out and with a titanic energy turned his face toward the future. At the end of his life, he was almost more myth than man, for his career as a whole became more important than any single work, his life in its constant renewal is symbolic of the creative process itself.

What was the source of Picasso's boundless confidence? For sheer facility with line and composition the world probably has never seen his equal. He could switch with ease from a contour drawing that rivaled Ingres for precision and grace to tumbling cross-hatched Goyaesque fantasies. No medium was beyond his range. He mastered clay, plaster, and metal as easily as paint on



'Head of a Woman (Fernande)'. Pablo Picasso

The history of modern art abounds in talented artists, however, Picasso, the man, transcended his own talent where a lesser man would have been dominated by it. In spite of the adulation which came very early in his life, he was constantly dissatisfied with his work.

A strong element in Picasso's character – his belief in instinct and the moment of truth – surely came from his native Spain. Like the bullfighter he believed the highest art comes from the fusion of violence and grace, and he was constantly testing his mettle to make sure he had

But his belief in art transcended nationality just as it

transcended talent. Perhaps his confidence came from a clear and prophetic view of the artist role in modern society – not to make objects, but to be. He said: "It's not what the artist does that counts but what he is... What forces our interest in Cezanne is Cezanne's anxiety, that's Cezanne's lesson; the torments of Van Gogh – that is the actual drama of the man. The rest is a sham."

Unlike our present-day process-oriented artists, Picasso became the quintessential model of the artistic genius and produced art in prodigious quantities.

Picasso straddled the 20th century like a colossus. His influence was and is, incalculable. But perhaps one should remember that by birth and upbringing he was a 19th-century man. He dominated our era but never belonged.

A worthy successor to his countrymen, Don Quixote, he pitted his independent spirit against the dehumanisation and anonymity of the 20th century and won. That is why, with his death, we feel our own freedom has, in some measure, diminished.



Les Demoiselles D'Avignon 1907

## Landmarks in a Career Untouched by Time

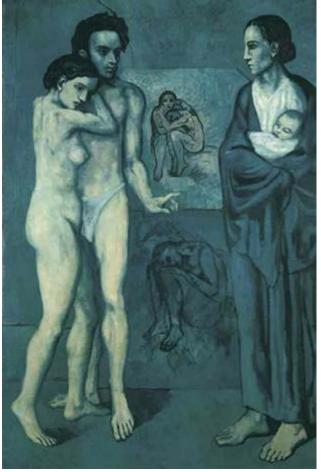
"Life", 1904

In 1901, shortly after his 19th birthday, Pablo Picasso went to Paris for the first time - resolutely turning his back on a promising career as an academic painter. Already he had passed the highest examination of the Royal Spanish Academy and won a prize in a national competition, but staid middle-class subjects did not appeal to him. Restless and brooding himself, he identified with the outcasts of society and found his subjects among the street people of Barcelona and Paris. This painting, "Life," was the most ambitious of his "blue period," which lasted through 1904.

Like many of Picasso's paintings it is an allegory, but its meaning is unclear. A central theme (one which was to occupy the thoughts of Picasso for the rest of his life) is the circular relationship with man to woman and woman to child. Some sources believe that the work's symbolism is based on the fear of unknown parenthood. Whatever the meaning, Picasso's personal involvement with the content of the painting is suggested by a preparatory study in which the central male figure is a self-portrait.

#### "Les Demoiselles D'Avignon", 1907

The passionate, black eyed young Spaniard soon became a magnetic figure in Bohemian Montmartre. By 1907 he had acquired a charismatic reputation among



Life 1904

FEATURE JANE ALLEN / DEREK GUTHRIE



Violin Hanging on the Wall 1913



Mother and Child 1921

dealers and critics; a beautiful mistress, Fernande Olivier; and a host of friends – among them, poet Max Jacob, Guillaume Apollinaire, Andre Salmon, and Gertrude Stein, and painters George Braque and Henri Matisse. But even tho he had already turned out as many canvases

during his blue and rose periods as other painters in a lifetime, Picasso was not content.

In the spring of 1907 he astonished his friends with "Les Demoiselles D'Avignon", a large canvas totally unlike his previous work. The shock to all was unforgettable. Braque compared the painting to a diet of tow and paraffin, and Matisse saw it as an affront to French art. With only one or two exceptions, poets, painters, patrons, and dealers publicly disapproved and privately mourned the "loss to French art."

Picasso originally had planned the painting as a figurative composition concerning the visit of sailors to a brothel. But while he was working saw the collection of African masks in the Trocadero Museum, an experience which changed his whole concept of art. What finally emerged was a savagely direct painting of five women in an ambiguous jagged space, their faces progressively distorted into the semblance of masks. The inconsistencies and distortions of this painting became the basis of the Cubist movement, one of the most important and fundamental developments in art during this century.

#### "Violin Hanging on the Wall," 1913

Picasso and Braque join forces in the exploration of the possibilities in Picasso's revolutionary painting. Foremost among these was a new way to paint not so much what we see, but what we know about objects and people around us. They fragmented portraits and still lifes by taking different views and superimposing one on top of another.

A later aspect of Cubism was the introduction of elements other than paint into the picture, such as the use of sand in this 1913 collage.

#### "Mother and Child," 1921

World War I brought many changes into Picasso's life. His close collaboration with Braque came to an end with the French painter's induction into the army and his entire circle was more or less permanently dispersed. Picasso's loneliness was further increased in 1915 with the death of a new love, Eva.

But in 1916 he found both diversion and solace in the ballet theatre. A move to Rome to design scenery and costumes for John Cocteau's new ballet, "parade", brought Picasso into contact with the elite circle of musicians, artists, and dancers who worked with the Russian ballet of Serge Diaghileff. Among them was a slim elegant dancer, Olga Koklova, with whom Picasso fell in love and whom you married a year later.

Marriage and the birth of a son, Paolo, brought a new mood of serenity and fulfilment to Picasso. Besides continuing his Cubist painting, he embarked on a series of paintings in a monumental neoclassical style. Among the best loved of these is his art institute painting, "Mother and Child", which invokes the ancient associations of the ocean and maternity.

#### "The Three Dancers," 1925

Peace and tranquillity never lasted long in Picasso's household. The young couple took a large apartment on the Rue la Boetie in Paris and began moving in the most select and fashionable Parisian circles. By 1925, however, Picasso had become impatient both with elegant parties and entertainments and with the social ambitions and domestic preoccupations of his wife. He also tired of the ballet. A violent painting, "The Three Dancers" bears witness to his disillusionment. This painting in which the central dancer appears to be almost crucified, announces a period when violence and the disruption of the human form were to be the expression of the impending disaster of another world war.

#### "Guernica," 1937

The year 1936 brought the tragedy the Spanish Civil War, which was to cast a shadow over Picasso for the rest of his life. Unable to accept the rule of Franco's Falangists, he was never again to visit his native country. The painter's emotions were roused to fever pitch when the Basque capital of Guernica was bombed by German planes on market day. Picasso's reaction was to paint, in a white heat, this great mural for the Spanish Republican pavilion in the Paris International exhibition of 1937. Many have called it the greatest painting of the 20th century.

Painted in stark black, gray, and white, it uses a readily understandable symbolism to maximum effect. The anguished scream of the woman, the dead child, the dying still defiant horse, the woman reaching from the window to shed light on the horror are welded together into a powerful criticism of the insanity and terror of war.

#### "The Dove"

(poster for World Peace Congress), 1949

During World War II, Picasso remained in Paris, maintaining a passive but uncompromising attitude which brought the wrath of the collaborators down upon him. By the time of the liberation, he was greatly esteemed by the French left wing resistance. Altho



The Three Dancers 1925



The Dove 1949

previously he had not taken an active part in politics, in August 1944 he declared his adherence to the Communist Party.

The communists did indeed open their arms to Picasso but greeted his art with mixed feelings. In Moscow his name was used for propaganda, but his paintings were never shown. One work, however, became a familiar and



**FEATURE** MIKLOS LEGRADY



Guernica 1937

hopeful symbol to socialists around the world - his dove of peace, which was used on the poster for the World Peace Congress sponsored by the Communist Party.

#### "Baboon and Young," 1951

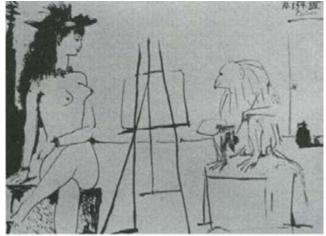
Picasso had surrounded himself with animals. Monkeys, goats, dogs, owls, dogs, parrots, mice, and cats had been his intimate companions. Many of them served as models for his paintings and sculpture. In this bronze baboon, however, Picasso demonstrates his unique ability to transform an object into something quite different. If you look closely, you will see that the monkey head is a toy motorcar.

#### "In the Studio," 1954

Sex was, for Picasso, a fundamental and overruling law of both art and nature. In a series of etchings from the 1930s for example, the "Minotauromachy", he fuses the myth of the bull-man and the artist into one powerful symbol of potency. But with approaching old age, he became more and more aware of the discrepancy between his physical deterioration and his undiminished sexual appetite. In a bitter and sad series of drawings from 1954, when he was in his 70s, he portrays the artist alternately as an obscene old man holding up a mask of youth and as a pet monkey. Thruout the drawings the woman remains the same - beautiful, youthful, serene perhaps a reflection of the series of beautiful young women who became Picasso's companions after his separation from his wife in the 1930s.



Baboon and Young 1951



In the Studio 1954

## A Decade too much of Luis Jacob



Luis Jacob

Some ten years ago, Canadian artist Luis held Jacob exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario. He filled a room with chairs found inside the gallery. Did anyone feel humbled by the skill involved or the years of practice needed for this piece, or the artist's explanation of why this work was so important? No. Instead, some top tier

artists

curators were resentful at having wasted their time coming to this floppy fish, only to told to sit on the floor while Jacob towered over them, pontificating. It was pretentious and insulting, though you may consider those great art.

In an imaginary conversation with the curator, I suggest that from now on, all contemporary artists should only do work gathering chairs into that one room. The curator would likely say no, this is something that only works once. No, it didn't even work once; it didn't work at all, and you should have known that. This pretentious act lacks any redeeming features; the public questions is only, why you show it and why did Luis Jacob do it?

Psychologist Carl G. Jung wrote that like a well trained amanuensis, we must include every interpretation to grasp the larger picture. We know that Postmodernism always denies art, defies tradition, does the opposite of what is expected, and, in fact, aims for the controversially unexpected. For example, postmodernism discards beauty. Archaeology and psychology both insist that beauty is a vital part of art as well as of mental health, thus to deny beauty seems a shocking, revolutionary practice, which will likely makes you neurotic.

Postmodernism equally discards skill, again to thumb its nose at tradition. It now shocks us to learn that Jacob got a humongous fee to bring chairs to that room. Jacob is obviously worth it; compared to the working class janitor who only brings chairs to that room, Jacob does

so with a large (I mean large) check in his pocket as an artist fee. Surely he wouldn't be browsing the feedbag if bringing those chairs weren't the best art that Canadians can do? And there's one more reason to explore, one this artist shares with the curator. Why curate this show at all? Being a curator is no easy life because, as they often tell us, you need to be noticed; today a curator needs to shock just as much as the highly paid artist.

In his BBC article "How modern art became trapped by its urge to shock", Roger Scrutton writes that:

"The fake is a person who has rebuilt himself, with a view to occupying another social position than the one that would be natural to him. Such is Moliére's 'Tartuffe', the religious impostor who takes control of a household through a display of scheming piety... So powerful is the impetus towards the collective fake that it is now rare to be a finalist for the Turner Prize without producing some object or event that shows itself to be art only because nobody would conceivably think it to be so until the critics have said that it is."

In Canada neither artist nor curator wants to be left behind, you don't want to be the person who doesn't get it. The truth is, and the point is, nobody gets it.

Making purposefully incomprehensible art is a typical postmodern practice. Duchamp set the precedent with the Large Glass. Duchamp wanted painting born of ideas and not wholly based on vision. He did not care if his ideas made no sense, nor subscribed to a logical narrative, as long as it made people think and ask questions, as in the Large Glass, the Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors.

Duchamp had intended the Large Glass to be accompanied by a book, in order to prevent purely visual responses to it, but the notes and diagrams include elements not present in the work. Marjorie Perloff in her book 'The Poetics of Indeterminacy: Rimbaud to Cage', suggests "Large Glass is also a critique of the very criticism it inspires, mocking the solemnity of the explicator who is determined to find the key". There was no key; in the Large Glass there's nothing to get, although it's intimated there is hidden meaning.

Duchamp wanted art to use those very ideas that denied his own taste and he got it; the only problem was, ultimately, the work is not that interesting because it's personal taste that gives art its numinous. If we didn't know the Large Glass was by a named artist, we wouldn't stop to look. Duchamp set a precedent making work that **FEATURE FEATURE** 

pretends to meaning when it strategically and purposefully has no meaning. This is where postmodernism was born. When art is no more than clever strategy.

Now let's recap what we've just read. Luis Jacob and the show's curator organized this event to produce something meaningless, because that will be shocking and will put both of them in the spotlight. You can bet your sweet cucumbers that nobody will know what those chairs mean, but they will all assume that it means something, but it purposefully means nothing. And when others don't understand what the artist did, they will assume the artist is more intelligent than they are. ironically it was Duchamp who said that art should be intelligent.

In a 1968 BBC interview with Joan Bakewell, Duchamp claimed the conceptual mantle when he said that until his time, painting was retinal, wholly framed in what you could see, and that he made it intellectual. Today we know at that moment Duchamp stopped painting; he made no paintings anymore after he made painting intellectual.

So far, we have a game where art is made that means nothing so as to seem intelligent. Curators promote it so as to seem intelligent and to get their name in the spotlight. No one considers the ethics of this behavior.

#### Luis Jacob today at TPW.

Ten years on, in Toronto, Luis Jacob's assistant cut pictures out of art books, then framed them and hanged them without further explanation in order to destabilize your viewing conventions. Luis will later destabilize the budget of the A.G.O. or the National Gallery by selling these cut-outs for an obscene sum; curators were already at the opening sniffing the burnt offering ... after all these are pictures cut from art books. Destabilizing is this year's word at the National Gallery, they use it till it becomes superficial even for a cliché. Jacob has a budget for writers to explain why you were destabilized once again (yawn) ... as if 40 years of destabilizing weren't enough ... please ... can't you just give it up ... won't you just let it go? These strategies provide Jacob with an unstable audience who are fed their own ignorance as humble pie, followed by a hefty dinner bill. Are we that ignorant? Have we really sunk to the level that cut out pictures are Canada's highest cultural achievement? When skill is no longer a requirement for artists, everyone reamins a beginner.

Luis is a salaried professor at the Daniels Faculty of



Pictures at an Exhibition 2011 (Tornonto Museum of Art)

Architecture, Landscape, and Design, (he was hired by Charles Stankievech), and he's also a well paid curator at the National Gallery of Canada ... so none would dare question his OCADU lecture fee for an evening titled "What's Your Disruption?" Actually, no more than a bourgeois grasp at street credibility, a real disruption would be horrid unless he was disrupting others. Yet Jacob as a curator should appreciate my article; this is my parrhesia, one hot disruption of Canadian art history right here on the Akimbo cultural platform. But I'm humane, I don't want to hurt his feelings; I didn't disrupt his evening at OCADU or TPW, I didn't rain on his parade, nor did I make decry him at his party. Since Jacob vacuums up artist and speaker fees, we are grateful his own time is not wasted even as he wastes ours.



Luis Jacob Tableaux- Pictures at an Exhibition, 2010, installation comprised of twelve painting

Did Hans Haacke return to map out this art system? To expose a postmodern insider-art trading strategy is a real disruption, an example to learn from and to conjure with, what's good for the goose is good for the gander, chickens come home to roost. When artists and curators call for disruption they admire exactly this level of scholarly activism so any touchiness at my words is obviously misconstrued and surely inappropriate.

If you read anything he's written you'll know that Luis Jacob is a literary genius. I'm astonished how well he weaves ideas, themes, and metaphors in a beautiful tapestry of words and thoughts. His writing puts mine to shame and if he restricted himself to writing books I would buy every one to enjoy late at night by the fireplace. Unfortunately Luis Jacob writes exhibition proposals.

They persuade juries his work is something special when regretfully it is not; it's his writing that's special whereas Jacob's art is juvenilia. As a teacher, theorist, curator, lecturer, networker, he is too busy to be a practicing artist when art is anything you can get away with, and if anyone gets away with it, it's Jacob.

Some believe art is mostly the idea but they're wrong; only a narcissist would ask that when an artist has an idea we should gape in admiration. Art is about work, as in a work of art. Surely if he locked himself in the studio

## Marcel Il Lusoire Frottage

Marcel Il Lusoire Frottage was born in Eastbourne in 1962 to Huguenot parents. He attended a local school where he suffered much persecution due to his dislike of sport and his already burgeoning interest in the Art World which he defined as the journey an art object takes from the artist's studio to the exhibition space. Which was a sophisticated description for a teenager.

He left Eastbourne in 1980 and moved to London where he attended the Chelsea School of Art. He did not actually have a place but he attended anyway. He came to know London night life and spent many a pleasant and heady evening on the embankment, frequently dressed as a woman would be dressed if she had had his taste in fashion. Few do. He attended parties given by artists, writers and poets working in London at the time and was often found out as the majority of them dressed up as better looking women in their own homes.

He first came to the notice of the Art World when he staged a one man exhibition in Trafalgar Square, a forerunner of the now vacant plinth idea with Frottage,

for a year like performance artist Tehching Hsieh, Luis Jacob might produce amazing work, and we're deeply troubled he doesn't have the time, like so many contemporary artists who are also too busy for the required hours of studio practice. It's telling that professional musicians don't have that luxury. Canadian art is post-truth, postmodern, and post mortem ... but technically once you're outed you can't go back into the closet.

This curating is driven by low self-esteem. When pictures are cut from art books it's not a viewing convention that's destabilized but the public's faith in whoever jerks their leash. Just what's wrong with our viewing conventions that a superficial trope is seen as the cure? Conceptual art is about the idea; the idea here turns the tables on an audience expecting sublime art; the idea is to shame them as a gullible public for their old-fashioned expectations. Insulting your audience earns their respect, as do lectures on how important this work would be ... if we but knew what it meant.

Luis belongs to literature; he should write books. Following Lucian Freud's dictum, Luis Jacob should act like a gentleman and leave art alone.

plinth

nude.

question

Miklos Legrady



Shoes with artworks painted on them

frequently asked of the exhibits now seen in the same place and of the entirety Frottage's future output. Indeed, he was never of the Art World but stood outside it as an inquisitor, a detractor, a heckler who sued everyone else's words to create his heckles. He was not a mirror that reflected anything back to, or from nature, in fact, as his personal manservant once said:

'Monsieur Frottage a d'autres choses à faire. Il n'est pas ici a ce moment,' (then he laughed and shrugged his shoulders.)

continued on page 34

FEATURE REVIEWS

## Monet's Tanks or the Beauty of Warfare

The above photo is of the NATO Saber Strike exercises in Poland that took place from May to June 2017. Taking away the tanks it could appear to be a painting by Claude Monet; however, the tanks are there, though camouflaged with foliage in a field of flowers. The blue flowers and green grass and undergrowth in the foreground are represented in soft hues of beige, green and blue with hints of yellow. The delicate blue flowers and plant life have an artistic splendour to them, beautifying the act of war. The composition is simple but elaborate in its exquisite detail of the flowers in the foreground. In the middleground we can see the two imposing armoured tanks in dark grey with linear and circular contours, embellished with bright greenery, giving them a new dimension in sharp contrast to the ethereal and fragile tapestry of flowers in the field they are trampling. A small cloud of grey smoke coming from the second armoured tank is lost in the background of the light grey sky. The dreamy impressionist-like field of flowers is contrasted by the presence of the tanks, giving them a new dimension. The clear limits between land and sky divide the hierarchies of the composition, horizontally organized by the two armoured tanks and the field. There is a photographic symphony that is unforgettable, described in different shades of light and suggests achievement and domination over nature. Photos like this should be widely considered a masterpiece, though perhaps the tanks as a paragon are not well accepted in the middleground due to the psychological intensity of the moment, but a necessary element in an impressionist war photo. Perhaps this kind of photo is not well received yet by the general public, who may have yet to get used to this style.

The second image is from the series of weeping willow trees Claude Monet painted in homage to the fallen French soldiers in the First World War. In the foreground we can see the soft, grassy base surrounding the weeping willow tree and its trunk. In the middleground we have all the leaves of the willow in their green and yellow shades. At the top of the painting the branches are extended like arms, as though calling or invoking someone

In the photo of the armoured tanks we know that the tanks are in fact there to build roads, bridges, rail



FILE PHOTO Poland's army tanks attend the final day of NATO Saber Strike exercises in Orzysz, Poland © Ints Kalnins / Reuters



Monet

networks and other civilian infrastructure to be ready for war. Shouldn't we instead be building for positive reasons, to increase communications, to build new houses, schools, museums and bridges to reach these places, as bridges of communication that open dialogue? The useless beauty of the flowers is contrasted with the merciless killing power of the tanks, of NATO behind the tanks. Isn't a painting (or photo in this case) about a dialogue without words that can communicate an expression, political belief, emotion, perception, or conviction in total silence?

My question here is, if 1.57 trillion dollars were spent globally on weapons in 2016, while this amount is predicted to grow to \$1.67 trillion in 2018 (Jane's Defence Budget's report) and more on civil infrastructure to prepare for wars, what if this money was spent on the arts? What if this money was spent on beautifying our world and not on destroying it and not on killing? Monet and his family moved to London to escape the Franco-Prussian war. Where shall we all escape to if war breaks

out in Europe, Russia, America or Asia? Where are the others in war-torn areas of the world escaping to? Does it make any sense? We don't want a revival of Pete Seeger's "Where have all the flowers gone" for Europe, or for that matter for anywhere else in the world.

Many thanks to the photographer, Ints Kalnins, for

his very beautiful and poetic photo, a reminder that war takes place even in beautiful fields and cities.

Price range of armoured tanks from \$8.58 million

Pendery Weekes

## Virginia

Forest green painted walls are lined by white negative space. The color green is associated with life, harmony, and energy. An explanatory introduction and one thoughtful quote are also painted, but in white. I have an idea of what is to come next.

A line of spotlights trail overhead, illuminating every wall, including the entryway, reminding me of the sun's rays. Eastman and Reda's photographs are traditionally framed in wood and nailed to the walls; Correa's photographs are placed in glass, supported by a metal back, either drilled or nailed.

Each connects to the overarching theme of nature. Reda's archival print photography focuses on natural landscapes, Correa's diasec finish prints hone in on natural colors, lines, and urban spaces, while Eastman's photographic film print create a flow of natural movement of bodies with nature.

Reda sends me traveling to see some of the coldest peninsulas, warmest skies, and rockiest mountains, feeling all the seasons in one.

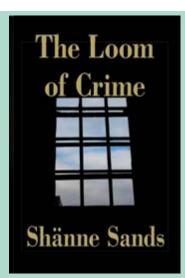
I feel an urge to move as free as each subject in the blurred stills of Eastman's. I become a dancing performance piece of "Natural Dance." I am at play aside a pond of lotuses and bright winged birds; or among lush, green countryside with a large tree on a hill; swaying in rhythm of the breeze.

Correa's last scene, #5 is a fitting finale. A tall, wide building stands in front of the car I ride in, the rain separating the man-made bodies. I peer through the window, while stuck inside, and see the city. The foggy windows have traces of my fingers sliding down the glass racing the raindrops in parallel lines and circles. A bright gaudy yellow light burns - Heaven burning inside me. Heaven is childhood and I find comfort in that.

Prices range from \$255 to \$10,200.

"To the Ends of the Earth" at the Workhouse Arts Center Museum (Lorton, VA) March 10 - May 13.

By Hayley Harris



AN ORTHODOX JEWISH IMMIGRANT FAMILY FROM RUSSIA. A SETTLED JEWISH IMMIGRANT FAMILY OF MARKET VENDORS ORIGINALLY FROM SPAIN. LIVES THAT CONVERGE.

A COUNTRY THAT DOES NOT RECOGNISE THEIR RULES. A SADNESS SO DEEP IT BECOMES A TRAGEDY. A YOUNG MAN IS BRANDED A CRIMINAL FOR TRYING TO FEED HIS PARENTS AND A YOUNG WOMAN FALLS IN A LOVE THAT WILL NEVER BRING HER HAPPINESS.

A BOOK ABOUT WOMEN, PASSION, TRADITION, AND FAMILY. SHÄNNE SANDS BRINGS TO LIFE TWO FAMILIES AND THEIR STRUGGLES WITH LOVE, WAR, INJUSTICE AND CRIME.

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## New York

by Jody B Cutler

#### Life at the Met

While an ambitious attempt to elide culturally and chronologically diverse, popular, scientific, and artistic sculptures of the human body, The Met's "Life Like" overreaches. The show is ironically shapeless, despite sub-thematic organizational scheme. In addition, the several carved and polychromed Renaissance martyrs and slightly creepy Victorian material (such as effigies of organic matter and death masks), while relevant, are overstated and detract from what is most successful in the show; the gathering of postwar art in this vein.

Duane Hanson, looks great with two characteristic, "dressed" works, especially, Housepainter II (1984), placed directly off an elevator, which adds to the intended effect (is there a repair going on?). Playing on classical statuary, viewer space, the race and class divides in "the art world," it now also recalls Fred Wilson's piece, Guarded View (1991), comprised of headless, dark-toned, mannequin-museum guards, installed in roughly the same position for the game-changing Black Male show (1994-95) when this building was the Whitney Museum.

That event resonates here in a section entitled "The Presumption of White," in reference to the European long-held misnomer of Classical monochrome marble statuary (we now know they were mostly painted) of the ancient Mediterraneans, carried through the Renaissance and into the twentieth century. Wilson returns here with take on this institutional racism in, The Mete of the Muse (2004-2007), which juxtaposes casts of appropriated (black) Egyptian and (white) Greek goddess figures. Peers and heritors of Hanson's hyper-realism, interestingly, mostly male artists dominate, as signified by the exhibition title. Most of the contributions by woman artists deal with disfigured, flesh-allusive forms à la Louise Bourgeois, who is featured. The final life-like say goes to Goshka Macuga's startling philosopherautomaton, To The Son of Man who Ate the Scroll (2016), worth seeing—and hearing.

Life-Like: Sculpture, Color, and the Body (1300-Now) The Met Breuer, March 21 - July 22, 2018

#### Power at the MOMA

This sprawling Adrian Piper retrospective offers an eye-catching challenge to visitors through its sometimes demure, sometimes hectoring, text-and-photo and performance art. Sticking with it pays off with a reflective, ethical and political pow.

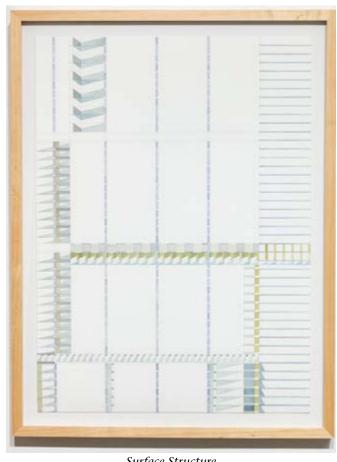
Piper was born in New York in 1948 and went with the counter-cultural flow of figurative psychedelia, changed to a somewhat purist Minimalism and Conceptualism before turning to explicit investigations of race, gender, and social responsibility for which she is best known. A dark-toned black and white photo series of self-portraits, Food for Spirit (1971), wherein while holding the camera barely, her mostly nude body emerges from the background, compels not only in terms of selfpresentation but also her sustained interest in Kant's writings on self-consciousness. Her personal experience with grey-scale in more ways than one is addressed in many works on paper, including the drawing, Self-Portrait Exaggerating My Negroid Features (1981), and fleshed out fully in Cornered (1988), a video piece which highlights the blind-spot racist assumptions of white society when it comes to skin color.

Piper's street performances in gender-bending disguises (mainly 1970s), represented by collages and absurdist adverts placed in the classified section of art journals, harken back to the disruptive art antics of the Situationist International group. Looping footage of her now legendary Funk Lessons dance project (1983-84) at Berkeley, along with a follow-up, three decades later in Berlin, Germany (where she currently resides), even out her confrontational impulse and pun on her intense need to teach. Among other works I would recommend: Vanilla Nightmares (mid-1980s) a ghostly series of charcoals on newsprint that visualize the colonial degradation of Africans; video booth installations that contrast official violence with official news coverage; and a tough take-away poster piece on the 2012 murder of Florida youth, Trayvon Martin

Adrian Piper: A Synthesis of Intuitions, 1965-2016"March 27 - July 22, 2018 Museum of Modern Art, New York (Traveling to the Hammer Museum, UCLA, October 7, 2018 - January 16, 2019)

## Minimalist Respite in Pittsburgh

Scott Turri



Surface Structure

In this, her third solo show, entitled You Will Arrive, at 707 Gallery, April 28 – June 17, Pittsburgh based artist Kara Skylling's focus is on crafting intimately scaled, minimalist works on paper utilizing grid-like pencil designs and compartmentalized muted color. It is apparent that Skylling's carefully conceived, rigidly controlled, underlying designs rely on a systematic approach to create frameworks which strongly allude to circuitry boards, electric breaker boxes, parking garage blueprints, aerial views of urban settings, even zippers. The support for the work is watercolor paper which floats on a solid colored backing paper typically with a one or two inch border and it is framed consistently, either in a natural wood or white frame.

In Surface Structure, 12" x 12" unframed, graphite and water color on paper, like much of her work Skylling relies heavily on the use of negative space. The positive consists of two columns of twenty-three equally spaced light gray green rectangles separated by narrow white lines. One thinner column hugs the right edge of the paper while a wider column is shifted about the same

width as the aforementioned column, to the left of center with the four bottom rectangles of this sequence extending farther to the left. Parts of the spaces between the rectangles are painted with a darker gray green and attached to the wider set of rectangles is a vertical band that runs the length of the piece and is also painted a dark green. The modular design feels like it could be a potential two-dimensional model for a Donald Judd steel stacked wall piece.

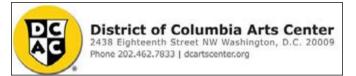
In the triplet Black and White (The Beginning), Black and White (View), Black and White (Something Simple), each of these mixed media works is mounted on a grass green backing. In these three pieces she uses less negative space and a more all-over compositional technique with a limited palette of monochromatic gray. The patterns within the 'grass' surround evoke urban gardens. She makes good use of the door and heating grate on the back wall of the gallery to further reference the built

I have a tendency to prefer the compositions that are more asymmetrical. In some of her larger singular pieces, perhaps because of greater spatial area she feels more willing to step into this less perfect world.

In Skylling's world we enter into a tautly organized, clinically efficient place. A well-kept place, so clean and neat, soft, where unless you really look closely you can't find any human presence, but it is within the details that one can actually see and feel the presence of a steady, gentle hand. One can't help but appreciate the investment of time and acknowledge the prerequisite skilled labor required to produce the work for this exhibition. I would assume that the making of the pieces is a meditative exercise for the artist, but it is also a deeply rewarding experience for the viewer. It is apparent that Skylling has cut her teeth on the lessons of minimalism. Like much of the minimalism that has come before her, she creates a self-contained, self-made world. In many ways, I find it refreshing that a young female artist is making work that references minimalist giants such as Agnes Martin and Donald Judd and doesn't feel the need or desire to grapple with the complexity of social issues that permeate every waking moment in our hyperreal lives. But, on the other hand, I wonder if the work isn't too derivative, relying too much on the nostalgic love of a bygone era. Either way, I enjoy the respite.

**FEATURE REVIEWS** 

## Washington



## Francisco Toledo: Mexico's Psyche

Once again Washington DC's largely insensitive and lax art community has seen an art maestro come and go. Francisco Toledo, hailing and thriving in Oaxaca Mexico, celebrated throughout the world, stirred not a yawn in the Washington DC art scene. He should have.

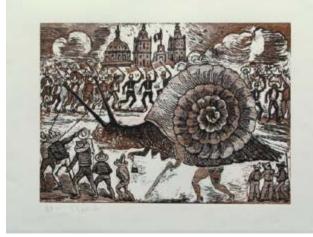
The work of Toledo is primal, pyscho-sexual abundance, sub-conscious disruption and beauty. He works in many media but the American University show was primarily prints. Masterful prints from his local world class print collection, part of his ongoing contribution to the Oaxaca cultural community, are on display. From Durer to Tamayo, these prints offer a consolation to his fellow Oaxacans. Toledo is a genius community artist, selling his prints to support his work at home; whether it is film clubs, educational projects, the Ethnobotanical Garden of Oaxaca, the building of libraries and helping other artists, he is constantly growing his local culture

The life of the Oaxacan environment infuses his imagination, his pre-Columbian realm, politics, mythologies, struggles both personal and social, charge and enliven his imagery. Animated moving subconscious beings "talk" throughout his work. His environment is to his mind as a plant is to soil, a constant interweaving that is both distinct and mysterious. Often uncomfortable and simultaneously indescribable, but you feel it, if you let the message seep in. He often prints his images many times, as they develop. We can see his images evolve. He is a perfectionist. He is riddled in life, lurching, biting, feeling, sentient and dreaming; his work demands you keep your eyes unblinking.

He owes much to the surrealists and Fauvism, and his fellow Mexican modernist. His teachers trained under Diego Rivera and Frieda Kahlo. His accomplishments may be seen, as his "language of confrontational dreamlife brought to bear". A personal language of our insides, the conflicts of our irresolute psyche, our beautiful uncountable feelings, our animus.

Animals play a large part in Toledo's pictorial world. One of his favorites are monkeys. Monkeys are often seen as human to Toledo. His monkeys are partying, having disturbing sex, being hunted from trees; they drink and smoke and blow horns and ramble about, innocent. Sort

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The cow, 1991

of half knowing, half dressed, thrown together, silly, ponderous, funny instinctive, screeching away.

He often positions his characters in hostile relationships. Like his lion tied up by mice or his frog pouncing on an ox or his carnival bear dancing with a masked girl or his turned up ass disemboweled - on its back being howled at on one side by a fox and on the other by a lion. Or a woman with thousands of monkeys lined up behind her, all in line for continuous sex as she smiles. What do these images elicit from us? They are seductively done. Our ire is shaken as a taboo is violated. I think you should partake. The Maya smile. He provides an Oaxaca path not welcomed enough in Washington

We are hijacked in his beauty. Something is within us, and Toledo seizes us. This, to his credit, is hard to explain.

Francisco Toledo struggled with ideas of being a political ideologue as so many of his contemporaries were. His artistry towers above any revolutionary

The director of the Katzen Art Center, Jack Rasmussen, is to be congratulated for having the insight and determination for bringing this show to our community. Not enough people came to see it.

Al jirikowic

Francisco Toledo: Toledo Múltiple, Katzen Art Center American University April 3 - May 27, 2018

## Cornwall

## Middling Balm

Patrick Heron at Tate St.Ives

Patrick Heron's writing on art put the St.Ives artists into public view.

It's a very enjoyable show with captions featuring remarks Patrick Heron wrote about painting, about the need to achieve balance, about the way the edges of a painting are so important as the onlooker's eyes look from them to different points in the composition and back and to and fro.

Some influences from Braque, Rothko, Robert Indiana,. can be seen and Patrick Heron mentions looking at

The early paintings are more figurative with a middle period of more solid coloured shapes that could have been cut from paper like Matisse, and then later looser ones with more space and calmer, lighter colour. I think these are the ones PH began thinking of them as entirely abstract but later realised how influenced he was by flowers in his garden.

The influence of the Patrick Heron sort of art is alive, very much so in St.Ives. Painters like Felicity Marr carry it on, most of the Penwithy art in the Penwith Gallery down the road upholds its aims, but there's so much more now, humour, politics, gender identity, ecology. After the Second World War's carnage I think artists welcomed a refuge in a simpler world of art, art like music, form and colour, a rest from horror. I think our times cannot just keep that going; it's a new time.

However, it's balm for the troubled soul to spend time in this show.

NEW ART EXTRAVAGANZA 🤌

**ART ON TRIAL** 

Acorn Theatre,

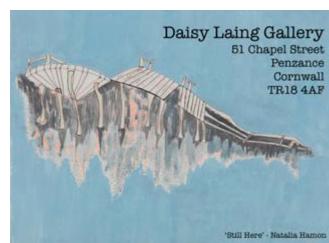
Penzance, Cornwall.

31st January 2019

Book now to ensure your laughter

Thank you Patrick Heron.

Mary Fletcher www.axisweb.org/p/maryfletcher & 'maryfletcher's blog on art













## Chicago

by Spencer Hutchinson

## Howard Finster at Carl Hammer Gallery

The first of the texts to grab my attention at Outsider Artist Howard Finster's current show on display at Carl Hammer Gallery is a white clad angel enveloped in images of flying women in multi-colored dresses titled, "Heaven is for all people.", completed in 1983.

"Heaven is for All People, Jesus makes it plain how to get there. If you don't make it, it is your own fault."

The awkward haphazard style is deliberately sloppy and off kilter, reminiscent of hand-painted signs from the American South. Images of Women having been "set free", fully clothed, free standing, and relieved of the constraints of the rectangular shape that defines a painting's object hood.

"Matthew 12:42 The Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation."

Included in the show is a Cornell box style composed of multiple layers of plexiglass receding into a background, each successive layer painted with trees and houses.

Words such as, "I Love you", "I will be seeing you." and "Time won't wait", are surrounded by text that reads, "In the worlds beyond the light of the sun, where all of man's victory will all be won. Work will be done.

Included in the text is an ad hoc type of way of keeping inventory of his paintings, "The Dove of God's Love" lists an inventory of 1,000 and 854 paintings. "Prepare to meet thy God, Jesus will come again, seek for him, lists an inventory of 2,000 and 143 paintings.

Howard Finster Man of Visions, May 11-June 29, 2018

## Manuel Mathieu, Nobody is Watching,

Haitian Artist Manuel Mathieu, (b. 1986) was raised in an environment infused with both danger and beauty. During the nearly two decades that he stayed in Haiti, he witnessed constant political upheaval in addition to rampant disease, and ongoing natural disasters, while imbibing the rich history of art and independence that is integral to the culture of Haiti. In an atmosphere where life, death, suffering, and great beauty are inseparable, Mathieu learned to wholly embrace the ephemeral with the tangible in life.

Mathieu's visual language, drawing from his own Haitian heritage (he received an MFA from Goldsmith University in London) draws inspiration from Haitian folk art, such as the sculptural work of Jean-Brunel Rocklor, on which Mathieu's *Riviere Froide* paintings are based. He has also been greatly inspired by the Irish Painter Francis Bacon to convey agony, and to turn the grotesque into the sublime.

All of the work in the show feature paintings that have only been painted on the surface of the canvas, not around the edges, reinforcing painting's traditionally two-dimensional presentation (painting as window).

His life-sized canvases engage the body as well as the eye, the muddy, neutral warm tones of the pigments

leave the viewer feeling calmed, in spite of the frenetic energy conveyed on the surface of the canvas. The majority of the pieces, which are more representational than abstract, hearken to other Afro-Caribbean artists, such as Olivier Souffrant and Jean-Michel Basquiat.

While his work veers through different styles, from austere minimalism in works such as 28/11, in works like 'First Steps', to where he treats the canvas as if he were imitating Lucio Fontana, exploring the physicality and permeability of the painting's surface. It is his quasi representational/abstract imagery that is the hallmark of his style. Recognizable objects such as bricks, bodies, faces and piles of debris are possibly references to parts of the world where "nothing ever happens", (at least nothing we can see) in the global south – where terrible crimes are left unreported and people are left behind. In spite of the doom and gloom that these works inspire, one can't help but feel a sense of ease and comfort, as if these paintings are just right; not only for the current political moment, but perhaps for a long time to come.

Manuel Mathieu, Nobody is Watching, Kavi Gupta (835 W. Washington) March 23-June 02, 2018

## Toronto

#### **Extremely Minimal**

There is nothing special about Canadian interdisciplinary artist, Lee Henderson's installation, Known Effects of Lightning on the Body (2014). Nothing particularly remarkable enough for it to be included in the group exhibit "Weight of Light," curated by Darryn Doull as part of his University of Toronto Curatorial Studies MVS-degree requirement. Nothing a to-becurator grad would feel necessary to show now, or first in order of the artworks on display at the school's Art Museum, Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, May 2-26, 2018. No, nothing of concern to academia, institutional thought, or the public.

Just three wooden benches enclosing a copper coveredprojector and projection-screen, flanked by two speakers set on the ground of a red room illuminated by a single mirrored bulb hanging from the ceiling atop. That's it; nothing else. Not even a change in the repetitive sequence the video plays of one Redbird match lighting another and burning until extinguished. No.

This is that life, death and life-after-death thinking you've come to learn about through books, classes and people you believe are better at understanding these sorts of things than yourself. You know those human-experience things like the chemical reaction to start a fire or develop a picture in a darkroom. That metal is a conductor of an electrical current but wood is not. Or what about that lightning strikes before thunder is heard? That is, unless it is made to sound by a struck match, recorded off-camera. Yes! That kind of thinking! The one where the facts are plain, the fiction is the art, and the separation of the two is empathetic, perhaps even predictable; so unlike today. No, there is nothing of importance from that which satisfies in its nature to take charge. Nothing foremost at all.

Weight of Light, May 2-26, 2018,

Natalie Shahinian

#### Resistance is Frozen

For the exhibit, "Architectures of the Body and the Built Environment: Impressions, Sensations and Expressions" at Galerie Pierre Léon Alliance Francaise, Toronto, January 11–February 4, 2017, Canadian sculptor W. Hung includes seven sculptures with heightened physical and metaphorical contrast: using "severe" architectural materials – steel, concrete, marble etc., – alongside expressive, polymer figures. With the differences in structures of forms laid bare, the question that surfaces when exploring the body of work is not the "why," but the "why so much?" To answer this question an examination of Hung's use of complementary elements, space and line, are required.

Empty space is essential to Hung's sculptures: it divides and contains, and the combination, is powerful. Space demonstrates freedom and captivity, in the intersection of which are the ghostly-white figures. On the threshold of continuance or confinement these male forms, in sculptures such as, *Indy Grab* 2016, *Purge Octahedron* 2013, and *Suspended Man* 2011, display their most startling revelation: that the space in which they exist, is not independent of them, but an extension; an exoskeleton. That although man differs from the environment, the "impressions, sensations, and

expressions" presented is to the degree in which the mutual effect of man, and man-made, is accepted. Space becomes supreme in each body's-architectural and human-resistance in acceptance.

The figures in Hung's sculptures resist their stolid surroundings with every last breath before being caste and frozen in time. They run (*Pull* 2012), tumble, (*Purge Octahedron* 2013), and scream (*Suspended Man* 2011) in vain; their struggle surviving in spirit, is at once physical and metaphysical. The outcome is unsettling and heartbreaking, as a futile fight usually is understood as the way of the martyr, poignantly depicted in Aftermath 2011.

But all is not lost. Life courses through where tension is made taut in Hung's use of line. The nylon threads and steel wires in the sculptures connecting the figure to the architectural supports are active and dynamic, for what is tension if not alive?! Shards 2013 takes the concept further by including red thread–like blood traveling through vein between organs animate and inanimate, but all living–only to demonstrate; where there is contrast, life exists; and where there is great contrast, the empathy to coexist.

Natalie Shahinian

FEATURE FRANCES OLIVER

#### continued from page 25

Before the inception of the New Exhibitionist Movement, Frottage made strong statements about his beliefs, although never in person. He had them delivered in a particularly Dadaesque style by his agent, lifelong friend and fellow Huguenot, Salvador Dodo, who was soon, sadly, to no longer be with us

His life became one of mystery punctuated with explosive moments of exhibitionism. Spurious tales of flagellation and dungeons began to do the rounds in the late 90s but Frottage merely withdrew into his own particular cell and refused to be coerced. At least, at first.

His public appearances became less and less frequent until rumours circulated that he had died and been hidden in a drawer by a fellow artist who wanted to paint decaying corpses. But critics doubted this as Frottage didn't befriend painters.

It was his Chinese cook who finally put paid to these pre-emptive obituaries when he said

'Frottage 先生有其他的事情要做'

It was not until his most recent and, some might say, devastating 'Happening' at the New, New Gallery, in St Ives in Cornwall that anyone knew that he was still working. In fact, even after the exhibition closed amid scenes of unparalleled depravity involving fish, a three legged table and two bricks from the council house demolished to make way for a luxury dwelling, no one could, it seems, find Frottage to invite him to speak at the glittering, no expenses spared closing street party.

His own personal, Premier Suite in the basement yielded no clues as it proved to be completely empty apart from a pair of last season's stiletto heels. However, his agent, Salvador Dodo, was on hand to deliver the last word on this, possibly antepenultimate end to an extraordinary and yet, strangely nebulous career.

'Senor Frottage tiene otras cosas que hacer. El no está aquí en este momento.'

Maxine Flaneuse de Cornouaille

## San Francisco

## Machines Can't Cry

Hearing a late famous poet recite his own verses as if he were sitting right next to you, watching marionettes deliver a touching performance with no puppeteer pulling the strings, seeing the beauty of the world with the eyes of a loved one who passed away: three works in the show, each occupying a separate gallery room, deliver these experiences with the help of technology.

The *Poetry Machine*, is a vintage organ whose 122 keys are attached to a motley crew of speakers transmitting Leonard Cohen's voice reading a different poem with each key that is touched. Interacting with the device felt like a séance: a husky-timbred oracle delivered messages that resonated with my emotions. The crisp and enveloping HiFi sound of the recordings made the invisible Cohen' presence so convincing I'll never again read his poems without it resonating in my mind.

Next door, Sad Waltz and the Dancer Who Couldn't Dance, features two robots pulling the strings of puppets: a female dancer performing to a piano piece by Armenian composer Edward Mirzoyan, and the man who plays the instrument. I watched as the device awkwardly threw the dancer to the floor, her arms helplessly entangled in her own strings. Poignant and sorrowful music endowed an otherwise farcical moment.

Finally, a computer-operated slide projector rotates photographs by Bures Miller's late grandfather, mostly sublime North American landscapes documented on his road trip to see a cancer specialist. The careful attention to detail and palpable admiration for the fleeting effects of light and shadow reveal the wisdom of a man who knows his time is running out but chooses not to hurry.

Although these works could not work without technology, I resented the devices, perhaps due to the emotional effects of each piece being too powerful to be produced by machines.

The highest virtue of Cardiff and Bures Miller's works is that they prompted me, ironically through another machine, to call the loved ones who are still around, to order available books of Leonard Cohen's poetry and to look up more music by Edward Mizroyan, all with the help of my IPhone.. At a time when technology has become unavoidable, perhaps the best we can do is, just like Cardiff and Bures Miller, to employ it in ways that make us feel more human.

Elena Platonova

Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller: The Poetry Machine and Other Works continues at Fraenkel Gallery (59 Geary Street, 4th Floor, San Francisco) through July 5th.

# Book Review: 'Shadows in Paradise' by Erich Maria Remarque Frances Oliver

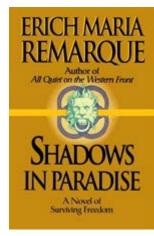
Erich Maria Remarque is remembered for his huge early success, now a classic, the best novel to come out of the First World War. The German title 'Im Westen Nichts Neues' (Nothing New on the Western Front), is more poetic but not the same meaning. Was it ever all quiet on the Western front? Outside of Europe, Remarque did not receive the critical acclaim of, for instance, Thomas Mann, and too few of his books are still circulating in the English-speaking world. A pity, because Remarque also wrote two of the best books – if not perhaps the best - ever written about European refugees, 'Liebe Deinen Nachsten' (Love Thy Neighbour) and 'Schatten im Paradis' (Shadows in Paradise). Perhaps he was too successful, too popular, too glamorous (married to Hollywood star Paulette Goddard) for the literary pundits to take seriously enough. At all events, it is the art market described in 'Schatten im Paradis' I would like to write about here.

obert Ross, the hero of 'Shadows in Paradise', a death camp survivor, lands in New York near the end of the war, with a false passport, a false name, a three-month Visa and about \$50 in his pocket. New York is full of other refugees from the Nazis, some impoverished, some – early arrivals – established and thriving. Robert is soon introduced to the immigrant network and lands a job, illegal of course, first with an antiquarian who sells mainly Chinese bronzes and then with Mr Silvers, who sells mostly Impressionists. Robert soon learns the tricks of the trade and is both amused and revolted by Silvers' facile cynicism.

Silvers declares that one cannot write about paintings. Or about art. All that is written about art is there to explain it to Philistines. Art can only be felt. "I wanted to become a painter," he says. "I was a lousy painter. Have I betrayed art because I no longer paint bad pictures, or have I betrayed art because I sell them?" He is sceptical about the expertise of museum directors. The dealer risks more than the museum director as he buys with his own money and so is less able to afford mistakes.

Silvers tests Robert's knowledge and taste by showing him a pair of Degas' and a pair of Monets; which of each pair is the better painting? Robert chooses right and Silvers is pleased. Robert was a journalist persecuted by the Nazis. His own expertise comes from a couple of years spent in hiding in a Belgian museum, where he could only come out of his cellar after dark. He would

wander around and look at the pictures, as much as he could see of them. Robert eventually escaped, but the kind and courageous museum director who hid and fed him is caught after a neighbour sees him making many night visits to the museum and tells her suspicions to the Gestapo. The director is taken away to die, one of the "shadows" that will haunt Robert to the end of his life.



So that is Robert's expertise, but he also knows French, so Silvers introduces him as 'my assistant, who used to work at the Louvre.' He regales Robert with more of his wisdom. Art dealers, he says are mistaken in saving money on frames; the less finished a picture, the more a good frame will enhance it. Pictures seen too much lose their lustre, in contrast to the 'virgins' that have been in private collections and almost no one has seen. These bring a higher price not because they are better but because of the lust of connoisseurs and collectors for discovery. There are now 10 times as many collectors as connoisseurs, Silvers maintains. Every social upheaval brings a change of fortunes and new collectors with money to buy, but they are not connoisseurs. To become a connoisseur takes time, patience and love. The epoch of collectors who were also connoisseurs ended in 1918.

Silvers has no gallery, no sign on his apartment door. He brings out paintings to show in his living room, one or two, usually, at a time. When a wealthy industrialist is about to appear, Silvers asks Ross to rapidly hang a Degas in his (Silvers') wife's bedroom. Silvers shows a first Degas to his buyer, then asks the 'ex-Louvre' employee, where is the other Degas he wanted to show? He tells the buyer about the growing value of Degas, how he himself has just bought back a Degas offered at twice what he sold it for. And the one in the bedroom – ah yes, says Silvers, we can go look at it, my wife is out. He is much too clever to say that his wife will be reluctant to part with it; he only lets the buyer see it. Then back downstairs there is more talk about how money inflates but objects keep their value. In the end the buyer takes both Degas'

FEATURE NEWSBRIEFS

and Mrs Silvers, who's been hiding in the kitchen, can go back upstairs.

Another favourite Silvers trick is to tell a buyer that he has another good painting which cannot be shown yet because Mr Rockefeller has an option on it. This really wows the unsuspecting client and the painting soon

returns and is sold ....

Robert Ross soon leaves New York for Hollywood where he gets a job advising movie producers on the correct authentic SS attire for the characters in anti-Nazi films, characters mostly played by Jewish refugees ... but that is another part of the story.

#### **Editorial continued from page 3**

dissent, healthy dialogue and examination of culture.

The New Art Examiner will keep faith as a publication of language and imagination, carefully eyeing the crevasse of cultural decline, give readers the challenge of doubt and persist in developing ideas about what makes good Art. Writers work through this and are courageous to put themselves on the line about what they think and feel. I believe in the power of our sensibilities to drive culture forward in the labyrinth we live today.

Annie Markovich, Assistant Publisher

## In our next Issue: Vol 33 no 1: September/October 2018

What is it to write critically about art? An unpublished lecture by Clement Greenberg

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#### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### BY DEFAULT THE EXAMINER WINS BACK ITS TRADEMARK FROM MICHEL SEGARD AND MICHAEL RAMSTEDT

Earlier this year we made an application through the lawyers for the Creative Arts in Chicago to win back our Trademark as a first step to stopping the publication of the rogue New Art Examiner in Chicago. We have won this first round though they are fighting against the judgment on the basis they never received the official notices. (May 2018)

#### VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS ACQUIRES 34 WORKS BY OUTSIDER ARTISTS AND A BASQUIAT SELLS FOR \$45.3M AT PHILLIPS

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) acquired 34 works from the Souls Grown Deep Foundation (SGDF), including works by Purvis Young, Thornton Dial, Jesse Aaron, and the Gee's Bend Quiltmakers. (Hyperallergic 24.05.2018)

#### OOPS

At the Heron Retrospective in Tate St Ives the European Editor met Maria Balshaw and asked her why the New Art Examiner was not on sale in the Tate. He was told that the Tate had to be very careful as we are often accused of manipulating the market.

I think we can safely say to our readers that she is not the political animal Nicholas Serota is, and that this was a ludicrous thing to say. Either that or the New Art Examiner will be the first journal of art criticism to be in ArtForum's top 100.

# Show in Florence sheds light on 'Soviet Renaissance'

A new exhibition of Soviet nonconformist art at the Fondazione Franco Zeffirelli in Florence takes inspiration from the work of the Russian film-maker Andrei Tarkovsky. New Flight to Solaris,

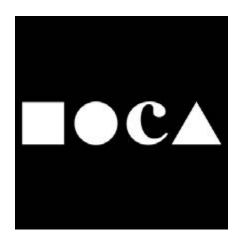
which opened this week (until 31 July), is the first foreign venture of Moscow's AZ Museum.

theartnewspaper.com 01.06.2018

## Michigan Adjuncts fighting for pay fairness

Turnover rate, or the percentage of employees that leave during a year, for Lecturer I positions is at 40 percent. Bargaining between the University of Michigan's Lecturers' Employee Organization and University administration continues

regarding wages, performance evaluations and other factors, LEO members are expressing frustration with what they say is a lack of administrative response to their proposals.



# Turmoil at MOCA in Los Angeles as Philippe Vergne departs.

The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) announced that director Philippe Vergne is leaving the institution, two months after the controversial firing of chief curator Helen Molesworth. Vergne put his \$4 million Los Angeles home on the market not long after Molesworth was let go.

Her firing came a few months after Mark Grotjahn withdrew from

the MOCA gala over a lack of diversity in past honorees—a move that forced the museum to cancel a fundraiser that typically brings in millions—and drew fierce criticism from the art world luminaries who commended Molesworth's dedication to staging exhibitions dedicated to women and artists of color.

