

# NEW ART examiner

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OF THE VISUAL ARTS

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**Nancy Schreiber** in Washington  
**Daniel Nanavati** on Cornwall  
**Jane Addams Allen** in Chicago  
**Scott Turri** in Pittsburgh  
**Viktor Witkowski** in Paris  
**Lynda Green** in Russia  
**Maxine** in Cornwall

## I OBJECT! AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM



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## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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

## The Academic Execution of Javier Tapia

Derek,

The American obsession with race swings from the inhumanity of slavery to the inhumanity of fascistic atonement. Both extremes demand the sacrifice of anyone who steps into the never-ending civil war at the wrong time. Such is the case with Javier Tapia, a white, Peruvian-born American citizen who is an associate professor in the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Department of Painting + Printmaking.

On October 25, 2018, a visiting adjunct professor named Caitlin Cherry alleged that Professor Tapia had “criminalized” her by calling a security guard to determine her identity. The alleged incident took place before the start of the 9:00 a.m. classes. Prior to being forbidden to talk about the alleged incident, Professor Tapia explained that he had suggested that the guard speak with Ms. Cherry in order to open a particular room to which the guard and some university personnel needed access. When the guard followed university protocol and asked Ms. Cherry for identification, the latter assumed that Professor Tapia had initiated the action. Ms. Cherry, who is African American, allegedly complained to Noah Simblist, chair of the Department of Painting + Printmaking, that she had been “profiled” and “criminalized.” Ms. Cherry then filed a Title IX complaint through the Office of Equity and Access. This, in turn, resulted in an official “inquiry” that would determine whether or not to launch an “investigation.” While Mr. Tapia was forbidden to address the issue, Ms. Cherry and her supporters spread the news of the alleged incident on social media.

In a move worthy of Joseph Goebbels, the Department of Painting + Printmaking allowed its students to defame Mr. Tapia through its social media site. What the university should have treated as allegations became accusatory facts that gave the impression of an official license for the abuse of Mr. Tapia. In addition, Ms. Cherry and her supporters gave interviews to print media outlets and to at least one television station, NBC12 in

Richmond, Virginia. Pro-Cherry militants broadcast Mr. Tapia’s telephone number, e-mail address, and home address. Then, on November 6, 2018, seven faculty members from the Department of Painting + Printmaking published a letter that accused Mr. Tapia of “racial bias.” The seven authors and main signatories, who are white, selectively solicited signatures from faculty, students, and administrators throughout the VCU School of the Arts. One of the authors was Mr. Gregory Volk, an assistant professor who is a contributing editor to *Art in America*. His participation in the defamation of a colleague calls into question his integrity as a writer for a respected art magazine. Again, the signatories had no evidence beyond the claims of the accuser. Yet they felt free to defame Mr. Tapia, and they proceeded to make demands that included the retroactive prosecution of faculty deemed to have committed offenses against their “community.” To that end they wrote:

“Encourage members of the VCUarts community, particularly current students and alumni, to report past instances of discrimination, harassment, or bias and provide them with clear guidelines regarding what to expect once a reports has been made.”<sup>1</sup>

An even darker passage echoes the approaches of the Inquisition and the re-education camps of North Korea by threatening those who question the official ideology:

“If faculty are unwilling to address their own privilege and bias, and refuse to commit wholeheartedly to this justice work in our program, we question the validity of their employment in our department. Additionally, we call for acknowledgement of harm done from faculty who have committed acts of bias towards members of our community both directly and indirectly.”<sup>2</sup>

The Orwellian vagueness of the preceding citation should frighten anyone who is familiar with totalitarian processes. What constitutes “justice work,” and if it could be defined, why should any artist embrace it? Is it a call to make social realism the official style of the department? Does it imply a hierarchy of right thinking and right art making? Are formalists, such Mr. Tapia,

guilty of aesthetic crimes? Furthermore, why should any citizen in a free society “address their own privilege?” Who defines privilege? The concept is as dangerous as it is nebulous. Nazis and Communists alike were fond of using privilege as a pretext for extermination. The same is true of “bias.” The term is exceedingly contextual. In fact, it could be used to question the actions that the faculty has taken against Mr. Tapia. Have they “addressed” their own anti-Latin American, anti-middle class, and anti-formalist bias? Why did they write in the language of the Moscow Trials or the McCarthy hearings?

After learning of the letter’s content, a student from the People’s Republic of China called it reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution, a time when the Red Guards hounded supposedly bourgeois professors to death. The actions of the authors may not yet rise to the level of the murderous events in Mao’s China, but they nonetheless imply a thirst for vengeance. Subsequent actions supported the suspicion that the university was acting in bad faith. Shortly after the Thanksgiving holiday, Mr. Simblist announced the following in a message to his department:

“Starting in January, Caitlin Cherry will join the department of Painting and Printmaking full time as Assistant Professor of Art. Her appointment will last until May 2020. We welcome Caitlin Cherry to the department and look forward to working with her.”<sup>3</sup>

The official announcement of Ms. Cherry’s full-time employment left Mr. Tapia’s supporters wondering if the incident had not been premeditated. While such an action could not be proven, the speedy hiring of Ms. Cherry called into question the ethics of an institution that appeared to be persecuting a Latin American professor. As if to confirm the suspicion of duplicity, on December 4, *The Richmond Free Press*, a local African American newspaper, published an anonymous opinion piece titled “Teaching While Black.” Without explaining why Mr. Tapia was silent, the piece presented Ms. Cherry’s accusations not as allegations but as the truth. The ability to play with narratives for political ends appears to define



the postmodernist ethos of the painting department. As one graduate student said in 2016, "I like revisionist histories." The outlook supports the allegations of former undergraduates who claim that they suffered harassment, intimidation, and threats against their future careers for not conforming to the official ideology. More disturbingly, they also allege that one of the principal signatories favors radical indoctrination over education and gives the impression that she may have ties to organizations that advocate the overthrow of the United States Government.

What had begun as possibly nothing more than a misunderstanding had reached a point that struck many within the Richmond art community as an ageist, classist, racist, xenophobic, and ideological purge. Whether or not it was true, VCU had given the impression that it supported Internet violence in its efforts to implement its diversity policy. Many within the Richmond Latin American community, along with their Anglophone allies, began to see a disturbing pattern that reached back to 2015 when the Department of Painting + Printmaking targeted another Latin American-born professor for termination under a false accusation of racism. Although the professor kept his job, he still teaches under a cloud of suspicion that demonstrates the power of Title IX as a political weapon. He will retire early due to the ongoing campaign against him and the university's passive complicity in the assassination of his character.

The latest incident in the Department of Painting + Printmaking makes it difficult to believe that the expression of hatred and rhetorical violence directed against Professor Tapia is spontaneous. The language reflects deep-seated racist, xenophobic, sexist, ageist, and classist resentments. Its message is clear: one cannot be white, male, Latin American, educated, and middle-class in the United States of the twenty-first century without incurring the wrath of the most hateful elements. Immigrants such as Professor Tapia are not welcome because they cannot be disempowered for the sake of ideological manipulation and domination. In

short, they will not conform to the third-class status that is expected from their kind. Consequently, they must be condemned for defying the colonialist narrative that affluent American activists impose upon Latin America: a narrative that preserves the region as a human zoo for ideological tourism. Any foreigner who defies the narrative must be vilified, humiliated, and eventually nullified. Character assassination through social media is only the first step.

Imperialism has many forms. It ranges from overt economic exploitation to the reduction of the other to an eternal victim. Latin American victims are acceptable because they pose no threat to the status quo while they increase the profits of the social justice industry. Human suffering makes good copy, and good copy sells. How many books are published with the blood of immigrants? How many academic careers depend on the continuation of immigrant pain? In the end, greed motivates the actions of the self-styled anti-capitalists. For them, Latin Americans are lucrative rhetorical commodities that cannot be allowed to escape their constraints. Whenever they escape, the profits fall.

Fascism also has many forms. The first is an obsession with identity. Everyone must be classified and placed in distinct boxes. Cosmopolitanism is intolerable. Cultures and peoples must not mix. Through the wearing of yellow stars or pink triangles, all must know their place. All must be readily identifiable. Each group must remain distinct. In the United States, this was the basis of official segregation. Today, it is the core of inclusive racism. Its primary rule is clear, "We must have one of each, but they must never touch or overlap." The academy creates an illusion of diversity in order to hide its neo-segregation. Of course, the machinery of oppression cannot accept that Latin Americans are naturally and authentically diverse. They include multiple cultures, races, and nationalities. They are unwittingly cosmopolitan, and, yes, it is intolerable. Someone must pay. A scapegoat must be found. An example must be made of those

who escape the prison of identity. Our shared humanity must be sacrificed to the obscenity of "separate but equal." The system cannot bear a challenge to the profitable manufacture of diversity and the public relations sham of inclusion. The persecution of Professor Tapia is a case in point. How dare he be a Latin-American Westerner? Does he not know his place?

This incident may not be a sign of an inevitably dark and fascistic American future, but it does test our optimism. Only one thing is clear, namely, that intolerance is now the norm across the ideological spectrum. Fortunately, there are still enough rational, decent, and tolerant Americans that it may be possible to reassert the sense of fairness and justice that allowed this country to weather storms that shattered less flexible societies. Inflexibility is the hallmark of fascism. It would be tragic for it to triumph disguised as social justice. Perhaps the assault on Professor Tapia will serve to remind us that if we return to pre-modern irrationality, we will not survive. The ashes of Dresden, Auschwitz, and Hiroshima should make the lesson clear.

*Michael Ferrán, December 2018*

## The Original Twitter

Editor

Klee, The "Twittering" Machine .... Better than Trump "Tweeting" on "Twitter" about Making the Great Modern 20th Century Great Again in the New Millennial Century ... Paul Klee, The "Twittering" Machine [Die Zwitschermaschine] (1922). Museum of Modern Art, New York, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Purchase Fund. "The title alludes to a kind of child's toy or domestic ornament, four mechanical birds resting on a hand crank, ready to sing when the crank is turned. In their still state, they give an intimidating impression, their gap...

*George Touche"*  
8/11/2018



## Monoculturism

Editor

Also to be considered is the role of the CIA in promoting Abstract Expressionism. "How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art" by Serge Guilbaut. Strange bedfellows, the CIA and Greenberg. Likely he didn't know... For a while now I've been disturbed by the thought that the Avant Garde consist of a group following a common ideology. It suggests history is made by bullies.

Miklos Legrady  
19/10/2018

Hi Miklos,

How true, "It suggests history is made by bullies", considering the bullies of today who operate only for their economic interest, often with terrifying consequences and total disregard of human rights. They do, indeed, make history; however, we need to defend our freedom of the press. Silence is deadly, while defending freedom of the press can be deadly in the real sense.

Pendery Weekes  
20/10/2018

Miklos,

Prior to our time, art history has been made by superior art, most of which can be construed as belonging to this or that specific group with both shared and not so shared viewpoints. Whether this continues in the future seems unlikely. Pluralism has spawned a large number of groups with shared viewpoints, but has also led to deprecating thoughts like "superior art", substituting "relevant", "new", "revolutionary", "provocative", and others, each the more the better, as the preferred modes for paying attention to art. I really don't know where this will wind up or how long it will last.

John Link  
11/12/2018

## The Words We Use

Editor

Canadian artist David Evans wrote, "the term 'post-modern' always seemed an absurd conceit. As though 'modernism' could be declared null and void by intellectual fiat. Then we'd have the end of art history – the triumph of reductivism." Today, art theory is like a broken telephone game. Someone's doctoral thesis misinterprets another's in a long chain of papers based on each other, the original wrong in both premise and conclusion... these scholars tasked as "risk-takers, art historians, popular voices, and truth-seekers" promote a dubious ideology in exchange for a horse's feedbag.

Daniel Nanavati is editor of Chicago/London's New Art Examiner. He spoke of how postmodernity for decades co-opted the best and brightest, until in time the post-truth world failed and badly needs archiving. We found that calling a stick a work of art made no difference to the stick which remained as much stick as it ever was. Nanavati spoke of a new movement of artists and writers who've had enough, want change and discovered each other online through their writing. A self-organizing spontaneous network to toss out the "same old, same old" school and it's practitioners, for the postmodern do not know what art is... but they know their comfort zone and will dig in tenaciously. Best practice is to write about the emperor's new clothes with criticism on a bed of witticism.

The ontology of art starts with an etymology. Oscar Wilde had mastered of the art of conversation just as the famed Bartolomeo Scappi, chef to Pope Pius IX circa 1850, had mastered the art of cuisine; so during the Renaissance the Borgias were masters at the art of poisoning their business rivals; art has always meant a skillful, intuitive, transcendent, and unique excellence above the scope of professionals.

This definition of art rejects

Jean-Francois Lyotard's myopic postmodern vision, gained while standing on the shoulders of tarnished giants who questioned metanarratives before him. Duchamp wanted to delete the senses from art but we've learned that rejecting sense is nonsense, senseless and insensible; the language stirs to speak for itself. Walter Benjamin says that all we can ask of art is an accurate reproduction of reality, that aesthetics, creativity, and authorship are Fascist inventions,(4) then Benjamin committed suicide from a catastrophic failure of morale.(5) Sol Lewitt says that an idea is art(6); try telling your high-school teacher thinking about your homework was the same as doing it. Lyotard is disrupted by facts remaining facts regardless of contingency so the foolish man built his house on sand. Then the rain fell and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it. Matthew 7:24-27

Miklos Legrady  
29/08/2017

## Conflict of Interest?

Editor,

One does wonder about the 3 items with their prices inside the article if the New Art Examiner hasn't started a partnership with the Victoria and Albert merchandising department or if the magazine itself has opened up shop. As almost every museum has its own gift shop that visitors are practically forced to go through, it could be that the New Art Examiner has found a way to discreetly have a gift shop inside the articles. This could be the start of something.

Stella Thomas  
03/09/2018

*(Ed: We never do things like this. It is part of the ethical approach we have to writing.)*

# NEW ART examiner

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## EDITORIAL

Washington October 30th 2018

I was invited to a talk given by Rafael Lorenzo-Hemmer at the Hirshhorn Museum who are exhibiting three of his heart-beat installations. His talk, given at 7pm in the cinema-like auditorium, was an object lesson in complacency.

Rafael has, as with other contemporary super-stars, a small full time industrial team of fifteen working on his ideas and when he said two of them were 'Trump refugees' the Washington audience of over 100 people, laughed. One woman cheered at another aside he gave on Trump and they all clapped heartily at his description of his next idea to take place on the Mexican/US border, with searchlights in both countries criss-crossing in the sky.

The woman sitting next to me, interpreting the introductory video on his life of work so far, read off the shows and the countries: 'Sydney...Mexico...London... Paris... he's been all over the world.' As if this, in itself, were indicative of his worth. The loud clapping and the sounds of approval for Rafael's views gave me pause for thought. Three days before, on the previous Sunday, in Pittsburgh, 11 Jewish people were murdered in their Synagogue. The greatest slaughter of Jewish people on American soil in American history. I am led to the thought that those who resist in their cultural enclaves the growing fascism in the USA, those who think by supporting a light show at the Hirshhorn they are fighting Trump, those who, despite all that is happening, maintain their 'niceness' and self indulgent liberality, are compliant to the will of the fascists. The people who are not nice are those who resist and resisting fascism is a deadly game. People are going to die in their thousands before this is dealt with but just as passion can degenerate into indifference, just as an art movement driven by men and women of vision and longing can within a generation become no more than mannerist so too a people, founding a nation on high principles and dedicated to those principles, can degenerate into 'nice' fascists.

Cicero, and many others, mourned that fact that the Emperor and his cohorts could enact the most profound assaults upon the Republic as long as the people were given a Games to take their minds off what was really happening. Rafael's light shows are a diversion. I don't know how much it cost to mount this diversion in DC but I do know it will cost lives because it is not, and it never will be, the way to fight American fascism.

Daniel Nanavati



**JANUARY 2019**  
Volume 33. No. 3

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### FEATURES:

- 7 REBELLION IS NEUTERED WHEN IT BECOMES ART** *Ralph Adam and Susana Gómez Lain review I Object! at the British Museum*
- 10 SURVEILLANCE, COMMUNITY, THE FUTURE OF ART** *Nancy Schreiber on Raphael Lozano-Hemmer*
- 14 WHY I WRITE FOR THE NEW ART EXAMINER** *Stephen Lee, London Editor*
- 17 PUBLISHING CRITICAL THINKING** *Daniel Nanavati on publishing the New Art Examiner*
- 20. LUDWIG MIES VAN DER ROHE** *Jane Addams Allen*
- 23 THE MARKET RULES BUT IT'S NOT OK** *Francis Oliver*
- 35. CHERNOBYL AND PRYPIAT** *Lynda Green*

### DEPARTMENTS

- 1 LETTERS.**
- 4 EDITORIAL BY DANIEL NANAVATI**
- 5 SPEAKEASY BY VIKTOR WITKOWSKI**
- 37 NEWSBRIEFS**

### FACTS

- 24 BASEL, MIAMI BEACH - BEN RUSSO**
- 25 PATRICK HERON** *Alexander stanfield*
- 27 CARNEGIE INTERNATIONAL** *scott turri*
- 30 WASHINGTON NANCY SCHREIBER**
- 32 CORNWALL MAXINE**
- 33 FASHION PENDERY WEEKES**

### QUOTE of the Month:

Banksy didn't destroy an artwork in the auction, he created one," Sotheby's senior director and head of contemporary art Alex Branczik wrote. "Following his surprise intervention on the night, we are pleased to confirm the sale of the artist's newly-titled 'Love is in the Bin,' the first artwork in history to have been created live during an auction. Alex Branczik, Sotheby's



Each issue the New Art Examiner will invite a well-known, or not-so-well-known, art world personality to write a speakeasy essay on a topic of interest. Viktor Witkowski lived in Germany, France, and the U.S. before moving to Vermont where he teaches, makes art, and writes about contemporary art. He is currently based in Paris, France.

## What is the value of art?

Art cannot change our world or the conditions of the art market. It cannot exist without auctions, fairs, dealers and speculators. Art can be full of ambition and desire for change, but it often struggles to make an impact beyond the art world. Most of us have come across these sorts of statements that describe art as beautiful, but powerless, as an evocative conversation starter, but ultimately ineffective - just another product in the global economy. Is there anything art and artists can do to disprove these claims? And more importantly: what can artists do to become less dependent on the art market's value system?

In the recent HBO documentary *The Price of Everything*, Amy Capellazzo, the Chairman of the Fine Art Division of Sotheby's, affirmed "that good art makes itself known regardless of value." This sentiment was endorsed by art dealer and collector Kenny Schachter in his Artnet News review of the documentary. Affirming that "good art makes itself known" implies that bad art does not make itself known, that bad art cannot rise to the top since it is self-evidently "bad". If strong auction sales and art fairs were only reserved for "good art", we would indeed live in a better world. It is hypocritical for two people who make their living by profiting off of art's speculative value to speak of "good art" that exists in a semi-autonomous state "regardless of value." In a world in which autocracies and their appetite for free trade increasingly take center stage in the global art economy (as in case of China and Saudi Arabia), a call for more democracy, transparency and equality for artists is required. But artists have to make this call. Are we up for the task?

An artist network based on mutual friendship, support and exchange of ideas is the most effective tool against an art market that primarily follows a trail of money. But as social media platforms like Instagram demonstrate, artists often regard their network as a means to an end. And by doing so, they mirror the characteristics of the economic system they claim to oppose. Here is how:

There is a segment of visual artists on Instagram who document their studio visits with other practicing artists. This could be an effective and genuine way of using social

media to expose the work of emerging artists and offer insights into their materials, methods and works in progress while building a network across styles, media and ideas. Instead these posts become demonstrations of affiliation: artist "X" knows artist "Y". This power dynamic describes a situation in which artists who exhibit less initiate visits with artists who exhibit more (it is rarely the other way around). In itself, this is a useful way of advocating for oneself if it was not for the transactional quality of this exchange: in front of a large audience, documented, tagged and geolocated. We do not discover art, we measure it. And the follower count that either increases or drops is one way to measure the value of this and all future exchanges. If every exhibition we visited listed the artist's number of Instagram followers, it would most certainly have an effect on how the art on display was valued (similar to the red dot next to a sold artwork).

The art market and social media are not the enemy. Instead it is our desire to be valued in a measurable way. An artist's participation in art fairs has become one such measure of success. Partly out of necessity and partly out of vanity, we - the artists - have accepted that there is no other way than the current way. We are enthralled by art fairs. We act like business owners and unapologetic 'go-getters.' We worry about lost Instagram followers. Let us put the focus back on art, why we started making it in the first place, and then maybe we can talk about its true value.

*Viktor earned a Master's Degree in Art Education, Art History and Studio Art from the Hochschule für Bildende Künste Braunschweig (HBK Braunschweig, Germany) in 2006 and a MFA in Visual Arts from Rutgers University in 2010.*

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# Rebellion is neutered when it becomes art

Satire in art is familiar to us all: Hogarth, Daumier, Gillray or, perhaps, Rabelais spring to mind. Their work using humour, irony or exaggeration to expose and criticize. They ridiculed the stupidity, pomposity, vices, follies or abuses of individuals, companies, rulers or even society itself.

Not all satire is so obvious. Sometimes it is hidden amongst seemingly innocuous content or it may appear in unexpected places. For example, London Underground passengers were recently surprised to see that station names on line maps had been changed unofficially: Shepherd's Bush had become Shepherd's Pie while priority-seat labels now warned that they were for "people who are overweight, conjoined or charming snakes".

In October 2018 a painting by Banksy, the secretive street artist, was sold at auction for £1m, only to be destroyed immediately by a concealed shredder. Ironically, the painting is probably worth more now than when it was sold. A highlight of *I Object!* is another artwork by Banksy, secretly 'installed' in the Museum with a fake label in 2005 and undiscovered for days. Its appearance here gives it an art world legitimacy!

The British Museum is vast, with over eight million objects, of which only about 1% can be displayed at any one time. Many items contain hidden satire in their design or hold inscriptions that, when created, were dangerous. These may be too subtle to be noticed by casual viewers – and sometime even expert curators. The quantity of such objects can be overwhelming: an entire exhibition might be devoted just to the museum's satirical materials on the current U.S. president, Donald Trump!

*I Object!* is a rare exhibition. People have always subverted authority, often risking gruesome torture and death. Unofficial satire is not expected in major museums and galleries (except specialist institutions, such as philatelic

museums). This exhibition owes its origins to Neil MacGregor who, as the British Museum's then head, created a highly-successful 100-programme BBC radio series exploring world history through items from the British Museum's collections. That inspired him further: why not a show on the alternative narrative, demonstrating how official items can be subverted to express disobedience or disrespect for authority, or to 'take down' important people – through discreet changes to official products such as portraits or coins? That raised questions such as: who decides what 'history' is? Traditionally it is the winners, but MacGregor wanted to see what the down-trodden or the 'man in the street' had to say.

He felt an external curator would be best for that. An obvious choice was the broadcaster and satirical magazine editor Ian Hislop. He was given free rein to interview curators and explore the content of the museum and its stores. Hislop spent months investigating, searching for objects with subversive nuances or hidden, possibly satirical, messages: not to laugh at the objects but to see them as serious political comments on ridiculous injustices. For inside knowledge he invited the museum's specialist Tom Hockenhull (Modern Money curator) as co-curator. One aim was to celebrate the ingenuity and humour of those who have questioned the status quo.

A brief video of Hislop at his desk, bored by the day's newspapers, nipping round to the British Museum for inspiration, opens the show. Speech bubbles distinguish his personal comments on exhibits from official descriptions.

Of the nearly 200 objects on display, dating from ancient Mesopotamia (1300BC) to Trump's election, everyday items, such as unofficially inscribed banknotes, sit alongside finely-crafted works of art, many shown for the first time or discovered hidden within the Museum's collections.

It is not easy nowadays to understand how and why people in the past were protesting, so 'dissenting' objects may not be recognised as such. Some exhibits have obvious



*Day of the Dead, full figure*



*Peckham Rock*



messages - an Edwardian coin defaced with the suffragettes' slogan 'Votes for Women' and an 18th-Century British print showing the future King George IV as an obese and uncouth man with a love of banqueting, booze and women, are prominent examples. As is a surreal Gillray cartoon of big male feet lying between tiny female ones - reflecting popular views of the then Duke of York.

However, many other objects convey hidden meanings. Examples include an ornate silver-gilt salt cellar from the English Reformation concealing Catholic imagery and an innocuous-looking painting of two owls, created in response to the artist's persecution after Mao's monitors had previously interpreted a winking owl as a harbinger of doom. Alongside these are objects which test the boundaries of permissible dissent, such as a Roman oil lamp depicting a woman having intercourse with a crocodile - possibly anti-Cleopatra propaganda. Others are not what they seem. For example, anti-Nazi propaganda leaflets disguised as self-help pamphlets. Exhibits from recent events include a pink knitted 'pussy hat' worn at the 2017 Women's March in protest against Trump's policies. Surprisingly for me no (anti-) Brexit items have crept in.

Not everything is negative. Some items, such as a papier-mâché skeleton of a factory-owner displayed during Mexico's Day of the Dead, show how in approved situations mockery of authority figures may be permitted.

The exhibition, which is located in the Great Court (formerly the much-loved British Museum Reading Room) reminds us of how, throughout history, people have used humour to subvert authority, while attempts to crush the spirit of rebellion have failed time and again. It ends with a wall where visitors can record their own subversive experiences.

While *I Object!* holds a fascinating selection of items from the Museum's collection it lacks a coherent narrative; more space (perhaps, supplemented by loans from elsewhere), a clearer layout and additional humorous exhibits like the Gillray cartoon, plus explanations of art's role in subversion and how different forms of dissent are manifested, would have been interesting.

All these feature in the fully-illustrated, annotated accompanying book (Hislop & Hockenhull: *I Object!* - Ian Hislop's search for dissent; Thames & Hudson, 2018) as well as in Hislop's introductory BBC series on the BBC website [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) ([here](#)) .

Ralph Adam

The Citi exhibition. *I Object!*: Ian Hislop's search for dissent British Museum room 35 until 20 January 2019



James Gillray



Salt Sellar.tif



# The Unprivate Eye

When you are climbing the snail stair of the Reading Room in British Museum you know something different is about to happen.

There is nothing more thrilling than discovering 'the freedom of speech and expression' alive and well; there is nothing more exciting than the breaking of rules and conventionalism of societies and the smart slight of mind that circumvents unfair laws and mores with intelligence, sense, humour and Art. I Object delivers this frisson.

The moment you step in, you encounter an amazing unexpected social advance. There, in the first row, very visible for the eye, is a special catalogue for blind people in which the main artworks exhibited are reproduced in braille, which is both futuristic and humanistic. It is great to pass your fingers over the raised dots and feel art through another sense. I challenge all visitors to experience this. A complete success of the co-curators Ian Hislop and Tom Hockenhull from the museum. Thank you on behalf of the blind who are most times forgotten in exhibitions.

On the walls and in showcases of the main gallery are a variety of amazing artistic and daily objects from all times, from all places, used as weapons of peace to dissent from the more oppressive instincts of the establishment and express and spread an alternative opinion while trying to avoid deadly repercussions; stoning, burning at the stake, the guillotine, hanging, shooting or polonium poisoning at the worst; torture, jail, social rejection or censure at the best. More than artworks, they could be considered lifesavers and their makers, not only artists but heroes, in times of ignorance, intransigence and savagery, so dangerously near in their own times, not yet eradicated in ours.

Prints, drawings, books, sculptures, crafts, artifacts, posters, defaced coins and bank notes ... among other delicacies, all concealing secret messages, some serious, others jokey but all short and sharp, as required for the situation.

From the banks of the river Nile in the kingdom of Cleopatra's pornography to the Church's edited and author's unamended seedy Boccaccio's Decameron, or a Bible which encourages sex sins, to the satirical Mexican cult of death, all teaming up with hidden political claims like the



the suffragettes' desperate cry, forever cast on coins, social denunciations or religious heresies written, carved or printed on all kinds of items.

The exhibition is a box of surprises you never know what is going to be next and the task of deciphering the messages makes the experience unpredictable, almost mysterious like in a game. At the exit you can write your own dissident's statement on a wall.

A suggestion for the curators: If you ever bring it to Spain, consider including the figures of "Fallas" from Valencia, the lyrics of "Chirigotas" from Cádiz and the iconic cocktail "Cuba-libre" (rum with coke), some other of our Latin ways of dissent.

I am not going to give you more clues. Just say that like in a merry-go-round, when you finish, you want another ride. Hurry up it is opened until the 20th January.

Susana Gómez Laín.

From the British Museums briefing notes:

Uncovering a treasure trove of dissenting objects can be tricky. Private Eye Editor Ian Hislop hand-picked a range of 100 intriguing objects that explore the idea of dissent, subversion and satire.

A wide variety of objects are on display in the exhibition – from graffiti on a Babylonian brick to a banknote with hidden rude words, from satirical Turkish shadow puppets to a recently acquired 'pussy' hat worn on a women's march. Unlock the messages and symbols these people used, and get closer to understanding them.

This history shows that people have always challenged and undermined orthodox views in order to enable change. Ultimately, the exhibition will show that questioning authority, registering protest and generally objecting are an integral part of what makes us human.

# Surveillance, Community, The Future of Art

*Nancy Schreiber considers Rafael Lozano-Hemmer*

Immediately inside the L'Musee d'art Contemporain in Montreal was a dazzling display of light, blinking on and off to an irregular rhythm. This inverted, seemingly never-ending Christmas tree of light drew me in to absorb the multitudinous crystalline structure; the tiny lights expanding to the greater. The Smithsonian Hirshhorn Museum again displayed Rafael Lozano Hemmer's work in their recent show, PULSE. But I was not so enthralled as at my first encounter. In part because the Hirshhorn displayed the cone of light in horizontal fashion so those tiny blinking lights seemed less heaven-bound. Also I had been informed of the process which made the lights blink and the rhythm thump, and that it was all instigated by the audience. The question I had to ask myself was why the science and the process took precedence over the obvious beauty of the show? Why, at this second iteration of the work, was I not awed at the spectacle before me? Knowledge and logic interfered with the magic, as it often does

Raphael Lozano Hemmer uses his knowledge to create beauty through technology. Exploring, documenting and displaying the results as art. Is the work then more art or more scientific documentation, or equally both?

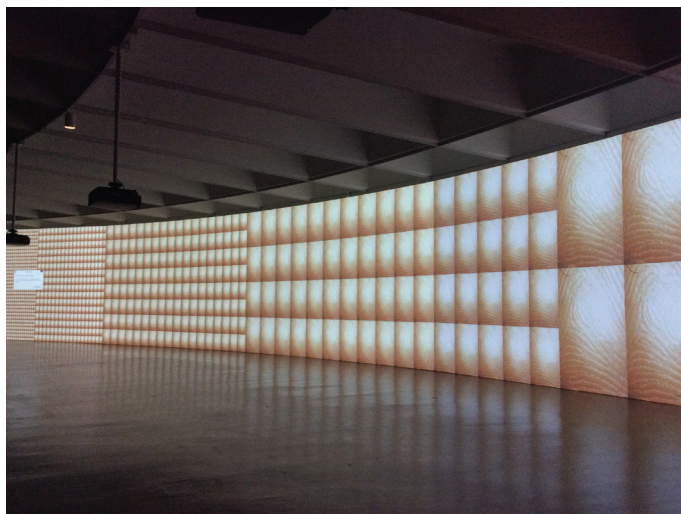
Going up in Mexico City, where his parents ran a nightclub, disco sounds loud and layered pulsating through the night, he went on to create installations of layered sound and light. Using light as both material and subject, Pulse Spiral, was exhibited in Unstable Presence in 2017 at the Musee' d'art Contemporain in Montreal. A spiral paraboloid mimicked one of Pierre de Fermat's mathematical equations with 300 lights hanging from the ceiling, pulsating to the rhythms of 300 heartbeats activated by the assembled audience. Each participant grasped a set of handlebars which recorded their heartbeats. Then, their heartbeats visualized, activated the cascade. One heartbeat could be clearly heard, but 300 creates a cacophony of sound that masks the individual beat. With 300 heartbeats of light flickering, one's own was lost in the community of beats. Shown in 2018 at the Hirshhorn Museum, in horizontal format, biometric data recorded by the handlebars held thousands of heartbeats. As in the nightclub, where layered sounds made it difficult to hear one sound or one voice, it was impossible to discern one heartbeat from the others at both installations, making all the hearts beat as one, in one unified song.

During the week of Art Basel, in June, 2017, Lozano-Hemmer, in the installation, Voice Theatre, sponsored by



*Pulse Spiral, 2008, Montreal*

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*300 fingerprints from visitors. As another is added the furthest drops out.*





*Voice Theatre*

HEK, House of Electronic Arts, Basel, activated the old Roman amphitheater, Augusta Raurica, built into a hill outside of Basel, Switzerland with a plethora of voices. Embedding seventy-five loudspeakers and 421 lights into all levels of the risers of the amphitheater, a microphone on ground level in the centre of the amphitheater activated lights and recorded sounds emanating from loudspeakers in metal columns behind the risers. As each person recorded their words, the sounds moved up one level. Ultimately, layered sounds from all levels overrode each other, again making one voice impossible to understand amid the totality of voices and words.

Sphere Packing, at the Musée in Montreal (2018) packs the total works of each of several composers into spheres with size dependent on the number of works each produced. Whereas Hilda Van Bingen's cube is small, one must enter and stand in Johann Sebastian Bach's spherical room, where 1,128 loudspeakers project layered sounds of Bach's counterpoint and overlapping melodies. This visualization of data to search for patterns emanates from education and employment in Lozano Hemmer's past. With a degree in Physical Chemistry from Concordia University in Montreal, he worked in a molecular recognition lab. The search for patterns has integrated with his notion of co-presence,

which he defined as the "co-existence of voices, perspectives and experiences", at the heart of his work. The coexistence of different viewpoints, active voices and singular experiences, asymmetrical relationships, forced cohabitations and issues of power, consequently the coexistence of technology, economics and politics in our social world, further defines his term co-presence, according to Lesley Johnstone, Curator at Montreal's L'Musée d'art Contemporain. Furthering his observance of interaction between strangers, his use of dialogic devices to observe and record the interplay of gazes and conversation, Lozano-Hemmer demonstrates he is acutely aware of the positive and negative aspects of community, urban space and surveillance.

In *Alza de Vectorial* (Searchlights over the City), a Vectorial Elevation created for the year 2000 celebration in the Zocalo Square in Mexico City, any Internet user was able to design a light sculpture accessing eighteen searchlight beams over the city. The user's identity was searchable on the web page, giving recognition to each participant. In *Subtitled Public*, first shown in Mexico City in 2005, Subtitles are projected onto viewers' bodies, and can only disappear when touched by another.

Lozano-Hemmer points out the negative aspects of living in a community, showing the danger of living together in urban spaces in *Vicious Circular Breathing*. In a vacuum sealed chamber, I sat for under a minute breathing the accumulated breath and germs of other people who had gone before me. As the show went on, viewers' participation made the air more toxic. Not unlike the sealed chamber and recirculating air in a plane, there is danger in breathing air of others and perhaps in recirculating words and opinions as well. As Hemmer did in *Voz Alta*, an installation to commemorate the massacre of 1968, a megaphone connected voices delivered at the site of the massacre into light bursts toward a government building, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Basilica of Santa Guadalupe. This anti-memorial, as Hemmer calls it, addresses the micropolitics currently taking place. *Pan Anthem I*, Kochi, India in 2014 used multiple channels to project the national anthems of all the nations in the world, together. Making the audience complicit in directing the outcome; all of his work includes audience participation while integrating sound, visual art and kinetics. The relational architecture series of 1994 intervenes in public space highlighting artificiality in that urban space. Never seeking to control, in *Semi-optics for Spinoza*, the optics are out of Lozano-Hemmer's control. These networks of communication, of global culture are mediated with digital networks, showing the positive possibilities of digital media.





*Vicious Circular Breathing, 2013*

Raphael Lozano Hemmer's work is about public vs. private. Those millennia-old mummies were encased, with their organs, in what Egyptians believed were permanently sealed sarcophagi, with the portrait identifying the body inside barely resembling the deceased person. The sarcophagus was then placed in a secret room in an almost impenetrable pyramid, not visible nor accessible to the public. Coffins presently interred into the ground keep the secrets of the dead equally inaccessible. Lozano-Hemmer was asked if his work was about death. I do not think it is, nor does he, but it is rather about the anonymity that structures encasing and hiding the dead provide; privacy and freedom from surveillance. Similarly, Lozano-Hemmer's crowded collections of hundreds of voices or heartbeats layering over and cancelling each other out provide structural noise; anonymity as one voice hides so many voices rendering people anonymous, as they are in a city or a nightclub.

In *Vapor Wave*, presented by Madrid's Max Estrella Gallery at New York's 2018 Armory show, faces projected onto the wall resulted from "photographs" in a pool of water with wavering focus again limiting identification. More importantly, he hung highly focused portraits of those who have disappeared in Latin America, to be seen by

as many viewers as possible, on the wall at the Musée in Montreal, hoping that a stranger might have seen one face. This technique is surveillance used for good purpose; a community effort to find those it has lost, as he unites all of us in this community, this human family.

His work provides an informed awareness of what is happening in our world. If all art is political, and it is, and if one of the prime purposes of art is to create awareness of the world we share, he is achieving that goal. But if art is defined as enlisting the notion of beauty in work that informs, his work might be interpreted as documentary. It is when the display of anatomical processes and the interaction between viewer and work, and amongst viewers use technology to create beauty that science crosses into the realm of art. Lozano-Hemmer's work is then undoubtedly art. Leonardo's paintings, with their anatomical brilliance and sfumato crosses that border as does Michelangelo's sculptures, with their perfect renditions of taut musculature but also infused with the spiritual as in his *Pieta*, and Palladio with his architectural logic and small changes to his columns to make them appear exactly similar and perfect.

For this writer, *Franchise Freedom*, the murmuration of 300 drones by Studio Drift and BMW, at rt Basel Miami

2017 on the beach at the Faena Hotel, looking like the starlings' ballet in the sky to music, is beautiful. Not considering the technological means, the drones that made this ballet, I revel in its wonder. We might ask about the religious experience that results from the experience of beauty or if it is rendered mundane with the realization that the magic results from scientific data. I do not care why the eyes of Mona Lisa follow me. I do not attempt to analyze the chemistry of the paint that makes Rembrandt's light appear to emanate from within his figures. Vermeer's portraits and interiors are no less beautiful when I am informed by David Hockney that he used a camera lucida to provide the initial outlines. Art is not logical, or a science experiment nor is it documentation. But Hemmer crosses that boundary. He draws you in with dazzle, makes you nervous with the realization of surveillance, and then appeals to you to find those who have disappeared due to politics, establishing your position in the human community.

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**Rozano-Hemmer was asked if his work was about death. I do not think it is, nor does he, but it is rather about the anonymity that structures encasing and hiding the dead provide; privacy and freedom from surveillance.**

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It is art turned upside down. Using beauty's dazzle to draw you in, eliciting empathy, then informing you of the dangers faced by all of us. Beautiful music is used in Sphere Packing, but with it Lozano-Hemmer then shows how too much music keeps each voice from being heard. One voice is beautiful, but too many together end in cacophony, too loud for human ears. So much surveillance, so many voices, so many people, so many heartbeats keep us from hearing our own, those of our lovers and of our friends.

Another aspect makes the work of Raphael Lozano Hemmer important and revolutionary. His work shows both the advantages and disadvantages of communal living. We breathe each other's air, but that air might be toxic as large concentrations of bacteria and CO2 accumulate. We delight in uploading our words and our heartbeats but can then not distinguish the words or beats, not revel in identifying the athletic cardiac rhythm we have worked so hard to achieve, or the meaningful words we thought so long about. But more importantly, Hemmer is making us all artists, all responsible for creating this world in which we live.

When we speak our words into the microphone at Augusta Raurica, they travel up the steps to create flashes of light. The light, the beautiful display, is art. Without our communal effort, each of our words, it would not be what is

displayed. Together, we are all artists participating in the making of the project. Technology is the messenger, the tool used to make the project work, but the art belongs to all who participate in the making. It is the creation of all of us.

Thankfully, Rozano-Hemmer is not afraid to be political. Lozano-Hemmer's future project, Border Tuner, scheduled for seventeen nights in November, 2019 will consist of eighteen robotic searchlights in El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juarez in Chihuahua, Mexico, making bridges of light that open sound channels to allow communication across the Mexican-USA border. Microphones at six interactive stations, three in each country will allow participants to scan the horizon. When two beams of light meet in the sky overhead, a channel will open and two people can talk. The beam of light will modulate in syncopated rhythms, similar to morse code. Turning the dial would aim the searchlight at each country, enabling communication where borders try to divide us. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer will not allow communication to cease, and will, as he always has, find a way to bring together the human community in mutual communication, with a dazzling display overhead. Perhaps that is why that first Pulse at the Musee in Montreal was so impressive. Those lights reaching toward the sky, opening up as the pyramid of light rose, seemed so optimistic, one tiny flicker at the bottom expanding to make a universe of points of light. I felt the warm embrace of this universal community. It was beautiful.

Nancy Schreiber



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**Ecstasy Series**

*Ecstasy #4, 2017, ink and gouache on paper, 9x10"*

# Why I Write for the New Art Examiner

My title, and therefore in effect my brief was proposed by the editors of NAE. My response is to paraphrase George Orwell's essay on this subject, 'Why I Write' (1947). It involves autobiographical accounts followed by a politics of writing – a useful model and a place to begin. Orwell cites four motivations for a writer: sheer egoism or the desire of a writer to define their own life, aesthetic enthusiasm – the pleasure of the use of words, historical impulse – the need to record the times in which he or she lives, and political purpose – the experience of the Spanish Civil War and of Burma consolidated his political motivation as a writer. In Burma Orwell understood Imperialism and in Spain his position was against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism. His direct experience of poverty, he says, made him appreciate working class life. 'That art should have nothing to do with politics is itself a political position'. In conclusion however, he emphasises that it is not possible to understand a writer's motives without knowledge of their early development and he re-asserts that the feeling of loneliness and of being undervalued as a child persisted as a presence in all his writing.

We live in a different historical era now, clearly-defined political causes such as the Spanish Civil War have been replaced by values which are a lot less easy to identify. We live in a time that is overdetermined, at the 'end of History' in which all forms and meanings are at a point of saturation. That said, I'll examine the impact of my autobiographical motivation first. Orwell's motivational descriptors weave in and out of this material.

I grew up in the elegant town Cheltenham Spa in the UK, architecturally an 1820 Neoclassical idyll, a dream city surrounded by hills, where Handel conducted concerts and the King and his entourage visited to taste the waters or take the cure. Gustav Holst, Bomber Harris, and Brian Jones from the Rolling Stones were all residents during different eras of the town. My grandparents were Irish servants to a retired colonel from the British Raj in India. They lived above the stables behind the colonel's elegant Cheltenham house. On the other side, my dad's family ran barges from Camden Lock in London back and forth to the North of England at the turn of the century. The lifestyle is visualised in Monet's painting, *Les déchargeurs de charbon*, 1875. Trench warfare wiped out the male population except granddad Ted. The family were evacuated to Cheltenham during the Blitz where they lived in a post-war pre-fab, a 'little palace', a bit like Levittown in the US. When working, Ted was a dustbin man, as we say in art jargon, a rag-picker of culture. Here are his Orwell-inflected, Cockney accented



*Stephen Lee*

words of resistance to Imperialism: 'Bloody rawlty, bloody rawlty got all the bloody manney and all the bloody powah', all said while unemployed, sipping tea from his saucer, in a cheap Salvation Army suit with his pyjamas worn beneath. When I write, I recall Ted's words.

At family gatherings, we discussed socialism and literature with my uncle who was a self-educated union organiser, whereupon I ceased my prolonged adolescent obsession with war comics and football and was inspired to read novels. At school I took the basic English exam seven times. Grammar, syntax and spelling remain an up-hill task. When I write today, I am motivated by my early fascination with literature.

So then why do I write art criticism? The act of writing greatly helps when thinking about my own artistic practice, and writing criticism in particular really helps to focus one's thoughts on how to judge what exactly is going on in the art world. It is not my intention to provide PR for the culture industry. I write as a critically-engaged artist. I have learned from Derek Guthrie that an artist must define his or her own work. If an artist's work is left open to multiple readings, then it is also open to multiple mis-readings. A corporate-style art school charging \$50,000 a year, a burgeoning art market and an art magazine that costs 'tuppence' yet can endorse an artist's practice or otherwise is bound to be a power play. Particularly when the ability to



endorse derives from the quality of the magazine's independent voice, for which an unavoidable historical precedent is the eighteenth-century academy in Paris and its relation to its public and pamphleteers, a relationship which remains in place today. Arguably, to be taken seriously an artist must be or have a committed independent wordsmith; this cannot be a con, a false validation engineered by an institution's in-house stooge.

The NAE advised me to look at back issues of the magazine and re-assess these against my experiences as a student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago to understand why I write. What comes across from reading is that the 'Hairy Who', Chicago Imagists were in a position akin to the family silver. An article comparing them to Seurat's *La Grande Jatte*, 1884, simply took them out and polished them a bit. James Yood and Alice Thorson reflecting on their 1985 editorship in the anthology *The Essential NAE*, 2011, expressed their allegiance to the dynamic of Neo-Expressionism while touching on the emergence of 'a new group of Conceptual artists'.

At the SAIC I gained further Orwellian insights into the political purpose and machinations of the art world. On the

one hand a particularly well-informed advisor helped me to contextualise further a direction that I had already partially understood, 'The Museum as Studio'. Some tutors were wholeheartedly supportive, whereas others used methods that in my opinion are similar to Donald Trump's mafia-inflected tactics: put-down, cultural slur, confusion, demand for allegiance, coercion. The central issue of contention was I think my interest in taste and the beautiful. I was developing an aesthetic rationale, a sociology of taste: I liked all the nice things the middle-class folks have, and I thought my socio-economic class should have them too. I didn't go to art school to make redundant conceptual pastiche, nor to be a liberal missionary conducting social sculpture or 'Beuyspeak', to borrow a term from Terry Atkinson. My central interest as an artist, to understand the beautiful in the context of conceptualism as critique, was beginning to form; I wanted to at least be able to continue to define myself as an artist. We left the city.

I had previously studied at Leeds Polytechnic in England and had attended a seminar where we read Kant's *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* and discussed it. One of the members of the Art & Language group attended the seminar.



*The Hill. Interpretation of Thomas Mann's The Magic Mountain 1924. Dialectical drawing- tar stain through paper. 2017*

*(The cleaner at the Berghoff sanatorium looks on as Naptha, a character from the novel based on Lukacs in real life, departs for the underworld. A shroud lies across the landscape. The dog from Courbet's The Funeral at Ornans matter-of-factly occupies the space of history painting while debris of a fossil-fuelled utopia lies strewn throughout the middle ground, pooling and staining from the other side of the paper).*

Conceptualism was a radical critique of high Modernism as connoisseurship, epitomised by the American-style painting of Jackson Pollock, Morris Lewis, etcetera. Conceptualism was not conceived as style, it was a critique. Discussion was its significant format: exemplified by the Art Theory course at Coventry School of Art, 1970-73 and *The Indexing*, 1971, an Art & Language cross-referencing index of textual conversations about art, and a conceptual artwork to boot. Again, why do I write art criticism? Because I consider critical thinking through writing to be the most significant legacy of Conceptualism.

To cut a long story short, the ease with which Conceptualism transformed into an administered style, a logo and branding, was flagged up by Terry Atkinson in 1973: '... Conceptualism had become a name, to put it obviously, which far from exhausted theory'. *The Indexing The World War 1 Moves and the Ruins of Conceptualism*, 1992. Charles Harrison, in *Looking Back*, 2009, says, in conversation with Elena Crippa, 'It was pretty clear that from 1975/76 Conceptual art was really over. It could only be kept going as a kind of logo'. This problem was reiterated and consolidated later in Benjamin Buchloh's 1990 essay (published in *October* magazine), 'Conceptual Art 1962–1969: from the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions'. Making reference to Adorno's, 'totally administered world', he states, 'Paradoxically, then, it would appear that Conceptual Art truly became the most significant paradigmatic change of post-war artistic production at the very moment that it mimed the operating logic of late capitalism'.

How does this discussion pan out today, in November, 2018? I recently took a trip into town, London. First on my 'must see' list, the Whitechapel Art Gallery where Elmgreen and Dragset's, *This is How We Bite Our Tongue*, 2018, exposes remnants of institutional critique in the initially startling form of a life-size reconstruction of the old Whitechapel Municipal Swimming Pool. The detail of the rusty, stained leaking roof in the base of the pool testifies to its dereliction and convincing scale. The work is implicitly critical of the gentrification process taking place in the East End of London. The site of the dispossessed pool, just down

the road, will become a swish hotel and spa.

Ominously, in 1984, when we resided in London, my wife and I and baby son lived across the river in Rotherhithe squats. The squatters were a politicised protest group attempting to prevent the Thatcher government's policy of removing the community of social housing council flats, to make way for gentrification. We often crossed the river to the old Whitechapel Public Library, which was known as 'the University of the Ghetto', next door to the Whitechapel Gallery. My wife had a book out on loan from the library, *Memoirs of Anna Dostoyevskaya*, 1925. The politics between the squatters and the authorities became a stalemate and we left for Chicago. When we returned, many years later, the library had been stolen through gentrification, it had become the suave café and increased exhibition space of the Whitechapel Gallery. Its library function had been subsumed further down the street as a disco called the 'Ideas Store'. The *Anna Dostoyevskaya* book remains on extended revolutionary loan, while the aesthetics of administration and conceptual branding currently hold court with the operating logic of late capitalism at the Whitechapel Art Gallery.

The 'University of the Ghetto', was founded in 1892 by the social reformers Samuel Barnett and John Passmore Edwards. In 1884 Barnett and his wife Henrietta established the settlement house Toynbee Hall, just around the corner from the gallery and still in active socialist deployment today. Its left-wing programs had a lasting impact on life in Britain. Clement Atlee, Labour Prime Minister from 1945 – 1951, worked at the hall, likewise William Beveridge, an architect of the Welfare State. This settlement house encouraged the philosopher Jane Addams to initiate Hull House settlement in Chicago. It is the pragmatic principles of Hull House which inform the philosophy of *New Art Examiner* magazine. I write for the magazine NAE, 'The Independent Voice of the Visual Arts', because there is a significant connection in terms of approach and 'political purpose' between my own beliefs and values, and that of the magazine.

Stephen Lee is an artist and a writer.

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## Frank Gehry is 90 in 2019. We wish him well.

When Frank Gehry was asked about his strength in design career, he actually mentioned three things: Scale (the art element of proportion to be grand), Material (the art element of the medium as well as texture) and Curiosity (the artist's temperament).

Lily Kostrzewa, US Managing Editor



# Publishing Critical Thinking in Cornwall

Some of the finest minds in modern history have edited journals, magazines, books or periodicals. They have enriched the cultural legacy of their generations with their virtuosity, fearless opinion and wide-ranging critiques of their generations. It is not a skill I began to develop until I met Derek Guthrie in Penzance, Cornwall and was presented with the opportunity of resurrecting the New Art Examiner. A journal of art criticism that, at its most successful, was the most widely read outside of those published in New York and the most successful to come out of Chicago.

I quickly discovered that editing is not the skill most needed for the modern editor. What is most need is Patience. Patience to heal a culture that has sold the worth of an artist's work to banks, traded thinking deeply about the visual experience for celebrity, and seduced art students with the irresistible allure of the overriding worth of their own sensibility above knowledge, skill and that most nebulous of all concepts 'taste'.

The roads of contemporary art, like Priestley's rolling English drunkard, ramble from Paris to New York by way of St Ives, teeter upon the words of Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno before learning to spell Marcel Duchamp and fall into the ditch of mishmashed thinking that has become conceptualism. An art world so divorced from the

aesthetic object that it ceases to matter what is made as long as it is commercial. Few are interested in being told that tax funded museums and galleries support rich trustees and billionaire collectors in further enriching their collections at the expense of community artists and the integration of a nation's conversation with the image as a depiction of their nationhood. The majority of well-known artists have agents and dealers working from accepted seats of power in the art world outside of which artists are barely taken seriously. People don't want to know that the reason this all matters is because those who know how to market themselves and network, will make millions and be no better artists than many who do not know how to market themselves. That what is sold as the culture of a country, is, in fact, nothing more than part of investment portfolios and at worst money laundering.

Brexit is the fault of the art world and the artists of the past forty years who have allowed themselves to fall into the trap of Orwellian definitions of who they are, instead of learning from history that they are 'the makers and breakers of the world forever ...' They make exhibitions of the latest tragedy in the world – from Yemen to drowning African migrants, from police brutality to the destruction of oceans – and forget to realise this is nothing but sentimental



*'Behold' - Kat Johnson*





*'Fame and Torture' - Kat Johnson*

commentary after-the-fact'. This is social science playing out in a muted art world. Artists have been profound thinkers not mere commentators. They rail, they protest, they stand before the firing squad leaving their blood on the ground as their final works. Take a lesson from the writers, who used to work with artists at all levels. They have tried for years to tell us Lorca was killed because he was homosexual. That is an historian's legerdemain; he was murdered because he was an important poet and poets educate the generation to come on how to make world anew. 'Would not we take this sorry scheme of things entire and shatter it to bits, remoulding it nearer to the hearts desire?' If a painting is another way of thinking then, by extension, every single artwork is a potential revolution of society herself. More than a metaphor it is a series of realised emotions caught by the artist and offered to the viewer. It is the truth 'when most denied, most alive'.

As we republished the New Art Examiner from 2015 and struggled to find writers, we discovered that in St Ives in Cornwall, once the avant garde and set to be so again, truth tellers are unappreciated. After selling a few copies we printed a review that was not positive about a Penwith Gallery exhibition. The copies of that issue were taken out of the Gallery, never paid for, and the Gallery refused to stock the magazine again. Exactly the same thing happened with the Newlyn Orion when we were told that they would

not stock magazines that were not in line with their exhibition policy. Tremenhoe Sculpture Gardens told us they didn't want a magazine in their shop that was saying negative things about 'their colleagues' at Newlyn Orion. Even the art hotel in Penzance, a place you would think the patrons would enjoy reading an international magazine of art criticism published on their doorstep, told us it wasn't for them.

The Tate St Ives neither has room to sell any magazines, nor space to invite living artists who were in St Ives at the time it was the avant garde, to speak to its members. It appears there is no interest in hearing what it was like to actually know them, from those who knew them. Ginny Button, the now retired Director of Falmouth University (née Falmouth College of Art) was requested twice if she had time to meet us. The head of a leading art college. She never replied (did she get the messages?). We approached the journalist school at the same college, and were told no meeting would be arranged unless first agreed by senior management. We never heard from them again. We should all be surprised they did not want their students to have access to working with an international journal of art criticism published on their doorstep.

I bow in gratitude to the St Ives Society of Artists, The St Ives Times & Echo and the Belgrave Gallery who have taken every issue and sold many copies, and to St.Eia Cabin and

John Bedding's Pottery Shop and gallery. And in Penzance the Art Shop and Redwing Gallery have headed up the small, elite group that values the wide ranging discussion found in our pages.

Why are we disliked? We say things like more artistic activity has not produced more quality art. It is reported that around the fifteenth year of the Booker Prize Antonia Byatt asked 'whose turn is it?' When a culture sinks into self-regard and cliques it takes every art form with it. But the direct way in which Penlee House was turned against the New Art Examiner and the way in which James Green, director of the Newlyn Orion, advised a councillor not to have anything to do with us goes well beyond a corrupt culture. It points to closed minds, to hidden interests and deliberate censorship.

I am not sure why this censorship exists but I think it may have something to do with the huge investment coming into Cornwall from Nicholas Serota and Teresa Gledowe. With tie-ups in funding to the tune of £500,000 at CAST in Helston, to shared trusteeships between Teresa Gledowe and Karen Townshend at Kestle Barton, the Serotas have the whole of Cornwall currying favour. Will it make Cornwall into the avant garde again? Will it produce 'good' art. If the YBA is anything to go by the propaganda machine will tell you it's all brilliant but it may be nothing but fashion.

Why do I say that? What is wrong with investing in Cornwall?

Let's first of all be clear, this is not investment in Cornwall; this is using Cornwall. Money will flow in, and has already started to, but the millions that could be generated by a new 'A' team of artists is not earmarked to be spent in Cornwall on Cornwall. It is investment capital that wants a high yield and a fast return for the investors. The personal wealth of the individuals who will benefit would stagger the average Cornish person and none of them will see a penny of it. Any more than the average Londoner benefitted from the YBA's antics or the average New Yorker became richer because New York became the power house of art after the last world war. Big art business doesn't have much time for the average person. However, it does know how to use people's hopes. The hope that art can solve problems, the hope that art can heal, the hope that art is the finest expression of creativity, the better part of the human consciousness, the principle driving force of all that is true. A brilliant self-sacrifice to excellence. Human beings have always had a propensity to worship images, and that makes images very dangerous. There isn't an image in

existence that doesn't come with a psychological byline at the ready in our heads. Brexit is all about the images millions have in their heads about themselves and the meaning of Country, and nothing to do with reality. And oh, how certain politicians like Johnson and Farage abused those images.

These matters take decades to come to political fruition. While everyone is busy making money they don't look at the damage they are doing to everyone else. There are some dissenting voices in the 80s and 90s but you have to look in cracking old magazine and fading newspapers to find them. Few remember their names and no one quotes them. Writers like William Honan of the New York Times who wrote in 1993, "Very strange things happen when the government or the academy or whatever it may be asks artists to perform in a certain way and begins to direct their activities." With the benefit of 25 years we can take out the word 'strange' and put in the correct term, 'neo-fascist'.

Artists are fiddling while culture is burning. Fascism is on the rise, peoples are on the move, the old hatreds are sparking into life and the gatekeepers of our culture: the managers at the Arts Councils, the national museums and art galleries, are broken recordings listing visitor numbers and kitsch sales as advances toward success, equality and the socially conscious generosity of the State.

Art education was once one of the finest educations you could have in the UK as it encompassed everything. Now art students are churned out and from the Royal College downwards they feel unprepared for the life of an artist who is not going to 'make it' in their lifetime, and they feel used just to keep faculties open for business. Investment in the arts in Cornwall is not going to change this scheme of things. Nothing happening in the political houses of the EU or USA or Brexit will change anything for the better in the art world as long as artists play the rich man's game.

We have one hope.

Art is not a status game. Stop looking for the feel-good factor. Start writing. Write down your fears, write down your hopes, write down what you see of the world around in your community and your family. Call out the hypocrisy. Identify the lies. That is what the New Art Examiner will always do and that is why certain organisations will never stock our magazine.

When they do you will know the vital shift into open debate will have begun and the road to artists being in charge of the culture of their countries and not the art managers, will have begun. Working together the promised renaissance in Cornwall could be magnificent.

*Daniel Nanavati*



# Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

**SUMMARY:** In this, the centenary of the birth of architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the attacks continue on the modernist functionalism that he espoused and the glass-and-steel building designs that expressed his vision. Though times have changed, and along with them the needs of architecture, a current New York exhibition of his drawings offers the chance to see Mies for the great artist he was.

Most great architects are artists first, builders second and good designers last of all, if by good design one means adaptation of a building to its function. No doubt this statement contradicts the ideology of modernism, but it certainly describes Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969), the most effective exponent of modernist functionalism ever to set foot on American shores. During this, the centenary of his birth, his admirers and detractors are still heatedly debating this central paradox of Mies's architecture — that he espoused functionalism and rationalism and practiced architecture as an art.

The litany of sins visited at Mies's door is a familiar one, given resonance by such grand inquisitors as Tom Wolfe and Robert Hughes: His glass buildings are cold, soulless places, hot in summer, freezing in winter, resistant to the introduction of those amenities and eccentricities that make a house a home. His city plazas are windswept and forbidding, his travertine lobbies are impersonal and unwelcoming, his museums are hostile to art and his open-plan school buildings are inimical to quiet, concentrated learning.

In response to these charges, Mies's admirers need utter only one word—"Chicago." New York is a city of canyons where buildings are only seen swooping upwards in dizzying perspective. Chicago is a city of towers that you see rising across vistas of parkland, lake and river — towers of gleaming steel and black glass, of red Corten steel and gold reflecting glass, of white marble sheathing, of massive curved pylons of concrete and delicately curved faceted glass, reflecting blue of lake and sky, like prisms of ice.

Downtown lakeshore Chicago has the most exciting and beautiful 20th century urban spaces in the world. And although he built only a fraction of the superb skyscrapers that have made Chicago a mecca for architectural connoisseurs, to Mies belonged the vision and the drive that created from the new materials of glass and steel a classical architecture with its own compelling language of forms, spaces, proportions, colors and textures.



*Ludwig Mies van der Rohe*

This supreme sensitivity to the look of space and form is what comes through in the Museum of Modern Art's current retrospective exhibition of the architect's work in New York. Mounted in honor of the centenary of his birth, it offers a rare opportunity to see Mies's drawings as the beautiful works of art they truly are. Mies's obsessive drive toward classical perfection is also the leitmotiv of Franz Schulze's comprehensive and revealing book, "Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography."

It is perhaps difficult for the current generation of American architects to appreciate Mies's achievement, for they have had to struggle to throw off his influence. Through his buildings, his own practice and his teaching at the Illinois Institute of Technology School of Architecture, Mies founded the second Chicago school of architecture. Like all schools, it produced more than its share of mediocre buildings. Giant Chicago firms like Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (Frank Lloyd Wright called it "skiddings, owe more and sterile") and C.F. Murphy repeated the Miesian steel and glass box skyscraper around the world until it became a tired formula.

But not one of the postmodern architects who attack his style comes close to Mies's command of materials and proportions, let alone his vision. Architects like Michael Graves, Stanley Tigerman and even the modernist apostate Philip Johnson have vied with each other in pasting arches,





*crown hall, Chicago*  
20

keyholes, gables and gewgaws onto their buildings in an effort to liven up their facades. But most of these visual links to the architectural past are so trifling and so awkward as to look merely amusing and eccentric, certainly not the stuff of a compelling architecture of the future. The distinguishing feature of the best Miesian architecture is a “rightness” of detail that comes as much from instinctual craftsmanship as from theory.

Born the son of a German stonemason, Mies spent happy hours during his childhood helping with lettering for gravestones. His elder brother, Ewald, was known throughout their hometown of Aachen for his ability to see the slightest misalignment of lettering. So young Mies must have absorbed the craftsman’s passion for perfection very early. At 15, after attending trade school, he apprenticed to a brick-mason and subsequently trained as a draftsman. Within a few years, his superb draftsmanship attracted notice from local architects, who urged the young man to pursue architectural studies in Berlin.

The first decade of Mies’s architectural career in Berlin gave little indication of the future visionary. His forceful personality impressed rich clients enough to secure him several commissions, but the solid burgher houses he built deviated little from the mildly progressive style of the

German architect Peter Behrens, in whose Berlin office Mies worked between 1908 and 1912.

Walter Gropius, the head of Behrens’s atelier and future head of the famed Bauhaus, was a much earlier apostle of steel and glass. During those years Mies was looking backward to the imposing classical structures built by Karl Friedrich Schinkel, the celebrated contemporary of Hegel, Kleist and Schelling. To Gropius, suiting the architecture to the age meant filling pressing needs, such as the creation of healthful workers’ housing and factories. To Mies it meant creating forms to celebrate the spirit of the 20th century, just as Schinkel had celebrated Prussian glory.

Mies was still unsure of his direction, however. It wasn’t until after World War I, in fact, that the architect adopted modernism as his creed. Then, aided by close association with artists Hans Richter, Theo Van Doesburg (co-founder with Piet Mondrian of the Dutch art movement De Stijl) and the Russian Constructivist El Lissitzky, Mies aimed the full force of his considerable willpower on the problem of creating “the will of an epoch translated into space.”

The craftsman in him, proselytized by the Constructivists, welcomed the opportunity to use the new materials and technological achievements of his age. At the same time, the idealizing order, implicit in the new art of De Stijl, gave



*Westmont Center, Montreal.*

him a spiritual anchor. For the next 10 years, Mies explored ways of welding these two poles together in buildings.

Few of the houses and none of the skyscrapers he designed between 1920 and 1937 were built. Until he came to America, Mies's reputation rested mostly on the creation of uninhabitable spaces. But very beautiful spaces they were. Many critics still believe that the pavilion Mies built for the 1929 Barcelona International Exposition was the high point of his architectural career. With its lavish materials of marble, chrome-plated columns, different-colored glass, free-flowing spaces and superb proportions, it was more like a walk through sculpture than architecture. The only lasting element in the whole ensemble was the graceful leather and steel Barcelona chair, which has become a much-imitated classic of modern furniture.

It was Chicago, then, that gave Mies his chance to build for the future. But the Architect's Westmont Centre, Montreal relationship wasn't just one-way. The most unfair attack on Mies by his numerous contemporary detractors is that his steel and glass architecture is somehow "un-American." This charge was repeated recently by architect Robert Stern in his public television series "Pride of Place."

Stem, an apostle of postmodernism, suggested that America stands for the individual against the universal and that the rational, universalizing architecture of Mies has no

roots in the American past.

But the reason American builders of the 1950s and 1960s embraced the Miesian style was that it seemed to them at that time quintessentially American. The skyscraper was invented in America, after all. And the steel frame building was invented in Chicago. Mies's twin lakeshore towers, built between 1949 and 1951, gave harmonious and beautiful form to the boundless technology-based optimism most Americans felt after World War II.

Times have changed and with them the needs of architecture. Certainly Mies has no blueprint for our building future. As Jane Jacobs has pointed out, modernist architects, including Mies, never understood the human needs fulfilled by cities. The postmoderns are right to search for new means of reinforcing our sense of history and community. But it is small-minded to deny Mies his greatness. His buildings are complete statements of an artist's vision, exacting and difficult perhaps, but classics of their time and place.

Jane Addams Allen

Published in INSIGHT into the News Magazine,  
Washington DC 1986



# The Market Rules but it's not Okay

In our high tech and cyberspace age a few old metaphors remain, from the time when work was mostly physical; metaphors still current in my childhood but now rare. You might still put a shoulder to the wheel, a nose to the grindstone, or die in harness. You might also be told there are lots of fish in the sea (no longer true). Much old speech has been supplanted by the jargon of the social sciences and that of telecommunications. We no longer meet, we network, etc. But what is most dominant, and most striking, in our daily speech is the language of the 'marketplace', that faceless god of the neocons who rule our world.

It began decades ago with the phrase, "I'll buy that," the response to anything the speaker approved. It has progressed to where we no longer implement policies or fulfil or keep promises; we only 'deliver' like a grocery van. To deliver a promise, taken literally, means no more than making that promise – an ambiguity convenient for politicians.

No one now makes decisions; only choices. Politicians make lots of 'tough choices', projecting an image at once macho and empathetic, when the only toughness for them is deciding what is more likely to win the next election and the actual toughness will fall on someone else. And the adjective for serious wrong-doing is often 'unacceptable', like the defective gadget the customer had to return.

We are no longer clients, hotel guests, diners or passengers. We are all only customers. If railways had kept the old term, there might be more recognition that the job of a railway is to get people from one place to another and on time, not merely to sell them tickets and provide income for shareholders. Our banks no longer offer a service but a product; even healthcare has been called a product, as has education, and students and patients are called customers. The distinction between goods and services is vanishing. A whole country can be described as a (tourism) product and in need of rebranding, like Britain after the epidemic of Foot and Mouth.

Styles, ideas, theories, customs and yes, also people, can be dismissed as 'past their sell-by-date' or said to have only 'limited shelf life'. We no longer display or exhibit anything; we 'showcase' it, surely the ugliest and clumsiest of all verbed nouns – as if only the image of a glass-topped counter makes what is on offer valid and real. I admit I have yet to hear, "Mr Smith was arrested for showcasing himself to women in the park."

In the past, I remember from geography lessons, textbooks referred to the 'agriculture and industry' of a region or country. Now there is only one word. Agriculture is an industry, as indeed it has become. While 'industry'

and 'product' take over our language, manufacture itself dwindles, moved to the cheap labour of the third world. It is as if the use of those words cloak the fact that in the West, most jobs are becoming those of middlemen, of buying and selling, making (except money) nothing at all.

The old terms boyfriend, girlfriend and lover have been dropped for 'partner' which used to refer to business relationships. There may be no more suitable word for the varied relationships of today but other languages cope differently; German for instance says 'my friend' as opposed to 'a friend' for that special one. As our words for close relationships have changed, so have our insults. In the great supermarket of the world, where competition rules, there are of course winners and losers. Past their sell-by date, it seems, are the old epithets which impugned the chastity of one's mother or the legitimacy of one's birth. I recently witnessed a furious row between two drivers. "You – you – you loser," one screamed at the other as he roared off, that being evidently the worst insult of all.

The market, where all values are relative and competition is all, sets standards not only for business but for life. We have the 'marketplace of ideas', the 'verdict of the market' and 'the rule of the market' or of the 'global market' that ultimate arbiter. Our world consists wholly of 'resources' – for the market, of course. Loggers 'harvest' thousand-year-old trees. Farmers 'harvest' pigs and sheep as if they were ears of corn, though even the EU has finally classified animals as 'sentient beings'. The use of 'harvest' does not merely de-animate and degrade the living creatures involved, it implies the whole planet is one big crop, there for our taking,

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Ruth Hardisty, author and publisher of BBC's *Back to the Land*

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as if we had planted it ourselves – as indeed, with genetic engineering, we hope to do.

It is not only animals. We are now all, unless ‘past our sell-by date’, ‘human capital’ and ‘human resources’. So no doubt do slave owners regard their slaves; we use the terms

for ourselves. We made the market; it has become a force as independent and powerful as nature or God. Human capital? Human resources? When next you hear those phrases, think about what they mean.

Francis Oliver

## Colour Me Impressed

The exhibition of the British artist Patrick Heron, which covered his early figurative and later complete abstractions, featured fascinating vignettes of his life. The first retrospective show of Heron’s work in over twenty years, highlights Heron as a driving influence behind the St Ives School. As a critic, Heron made commanding arguments for abstraction, pushing the boundaries of what art could achieve.

I was enticed by the vibrancy of colour Heron chose to utilize in his paintings. It stayed in my mind. Both during and after I visited the exhibition it was, and still is, quite impressive. As a prominent representative of the genre, Heron’s work suggests that British Modernism sought direction and inspiration by peeking over the English channel at the French schools of art. After engaging with Heron’s paintings, particular French artists appear to have influenced his work more than others. Cezanne, Braque, and Matisse are three notable influences, but another stands above the rest, Pierre Bonnard.

Heron’s frequent usage of informally arranged interior spaces, several of which have garden views or references, is derived from Bonnard’s compositional and thematic choices.

Not enough focus is given to Heron’s writing, which results in a lack of context for important parts of this exhibition. More information about his tenure as an art critic would add another dimension to the show’s narrative. However, the time-line presented does highlight some prominent moments in Heron’s career, but it gives no

indication as to how Heron can be placed in a broader art historical context.

As an artist, Heron made specific choices regarding colour, form, size, and spacing in his paintings. The manner in which he executed those choices is the true brilliance of his work. It allows the viewer to develop an individualized response and relationship to his creations. In a sense, Heron allows the viewer to put the finishing touches on the paintings.

I am thankful for having seen this exhibition and for being introduced to an authority on abstract painting. As a movement and genre of art, Modernism is quintessentially European. Author and art historian Serge Guilbaut has suggested that New York became the centre of Modern art during the 20th century. However, Heron’s body of work throws a wrench into the mechanisms of that claim. No artist in the States painted like Heron did. I was educated and trained as an art historian in the States and Heron’s name was never mentioned. Undoubtedly, this is a result of Heron not being included within the Greenberg domain.

I am inspired by this exhibition to lift that veil and pursue and research art beyond that sphere.

Alexander Stanfield

Turner Contemporary Museum Margate, Kent UK. Fri 19 Oct 2018 - Sun 6 Jan 2019

*Alexander started the New art Examiner’s online course teaching critical writing in November, and we are delighted to print his first published piece.*



Derek Guthrie will have an exhibition in Cornwall’s Lost Meadow Gallery in May

# Basel, Miami Beach

Art Basel, Miami Beach is, supremely, a market-place. You walk into the exhibition halls at Untitled, Scope and the Miami Convention Center, and walk around the spaces with your list, knowing exactly what you want to buy. Like any instinctive shopper you are always open to a new experience but in the main your meal will be what you anticipated it would be.

If, of course, this was all for people just to look who could complain at this rich and varied experience. From Kitsch to Picasso, from Koon knock-offs to the salesman himself it is all here. But somehow, exactly like your bag of potatoes being the same weight today as it was yesterday, with exactly the same distribution of size and shape, so the objects being sold are overwhelmingly devoid of serious thinking, derivative of process and so desperate to be new, the makers (you cannot call them artists without a smile) devolve to any rehash of any idea with the lacquer of a new material or politically correct pointers to suffering.

What does it say of a nation that Johannesburg chose to show photographs of people, in all shapes and in many manners, while New York showed a series of dirty and repainted fuel cans? The former relishing the image, discussing what their people are, the latter showing what corrupting the status of the individual does to a society. So many things were shiny, so many things were 'ethnic' for the sake of being ethnic. Above all, so many things were there so the collectors could find exactly the right object for the space on the wall or the bare patch on the floor.

The most beauty I saw on display was the elegance of so many of the women walking around. More works of art were wearing dresses than were displayed in almost all the gallery booths.

Basel Miami Beach is not about art. You could see all the art on display in one afternoon, you didn't need a week. It was all about trading goods and providing a financial service. And when you traduce art to goods you rip out the heart of your culture.

We know images play a crucial and deep role in the human brain. We know people have and do worship images. When you dally with images you play with a peoples sense of themselves. You don't just end up with a bad meal. It is the degeneration of your culture to pretend that what rich people trade with each other still is, in fact, a statement of nationhood and its identity.

It no longer is.

Art and Art Basel are two, distinct creations. They only look similar.

*Daniel Nanavati*



*Johannesburg*



*New York*



*Deux anes Vert, Marc Chagall*



# The Auto Mall of Art

Used car salesmen and all their entourage of overhyped and bibulous aficionados filled the rows of the new and alluring showroom of Art Basel Miami inside the Miami Beach Convention Center. Booth after booth of this year's freshest art pieces were surrounded by elegant but weathered dealers and artists trying to make it big. Miami Beach tries to pull it together by coating the city with sophistication and elite events curated by international powerhouses such as BMW, MGM Resorts and Ruinart Champagne, etc. If the ever-present publicity was not present and if one was not told that there was a world-renowned beach a few city blocks from the main venue, one could mistake it all for Las Vegas.

The true origins of the Art Basel Miami do, indeed, go back to car dealers. One to be specific - Norman Braman, an 86-year-old billionaire car dealer and former owner of the Philadelphia Eagles. Braman's enthusiasm for the finer things in life brought him to the art world via his full city block car dealership on Biscayne Boulevard, boasting its very own petrol station. "Braman has become a towering figure in Miami's art scene. In the late 1990s, when there were fewer than 10 galleries in the entire county, the billionaire collector helped convince a conservative Swiss art fair to open a second edition in Art Deco, neon-streaked South Beach. Seventeen editions later, that fair, Art Basel in Miami Beach, has raised the profile of contemporary art in popular culture more than almost any single other entity".

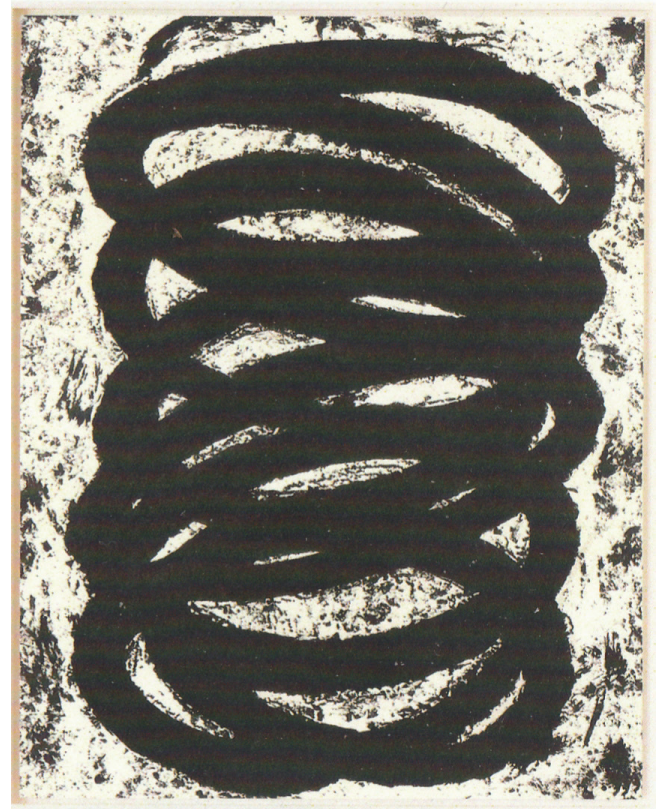
Without a doubt, this once a year celebration of the contemporary and classic arts will go on for years to come; despite market crashes and recessions, art will always prevail. All the fanfare, along with vintage champagne and truffled risotto dinners topped with exotic animals, might disappear and possibly revert to a much simpler era. There was a time where all that mattered was enlightening the world with fresh ideas, new art and naive but original talent discussed over an intimate dinner, not at a rave party on a rooftop of a Las Vegas hotel chain in Miami Beach.

Today's art world is littered with followers that try to mimic what was successful a decade ago; they have created a shiny but blurred déjà vu visible throughout the endless rows of booths. Cars and art are quite similar, if not in the same category; there are a few manufacturers such as Bugatti or Ferrari that still have the passion to build an original avant-garde piece of machinery and the ones that just decide to copy them because it is safer than making a fresh start. The same is seen in the art world. Such safe-bets all we have to look forward to.

Ben Russo



*Finally Finished IV. Richard Serra*

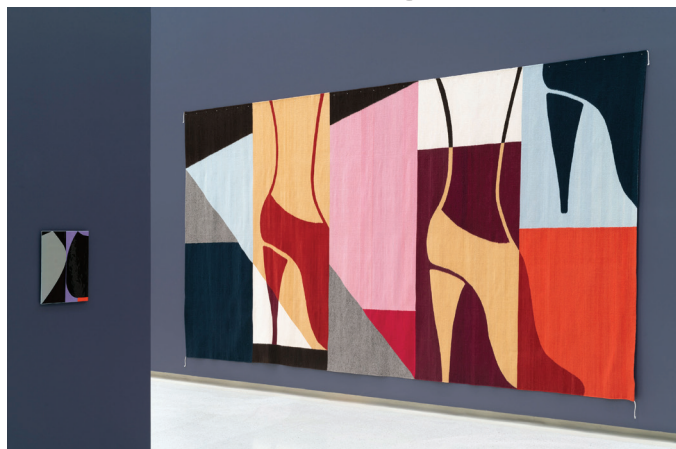


*Finally Finished III. Richard Serra.*



# Pittsburgh

## Same ol' Carnegie



*Ulrike Müller Wraps and Rugs (con zapatos) Installation View 2018 Courtesy the artist and Callicoon Fine Arts, New York, photo by Bryan Conley*

It was made clear in curator Ingrid Schaffner's introductory meet the press talk when she posed the rhetorical question to herself; is there a theme for the Carnegie International? Her emphatic response ... NO.

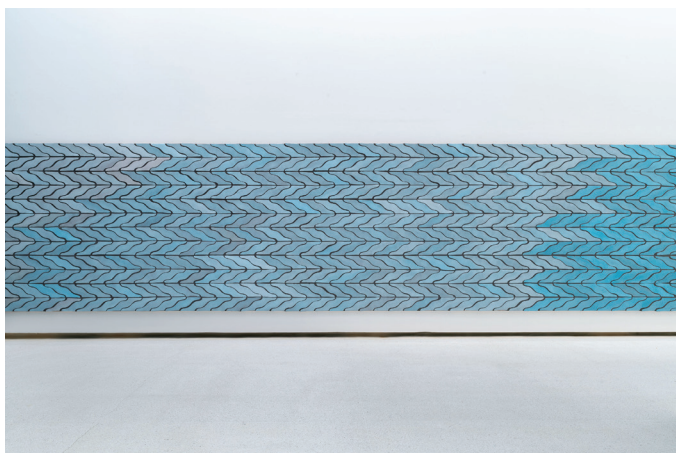
In general the exhibition is arranged as a series of one person exhibitions which only reinforces the idea that there is not an overarching theme to this iteration. Perhaps a nod to the seemingly endless extension of post-modern pluralism or is that now post-post-modernism. Meet the new boss, same as the old boss. Speaking of power, the event is meant to include artists from around the world and it does fulfill this obligation, however the works and artists that were chosen fall heavily within a western centric framework for what constitutes contemporary art. The exhibition is really about the interplay of idea based art vs work that is mostly formal with an emphasis on appearance and craft. Art that would traditionally be found in a museum type setting, super-sized works that were made to fit the large scaled museum white cube spaces vs art that is more socially engaged and is rarely seen/experienced inside the traditional art institution. Whereas the former fits very neatly in its proper context, often the more socially engaged artists/collectives felt out of place, asked to make work using formulas that make sense outside of the institution but feel watered down or just plain inappropriate within the museum context.

The former works in general for artists such as Sarah Crouner and Ulrike Müller who were tasked with the challenge of staging an entrance to the exhibition and who both combine elements of minimalism with pattern and

decoration in their works. Crouner's undulating wall mounted, relief ceramic sculpture with its repetitive chevron pattern begins outside of the Scaife Gallery and then continues within as if penetrating the interior /exterior wall. Her ceramic sculpture and dyed and sewn collaged non-representational canvases create in interesting dialogue with Müller's modestly scaled enamel on steel paintings and her large scale abstract weavings which reinforce their two dimensional flatness but also include high heels. This pairing helps to create a visually stunning gateway for the rest of the exhibition because of their ability to command the cavernous spaces of the museum so well.

Unfortunately for Rachel Rose and her gentle, meticulously crafted animation *Lake Valley* the space tends to subsume the work. Although set up as an installation it is essentially out in the open. Someone decided to put a carpet down to invite viewers to sit as if watching cartoons on a Saturday morning on TV but it feels nothing like a living room or an old rec room, it lacks intimacy and unfortunately the work suffers because of it. It is not large enough to compete with the space and the other work around it and really deserved a smaller contained space. Continuing through the exhibition one encounters a larger installation of figurative paintings by Londoner Lynette Yiadom-Boakye. The subjects include black and brown skinned males and females lounging around posing languidly in both interior and exterior settings. The works show off a certain type of painterly virtuosity. They are handsome paintings of attractive people. And although they look good and check off the visceral and sensual boxes for engaging paintings once one gets beyond the appearance there is a void. Thinking back to the last international her work has some relation to Henry Taylor's narrative style figurative paintings, which were a bit more raw and unpolished but they also carried an historical weight of the black experience. Unlike Yiadom-Boakye paintings, where we just get staged figures and narratives that look like they could come right out of J Crew catalogues -- perhaps that it is the point.

Some of the most engaging work is found within the smaller spaces of the museum. I can't help but feel like I am walking through a big box store when I am inside these larger Scaife galleries. There is a clinical, impersonal vastness to these spaces which often leaves me cold, with their gargantuan scaled works creating a hierarchy perhaps literally and figuratively between the dominating bully (the artwork and museum interior architectural space) and the



*Sarah Crowner Wall (Wavy Arrow Terracotta) Installation View 2018 Courtesy the artist and Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York, photo by Bryan Conley*

minuscule powerless viewer. These types of spaces encourage and foster the idea of spectacle. This is why I gravitate to the Heinz Architectural Center, which houses the work of 3 artists and one collaborative pair. Here the spaces are much more intimate with lower ceilings, moodier lighting, linen colored walls and dark stained wood moldings. It feels like its own show within the larger exhibition and you have to physically open doors to enter this space. This is an excellent example of the curators pairing artists with appropriate spaces. Jessi Reaves has a room to herself and once again we have evidence of the curators' fondness for well-crafted formally engaging work. Reaves a trained upholsterer uses this skill to her advantage by taking apart furniture and then piecing it back together in clever and engaging ways which take the form of wall mounted and free standing sculptures as well as a very large, free flowing organically shaped couch. I couldn't help but recognize the influence of Lee Bontecou on this work. In the Feminist Responsibility Project, Beverly Semmes rebukes sexist and misogynist portrayals of women by selecting imagery from porn magazines, printing them onto canvas and then slathering paint overtop of the figures exposed bodies. Her critique includes the fashion industry as well as Semmes centralized video documents her own version of a fashion show with models wearing patterns derived from imagery from the aforementioned paintings.

In a piece certain to leave the smallest footprint but perhaps the most lasting imprint on my memory was the work of Japanese artist Yuji Agematsu which is tucked away in the diminutive Charity Randall Gallery. The work is a record of a daily ritual of collecting. Agematsu, a pack a day smoker sets out on daily walks and collects refuse that he finds along the way. He then creates tiny mixed media pieces with this collected refuse and carefully places them within the clear plastic wrappers of his cigarette packaging.



*Alex Da Corte Rubber Pencil Devil, Courtesy the artist and Karma New York, photo Bryan Conley*

He displays these pieces on twelve clear acrylic shelving units one for each month of the year (which resemble the inside of a medicine cabinet) and organizes the plastic wrappers and their contents in an ordered set of rows and seven columns in conjunction with the days of the week. The miniature time capsules of waste displayed like artifacts are nonetheless extremely fascinating and I found myself transfixed by their contents which often contained items such as: chewing gum, used q-tips, candy wrappers, hair, hair ties, half eaten dum dums, and an occasional tiny picture from a magazine or newspaper clipping including an image of John Travolta. The lighting of the work created beautifully intricate black and white shadows of the plastic packaging and its contents on the wall behind the pieces. They looked like ghostly versions of the contents, perhaps a foreshadowing of what the future holds... Death

One of the most challenging parts of the jobs of the curator is how to manage artists and artist collectives who have essentially built their careers by making work that is intentionally situated outside the confines of the gallery and museum setting. And here we are talking about the new wave of socially active artists whose work is often in opposition to the type of institution such as the Carnegie Museum, the epitome of a well-known purveyor and power broker for the construction of artistic taste and cementers of artistic legacy. This is where the hypocrisy rears its ugly head in the wink wink relationship of curator, institution and artist(s). A perfect example of this happens with the artist collective Post-Commodity. Based on their name, one can assume that they are attempting to position themselves outside of the economic infrastructure and in so doing extend the philosophy of the earthworks, conceptual and neo-conceptual movements. In the last Carnegie International, Zoe Strauss set up a temporary portrait photo studio on 8th avenue in Homestead and took free portraits of the locals. Under the auspices of egalitarianism this type

of work attempts to engage with the community and make the participants feel like they are important and in the end have a place in the museum which was built by Carnegie, former owner of the former Homestead Works steel plant. This year Postcommodity takes up the mantle of socially engaged work by according to their website fostering connective shared dialogues that challenge the negative metanarratives which are destabilizing our communities. After a number of site visits to the Carrie Furnaces, formerly an integral part of the steel operation at the now closed Homestead Works, and also visits to the Hill district, once known for its vibrant jazz scene, their work on the floor of the hall of Sculpture used salvaged steel from the Carrie Furnaces site in Rankin, crushed granular glass and three sizes of coal. In addition they recruited local jazz musicians to perform improvisations in response to the piece. In both of these cases Strauss and Post-Commodity come to a designated area, Pittsburgh, with the intention of applying their models of socially engaged working methods. They spend a short amount of time there and then make work that marginally addresses the social issues of the particular place. How can this work be authentic? They are not making the work from the inside of these cultures. They are not a part of the fabric of these cultures. They have become recognized in the art world because they have made work from an embedded perspective, places they have lived and worked. But when this blueprint is used outside of their homes where they have established roots, then it becomes something else entirely – formulaic and inauthentic. In addition the work on the floor of the hall of sculpture took a massive amount of resources to gather the material and transport it all to the museum and then this will be repeated when the show closes unless of course the museum purchases the piece. Isn't that the ultimate package of commodity and consumerism all wrapped into one?

A similar conundrum occurs with the work of Jon Rubin and Lenka Clayton who have joined forces in their installation *Fruit and Other Works*, again, artists known for their work outside of traditional art contexts. Here they have come up with a shrewd solution to working within the museum setting taking the 10,632 rejected titles of work that were submitted from the earliest years of the *International, 1896 – 1931* and then employing local artists to paint the titles on paper during museum hours. Visitors can then take the painted title home with them as a souvenir. One of the interesting outcomes of this enterprise is the fact that the hired artists (I wonder how much they are paid?) sit there for hours on end painting these innocuous titles. It is essentially a sweat shop of sorts for these artists who work tirelessly and are expected to crank

out a painting every 8 minutes or so while the owners of the means of production Clayton and Rubin are absent but get all of the recognition. It becomes a perfect metaphor for the capitalist model and perhaps a nod to the namesake of the museum – wink, wink.

Having lived here for over 30 years, I have seen many of these *Internationals*. When I was young, I often dismissed



*Yuji Agematsu Installation View 2018,  
Photo by Bryan Conley*

them as just part of the bourgeois enterprise. As I matured, at times, I was impressed and or in awe of some of the work that I saw at these exhibitions and was thankful to be able to see art that was considered to be important and had been canonized by the international art world. As of today, I am no longer enamored with the art itself. There is so much art in the world to weed through and the moments of nirvana have diminished greatly. Now, when considering the Carnegie international I examine it more critically by trying to understand what this type of exhibition really means to the city of Pittsburgh and the top-down art world which in general is still dominated by the major art centers. What is most relevant to me is to underscore what is behind the machinations of an art world trying to maintain itself, sustain its relevancy and preserve and build on its relative worth in the global economy. Of course dealers, auction houses, museums, and collectors around the world have a vested interest in making sure that we believe the hype. In the end I look at this exhibition through the eyes of a mature artist and someone who has established Pittsburgh roots.

It really has become just another exhibition.

Scott Turri



# Vanishing into Infinity

*Yayoi Kusama at the Hirshhorn.*

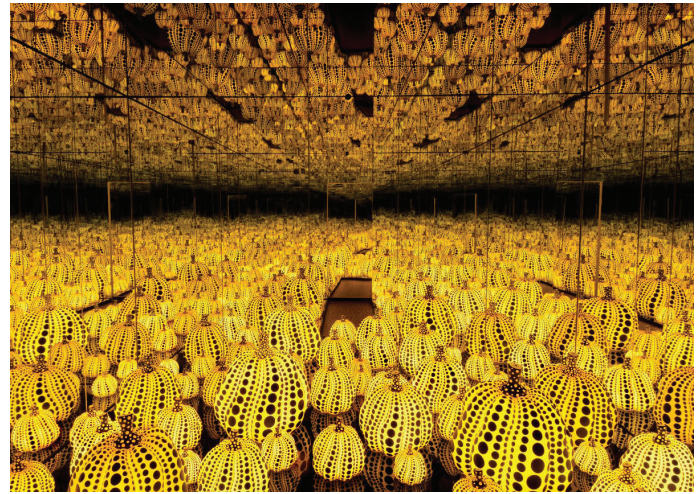
Standing alone, surrounded by a cosmos of points of light, or rows of glistening, golden pumpkins, my loneliness is alleviated by the unaccountable vastness and brilliance of these shimmering forms. But there is a dark side to this brilliance; the artist's suffering and experience played out on this field.

Yoyoi Kusama, a very private artist, who hides in a mental institution at night, and in her nearby studio by day, fears loneliness. She has conquered her fear with a self-imposed treatment program of desensitization, surrounding herself with myriad companionable forms. Her constant making and exhibition of repetitive round forms, be they light, pumpkins or seeds lead to organized patterns that allow her and her audience to organize the overwhelming chaos in our lives and societies, surroundings and visions in a pattern of beauty and life. Kusama wants "... to show that I am one of the elements - one of the dots among the millions of dots in the universe."

No longer lonely, I am immersed in the beauty, in the brightness of a thousand stars for the few moments I am allowed in each light room. With multiple points of brilliance, below me, surrounding me, above me, I cast the only shadow in the room. Only a human can cast a shadow in this starlit universe. Emerging from the light room, by turning my back on this cosmos, entering another, I am surrounded by heavy, gravity-bound pumpkins sticking to the dark earth cemetery ground on which I stand in the dark night. I cannot escape the similarity of the womb and pumpkin shapes, the pumpkin's stem resembling the elongated sperm entering it, seeds inside ready for fertilization. The cemetery of pumpkins is enlivened and fertilized begetting life, with beams of golden light, just as floating stars in space, in the last installation become linear paths leading to infinity.

It is all related in one narrative. We do not die, but become infinitesimal points of light, one dot among millions, in the heavens. On earth, we must inhabit the ground, like pumpkins, like women's wombs, receiving sperm that fertilize the seeds within us, to allow the civilization to go on. We cannot long for or inhabit that celestial world we have momentarily experienced, because human life on earth, that of the golden pumpkins, the golden wombs of our present time are just as spectacular.

All of Kusama's work, totally autobiographical, reflects



*infinity mirrors*

her past and present. A woman artist, the issues she embraces in her work are timely and relevant. Perhaps that is why websites crashed with attempts to obtain tickets for her show, *Infinity Mirrors*, at the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C. and at the Cleveland Museum of Art. One of her first installations, *Infinity Mirror Room-Phalli's Field*, (1965, Castellan Gallery, New York), featured the artist lying on a bed of multiple, hand made polka-dotted, snake-like pillows, clearly intended to be phallic forms. Kusama invited viewers to walk a polka-dotted path of phallic forms while seeing themselves and the forms reflected in the mirrored floor. Here, Kusama merges the technology of mirrors and light with the hand-made craft technique of sewing, which she executes herself, emphasizing the making of the universe, be it on earth or in the cosmos.

Since that first installation, Kusama has produced twenty different mirror rooms. They have ranged from life-size rooms to mirrored peep-show chambers to domed mirror rooms surrounded by inflatable balloons hung from the ceiling to the dark, mirrored "infinity" rooms of cosmos-like points of light seen at the Hirshhorn, in Cleveland and in other museums shows.

The retrospective, *Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors* at the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C. and various iterations of the show including at the Cleveland Museum of Art during the first Cleveland Tri-ennial in Summer, 2018 included paintings, room-size installations, sculptures and mirrored peep shows. They provided a complete lexicon of her play with motifs, color, layering, light, reflection, and exploration of the body and the celestial universe. The

exhibitions covered the three main periods of her career, from her 1958 arrival in New York City, when she climbed the Empire State Building stairs to survey the city's lights, then staged happenings, painting everything and everyone, including her own nude body, with dots; her work in the late sixties and early seventies when she returned to Japan, and her rediscovery and frenetic making of work from the 1990's to the present.

According to the artist, having survived World War II in Japan, when she felt she could no longer go on, she observed a river of white stones behind her house, leading to her repetitive patterning of dots to fill a vacuum, first shown in her 1952 work, *Infinity*, with black dots on a white canvas. However, I contend that observation of fallout and shards of destroyed buildings and civilizations during the war led to this field of dots that marks all of her work. The use of phallic symbols, of male power, further corroborates the World War's destructive power and fallout from the bombs, instigating her mark making.

After those initial dotted paintings, she created painted visual fields where nets or dots cover everything. In *Infinity Nets* (1960) white nets, painted over a black or grey ground limit the view of what lies behind or underneath them, separating Kusama from the traumatic surroundings. Those nets obscure and dots persist throughout her work, as she explains in the catalogue for her second exhibition at Victoria Miro Mayfair; "The universe would be obliterated by white nets of nothingness connecting astronomical accumulations of dots."

Everything is covered in dots at her Hirshhorn exhibition, from the circular forms in *Infinity Nets*, to the round acrylic pumpkins of *All the Eternal Love I Have for the Pumpkins* (2016) to the points of light in *Infinity Mirrored Room-Brilliance of the Souls* (2014). We are encouraged to cover a white room, with white furniture, (reminiscent of the mental institution where Kusama spends her nights, or a

hospital where one might have recovered from the radiation-induced illness after the bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, with colored dots in *Obliteration Room*, (2002), Kusama writes in *Manhattan Suicide Addict*, (1978). "When we obliterate nature and our bodies with polka dots, we become part of the unity of our environment." Obviously, she refers to the obliteration of nature by the bomb, the ensuing radiation illnesses, uniting the devastated environment and the self. BOMB magazine's interview with Grady Turner, Winter 1999, states, "Polka dots symbolize disease...Nets symbolize horror toward the infinity of the universe-We cannot live without air."

Cloth-covered, handmade by Kusama, painted phallus shapes repeat ad infinitum in the multi-genre work, *Infinity Mirror Room-Phalli's Field* (1965/1998) and again in *A Snake*, (1974). She had to touch the phallus shapes as she made them, constructing them, stuffing them with foam until they stood stiff. But they are not connected to anyone. They function as objects, divorced from the body they might connect to. She deconstructs her fear as she constructs these objects and orders them in martial patterns, to march across the landscape she inhabits. The resulting desensitization releases her from fear of sex and phalli.

Whether phalli, or lights or specks of radiation fallen from atomic bombs, Kusama has succeeded in creating the sublime; her installations show her fear of death but also the beauty of the world that awaits, and that of the universe that surrounds us above earth's atmosphere, untouched by the disease and horror unleashed by powerful men. Whether the twinkling lights of Tokyo, or New York, from her perch in space, her body no longer tied to the earth, or penetrable by radiation, or phalluses, or disease, she overcomes fear, of sex, of death, of loneliness.

And old artist, now 88, who has thought about death, experienced hallucinations full of colored lights, seen the power of men, and feared sex; ( she never married or bore children), flown above dark cities filled with twinkling lights and seen rows of dead, diseased, buried, with tombstones above them in fields, has produced this body of work. She has alleviated the fear of death, forgiven those who bombed and killed, and replaced it with a curiosity of what is to come. She wrote, in *Infinity Mirrors*, "After I die, I hope that people see that my paintings are about love and peace and spirituality." Yes, and ugly, mundane reality and the beautiful light of the universe.

Nancy Schreiber / Liz Ashe



*Infinity mirrors at the Hirshhorn*



# Pulitzer comedian at the Hirshhorn

The Hirshhorn hosted an interview between Jerry Saltz, critic at New York magazine and Charlotte Burns editor at In Other Words on the evening of 29th November 2018. It was the second talk I had attended since arriving in DC on 26th September, the first being given by Raphael Lozano-Hemmer. Both were self-indulgent hogwash.

Saltz is a stand up comedian. From his opening with 'Hello Washington' to his choosing the most famous and most obvious artworks to illustrate his exhortation to the assembled audience to be vampires if they were going to be good artists. Stay up all night. Never stop working. He played to the political sensibility with his admission that his parents were, in today's parlance, illegal aliens. He wanted his audience to laugh. He wanted them to love him. He wanted them to take selfies with him. They were willing sheep.

I was in no doubt by the end of his talk that his wife was more deserving of the Pulitzer Prize for art criticism than he. I was also in no doubt that he is, in every way, a light weight thinker. His throw away line that in 24 months maybe we will be rid of Trump made me think that the last Jewish people who said that fascism wouldn't last were mostly dead within twelve years. If any of you have read this issue of the New Art Examiner from first page to this, you will be in no doubt as to what I think of celebrities in contemporary art and the damage such a cultural perversion has done to the nations of the world that indulge in it. One girl was shaking when she stood next to Saltz because of his fame. When did we cease to judge the awe in which we held people by the depth of their knowledge and the character of their speech? When did we teach children to worship well known faces and not question too deeply the content of their thoughts?



*The Hirshhorn should do better*

He says he was a late developer but if this is the standard of his discourse, this playing to the crowd, he has yet to even begin to think. The Republic is in peril, the fascists have learned how to win because liberals only know how to lose. Saltz is not a failed painter because his work was no good, he failed because he was too cowardly to suffer the poverty of trying until he got it right. He gave up. Like thousands of others. The underlying reason he gave up is because not everyone is an artist, despite the kindergarten teachings of contemporary art schools.

Liberals lose because real critics, real thinkers like Derek Guthrie, are never asked to talk or lecture. Here's my challenge to the Hirshhorn. Invite the Publisher of the New Art Examiner to talk. Let those interested in art be challenged and dispense with this self-satisfied mob of actors who think not, know not and paint not.

Daniel Nanavati

## The Penwith Gallery improves to One out of Six

I am intrigued to discover how very much I want to be challenged by Art and not just to see something done well that has already been done and is now being done again.

Of the 6 artists in this exhibition, by far the most interesting work is by the sculptor Seamus Moran. His work is complex and intriguing. He is at once thoughtful, challenging, humorous and incredibly skilled. The attention he gives to his work is apparent in every tiny element. The humour is black, the Catholic influence evident, the whimsy unexpected.

Of the many pieces in the exhibition, the humour of a half-closed, spiked pod containing feathers called simply

'Snatch' is clear but the piece itself makes a stronger statement about the harshness of life, dog eat dog – live with it.

'Disposable' is a crab shell filled with what appear to be pieces of acrylic with plastic forks unfolding around the shell. The crab lies on its back and we do not know if it is dead or about to flip over and scuttle away. It is an animation waiting to happen.

For me, the star of the show was undoubtedly a piece called 'Harness' in cast alloy, stainless steel and wood. An articulated bird-like figure, armoured and 'volant'. There is heraldry a-plenty here and the figure is reminiscent of some

of the earliest and crazier 'crests' worn on top of the tilting helm for jousting. The figure is both open and strong while being intensely vulnerable. It reminds me of Epstein's Rockdrill. Strength and vulnerability. Great combination.

Next to Harness is the tiniest piece in the exhibition 'Untitled Bronze' – incidentally, how challenged we are by the lack of a label. Will it make us look more carefully, more openly – longer? The piece is minimal and bone-like yet still strong, very ancient and utterly fragile. There is a resemblance to a holy relic, both in the object itself and in the presentation - a spike from the Crown of Thorns. The complexity in such a tiny piece is intense.

Seamus Moran uses bone, feathers, resin, metals, porcelain, leather, wood – he uses what will work and it does work in each piece. There are elements of fetish, the grotesque, there is hard-hitting humour, there is pain, punishment and fragility but, above all, there is a mind that never stops asking questions or looking for new answers.

*Maxine flaneuse de Cornouaille  
Penwith Gallery, St.Ives 6th Oct-3rd Nov 2018  
Group exhibition by Tom Leaper, Karen  
McEndoo, David Moore, Seamus Moran, Iona  
Sanders and Mark Verry*

## EXTRAVAGANZA 2



### ART WORLD ON TRIAL

At the The High Court of Justice  
and will commence at 7pm

at

**THE ACORN THEATRE**  
**April 13th 2019**  
**PENZANCE**

the comic and hilarious nature of the 'Art World on Trial' is set to  
expose art to serious satirical questioning

contemporary and historical artists will be placed in the  
witness box to be questioned on their appropriateness to culture and  
contemporary life

the audience acting as jury will pass judgement as a final conclusion to the  
necessity of art or not

ticket price from Acorn £10 - door £12  
organised by NewArt Examiner

## The Bralette and the Twilight of the Underwired Push-up Bra vs. the Codpiece

Women have always supported pain and discomfort in the name of beauty and fashion, as they have tried to fit the image society expects of them and have the figure that men of their time admire. All for fashion. The fact that some

clothing articles might be uncomfortable or constricting has been considered unimportant and just part of being a woman – discomfort is natural, of course. Women over the ages have undergone endless fashion tortures, from

tight bodices, corsets, foot binding in China, girdles, sleeping on steel curlers at night, garter belts, uncomfortable high heeled shoes, thongs, suffocating tights and stockings, to underwired push-up bras to make them look bustier. Would men have ever put up with such rubbish? Would a man be willing to wear an underwire supporter for his trouser snake? No, never.

It's questionable if men would be interested in displaying and making more evident their male genitalia again as they did in the 15th to the 17th centuries, where they wore the so-called codpiece as a pouch in front of their trousers to show off their attributes and virility. The codpiece had no underwiring, hence they had no pain or discomfort in wearing them, probably with an element of pleasure. ➤





Fortunately, around 1575 Queen Elizabeth (1533–1603) was able to discourage the use of the codpiece. Today most men wouldn't like all the publicity of having their crotch stared at constantly. However, Amazon does sell at least two models of undergarment codpieces for men in a modernized model that is somewhat similar to the effect of the padded underwired bra. They offer the amazing "male package enhancer" that can be worn underneath trousers and swimming costumes; it gives men a noticeable bulge, so they appear larger. They also offer comfortable elastic ball lifters to enhance their appearance or attraction. Interesting.

Today most of men's clothing is focused on comfort, excluding the tie, which is excruciating at times, especially in the summer heat, though it doesn't really enhance a body part except for a man's face and broad shoulders, should he have them. Men's clothing has more pockets and in general is better made than women's clothing. Seams are often re-enforced, and fabrics are not delicate and easy to rip like the chiffon and silk fabrics often used in women's clothing. Pockets for men are real, whereas designers for some reason often leave fake pockets in women's trousers and jackets, as though they didn't need them. Sportswear for women is changing all this, and it's a godsend. In 2018 isn't it time women eliminated uncomfortable bras that exaggerate the size of their breasts with the conspicuous display of their bodies, advertising their femininity?

Women in the 15th and 16th centuries were exposing their breasts in their dresses, from Queens to prostitutes, as the breast wasn't considered sexy but as a sign of virtue. A press release of the University of Warwick wrote (also in History Today magazine): "In the 1600s it was fairly commonplace for women to bare their breasts in public. The fashions were initiated by court members and Queens, then replicated by ordinary women, and common prostitutes. 17th century fashion, rather than demeaning women, could be empowering. The extremely low-cut dresses were designed to encourage men to look but not to touch. They empowered some women to use their sexuality."

From: <https://web.archive.org/web/20040803155530/http://www.newsandevents.warwick.ac.uk/index.cfm?page=pressrelease&id=1858>

As time went by women covered up again and started wearing corsets. From the corsets came the girdles, and then those too mostly disappeared from the scene and along came padded and underwired bras to enhance the breast lift. These bras promised instant shaping, thanks to the engineering feat of the wire structure; wire, though covered with soft fabric, easily chaffed delicate areas of skin as it offered no flexibility. Women looked forward to nothing more than coming home and taking off their bras,

freedom from those wire cages.

Bra underwire from US patent #6468130

Building a bra isn't just a design pattern, but is also a feat of engineering, of hydraulics and physics. Some bras have been studied by engineers as shock absorbers for the big bosomed women who bounce with every step. There are even patents for the engineering structure of some bras; they are not just drawn by fashion designers. Due to market trends some of these highly trained bra engineers are already having to change their specialty and re-train in other fields of engineering.

U.S. Pat. No. 6,203,400

So why the big shift today from sexy underwired bras to the unenhanced bralette or even the flattening sports bra? The answer is comfort. Comfort over discomfort and a new kind of sexuality, as a trail blazer and burst of sincerity. Women are becoming real, no more illusion, no longer little Barbie dolls. At least some of them, many of them. The underwear industry has had to meet their demands and unquestionably the trend towards sports bras and bralettes is growing exponentially. According to retail analytics of Edited, "sell outs of push-up bras have fallen by 50% compared to a year ago, while sell outs of bralette or triangle bras, have rocketed by 120%. That's based on a sample of 80 lingerie retailers across the US, UK and Europe."

Where sports fashion has been transforming everyday wear even for work, it has finally made a dent in the bra industry. Women are more and more interested in being fit and showing off their fitness; hence the success of the sports bra, but also the little, light bralette, leaving a woman's breasts to feel totally free as though going braless. Can it get any better? Fashion expert Liliana Vazquez says, "Sports bras have almost become women's badge of honor from their workout and having a body that's fitting of just wearing a sports bra." Some progress has been made as women leave behind their cages and embrace their breasts in the wind. Perhaps men will also benefit from this.

With the royal bra fitter (82-year-old June Kenton of Rigby & Peller) losing her famous client, thanks to her autobiography that also covered fittings with the Queen, the Queen Mother and Princess Margaret, what is yet to come? Have they too abandoned their underwires in favour of bralettes and sports bras?

*Pendery Weekes*

# Art in the Ruins

I have a small but persistent belief that places touched by disaster, such as Chernobyl and Pripyat, may be haunted by ghosts, those unsettled spirits tethered to the earth by an inability to comprehend the fate that has befallen them.

It was a day of ethereal mist and cold damp air in the woods which have thrived unchecked amongst the villages in Chernobyl. We wandered around once pretty cottages, derelict now, long abandoned by the threat of radiation. Traces of picture book carvings of doves and hearts could still be seen around the windows and doors and rotting floorboards still supported sticks of furniture, a kitchen table, an old cupboard. We could just make out the remains of kitchen gardens, children's play areas, a small park with a rusty swing and see-saw.

I peered in a particularly charming bedroom window, murky with cobwebs and dirt; I could see a fine iron bedstead. When I stepped back, taking in the window and not the room beyond, I started, for staring hard back at me was a translucent old face, almost like a pencil drawing, with wiry silvery straggles of hair stuck out from her head like electricity. Someone who had returned, for reasons of her own.

One man, Ivan, had come back to his home in Chernobyl, the home he had built himself. Eighty now, alone since his wife died two years before, he hewed his wood, fetched water from his well, and blessed the Authorities for supplying him with electricity. Still, his home was a hovel, and only someone accepting of life's twists and turns could have lived in it. Asked if he worried about the radiation, he shrugged and said that he couldn't see it, he couldn't smell it, so he never thought about it.

We drove on to the radar station, a ghostly structure in any weather but particularly on this day of swirling mists where the top was barely visible. Vertical, horizontal and curling steel. Designed to detect over-the-horizon missiles, it towered above the fir trees and reduced us to midgets. Never fully effective it seems, and now standing in isolated splendour, Ai Weiwei came to mind, his compelling installation 'Straight' where he straightened and transformed over a hundred tons of mangled steel rods that had been collected from the schools which had collapsed in the Sichuan earthquake in 2008.

Our group boarded the minibus to drive to Pripjat, the town where the fatal reactor went into meltdown.

The once pristine white apartment blocks of Pripjat are derelict, windows shattered, ceilings falling, cement paths cracked, lichen growing, greenly radioactive.

The hasty abandonment of the apartments was apparent



*Chernobyl Memorial*

by the odd dog eared and faded child's drawing still pinned to the wall, the soft toy, drizzled with years of dust, perched on a windowsill, the chairs, overturned, splintering, an old kitchen cabinet.

We have seen photographs of the apartments before the accident, model homes, so very modern, borders full of roses, everywhere happy people.

Now saplings crowd the windows, grassy tufts invade and in places cover the concrete paths. Who would have thought that roads once so wide and open could become single trackswith weeds and moss criss-crossing haphazardly?

We moved on to the indoor swimming pool, bigger than was normally allowed for a town of this size, but this was a flagship town, proudly bearing testament to the Soviet Union.

The steps to the diving board had been sheared off, the empty pool was deep; its sides steep. A gaggle of ghosts huddled in the bottom among the broken tiles, a solitary trainer, a mattress.

The desolate café by the lake was purported to have served the best ice cream in town. What a grand place it must have been to relax on a weekend, overlooking the lake, with steps down from the patio to the landing stage for boarding the 'Rocket' and the 'Meteor', the popular water transport.

Two huge stained-glass windows, one of a stylized woman blowing a trumpet, in a rich variety of colours; both now somewhat shattered, a mosaic of multi coloured nuggets strewn across the floor, the remaining glass clinging to the frames like pieces of a jigsaw. On bright days the sun must



have lit up the café with blocks of colour like one of Paul Klee's paintings.

We were shown photographs of busy days at the café, mothers strolling with their children, couples hand in hand. In winter people would skate on the lake.

We moved on.

A monument to the firefighters who died, selflessly working to put out the blaze, trying desperately to limit the threat to the people, stands by an exhibition of some of the machines used to fight the explosion. It is a memorial created by skilled firefighters from the next brigade, therefore a work of deep respect, empathy and gratitude.

We wander on soberly.

In the cinema there are only a few of the plush seats inside, visible in the gloom. The hospital, the operating theatre, the babies' nursery, a row of metal cots, and endless rubble.

And so we walk on, the concert hall, with the grand piano looking anything but grand, the ivories, what was left of them, akimbo. The school with one wall collapsed so that it stands like an open doll's house, square classrooms with neat rows of desks and chairs exposed, a poignant reminder of how quickly the evacuation had been.

Pripyat is still regarded as home by many who were exiled, though they will never return to live there. Today it seems more like a decaying installation.

Finally, we reach the amusement park. Much publicized, it was to have been formally opened on May Day. The explosion happened on the 26th April, so May Day never came.

The Ferris wheel, with its twenty or so yellow carts resembling open cockle shells stands tall, a haunting silhouette against a silvery sky, waiting for joy riders who would never appear. We were warned that some of the carts had hot spots still, and NOT TO TOUCH.

A child's roundabout ride slumped sagging and rusty, next to the higgledy piggledy dodgems.

The ghosts slipped away; half way up the wheel a yellow cart swayed slightly.

Lynda Green

*Linda Green is a writer. She has had several short stories published in a national magazine, one story in an anthology, The Ruberry Anthology and short listed for Mslexia mag and the Mogford prize. For pleasure she cooks and reads.*

## RECOMMENDED READING:

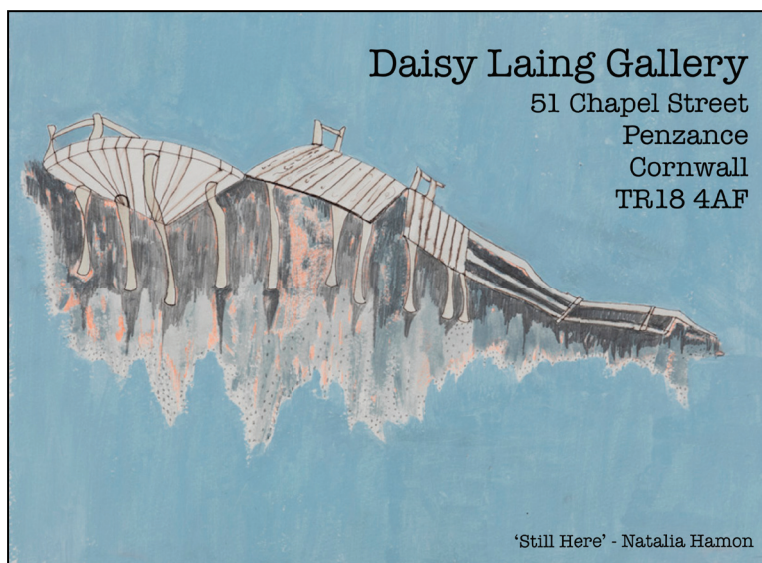
1. JULES OLITSKI, 2003. It contains an essay by Jim Walsh that focuses on Olitski's facture as it applies to two different exhibitions held in New Hampshire that year. It was published by Four Forty, Marlboro, Vermont.

2. ANSEL ADAMS, LANDSCAPES OF THE AMERICAN WEST by Lauris Morgan-Griffins, 2008. It is not authorized by the Adams estate. It is a large, heavy book that concentrates on reproductions of Adams' photos. The scale of them yields a sense of what they really look like, compared to repros of more modest size, though a repro always falls short of the real deal, and these make the difference between printer's ink and silver painfully obvious.

3. MORRIS LOUIS, CATALOGUE RAISONNE by Diane Upright Headly. This is the definitive basic reference to the work of Morris Louis. The narrative not only covers his life but also detailed observations and speculations about the facture of his paintings, which he made in near seclusion, despite living in a Baltimore suburb. Or should I say seclusion caused by living in a Baltimore suburb. In any case he painted in a dining room not large enough to contain his UNFURLEDs and had to roll them out

through French doors into the living room to get a sense of what they looked like as a whole, having painted them one end at a time. There is also carefully documented evidence of the way Louis' work stretcher had an effect on the veils.

4. HANDMADE: THE ART OF SUSAN ROTH, 2015, published by the Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse. Essay by Sarah Rich, decent repros. Roth is an underappreciated artist. This book and essay places Roth's whole body of work into one context, which was long overdue.



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### New Art Examiner numbers

The New Art Examiner passed 220,000 unique visitors in 20 months in November 2018, with an average now of 500 a day.

### Poor Chicago

We were awarded the trademark by the Trademark Commission and it was taken back. We now hear that a certain Alderman, the lover of one of the cabal, may have used his political power to effect the volte-face. What does it say of a city's culture when those in power do not have the ethics to protect intellectual property rights?

### New appointments

We welcome Professor Jorge Benitez as our new Assistant Publisher. He will be working closely with Derek Guthrie and the team, out of Virginia, on policy and content. We are delighted to welcome Ben Russo as our Development Officer. He will be resident in Utrecht, Holland. Lily Kostrzewa has accepted our offer of being Managing Editor in the US working from Michigan with her opposite number Pendery Weekes in Cornwall, UK. Miklos Legrady, who has been our Toronto editor for eighteen months, is taking on the role of writing a page each issue entitled 'Scouting the Blogs' which will be like our old Art Press Review, but covering the art writing on the Web. Your team continues to grow.

## Detroit to Toronto



Your Publisher and European editor took the tour this month starting in Basel, Miami Beach, the review of which is in this issue, to discussing with editors in Detroit and Toronto how to establish strong writers groups and make each city responsible for its own art discourse. Melanie Manos in Detroit, arranged

for us to visit three galleries, Wasserman Project, David Klein and Simone DeSousa. In Toronto Miklos Legrady arranged for us to meet with the Museum of Contemporary Art in their new home and the Olga Korper Gallery as well as a dinner with Canadian artist Rae Jonhson.

Discussion on magazine culture, blogs, art fairs, and the shows were high on the agenda and we are delighted to report to you that strong writing is coming from both cities.

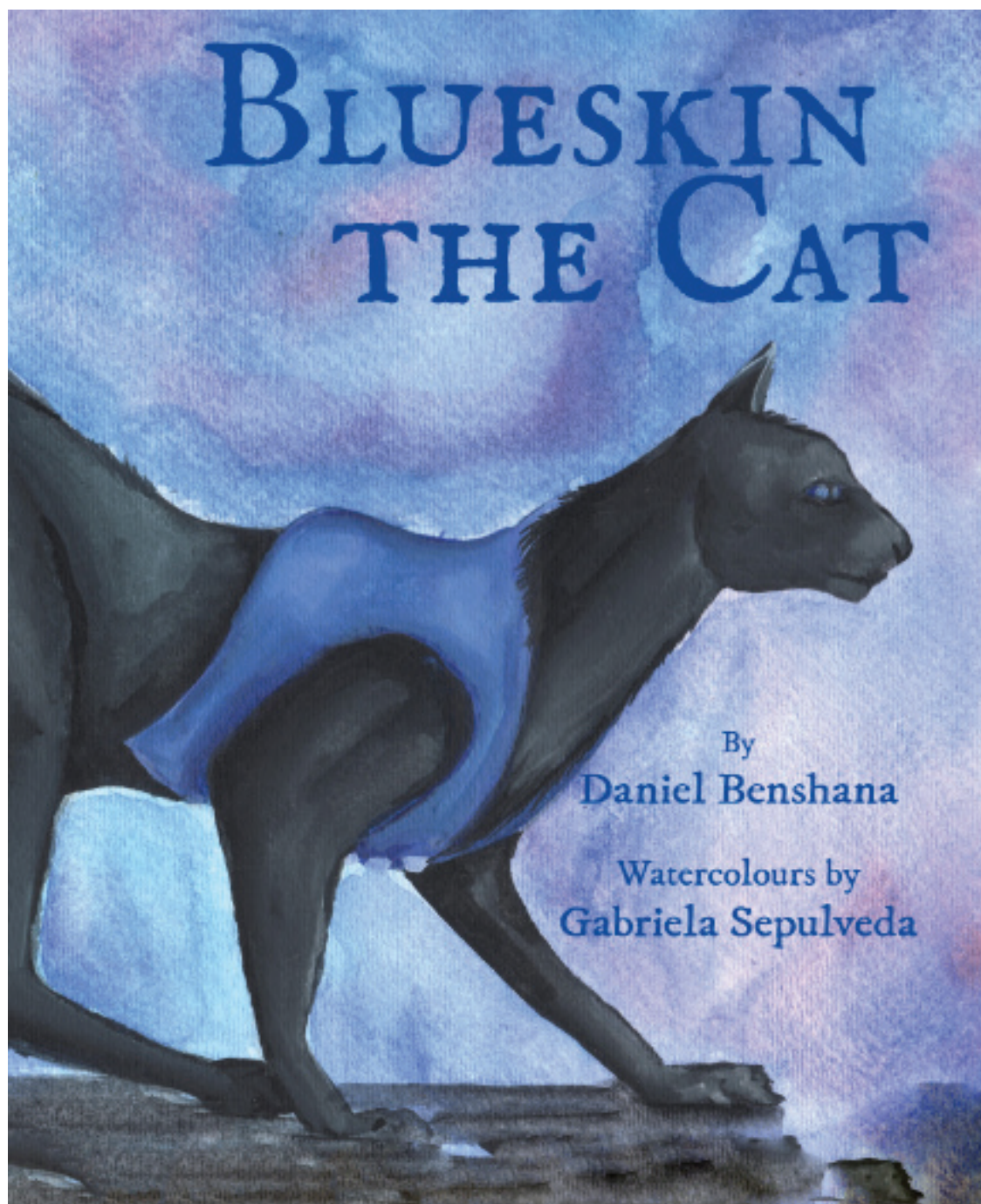


The inaugural meeting of the **Washington Writers Group** in the National Press Club on 14th Street. We were delighted to be guests of the National Press Club where, with Annie Markovich as Chair, we talked about the strategy of the magazine and planned two issues ahead. We also appointed Liz

Ashe, the sculptor, and poet as liaison with the Cornwall Writers Group, a position she said would be fascinating.

We intend to put a new page on the website to tie the work of the Writers Groups and give our readers an opportunity to engage with critical writing.





Blueskin, reincarnated as a cat , sees the two men responsible for getting him hanged and plots his revenge. So begins his adventure as a cat on the High Seas, fighting pirates and surviving a storm, until they all finally arrive in America. There he learns the true nature of being a cat and how much better it is than being a highwayman.

£9.00 / \$10.00

FootSteps Press

