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Paris and the Aesthetics of Complexity

Jorge Benitez

INSIDE:

The New Art Examiner is the product of the thinking and life-long contribution of Jane Addams Allen. We thank you in her name for reading this independent journal of art criticism.
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The New Art Examiner has a long history of producing quality and independent art criticism. Any art scene needs writers to keep a professional eye on art activity. Otherwise, insider trading will determine success in this troubled art world.
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Paul Cézanne: House of the Hanged Man, Auvers-sur-Oise, (c. 1873)
oil on canvas

Musée d'Orsay, Paris, bequest of Count Isaac de Camondo, 1911
Photo: © Musée d'Orsay, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Patrice Schmidt

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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

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The *New Art Examiner* welcomes reviews on books of visual cultural significance.
Please send your review 500- 800 words per book to:
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Subject headed BOOK REVIEW
Please include the full details of the title, author, publisher, date and ISBN.`

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QUOTE of the MONTH:

"The object of art is not to reproduce reality, but to create a reality of the same intensity."

Alberto Giacometti

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When the Spirit of Kalundo comes so does Kianda, 2019
Courtesy of Mariane Ibrahim

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Editorial

I fell in love again with Paris this fall, while attending Art Basel and skipping out after a cursory view of the show to imbibe the exhibitions and museum shows this city of art affords.

I spent days visiting private collectors' art, seen through golden bubbles of champagne, to roaming the Louvre's galleries, visiting Rembrandt's and Vermeer's, so many, taking me to a world where portraits portray sitter's emotional state and the artist's connection, an audience's willing absorption into a different era and mindset, to the Louvre's exhibition, *Ful* where I spent three hours absorbing Rabelais's words to modern art about those labeling fools as a truthtellers.

The surrealism show at Centre Pompidou, subtitled Surrealism first and always, celebrating Andre Breton's 1924 *Manifesto of Surrealism* challenged prior artwork, while resonating today, reminding us what war has wrought, of what mankind is capable and the empty fields of bones that might and did ensue. A show of Arte Povera, a group that condemned art's commercialization was held, satirically, in the Bourse de Commerce, the Paris Mint, a juxtaposition no doubt enjoyed by the French.

Pop Forever, featuring work by Tom Wesselman and his comrade, blurred boundaries between Art and reality, often commercial. A rendition of Monet's *Waterlilies* showed magnificent, purples, rose pinks rising from cooler waters. The 18th arrondissement's view of park and trees rivaled landscapes in the museums.

The built environment, medieval gargoyles on buildings, uniting form and function and carved grotesques, modern sculptures and wide boulevards, and always, the view upwards; the spires of Notre Dame, restored, or the hill of Montmartre, kept me oriented and prevented my ever getting lost. Circling the Arc d' Triomphe twice, an impromptu band played. I'd abandoned the bureaucracy of the art fair for Paris itself, where art is everywhere, in everything, often free for the taking, where the air seems scented with art.

It is good that Art Basel has now opened an official fair in Paris. I saw here, differing from its emphasis on prospecting for art buyers an inclusion of art lovers. Administrators were kind, abandoning strict rules to help those needing rides, champagne, directions, hotels, restaurant recommendations, reminders that Paris takes it easy, late is ok. It is not northern Europe, and parted with Germany ages ago, let artists run their lives and careers collectively, letting those in those who truly love their art.

Whether admitting black artists from America, who abandoned the US for Paris in the 1920s and 30s and after or setting up their own Salon des la Refusees, or hosting Spanish artists, Picasso, Dali, to paint truth and revolution, evolution, Paris finds its artists and its own way. Whether admitting those labeled fools are in fact speaking truth to power, Paris is unafraid. Rebuilding the spires of a cathedral that took hundreds of years to build the first time, in only five years as a communal effort with all of Paris donating, Paris leads the art world still.

I love Paris, for its people, its art, its history, its display and embrace of past, present and future worlds, all in one circular hug.

SPEAKEASY

Berthe Morisot, Le Berceau, (1872)

©RMN-Grand Palais (Musée d'Orsay)

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

In this slightly different issue we are printing the personal memories of Paris, France of several art professionals. Maria Balshaw, Director of the Tate, Sophie Kazan professor at Falmouth Art School, Rob Couteau author and Elizabeth Ashe, sculptor, to celebrate Basel Paris.

If I had to pick a single painting (too hard!), I would select Bertha Morisot's wonderful tender painting of her sister and baby, Le Berceau (1872) in the collection of Musée D'Orsay.

My fondest memory would be my 50th birthday when my 20-year-old daughter took me on a surprise day trip to Paris. She made a jigsaw puzzle that was a map of Paris with all my favourite places on it. I assembled the jigsaw and she then handed me my passport and a Eurostar ticket. We began the day at the Pompidou, we went to D'Orsay and the Museo Picasso. We explored the Marais and ate in our favourite restaurant. The Polaine bakery, the Mariage Frere tea shop and Barthelemy cheese shop were all on the map. The motivations for coming to Paris are epicurean as well as artistic.

Maria Balshaw, Director The Tate.

Paris is caught up in a continual hustle and bustle ahead of this year's first Paris Basel Art fair. A few weeks before, the MIRA Latin American art fair opened in the Maison de l'Amérique Latine residence on the left bank, while a day or two later, the MENA art fair in the Galerie Joseph mansion in the trendy Marais district focussed this year on female artists from the Middle East. A few days later Paris Fashion Week kicked off, with catwalk shoes and private sales taking place in venues all around the city.

I spent my childhood in the stately neighbourhood of Auteuil in the 16th arroundissement of Paris. Since then, I have visited the capital for research, to attend events, also to unwind and spend time with family. This may be why, one of my favourite place is off-the-beaten-track; a hidden little park, Le Square Félix Desruelles, in the shadow of the 11th century abbey of Saint Germain des Prés in the 6th arrondissement. Accessed only through a couple of narrow gates off the busy Boulevard Saint Germain, the park is named after a late 19th and early 20th century sculptor. A marvellous example of his work, the statue of a singular potter and a massive ceramic gateway are tucked away in this narrow park, almost out of sight!

Fontaine Pastorale is a gem, carved by Felix Desruelle in 1923. Situated in the most narrow portion of the garden, it is a sculpted neoclassical and allegorical sculptured scene set in the upper portion of a fountain with three taps and a basin, set beneath it.

It's a scene of teenage romance; the figure of a young shepherd leans nonchalantly against a wall with sheep grazing beneath him. He is looking casually at an awkward girl siding up to him, with her arms held innocently behind her back. I find this sculpture magnetic and the scene is romantic and Desruelle has also give it a very spiritual rendering. The expressions of the figures and quietness of the scene suggest that it may indeed be a glimpse into the romance of Jesus' parents, Joseph the shepherd and Mary.

Further to the left are winding, leafy paths with benches and overhanging branches in the park. A bronze statue of a man wearing a doublet and what appears to be 17th dress stands on a pedestal in the centre. He is Bernard Palissy, an engineer, an artist and a potter who is holding what appears to be a dish with intricate designs on it. Palissy invented a 'rustic' style of ceramic decoration, which may explain the dish he is holding. He was determined to understand how to make Chinese porcelain but never cracked the technique! His statue here is quite interesting particularly as it stands here in the gardens of a catholic abbey. Palissy was a Protestant who was imprisoned in the Bastille, for his subversive views. He died there in 1589.

The crowning glory of the park is a massive ceramic doorway designed by the French pottery manufac-

Louis-Ernest Barrias : Bernard Palissy,, bronze, (883).

turer, Sèvres. This name or brand in white letters set into a yellow panel, crowns an ornate archway, with side panels and many, many decorative motifs including what appears to be a scarab or beetle in the very centre of the arch. The gateway was originally made for the facade of the French Manufacturers Pavilion of the Paris World Fair in 1900, in the Place des Invalides just across the Seine. Originally located in Vincennes, near Versailles, the soft-paste porcelain factory was the official royal factory and it bore the intertwined LL motifs, as a factory mark, in reference to its patron, Louis XV. The factory moved to Sevres in around 1753-1754, which may be the reason that there are two shields bearing the dates 1753 and 1900, on the upper register of the gateway. After the French revolution in 1789, the factory became the National Porcelain Factory, known as the makers of high quality porcelain and enamel decoration. The gate was designed by a sculptor called Risier, and I love the turn-of-the-century baroque sculpture and opulence of the medallion at the top! Also the early Art Nouveau floral tiles and heavy baroque arch and rosettes.

As an art historian, I find the origins of decorative motifs and the stories of people who made them fascinating. The Sèvres gateway is 12 metres tall and apparently 10 metres wide. It features many decorative features, flowers and greenery. There is a beetle in the centre of the arch, the flowers and geometric patterning on the sides of the gateway that could resemble colourful papyrus plants and geometric pyramid shapes could be a reference to the late 19th century Orientalist obsession with Ancient Egypt! The French scholar and Egyptologist, Jean-Fançois Champollion had deciphered the Rosetta Stone in the 1820s and this captured the public's attention throughout the late 19th and early 20th century. Also, the rose motif which appears in the patterning in the lower section could be a reference to Louis XV's mistress, Madame de Pompadour. She who took a great interest in the production of porcelain at Sèvres and the enamel decoration, particularly the red-pinkish coloured rose, which earned the nickname, 'Roses de Pompadour'.

This little garden or park therefore seems to be dedicated to the arts, named after a turn of the century sculptor, a ceramic manufacturer and a protestant martyr scientist and potter, with monuments devoted to beauty and appreciation of technical skill.

Tucked away, off the busy Boulevard and out of the hubbub and traffic, the perfect place to sit meditatively for a minute or two before heading off to art fair events and openings!

Dr Sophie Kazan, Falmouth

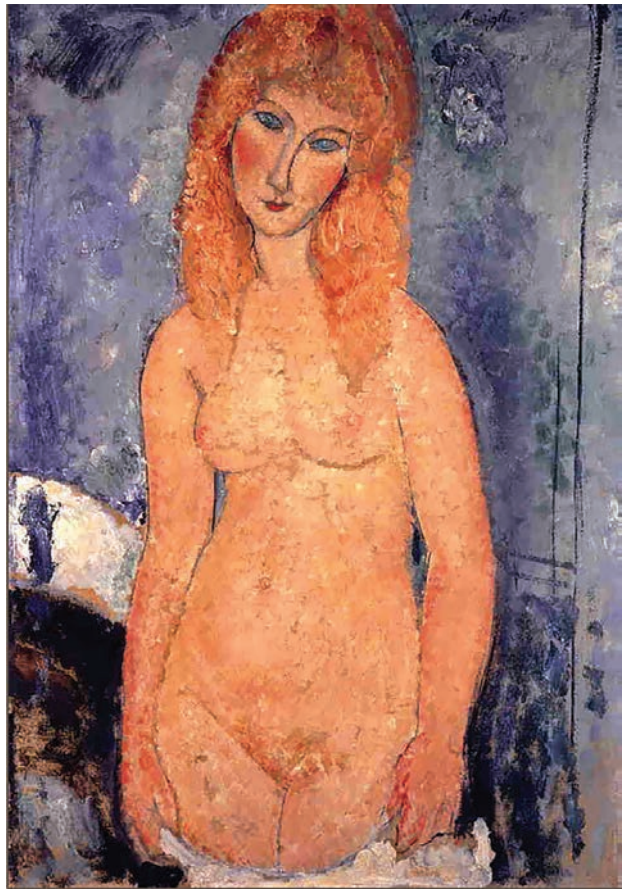
Paris is the City of Light, but it's also a spectral city of celebrated ghosts. Two that haunted me continually when I lived there from the late Eighties through the 1990s were Amedeo Modigliani and his friend Francis Carco, the great French raconteur who chronicled the lives of so many artists in his memoirs, which are themselves works of art.

In From Montmartre to the Latin Quarter (1927), which I recently had the honor of editing for a newly revised edition, Carco tells a bewitching tale of his devotion to Modi's work during a period when most French art dealers scoffed at his labors. At that time, Carco, just like Modigliani, was living a penurious existence, subsisting in a cheap garret. One evening Modi's Polish dealer, Zborowski, invites Carco to his lair to display an assortment of these unwanted creations, which lean against a wall. The room is lit only by a candle held in "Zbo's" hand, so the men must crouch to obtain a better view. Within moments, Carco is overwhelmed by their powerful beauty, and despite his poverty he offers to buy one with his last remaining francs. Zbo responds: "To you, I won't sell ... I shall give it. Here ... I give it to you ... because you love it."

The gesture represents an act of profound empathy. It was also a shrewd move. After sharing his hovel

with this magical image, Carco can't help himself: he scrapes together his meager funds to acquire additional works. He writes of the "delight" he experienced each morning in that tiny chambre, "when I woke amongst those nudes with milky and orange flesh, under their blinking eyes and their magnificent forms! … They were women I loved, and I felt alive beside them. And they were alive: their presence excited me." He would go on to publish the first in-depth critical appraisal of Modi's work in the Swiss journal L'Éventail in 1919. Scholar Kenneth Wayne writes: "Carco's was the only article devoted solely to Modigliani during his lifetime … this article is one of the purest, most sensitive, and insightful pieces of writing ever penned about the artist and his work by someone close to him." Although Carco himself brushed aside the importance of the piece, it helped to build a firm foundation of recognition for the beleaguered artist and germinated important recognition from abroad.

It's not known for certain which painting was the one gifted to Carco, but my research has led me to suspect that it was the Nu blond, also known as Blonde Nude with the Dropped Chemise. In any case, it was certainly one of Carco's favorites, and it's featured as a frontispiece in his book, Le Nu Dans La Peinture Moderne (1924). In that text, his love of the portrait is expressed in a moving tribute. First, he compares the vigorous forms incarnated by Modi's enlivening brush to the daubs of those academic painters who preceded him: "the cold, sandpapered nudes of the art academies … bodies made of inflatable rubber, breasts stacked like tiered cakes, buttocks of trembling jelly." But now, instead, "A breath exhales from [Modigliani's] nudes, the very breath of life … Where is the image in which the fervor of living is better incarnated?" And in paying homage to Nu blond, he can barely contain his joyful enthusiasm. Her "most delicious flesh tones blend, knead with an adorable lightness to whip with mother-of-pearl and pink, rub with amber, fluff with blondness, this triumphant freshness that an exquisitely attenuated light of an April morning caresses more than it sculpts. Between the light and the skin, there is this impalpable velvety garment, this 'frozen' translucent flower, but where the lighting plays with all its shimmering: all this mixed, melted, less painted than sprayed on the canvas." This was a time when art critics – even those in the avant-garde – were not afraid to pay homage to beauty; and they did so while being fully aware that the notion transcends its classical limitations. For there is, after all, such a thing as a beautiful idea, even one that challenges the notion of beauty itself. In the Nu blond, a beautiful idea fully blossoms.



Amedeo Modigliani: Nu Blond or Nude Blonde with the Dropped Chemise. (1919)

When first absorbing a work of art, I like to wait and listen for a word or phrase that evokes its essence. Here, the term "tender fire" comes to mind. Perhaps it was kindled by the iridescent blush on the unknown model's cheeks; or the blazing ripple of her cadmium-orange hair; or the tints of brilliant, peach-toned flesh that Modi had so energetically applied with a dappled brushwork to create perfect complements to the undulating blue hues of the background. All of which infuse the portrait with fervent intensity. Those who see only a "nude" miss the whole point of the piece: a living, breathing, animate creature has stripped away her persona – dropping it along with her chemise – to unveil herself; and an equally bold artist attempts to capture this transcendental radiance. The gleaming reflections that hover in her pupils are the focal point: they arrest our fluttering gaze and challenge us – and the artist – to gaze back. The first thing that struck me about this perpetually modern masterpiece is the powerful presence radiating from those eyes. On the one hand, her regard is confrontational: a stare that asserts her dominance, her unwavering self-assurance. On the other hand, it's softly alluring, deeply

seductive, purposefully enchanting. Following the fine curve of her nose down to the puckered lips, we encounter a further expression of this budding warmth; and when we gaze back at the riveting orbs, their mood seems to have shifted, now conveying an unreserved affection.

Carco auctioned off most of his collection in 1925, but he held on to this exquisite composition until March 1939, when it was sold at auction to the dealer Jos Hessel for 250,000 FF. The "liquidation" of goods – and of human lives – was in the air. Just six months later, England and France would declare war on Germany. Carco slipped into Switzerland as the Nazis swarmed across France, but he always carried the memory of this collection with him – along with the specter of Modigliani – like an intimate souvenir.

Rob Couteau, author

My first few trips to Paris were with my mom. We stayed in the same place each time, the three star Hôtel Jardin le Bréa in Montparnasse. It was old, with matching decor that had a good long life, and an interior garden oasis. The elevator was more of an afterthought. Like a Victorian closet, it fit the two of us with a small suitcase each, at a squeeze. We would laugh, squished in there, eager to sleep away jet lag. When my mom first chose the hotel, she told me – "in Paris, book three star or better. It's probably dirty. It's safe, more about generational good service than extra perks. The perks are outside the door - the whole city".

Jardin le Bréa is a couple of blocks and a side street away from the Metro, and there was a farmers & flea market twice a week. I bought a 1" penknife there for a few francs. The brass was all scratched up, and the sliver of wood, hand oiled. I miss using francs. We shuffled carefully through antique photographs and bought picnic fixings to eat along the Seine. Before I could drink, it was Pellegrino or lemonade, a baguette, the most amazingly fresh brie, a chunk of hard salami, peaches and plums. Of course, a few years later my first glass of wine was in Provence, and our picnics upgraded to include a bottle of wine. We bought amazing tarts along the Champs-Élysées, fruit and custard tarts with a sugar glaze. We meandered through art galleries and walked the Left Bank, where I developed an appreciation for street art. We tried the Louvre once, but at 11am the line was already three hours long, and that was just to get inside the museum's part of the line. So instead, we climbed the steeple steps of Notre Dame with a handful of other tourists.

I took a dear friend, Mary Pat Norton, to my last visit. She had never been before. A vintage-turned-budget

Auguste Renoir Renoir's La Balançoire (1876)

romantic spot didn't make sense. I booked us the Hotel Diana…. Accidentally for the wrong month. I found out the day before, so I settled for the closest three-star hotel I could find in walking distance from the train station. We arrived around 9:30 at night, too late for dinner except for a couple glasses of wine, so we rushed to the corner grocer at closing time for a baguette, brie, grapes. We ate with the windows of our balconette open, and the brie was so fresh and lush, it was more like honeycomb.

Our first day in Paris started with breakfast in a walk-up cafe by the Metro. We dined on cappuccinos and juice, omelets and jams and baguette slices. Then we were off to the Musée Rodin. I have loved Rodin nearly as long as Henry Moore, maybe since age 9. The beauty, dangers, poetry, hell, the complete awareness of detail, fragments and repeats, and to be surrounded by so many works, is a dream. The garden was full of well-shaped cone and hedge bushes, flora, and so many bronze works. The toast, though, was the *Three Shades*, positioned with the Eiffel tower off in the distance, rising from the middle figure's shoulders, Even the Nouveau font vinyl wall signage in the museum was inspiring. So was the original hardwood flooring with inlay and geometric patterns, and the ornate crown molding. Of course, Rodin's home and studio would be such a mecca for artists. What's more, the museum doesn't

Auguste Rodin_Three Shades (1881-1886)
photo Elizabeth Ashe

treat Rodin purely as an artist of a previous century; it treats him as historic, yes. The early photographs prove it. The museum works diligently to credit him as an influence for later and contemporary artists, and curates exhibitions accordingly

We strolled beneath the elm and lime trees in the Jardin des Tuileries and enjoyed delightful glasses of rosé. It was the first time either of us had seen a Giacometti out in the wilds of a garden. Comparing the nearby flowering Allium blooms, pinpoint star textures to his organic yet gouged surfaces, felt so very Paris.

At the Musée D'Orsay, we soaked in every inch, wide aisle, and room. Monet's just... there. Omnipresent. Some behind glass, and some not. A toddler ran ahead from his father and touched a water lily. My heart leapt into some extreme Protect The Monet! I didn't jump, but I did startle the kid to quickly take his hand away. His father, at least, was appropriately horrified of his son's act. All the marble and bronze sculptures were given breathing room to build the gravitas between them, providing safe space between visitors and art. Vincent Van Gogh's *Bedroom in Arles*, one of seven versions, lives there. For the first time in my life, there I was in front of my favorite painting, Manet's *Olympia*. All the feet shuffling, echoes, noises around me, went hush. Like the personally sacred moment when I noticed and learned about keystones in a centuries-old church, in the depths of a -40° winter day. I have loved her for decades. I wrote a paper about her in college and based my first installation on Olympia and the conversation between artist and painting and art world, that she was. I stood at Renoir's *La Balançoire* for several minutes. The dappled sunlight in the park and on the figure's clothing was just perfect, subtle - like a good smile, and a little bit shy - like the woman herself. The blue bows on her white dress opposed the ground, and some of the bows looked more like birds or hands. When it was first shown the critics protested the treatment of light, but it was also purchased right away. In the upper rooms, the Nouveau woodwork and domestic decorative collection took over. We were the last ones to leave, shooed out by understanding guards.

Something in the gardens gave Mary Pat an awful ankle rash, so we hunted for a Farmacia. I told her that going to speak with a French pharmacist is an experience that stayed true from years before. In our bad French, we showed the rash and said where we had walked. He looked at my ankles "ok, yours are perfect" and suggested a couple of creams for Mary Pat. They helped.

Onward to an early dinner on the way to the Eiffel Tower at sunset, we stopped at a rustic place, part hunting lodge, part early 20th century aesthetic. We ordered something lovely and simple for a meal. We were starting to tire of wine, if that were even possible. The cocktails menu was... not inspiring. As it was a summer evening, it should be refreshing! The bar had two of my summer go-to favorites, St. Germaine and Limoncello. I asked our waiter to ask the bartender to make us my summer studio drink - Pellegrino, with those liquors. He gave a "that's crazy, whatever why?" look. I said "Oui and make one for both the waiter and barkeep too". They were quite impressed.

We kept on - with a half-sized bottle of champagne and sat in the grass field with hundreds of other Eiffel devotees. The field is so dry and the dirt, compacted. I wish it could get a break. It was late dusk, midsummer. The sun didn't even begin to set until after 9pm. We shared direct from the bottle and toasted to the sunset dusk lights show, like sugar crystals popping champagne bubbles, sweet and fun.

Elizabeth Ashe, Sculptor, artist

“Paris and the Aesthetics of Complexity”

Jorge M. Benitez

Some of the marine horse. Emmanuel Frémiet: Fountain of the four parts of the world (1873)
Place Camille Jullian

“You don’t arrest Voltaire.” Charles de Gaulle, 1968

Charles de Gaulle was a soldier and a patriot. He was also an intellectual steeped in the great tradition of French letters. Years before its capitulation in 1940, he had accurately outlined how Nazi Germany would defeat France. Unfortunately, the French high command did not listen to him, and humanity paid the price for the mistake.

In 1968, Jean-Paul Sartre joined the Maoist-inspired student protests and ended up in jail. When President de Gaulle heard of the detention, he ordered the release of Sartre with the quip, “You don’t arrest Voltaire.” Sartre was the great philosopher, but in that instant, de Gaulle proved to be the more subtle and elegant thinker. He was also the more magnanimous of the two French giants. Given his hatred of de Gaulle, it is doubtful that Sartre would have forgiven the general had their roles been reversed. He should have been more gracious in light of the experience of Robert Brasillach twenty-three years earlier.

In 1945, General de Gaulle refused to stop the execution of Robert Brasillach, a brilliant intellectual and writer whose crime was the use of his talents in support of the Nazi occupation of France. Like many French fascists, Brasillach was more than a politically and racially motivated ultranationalist. His fascism had an aesthetic dimension. He and his Nazi friends shared a romantic worldview centered on the cult of beauty. They longed for a world of beautiful bodies living in idyllic settings reminiscent of paintings by Nicolas Poussin. The concept seems farfetched to the more utilitarian Anglophone world where even the Left is mostly transactional, but in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and even the Soviet Union, ideology was inseparable from aesthetics. Fascists and Socialists alike shared a lingering romanticism that sought beauty in utopian perfection. Intellectuals and artists held the keys to that beautiful future. They understood, as did Stalin and Mussolini, that the people were merely a means to that end. Therefore, it is no accident that the mostly left-of-center French intelligentsia petitioned de Gaulle to spare Brasillach’s life precisely because he was a brilliant man of letters or that the general refused the request for exactly the same reason. The signatories of the petition included the poet, Paul Valéry; the philosopher, novelist, and playwright Albert

Camus; the poet, playwright, and critic Jean Cocteau; the painter André Derain; and the composer Arthur Honegger. If Brasillach had been a run-of-the mill traitor, he may have survived, but in de Gaulle's eyes, his intellect and artistry made his crimes unforgivable.

Sartre, Brasillach, and de Gaulle shared an approach to life and art that defied their ideological and professional differences. In a very French sense, they were all soldiers in a war for the glory of France and, by extension, humanity. French universalisme said as much. Even a self-styled anti-colonialist and revolutionary communist like Sartre could not escape his ingrained belief in the superiority of French thought and expression. Paris was the epicenter of that superiority, and Sartre and his lover Simone de Beauvoir reminded Albert Camus that his Algerian birth would always condemn him to an inferior status. He may have been French, but his accent was not Parisian. His thoughts were too Mediterranean and Dionysian. His socialism lacked the requisite Hegelian incomprehensibility, Marxian monomania, and Kantian moral rigidity. In short, he was insufficiently German to be French. This paradox lay at the heart of a Parisian identity crisis that still governs its aesthetic complexities. Where does France end and Germany begin? France is a mostly Latin country with both German and Italian roots. The Franks were a Germanic tribe, but the Latin they adopted as their language became the basis of French. Geography itself speaks to the internal conflict as France borders Italy and Spain to the south and Belgium and Germany to the north and east. That geography showered France with cross-cultural blessings and simultaneously cursed it with centuries of war. Paris bears the scars and showcases the blessings.

Throughout its history, Paris has been a battleground for philosophy and art. That history is visible in the sculptures that adorn streets, parks, plazas, bridges, and buildings. Paris defies iconoclasm and seldom destroys the symbols of its history to suit changing moral fashion. Despite the current Western craze for socio-historical moralizing, l'Arc de Triomphe stands in beaux-arts grandeur as a monument to Napoleonic imperialism. Although the French Revolution cut off the heads of some statues along with those of aristocrats, the iconoclastic hysteria did not last. Reason and aesthetics prevailed over self-righteous emotionalism. In Paris, art transcends the dirt of history. Revolutions come and go along with saviors and villains, while the latter often inspire better art. In the end, the art matters more than the politics or the history behind it. As for the morals, they are little more than a capricious and annoying guide for social harmony, something to be raised or lowered like the hemline of a Chanel skirt, preferably without injuring the wearer. Like Manet's *Olympia*, today's moral outrage is tomorrow's masterpiece. Puritanical qualms are exiled to Geneva, or as Robespierre discovered, excessive virtue must be guillotined.

Front Courtyard of the Hotel de Cluny (Musée National du Moyen-Âge), rue Du Sommerard

In a city adorned with sculptures of male and female nudes, sensuousness and sensuality matter more than priggishness. The Parisian gaze is cosmopolitan. It looks and stares at everything. It judges everything. It is easily shocked only to fall in love, eventually, with the offending sight or object. The only scandal is the absence thereof. Scandal fuels argumentation, and argumentation is the lifeblood of a Parisian intellect that thrives on opposition. Parisian discourse is serious, witty, provocative, and occasionally coquettish. Philosophy is a public sport rather than the preserve of shy academics. The opinions and conclusions are taken as mutable sugges-

An area of the Rue Ordener in Paris has become a true museum of contemporary art with new grafitti appearing all the time

tions. The construction of the argument and the language at its core are more important than the conclusions. After all, what is the point of justice without elegance? Would it not be repackaged barbarity? Freedom without art is worse than tyranny. Equality without style is vulgar criminality. Speech is an art, and language is the heart of speech. To Parisian ears, the unaesthetic or inarticulate philosopher should remain silent. Awkwardness is not a virtue.

Paris is expressive rather than expressionist. The Cedar Bar inspired fistfights. The Left Bank inspires wit and an occasional revolutionary. The latter seldom lasts. Despite periodic flirtations with ideological extremism, Paris is too Voltairean and civilized to embrace Jean-Jacques Rousseau or Chairman Mao beyond a juvenile tryst. Besides, the Swiss Rousseau and the Chinese Mao were as intolerant as they were boorish. Paris, on the other hand, demands subtlety. Talleyrand must triumph over Napoleon.

The aesthetics of complexity are incompatible with binary thinking. At its best, Paris embraces contradictions. Marcel Duchamp may have stopped painting, but he loved and collected surrealist paintings nonetheless. He defied the secular teleology of Clement Greenberg. As Duchamp made clear:

'Art is produced by a succession of individuals expressing themselves; it is not a question of progress. Progress is merely an enormous pretension on our part. There was no progress for example in Corot over Phidias. And "abstract" or "naturalistic" is merely a fashionable form of talking—today. It is no problem: an abstract painting may not look at all "abstract" in 50 years.'

Painful experience has also taught Parisians that binary thinking and notions of progress inform the totalitarian impulses of intellectuals such as Sartre and Brasillach. History shows that intellectuals and artists are often more erudite and creative than smart or compassionate. They assume that they can reason their way through any challenge without the burden of empirical evidence, or that they can reinvent the world without regard for the consequences. As the French-Bulgarian philosopher Tzvetan Todorov observed:

'What dictators and avant-garde artists share in common is their radicalism, or if one prefers, their fundamentalism: they all wish to work out of nothing without taking into account what already exists in order to construct in accordance only to their own criteria. […] That which they have in common is their totalizing ambition which does not acknowledge any limit and will not admit any divergent opinion: the artist wants to abolish all other aesthetic canons, the dictator is ready to shatter all the previous norms of social life. That which they have in common is ultimately the lack of consideration for individual opinion and a preference for standardized collective productions. […] Their ambition is infinite; all the while it designs a closed space and therefore will not recognize anything outside itself. Drunk with pride, artists and dictators hold the same conviction in mastering the entire process of construction — whether of artworks or societies'

Nearly 80 years after the execution of Robert Brasillach, as the Western world seems to seek authoritarian solutions, history has tragically proven de Gaulle to be correct. The aesthetics of complexity are preferable to binary simplicity.

The world should follow his example and free Voltaire.

Minimal Effectiveness in Paris

David Goldenberg

Philippe Thomas at the Jan Mot Gallery

During the opening of Sharjah Biennale 2023, l met a selector of one of the Venice Biennale Pavilions, who said that as a consequence of Brexit, international money for Art intended for London, would now shift to the arts in Paris. I had no way of knowing whether this was true or not, but l was interested to visit Paris to see for myself visible signs of this influx of money. The opening of Art Basel Paris inside the magnificent Grand Palais was intended to make a statement of intent to the rest of the world.

In a recent article by Christies Guillaume Cerutti, in art newspaper on the art market, and the relationship between London and Paris, showed that London Global art sales are 17% and Paris sales are 8%, so that the UK retains its dominance in the European market, while overall Global centres of art sales remain in NY at 45% and China at 20%.

The previous week Frieze London opened. This year the art fair was redesigned and reduced to a smaller manageable size, designed as a series of interior rooms, with carpets and painted walls and variable size booths to accommodate different types of work and installations. It was possible to take in the whole fair in one day, however very few works made a lasting impression. The installation *Jumbled Alphabet* by Nariy Baghramian at SLG was superior with an array of satisfying shapes and materials.

In contrast, Art Basel Paris which replicated the model of an industrial trade fair, with similarities to the former Art Cologne, occupied all parts of the Grand Palais, the vast central ground floor, side corridors, and two tiers and side rooms, with additional exhibitions by single artists in buildings near the Palais. The most important European art galleries were present, including the Jan Mot gallery. I saw this as the collective body of Western Art and Global Art Market, in the form of a cellular organism and ecosystem, which showed no evidence of new thinking and understanding of art, diversity and post colonialism, just space for cultures to enter the market and world art, summarising over a hundred years of European and Western aesthetic history. Over 95% of the exhibitions were inward looking, showing key examples of that history or riffing on that history,

Eva Presenhuber: My House *(section)*

whether figurative or abstract, painting or sculpture.

Both art fairs in that respect can be seen to have retreated to conditions similar to the 1960's, where painting and sculpture, and conservative values predominated. It was for this reason that Baselitz and Oehlen, who had works in London and Paris, have succeeded so well. Instead of developing a new language, they have tapped into the large pool of western modernist abstract and figurative painting models, and within this conservative convention and narrow restrictions, plumbed an idea of pure aesthetic invention, which a number of other artists are also looking at.

Works that went against this aesthetic pool, works looking at information for example via the cloak of westernisation, such as Walid Raad's *Better be watching the clouds* [again] and Bouchra Khalili's *Sea Drift*, subverted aesthetics, the art object, and what is available through perception. Jan Mot gallery, the last surviving gallery of European avant garde, conceptual art and anti-commodified art, presented grey tables with strips of measurements by Stanley Brown, and a small film strip work by Manon de Boer. The Poster work by the great Philippe Thomas's *Ready Mades* belong to everyone but then didn't work. Elsewhere in the fair I saw a black and white photo of Fontana making a cut into a canvas, Clemens von Wedemeyers group of Social Geometries framed digital prints. It was also good to see Marcel Broodthaer, critic of Fordism, showing a vacuum formed plastic relief, American minimalist art, commodity culture and pop art, but again this didn't work in this context.

The conditions for showing work were brutal, given the mass and quality of works. So that works that fell below par or booths and installations that didn't quite work or works whose production values were not as good as they should be, stood out immediately, and drew comparison with works and displays that did work. For that reason, Galerie Eva Presenhuber's blue gridded installation, *My House* dedicated to one artist, Tschabalaha Sell,stood out, by providing room, focus and an environment for the collected material to gain coherence, to breathe and gain accessibility. Another installation that I thought was successful showed work by the Japanese artist Fuyuki Matsui, including a pencil drawing titled insane woman under the cherry tree." The installation was a work of art, with small recesses built into the wall to display sculptures, small paintings and drawings. In contrast the installation of Martin Boyce projects, didn't work as there were too many different types of art, the space felt claustrophobic, and the lighting didn't did not enhance the installation. Olaf Eliasson and Pae White presented similar looking sculptural works, suspended from the ceiling or mounted on the wall. One body of work looked polished and technically resolved, and the other didn't. Technical faults and miscalculations distracted from gaining access to the content of the work.

It is sad to note that the generation of American conceptual and appropriation artists, Josef Kosuth, who was represented by a work from the 1980's, recent work by Sherry Levine and Barbara Kruger, looked very weak and crude. Illustrated very clearly, more than ever, was that projects using an internal critique of the art system, reflecting its terms, history, theorisation, has proven to be misguided and the last gasp of white western artists to assert dominance through perpetuating western cultural colonialism. This was also brought home in the Wesselman exhibition. Although I think Wesselmann's work and especially the relief works are very interesting and a glimpse of how great contemporary art can be, the project was undermined through the glorification of commodity culture, any sense of self awareness, and utter failure of a critique and understanding of the harm, through global homogenisation and uniformity of cultures and peoples through commodification. In the same exhibition there was a large bombastic shiny, perfect, but vacuous sculpture by Koons, as a celebration of western commodification and equally misguided concept of the religious value of art to transcend what exists. It revealed or exposed, apart from Warhol, the utter failure of the pop art project.

Roni-Horn: Bourse-de-Commerce Pinault-Collection,-Pariss

Another reason for visiting Paris was to look at Mohammed Bourouissa's work. l came across an excellent large wall based mixed media sculpture, Juliette Wagman's digital photos attached to car body parts, which on reflection l came to see as a car crash, a literal crash and disaster that ends someone's career but in this case represented a crash of culture opening up a black hole in western culture, gravity collapsing down into itself, crushing culture and history into a mangled ball of art and technology. To expand the notion of comparison further, it was obvious to compare the work to Stella's late works shown on a narrow walkway on the first floor, which appeared inert. Another comparison is to Oscar Murillo's recent show in Tate Modern Turbine Hall, that recreated the display of Monet Waterlilies, which came across as propaganda to promote not just Tate Modern's reduction of art to modernism, but also the recent celebration and revisiting of early modernism or the foundation of European Modernism, which centres the art world back on European culture. Also, modernism as key to global art, at a time when there is supposed to be a global art world opening up to other cultures and inclusivity, points to a significant contradiction here and the commodification of styles, with the end of development and evolution of art.

Two bodies of works in the art fair worked very well in this context. One series which l call 'Perfect Objects' and another looking for the physical embodiment or commodified representation of ephemeral practices. What l mean by perfect objects are sculptural works and objects that are highly focused, and that have shed any form of distraction, so that the viewer has complete access to the physical object, that appear effortless and to have just arrived in that space. Roni Horn's transparent and opaque glass floor-based objects are the clearest example, along with Urs Fischer's, digital collaged face panel work; Ugo Rodinone's yellow painted small branch floor sculpture and brightly painted balancing pebble; and Takashi Murakami's typical flowers and anime silkscreen paintings. Monica Bonvicini's *Love is blind*, a medium size, shiny black panel with a hole and handcuffs, bore a similarity to this category, but its social sexual content pushed the work somewhere else. Seth Price's new wall based mixed media painting *Endless Empty Walls* wants to join this new club, but the work was unconvincing through its incomplete synthesis of abstraction, realism and figuration, although the title was fitting under the circumstances.

How do they differ from a reading of minimalism? I have kept in mind a quote from Carl Andre that "an artwork doesn't contain content". I think this is probably true, so what to make of works that show so much content today? In general, when you experience minimalist works, you experience the removal of what you want from art and from everyday experience even though a minimalist work has the form of a material fact.

Two pieces, a green circular transparent floor object and a leaning panel, made of several panels of Perspex, glittering pearlescent coloured front facing panel and back reflecting red light, by Ann Veronica Janssen, are minimalist or condensed abstract works, that verged on the decorative, showed a successful interpretation and transition from ephemeral colour gas and light installations into commodities. This sounds obvious and easy but there are so many artists who have failed to make that transition.

Another artist who had works across the art fair, was the German artist Andrea Buttner, who exhibited several large and small-scale wood cuts and small glass paintings. Buttner 's diverse practices act as a vehicle for unearthing the foundations of post war

culture and its art historical ideologies and propaganda. I am still unsure about the woodcuts as a vehicle for undertaking such an analysis, with their depiction of nuns and vegetables, in simple lines on monochromatic colour grounds, as a depiction of monastic orders and poverty, protesting wealth and commodification of art and consumer society, with its distinct echo of Agamben's political philosophical analysis of similar themes. l presume that her doubt and problematisation of the status of the art object is intentional. Here l am reminded of Michael Craig Martins' 1970's conceptual work, This is an oak tree, a text next to a glass of water, where the declaration influences how people think and perceive the world, reflecting how propaganda works in society. This interrogation works in parallel to her analysis and unfixing of post war frozen interpretations of concepts and the politics of materials and their ideological position within art, sowing considerable instability when looking at Buttner 's work. Despite their simplicity you don't know exactly what you are looking at. In that respect Buttner's work complements the great Sturtevant, who had a new exhibition *Zip Zap* at Ropac, that equally undermines the complete edifice of western modernism. In many respects the peculiarity of the selected works can be seen to be doing the same thing that we found at Art Basel Paris; a succinct overview of art since the 1900's. Here the categories and genealogy of this history has been completely undermined and thrown into confusion and the arbitrary nature of modernism's categories shown up and thrown into question. Sturtevant is the only artist who approached whatever can be seen to be a workable form of critique within the western global art.

At the Paris Internationale art fair in northeast Paris, in a former Post Office on five floors, the House of Gaga from LA, showed works by ASMA, an artist duo from Ecuador and Mexico, whose work l was told escapes western art historical references on display at Art Basel Paris presented small painted tin sculptures. What l thought a mental act was encouraging, and showed, however small a step, that here was the glimmer of a break with colonialism and that a completely new universe had opened up. That said overall, the best work in all the art fairs in Paris was to be seen on the ground floor of the Art Basel Paris art fair, despite interesting installations shown on other floors of the building by new and emerging artists, apart from one project that showed a small grey framed drawing against a wall of grey sheets of paper that explored the Architectural space that framed and delimited work.

Andrea Büttner : Kunstmuseum

African Diaspora and Paris

BLACK INFLUENCE IN 19TH CENTURY MODERNISM

Lanita Brooks-Colbert

Since the 18th Century, France and its capital, Paris was considered the center of the art world. Parisians witnessed the end of the reign of Louis XIV with Paris becoming center stage of the Enlightenment. Philosophers, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot, produced world-changing ideas, contributing to the city's reputation for cultural sophistication. This period in the city's history brought artists from around the world to Paris to learn and be inspired by the city's artistic resources and creativity, particularly in painting and its cultural achievements in theatre and music. Paris was in its artistic prime in the 19th and early 20th century, when a colony of artists established in the city, with art schools associated with some of the finest painters of the times.

Then as now, Paris remains an important milieu de rencontre, or meeting place, for people of the African diaspora, including African Americans and those of Caribbean heritage. Columbia University African Diaspora scholar, Dr. Brent Hayes Edwards, said, "Paris allowed boundary crossing, conversations, and collaborations that were available nowhere else to the same degree." Many African American artists moved to Paris in the 1920s because of the city's open and tolerant atmosphere, calling the famous arts district, Montmartre home to African American expatriates. Post World War I Paris lured African American writers, thought leaders, artists, entertainers, and musicians. This emigration from 1910 – 1940's had as much to do with race relations in the United States as it did with the cultural and social attractions of Paris, the City of Lights. Luminaries such as Josephine Baker, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and a host of jazz and blues musicians found in Paris an environment free from overt racism. It was, to be certain, not a color-blind society or one devoid of irony. The artist Palmer Hayden, who describes his 1930 painting, "The Janitor Who Paints", as "a sort of protest painting" because of his economic and social standing in America, found that he was treated better by the French when he let it be known that he was an American. Yet Paris provided, as the abstract painter Edward Clark, whose style was shaped by the years he spent in Paris in the early 1950's, observed, Paris was a place where "one was hated as an equal." This may sound like cold comfort, but it was a welcome change for American blacks inured to the indignities encountered at home. The Harlem Renaissance Movement from 1910 –1942 was the aftermath of this passage, as some artists returned home while other artists' work in Paris became known in America.

Pablo Picass:o Girl Before a Mirror (1932)
oil on canvas

African Diasporic creative influences on American and Caribbean Blacks and artists aligned with Modernism in19th Century Paris broadly situates modern and contemporary artwork by people of African descent in discussions of traditional West African art. African art dates back before written records. Africans used art to communicate and reflect their religions and traditions, often using symbols and codes representing power to indicate the status of their people and leaders in masks, paintings, and face art, characterized by geometric patterns and vivid dissonant colors.

Fauvism, emerging in late 19th century France, dis-

Jacob Lawerence: The Builders (1947.)
tempera on board

tinguished by its use of bold colors, complex brushstrokes, and non-real figures and other art movements in nineteenth century Paris were influenced by African art, seen by Parisian artists including Picasso, reflected in *Girl Before a Mirror*" (1932) and *Girl with Mandoli*n (1910). In Wassily Kandinsky 's work, *Black and Violet* (1923), the admiration for explosive Fauve colors accompanies his artistic turn to Cubism. Both artists' blending of several viewpoints in the same painting, creates pictures that appear broken and abstracted, but also recall African sculpture and masks used in performance where the performer twists and turns allowing the viewer varied perspectives. Cuban artist Wilfredo Lam, who lived in Paris 1938-1941, influenced by his African, Asian, and European ancestry, as well as the Surrealist Movement in Paris, painted *The Jungle* (1943), fusing images of Afro-Caribbean deities and spirits with European Cubism and Surrealism, referencing West African religions, Santeria and Vodoun. African American artist, Jacob Lawerence, describing his work, *The Builders* (1947), called his own style "Dynamic Cubism". While not strictly adhering to the tradition of Cubism, Lawerence utilized fragmented forms and bold color to create a dynamic visual language. History tells us that for American Black creatives to live, paint, write, and perform in Paris was obligatory for their careers and Paris' bohemian allure was enough to attract talent from abroad that sought personal freedom as well artistic freedom.

African American painter, Henry Ossawa Tanner settled in France in 1891 and enjoyed considerable success. His legacy along with painters such as Annie E. Anderson, who studied in Paris after being denied attendance at the prestigious Corcoran School of Art in Washington D.C., opened doors for African American artists who lived and worked in Paris during the Jazz Age including sculptors Elizabeth

Lois Mailou Jones: Arreau Hautes-Pyrenes (1949)
oil on canvas

Prophet and Augusta Savage, and painters Palmer Hayden, Hale Woodruff, Archibald J. Motley, Jr., and Albert Alexander Smith and later Lois Mailou Jones. Lois Jones met painter, Celine Tabary in Paris 1937 and became part of a social cohort of Black creatives living in Paris in the 1930's. When Jones returned home to America, she and Tabary with abstract painter, Alma Thomas formed 'The Little Paris Group'. Mailou Jones displays French influence in her work '*Arreau Hautes-Pyrenes*' (1949), showing a nearly impressionistic style that recurred throughout her career. The bold emblematic qualities of African art in her work, *The Ascent of Ethiopia* (1932), led her to create abstract art with striking color contracts and three-dimensional forms.

Did African and Afro-Caribbean artists form a cohort like the impressionists and fauvists did or did they work solely? African American in Paris did not stand alone as an ethnic group in France. Since the early 1700, Blacks, the Africa Blacks and French West Indies Blacks lived in France. In 1930 the Negritude Movement, a political artistic literary movement originated in Paris. The movement centered around a group of black students, scholars and artists from the Caribbean and Africa who lived and/or studied in Paris. Their main objective for the creation of the movement was bringing together artists and thought leaders from French colonies in Africa and the Caribbean, the French West Indies, with the aim of promoting an appreciation of the history and culture of black people. In 1930's Paris, African American artists, intellectuals, and writers encountered African and French West Indies comrades. The bond that was developed between these three groups was highly productive in terms of mutual influences and cross pollination in area of literature, art, culture, and notably political awareness. Out of this unity of black cultural heritage, African American writer,

Guillaume Guillon-Lethière: The Oath of the Ancestors (1822)
oil on canvas

James Baldwin wrote his famous essay 'Prince and Powers". Stuart Hall, Jamaican born British sociologist and cultural theorist said, "Cultural identity … is a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being." Yes, African American and Caribbean artists living and working in Paris did form a cohort in social and art historical context.

In 1996, The Studio Museum in New York exhibit *Exploration in the City of Lights: African American Artists in Paris 1945-1965* explored the effect Paris had on African American artists working there opining that for American artists of African heritage, Paris presented a place where everything was open to them. In 2016, the exhibition, *The Color Line*, at the Musee du Quai Branly, in Paris introduced French audiences to 200 works of African- American artists. The exhibit chronicled a dark period in the United States through the cultural history of its Black artists, the prime target of racial discrimination. Unlike America, a stimulating art scene awaited them in the French capital. This artistic discrimination continued to consume artist like Beauford Delaney, a modernist painter of the early 20th century, with the prejudices of being black and gay in a racist homophobic society forcing him to emigrate to Paris in 1952, where he changed his artistic style, studying color and light through abstract expression. This is shown in his *Untitled work* (Yellow, Red, and Black Circles for James Baldwin, Istanbul). In 2017, a documentary directed by Joanne Burke, titled *Paris Noir: African American in the City of Lights* shared the achievements and challenges of black artists in Montparnasse while giving us an appreciation of beneficial cultural exchange between France and Black America. Black intellectuals, musicians, writers, artists launched the appreciation of Black culture worldwide.

The recent (June 15 – October 14, 2024) Guillaume Lethière exhibit at Clark Art Institute, in Williamstown, Massachusetts shows his captivating use of light in his works. Guillaume Lethiere, a favorite of Bonaparte and his court, was a central figure in the Caribbean community in Paris. His works, *The Oath of the Ancestors* (1822), depicting the defeat of French colonial forces and achieving independence for Haiti addresses issues of colonialism, slavery and diaspora in its political, social and art historical context. Lethière's home was described as "open to all Creoles". He was close friends with General Thomas-Alexandre Dumas from Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti). His birth and story were typical of colonization. A son of a white plantation owner and enslaved woman of mixed race, Lethiere moved to France with his father at the age of fourteen to study drawing and painting. He achieved the highest levels of recognition for his works at his time. His work was not well known until the Clark Art Institute exhibit shed light on the presence of Caribbean artists in France during his lifetime.

Francisco Oller El Velorio (1893)

The Caribbean African Diaspora French influence continues with Francisco Oller, a Puerto Rican painter who spent time in Paris (1856 – 1896). Francisco Oller's work, *El Velorio* (1893) was influenced by Impressionism and Realism. His work combined his experiences abroad with his attachment to Puerto Rico's geography, light, and customs. Oller's work helped shape a uniquely Caribbean aesthetic that was an important contribution to both the Paris avant-garde and the Puerto Rican school of painting.

In the last 50 years, museums, scholars, writers, filmmakers, archivists, visual and spoken artists have examined and presented the profound significance of Black heritage culture in Modernism and those who are responsible for its place in history. Hybrid art generated by cross cultural interaction did, can and will hopefully leave an archival and antidotal footprint that represents acknowledgement and acceptance of who we are and our place in history.

From Revolution to Evolution

PARIS 1874: THE IMPRESSIONIST MOMENT

Maryanne Pollock

Claude Monet: Impression Sunrise (1872)
oil on canvas

Paris 1874: The Impressionist Moment at the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC illustrates Paris at the moment when the Impressionists energized the City of Lights with their spectral colors and brushstrokes of immediacy. It was from the ashes of L'Annee Terrible, the defeat of the French in the Franco Prussian War, the failed revolt of the Commune and the worst winter on record in Paris that the first Impressionists organized their show simultaneously to the Salon, the most prestigious art exhibition in France. It was held in the opulent state of the art showroom of Nadar, the official photographer for the Gran Hotel by an eclectic group known as Societe Anonyme, who set forth with new energy, independence and depiction of light in an open Exhibition without jury or prizes.

In this exhibition Paris 1874, the Impressionist Moment, co-curated by teams from Washington D.C.'s National Gallery of Art, and Musee d' Orsay in Paris, the exquisite Monet painting titled Impression Sunset was borrowed from the Musee d'Orsay. One of the first Impressionist paintings, Monet's work leads the viewer to experience color as the 1874 Parisian audience might have, jolted by the new modern art differing from historical, religious and mythological paintings in the state sponsored Salon exhibition. As the Impressionists burst forth with fire and energy as piercing as the sun in this masterpiece by

Gustave Caillebotte: La Rue Halévy, vue du sixième étage (1878)
oil on canvas

Monet, this year launched the Impressionists, and some argue the beginning of Modernism.

Swaths of Paris were still in ruin from defeat in the recent Franco Prussian War, the worst winter and starvation on record and yet from this rubble would rise "one of the most beautiful and exciting cities in the world", envisioned by many but finally emerging in 1852, headed by Louis Napoleon III, the nephew of former Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. Finding Paris filthy and crime ridden, he employed the cold hearted but efficient Haussmann who, without visiting the areas he gutted transformed Paris with wide boulevards and elegant buildings bustling with bookstores, galleries and hotels, cafes, photography studios, a new Opera House, and boutiques with the latest fashion. Caillebotte painted this dynamic scene in primarily brilliant cobalt blues from the perspective of his sixth-floor studio.

The Impressionists' new ways of illustrating modern life and its kinetic energy used newly invented materials from chemists like Sennelier who produced tubes for painting "en plein air" (painting outdoors) and photography and film recording movement and street scenes.

However, not all impressionists painted outdoors. Many, including Renoir, Sisley, Cezanne, Pissarro, and Morisot, energetically captured the fleeting plein air where they made essential notes and watercolor sketches on paper or small wooden panels and hustled back to their studios to finish their paintings with oil on canvas.

Guiseppe DeNittis who arrived from Italy six years prior to making his debut at the Impressionists show, created some of the most vibrant plein air studies in the show. His six hour climb up to the exploding Mt Vesuvius required an immediacy in technique for

Eduourd Manet: The Railway (1873)
oil on canvas
also known as Gare Saint-Lazare,

his very survival. He answered that call by using a gorgeous mahogany panel that served as a stand in for the scorched earth, contrasting its flatness with luminous white puffs of smoke and ash and deep black gorges.

Edouard Manet, considered a "father of modern art", disgusted the public with his painting The Railway when it first showed at the Salon, as it epitomized the modernity of the moment. No longer would kings and saints, nor the aristocracy touting biblical heritage be the standard of the day with this painting jolting the public into that new reality. In Manet's painting, a beautifully dressed woman is freed from the confines of her home (and perhaps her corset?), taking power back by directly confronting the viewer, reading with a girl who faces away from us, both lost in their own worlds. The trains wheeled new bourgeois wealth from international hubs like London and even America, connecting trains from Le Havre to Paris and into the French countryside and beyond. As with the new technology of the time, new art became the bridge to and announcer of the future. Although difficult to imagine from our perspective, paintings like this were an assault to the public eye who considered the Impressionists, slap dash, garish and unfinished.

Mary Cassatt attended the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts against her parents' wishes. Moving alone to Paris in 1866, she faced misogyny from her fellow male artists including Edgar Degas, who eventually became a close friend and collaborator. Her portrait painting in the Salon 1874 exhibition titled Ida revealed the mania for all things Spanish in Paris at the time. She represented a new internationalism that was key to Paris becoming the center of the art world for decades to come. Like Caillobotte, she was never represented by the conservative, pro-family, pro-monarchy, moralistic art dealer Du-

Montmartre circa 1874
Unknown Photographer

rand Ruel as part of the Impressionists' shows. Mary Cassatt, and Caillobotte whose male gaze landed on the more muscular male figures rather than on the coquettes loved by Renoir and Durand Ruel faced further exclusion. With Cassatt's brother going on to become the wealthiest man in America when he owned the Pennsylvania Railroad, she used her connections to procure sales of the Impressionists' work, especially Degas, who, even though he was a key player in the Impressionist group, considered himself a realist. His paintings often relied on a Renaissance technique of rendering the entire painting a la imprimatura, a full tonal scale underpainting to which glazes of color would be added. It was a letter from Degas to the mother of Berthe Morisot to participate in the Salon exhibition of 1874 that resulted in her participation as one of only two women, along with an anonymous aristocrat to show in the first exhibition of the Impressionists. Despite the ban on women in the academies, and from the art jury of the Salon, women still managed to make stellar work, making up thirteen per cent of participating artists. Without doubt, it did not hurt that Manet was her brother-in-law, and she was the great niece of Fragonard. She was a wonderful painter in her own right producing such work as The Cradle for the first Impressionist show in 1874, a tender intimate moment capturing perhaps the overtired and monocular vision of a new parent, in this case, her sister, Edma, also a painter.

Most impressive and energizing about this grand exhibition at the National Gallery of Art is how this eclectic group of discontents, some rejected from the conservative Salon, some maintaining footholds in both the Salon and exhibitions with the Impressionists freed themselves from the fiscal and ideological confines of traditional venues. They turned the ashes of revolution into evolution and created their own independent collective, the first of its kind in France taking advantage of a new law allowing a joint stock holding company to exist with variable personnel and variable capital. They took what was meant to be criticism of their work to brand themselves and work independently, free of the restrictions of the

Auguste Renoir: The Dancer (187)4
oil on canvas

academic Salon, and hypermoralistic gallerist Durand Ruel, opening a market for their work to new monied collectors pouring into Paris. Impressionist paintings, particularly those by Monet, are often hung next to those of Abstract Expressionists and other contemporary paintings cementing their relevance today. They still beckon us to be here now and to focus on the light, a message that is as relevant today as it was 150 years ago and perhaps eternally.

Art is its Own Family

Nancy Nesvet

Yannis Kounellis: Unititles (1967)
Carbon antracite

Arte Povera, (Poor Art), an Italian movement championing new experiments in visual art, music, literature, installation and performance, was first announced to the public via a manifesto entitled, *Notes on a Guerilla War* by Germano Celant, first published in *Flash Art*'s, November-December 1967 issue. Arte Povera is most often cited as a movement that relied on the use of 'poor materials', meaning pre-industrial, non-technological means for making art, but also identified the poor, Povera, according to their actions and behaviors: the rich, according to Celant, work within the system whereas the poor do not, seeking an alternative, often an abolition of all positions. With Arte Povera relying on individuals, as Celant proclaimed, "man is the message", a community of those practicing Arte Povera questioned reality and the behavior of capitalist society as perceived visually and explored psychological interpretations questioning reality as made by those in power, newly interpreting their world.

This 1960's and 70's Italian communal art movement reacted to the situation in Italy after the Second World War. They illustrated positive applications of discoveries in physics and chemistry before the war while questioning the increasing role of technology and mechanization, arguing for the use of pre-industrial revolution materials. The exhibition, Arte Povera, produced by the Pinault Collection, at the Bourse de Commerce in Paris, an odd venue for a movement that railed against commercialization, but one that illustrates Arte Povera's often satirical methods, assembled a comprehensive exhibition of work produced by artists associated with Arte Povera, their influences and those they continue to influence today.

It was a time of experimentation, using materials available in a country deeply affected by the recent war, teaching artists to use what they could find, to make art elevating common material to make artistic statements, to make art of the people, rather than the economically well off and celebrated. Exhibiting the first installation of contemporary art, the Arte Povera artists showed humans, animals, minerals and vegetables in co-evolution, rising from the floor-based horizontal stature of animals, the ground-home of vegetable and mineral to the later vertical stance of humans and the attendant verticality of paintings. The materials chosen most often included natural materials, plants, minerals, dirt, and the detritus of civilization, rags, oil, and smoke. Demon-

Pérez Javier: Inspiracion Expiracion un soplo (2024)

Installation View

strations and installations illustrated and explored forms of energy, including oil production and transmission of electricity and power.

On the museum's façade, beginning near the right entrance, Mario Merz's Numero di Fibonacci weaves around the building's back, as we encounter neon numbers representing the numbers of the Fibonacci sequence where each number is equal to the preceding two, much like couples producing children, but also illustrating the creative act whose progeny doubles. Realizing that electricity producing light in a neon tube is likened to electricity produced by lightning bolts, he brings science together with art, natural phenomena with man-made installation.

First encountered inside, against the walls of the circular space, is Senza Titulo *(Materassi) (Untitled) (Mattresses),* the 1970 work first shown at the Sonnabend Gallery in Paris shows six mattresses, standing upright as they were at the Jeu de Paume in 1994. Lighted tubes connecting the mattresses become abstract scrawls, recalling the shapes of paintings but softer, and connected. Differing from the original intention afforded by the horizontal to the floor staging of the work, it more resembles a typical museum installation than one to be walked on or around, but establishes the verticality of a painted canvas, making the mattress not a soft place on which to lie, but an art object.

Overall, the exhibition intentionally recalls the Arte Povera installation on the floor at Deposito d'Arte Presento at Turin in the late 1960's. Here, at the Bourse de Commerce as in Turin, art was largely installed horizontally, on the floor, denying its existence as painting or sculpture, but rather, to be encountered, touched, a field to be walked upon or what Luciano Fabro, whose work, *Lo Spirato* is exhibited here, called a habitat, a place to be lived in. The 2003 Arte Povera show at the Hirschhorn Museum in Washington, DC, also exhibited horizontally, on the floor, was made largely of living plants and other commonly encountered natural materials.

Giuseppe Penone's *Idea di Pietra-1532 kg* di luce (kilograms of light), a bronze cast tree holds river rocks in the interspaces where branches intersect, interpreted as stable rocks with living, meandering branches weaving around them, like thought processes around the stable mind.

Further on, Mario Merz's lifelong companion, Mari-

Alighiero Boetti: Mappe (1971-1973)
Linen, Unframed

sa Merz's Senza Titolo's delicate rhythmic sounds of water flowing in a fountain rise above a wax violin in a lead basin on the ground providing opposites; malleable wax surrounded by formed, hard impenetrable lead, as a magnet attracting the metal spout, shapes the water into the form of a heart. The force of magnetism urges lead to bend into a shape interpreting love, recalling the biblical admonition to turn weapons into plowshares.

In the vitrines surrounding the circular passageway, writings, books, artwork, posters photographs and historical documents tell the story of the movement. Multiples, new media, documents of collective performances and experimental theatre are included. Past influences are documented as is the work influenced by Arte Povera including that of David Hammons, Theaster Gates, D Harding and Otobong Nkanga, all illustrating the collective and cooperative nature of those involved in Arte Povera.

Fabio Mauri's *Screens* mimic the rectangular shapes of movie or television screens but also military insignia and license plates, exploring the connections between power and media. The exhibition includes Mauri's many cultural practices including theatre, performance, writing, publishing and film installation, noting the founding of the magazine *Citta di Riga* with Kounellis, but also his projection of Pasolini's film, *Vangelo secondo Matteo* (The Gospel according to Saint Matthew) projected onto Passolini's white clad body. Noting the inspiration for future projection work, we might look to Krzyszko Wodjczko's later projections onto a statue of Abraham Lincoln and his projection of Ronald Reagan's hand posed in honor of the pledge of allegiance standing in for corporate business.

Three works at eye level; Jannis Kousellis' 1969 work created for *Live in Your Head*, at the Kunsthalle Basel, rejected by Customs as an artwork, deemed instead commercial goods opened a new investigation for Kousellis, who then created an artwork evoking the transportation of commercial goods. To note this forerunner of the Andy Warhol's pop art magnification of Brillo boxes and Campbell's soup cans is obvious. When Attitude Becomes Form Giulio Paolini's 1967 *Lo Spazio* made up of eight letters composing words, foreruns later text work of Barbara Kruger and Jasper Johns. Emilio Prini's five packets of lead defining space led to the confusion of space in Pier Paolo Calzolari's 1967 icing structure, Senzo Titolo (Untitled) and the steam produced by Alighiro Boetti's 1993-4 *Autoritratto*. That steam also recalls the production of the steam locomotive, linked with the onset of the industrial revolution as well as, chillingly, the steam produced by trains carrying people to gas chambers during the Nazi era.

Giovanni Anselmo's Direzione where a boxed needle

Lucian Fabro: Lo Spirato (He Passed Away (1968-1973

points north, orienting us, illustrates attempts of Arte Povera artists to encounter, define, illustrate space and people's place in it and to redefine and make known the possibilities of space and materiality, but interestingly, in pointing north, aims at Paris where we are.

With Mario Merz's igloos in the exhibition recalling nomadic societies and their dwellings, through which one can see the sky, we recall Hausmann's attempt to design Paris' space, due north of Italy, as one to circumambulate, including art above and on the ground, as navigational markers, whether the high ground of Montmartre, the markers on sidewalks, bridges that cross the Seine, or Notre Dame herself, from which Quasimodo supposedly looked down at the ground to see Esmerelda dance in the square of the people.

This is art after World War II, when cities were blown away, burned to smoking piles of residue, people displaced and stripped of any belongings they had. Here, the smoke is seen, the land horizontal and bare but for nature coming back, piles of clothes, rags, in Michelangelo Pistoletti's installation, *Venere degli stracci* piled high; with no longer use to those who wore them. Yet there is optimism and curiosity. His exploration of mirrors to effect transformation, part of his practice since 1962 wherein the pictorial surface becomes a passage into a different world becoming the caged sphere. *Mappamonda*, recalls his sphere of newspapers rolled through the city by a cooperative group of artists, gathering dirt from the street.

The art on the second floor veers away from investigation of materials and orientations to explorations

Michelangelo Pistoletto: TRhe Mirror (1973-1978)

of production of energy. Gilberto Zorio's work shows an electric current running through a chrome nickel wire, showing the use of materials to create new forms of energy. For me, the allusion to Einstein's work cannot be avoided, as these artists attempt, as he did, to better the world by bringing new forms and adaptations of creating energy. Nor can we avoid noting that although man misused Einstein's discoveries to destroy, here Arte Povera artists create but also question new forms that might or might not benefit the populace. Genovese artist Emilio Prini wants to break post-industrial machines including cameras and television sets by bringing back forms of authenticity as the cooperative society of artists, explored bodily perceptions and movements. Adding to the artwork is a display of books relating to the work of Arte Povera, ranging from texts by Thoreau, Adorno, John Cage, Rousseau, Fabio Mauri that underpin philosophical theory and explain the work of Arte Povera artists. Not only does literature corroborate and explain the artwork, linking us with the energy expounded by minerals, flora, stars, and the galaxy as in *Trecento millione di anni* by Anselmo, but the exhibition smartly juxtaposes historical precedents with the work exhibited. An Etruscan Canopic vase (ca. 600-575 BCE) is displayed next to Calzolari's Casa *Ideale*; a Paul Klee painting on jute is sited in Boetti's gallery. Kazimir Malevich's 1917 *Dissolution of the Plane* is displayed near Kounellis' first Sensa Titolo (Untitled), a pile of black coal on the floor, giving the two-dimensional square a three-dimensional reading, alluding to the production of energy from natural resources. It is as if the modeled heap of coal inspired the painting. A small sculpture of lapis lazuli from fifth century BCE's Achaemenid dynasty near Anselmo's Verso Oltremare establishes the connection between eastern and western cultures, uniting creatives. Sano Di Pietro's ca. 1460 painted *Madonna and Child* relates to Marisa Merz's *Clay Teste*. Giorgio de Chirico's 1948 self-portrait is placed next to Paolini's work showing DeChirico's inspiration.

With Arte Povera artists critically commenting on modernist high art, using natural materials, so rejecting technology, but rooted within Mediterranean histories of art, the work is relevant to today's discussions of the place of technology in artmaking, if there should be a place at all. Looking ahead as well as backwards at influences for Arte Povera artists, the exhibition asks how artists might negotiate technology imbued practices and how they might embrace simple materials and animal, vegetable and mineral, rejecting anthropomorphism and technology. In so doing, Arte Povera artists strived for and achieved to a high degree a communal investigation and utilization of elements of the natural world, including the forces of electricity, magnetism, energy production, flora, fauna, land, water and natural materials making their work highly relevant to our situation today, and the artwork that increasingly illustrates it. As land art and eco-feminist art, piles of rags and society's detritus as exhibited by Mark Bradford at a recent Venice Biennale US pavilion, and Lightening Fields in the American southwest takes the stage today, from the 1980's to the present, the work begun by Arte Povera continues.

Taking a Pause to Breathe, to Be Still

Lorenzo Cardim

Resting in the heart of a small village in Champagne, France, Château d'Orquevaux seemed to exist beyond the grasp of time. The stones of the Château held the memories of those who had passed through—Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's dreams, Denis Diderot's words—all lingering in the air like the mist that hovered over the valley at dawn. Each morning, I awoke not to the sound of alarms or the demands of the day, but to the soft breath of the French countryside, whispering that there was no need to rush.

The world beyond those ancient walls may have spun in its usual haste, but here, time moved with the rhythm of the land. I would sit with my tools at first light, carving hands and lips from wood as the sun cast its changing shadows across the hills. My hands worked steadily, yet my thoughts drifted, carried by the quiet of the valley. These wooden forms—silent and unmoving—paid tribute to the stories that shaped me, to the connections we build, and to the longing that unites us all. In each finger and palm, I carved echoes of people I had met, those who had crossed seas and borders, carrying within them a quiet hope for belonging and the courage to reach into the unknown.

In the silence of the Château's gardens, where the mist gave way to the crisp air of midday, I found meaning not in perfection, but in the imperfections of each piece. The unexpected bends in the wood, the small flaws, became part of their stories, much like the unique paths we all take. By evening, as the hills blazed with the gold of the setting sun, I was reminded that though time passed, it did so with a kind of grace that asked for nothing in return. In those quiet moments, I realized these hands were more than carvings; they celebrated human connection, courage, and the timeless bonds that unite us.

At times, I would set the wood aside and turn to textile, weaving stories with fabric and thread in lieu of timber and chisel. Each stitch held the weight of history—stories of immigrants who had crossed the U.S. border, journeys made under foreign skies, and steps taken with trembling hope. I thought of their courage as they left everything familiar behind, often with little more than a handful of belongings and hearts full of dreams. Each piece of fabric seemed to carry the voices, laughter, tears, and unwavering strength of those who had traversed deserts and rivers, faced uncertain fates, and yet, kept going. Though delicate, these stories were unbreakable, much like the spirit of those seeking not just survival, but a place to belong. As I sewed, I reflected on the strength it takes to carry such histories—to stitch together fragments of a life scattered by borders, pieced back into something new, something they could one day call home.

The Château, with its own rich history, became my sanctuary at a time when I yearned for a quieter space to reflect, a place to rekindle the creativity that had first drawn me to my craft. I had spent the last four years deeply immersed in two monumental projects—the reconstruction of Notre Dame de Par-

is and Buckminster Fuller's geodesic dome at the Smithsonian American History Museum. Both projects were significant, architecturally and emotionally, and through them, I gained insights into resilience and the beautiful convergence of art and science. These experiences brought me face-to-face with the endurance of human ingenuity and the grace of preservation, lessons I held with quiet reverence.

As these projects concluded, I felt a familiar pull back to the roots of my creative work—not a need to escape, but a call to pause, to explore more deeply, and to understand the path my hands and heart had quietly traveled over the years.

The Chateau was the ideal setting for this introspection. Built in the early 18th century, it held echoes of a past steeped in industrial progress and family legacy. Abel Caroillon du Vandeul, an industrialist, acquired the estate in the 1760s, establishing a metal forge that remained with his family for over a century. Through marriage, the du Vandeul family connected with the philosopher Denis Diderot, preserving the estate through periods of transformation and quiet resilience.

Sadly, history rarely unfolds without moments of turmoil. During World War II, the Château was seized by the Nazis, like so many grand estates across France. Its strategic location and historical significance made it a prime target for occupation. After the war, the property was reclaimed by its original owners, though it had taken on new meaning. Once marked by industry, the Château now stood as a symbol of endurance—a place that had weathered the storms of war and occupation, much like the hands that had built and rebuilt it over centuries.

In 2003, a new chapter began when the Attias family acquired the estate, and with the vision of their son, Ziggy Attias, and his partner, Beulah van Rensburg, transformed it into a haven for artists worldwide. Today, the Château stands as a sanctuary for creative exploration, a place where history and imagination merge, and where the past whispers its lessons to those willing to listen. Artists are free to create within its timeless beauty, to breathe, and to find themselves in stories older than their own. It was in this quiet space, where the echoes of history mingle with the hum of creative pursuits, that I too found myself immersed in a deeper understanding of time and purpose.

As Antoine de Saint-Exupéry once wrote, "It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important." Like Saint-Exupéry's rose, the Château offered me the gift of time. Here, I could step away from the structured days of administration, to engage with my art in a thoughtful and profound way. Yet one of the most cherished gifts of my time at the Château was not the work alone, but the presence of others who joined me on this journey. Writers, poets, painters, printmakers, singers, dancers, and the chefs who nourished us each day—all with their own simple, honest arts—filled our hearts and bodies with sustenance. In their company, I was reminded that true creation is not a solitary act, but a symphony of shared silences, conversations, and a mutual search for meaning.

artist at work creating hands
Above: Finished

Château d'Orquevaux did not merely shelter us—it spoke to us, taught us. In its stillness, I learned the true value of presence, of allowing oneself to simply be. I came to understand that creation is not born from hurried hands or restless hearts, but from moments of quiet, when we allow ourselves to breathe deeply and listen. And in those breaths, in those pauses, I found that the greatest art is not in the product, but in the act of being fully alive, fully present, fully still.

Art in the Ocean

Annie Markovich

installation view

Artist Nicola Bealing presents underwater creatures crafted from salvaged or recycled materials in the upper gallery, filling the room with curious, delightful sea plants and animals suspended from the ceiling. Dead Man's Fingers' colorful name suggests grotesque images. I was dead wrong. Bealing developed the paintings over 10 years and captured the mysterious chaos of nature now in the midst of environmental apocalypse.

Sharing the upper gallery with the sculptures, are four surreal underwater plant images, painted during lockdown, each taking center stage as meticulously painted portraits reminiscent of H. Bosch's "Gardens of Earthly Delights" in their intricate detailing of seaweed shapes. The themes vary from super realistic depictions of what Bealing calls, *Dead-Man's Fingers, Fans and Ears* that can hear the Sea. Superreal or surreal the sheer magnitude of work overwhelms the gallery's four walls.

Downstairs In the lower gallery, *Sea Series*, unlike the upstairs fanciful sea garden, Bealing alerts how environmental degradation equates human horror. In *Swallow Dive* a ghostlike figure dives into a sardine packed body of floating heads. The Sea World is black darkness, ominous and horrible. Another underwater decapitated figure with fishhooks pulling his flesh in green water lurches through the water, helpless. A man with a bulbous red faced head stands in water called "Jellied". Underneath jellyfish bubbles and pollution above, his head looks out at yellow molten sky.

Don't miss *Man on Fire* whose body is submerged in a black sea. His head is on fire and boils cover his body. The unifying element in this series of oil paintings is the compositional structure where the upper third of the painting is usually horizontal, with or without heads. *City Man* is hard to find midst a tangled brown blob. Bealing painted her subconscious fear and many of these works of art are not pleasing to look at. The significance of Bealing's work lies in its clarion call to heed the damage and to look, see and hear what the Sea is telling us. Thankfully the show has been up from May until November.

Nicola Bealing: Sea and Dead-Man's Fingers
04 May — 02 Nov 2024, Newlyn Art Gallery Penzance

Hear Her Speak

Mary Fletcher

Małgorzata Mirga-Tas, a Polish artist, has been the first Roma to represent her country at the Venice Biennale 2022 and Tate St Ives are showing her first major exhibition in UK. Małgorzata Mirga-Tas was at the Tate when I went, looking lovely in a glittering gold blouse and layered black skirt worn with boots. Unfortunately her well attended talk was inaudible. The acoustics at the gallery are terrible but I feel some experiment with mics and rehearsal could help.

It seems such an unforgivable loss that we have the artist there but technical problems are preventing her words from reaching us. Nowadays regrettably we are not given a little booklet but there is a lot of information online and on the wall and a video with snatches of gypsy music. The book is not arriving to buy until the end of October. It's an impressive looking show of large figurative works made with brightly coloured fabrics, some with 3D relief or attached jewellery.

I enjoyed it and was pleased to learn more about the Roma and that the artist is trying to rehabilitate the image of gypsies and make more widely known their persecution by the Nazis. She has used documentary photos and references to pictures by past artists to make her own, with help from other women - whose names are not given.

I have questions- why does she leave all the background grey and flat for the faces and arms, which are drawn on top in black? I was interested to read about Nazi prisoners but surprised they are then depicted in one case as a violinist with no violin, in another a tram driver with no tram. The soviet regime is mentioned but there is no hint of how Mirga-Tas sees that era. Why no present day references to Roma life? Can a gaily coloured image of a bear help in any way counter our disapproval of bears being trained in past times to dance?

Does recreating non - Roma stereotyped images of gypsies in any way change our view of them?

Do the large dark backgrounds work as the artist thinks to imply the images of people are emerging from a dark past?

It's so difficult to make political points in imagery - so here the labels can become more poignant, informative and interesting than the pictures. I found myself recalling how DH Lawrence wrote of gypsies, how they were depicted by Sven Berlin and Laura Knight, and how they fare in today's society in UK.

Of course it's Tate's habit to generally feature one star artist so any comparisons or contemporary news stories are left to the audience to recall or research.

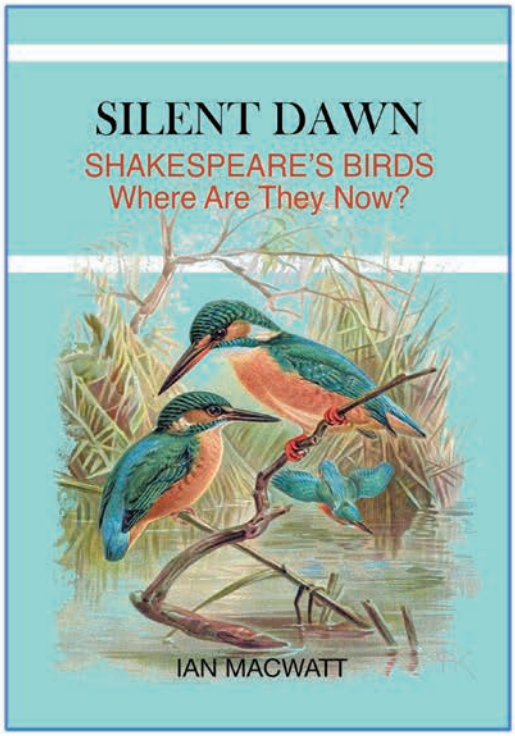
I'd like an area for these avenues to be referenced and discussed in the show - but at least as a member of one of Tate's Look groups I will have the opportunity to do this later.

Will local Roma people be encouraged to attend and record their reactions?

The fact of the exhibition has roused my engagement with Roma issues but has the work rather than the labels said anything beyond to ask one to look at the nice pictures? Could it have done?

Małgorzata Mirga-Tas at Tate St Ives, 18 October 2024 to 5 January 2025

Malgorzata Mirga-Tas: From the series Wonderful People
St Ives Tate



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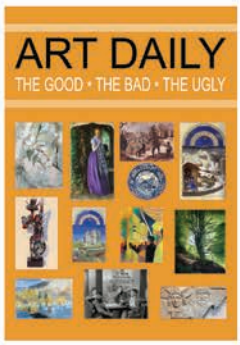

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