

June 1st 2015 \$6 / £4 / €5.80



INSIDE:

Death of the New

by John Link

The State of the Art

by John Stepling

Splitting the Public and Private uses of Art

by Dr Nizan Shaked

Notes From the Last Colony

by Bill Roseberry

FEATURES:

Editorial by Derek Guthrie

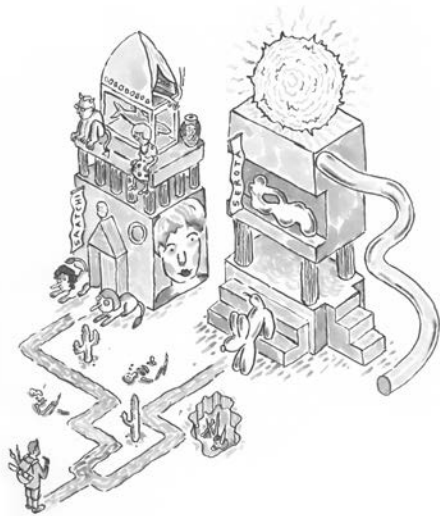
Editorial by Daniel Nanavati

Ed Paschke at the Ashmolean

Leon Golub, at the Serpentine

Book Review: Who Paid the Piper:
the CIA and the Cultural Cold War

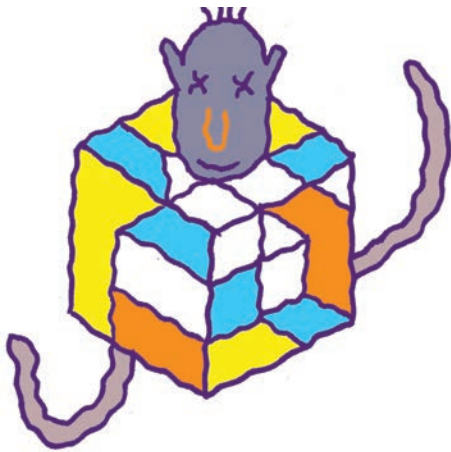
Letters



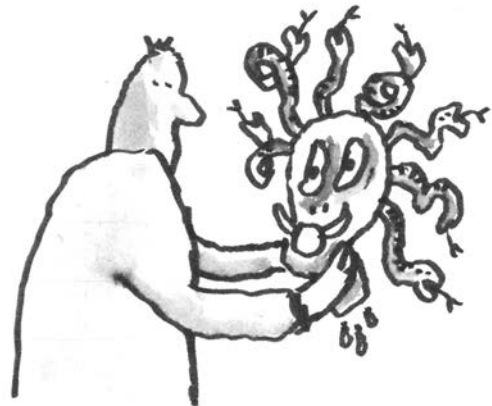
SAATCHI OR SEROTA?



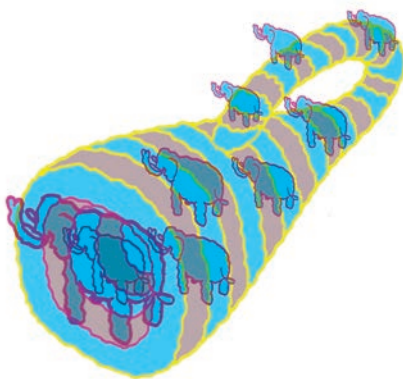
ALTERNATIVE USES FOR THE TATE ST.IVES
NO.1 POLDARK WORLD



DRAWING IN THE FOURTH SPATIAL DIMENSION.
NO.3 THE BABOON



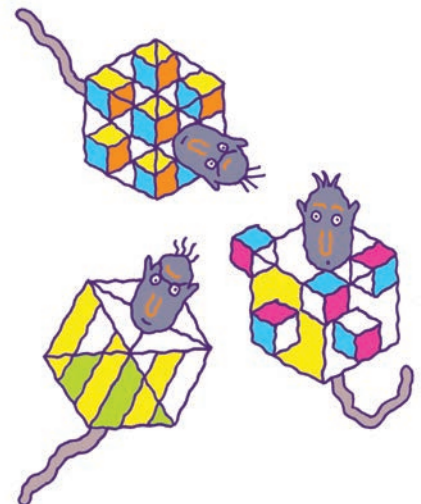
DAVE'S NEW SMARTPHONE



DRAWING IN THE FOURTH SPATIAL DIMENSION.
NO.2 AN AFRICAN TESSERPHANT



DRAWING IN THE FOURTH SPATIAL DIMENSION.
NO.1 THE HYPERDUCK



DRAWING IN THE FOURTH SPATIAL DIMENSION.
NO.3.1 SOME MORE BABOONS

LETTERS

Sir,

It is interesting to me that few of the so called top art schools and universities are interested in bringing Derek Guthrie to this country after he and Jane contributed so much to criticism and art through The New Art Examiner and other publications. True one does not invite Derek to talk and expect that he will perform in a manner that will insure you accolades for hosting such a swell friendly guy — for Derek for sure will rustle some feathers. But seriously, is that not what being a cutting edge thinker, critic or artist is all about? Funny that a little university in conservative Augusta Georgia has had him speak on numerous occasions over the years, while the bastions of the educational avant-garde seem reluctant to stick their necks out. Come on brave souls — show Derek you are interested in real discourse.

Tom Nakashima
NC (One Question 11.10.2011)

Editor,

Delighted to hear the New Art Examiner is coming to Cornwall and the UK. We have lacked a voice in the art world since the demise of Scryfa magazine. With such a long history of the Newlyn School and the St Ives group it is good to know you are here.

P Tregarthwin
Cornwall

Editor

Community art thrives here in Cornwall. The attraction of Cornwall for artists is long known perhaps less well known is the interest collectors have always shown. Not just the casual tourist but the wealthier business men and women who have second homes and retirement properties in the county. The baseness of the wider art milieu hungry for money and fame has nothing much to do with the passion people have for creating.

That we can now bring on new writers and teach them to be first rate critics with an eye on history and meaning at the same time, is much to be praised.

Thomas Finegan
Cornwall

To Whom It May Concern,
John Link is simply a reactionary neo-con who

should never have been allowed to teach. He is in denial of what our most prestigious universities offer for contemporary art students who are serious about the culture of our time.

M. Rutt
Texas

Editor,

This is very interesting news. I hope Falmouth Art College find time to talk to you to give students a chance to become writers on the arts. Some of the most profound comments on the role of artists and their work comes from artists themselves who can make excellent critics.

I understand you now have several Friends groups in the County which I also think a very good way of getting ideas into the magazine from the 'street' level.

I studied art at Wolverhampton and thought in the 60s it was one of the finest, all round educations you could receive in this country. No more.

Colin Edge
Cornwall

Editor,

I do want to express my chagrin that Chicago art schools and university programs haven't come together to bring in Derek to speak on the occasion of the publication of the Essential New Examiner. All of those institutions, their faculty and students, reaped enormous benefits from the NAE which put the national art spotlight on Chicago — and the Midwest. Most important, the NAE fostered gritty independence and enabled many new writers and artists to contribute to the art discourse. The NAE was a contentious and fresh publication that helped to put authority for art back into the hands of artists, often earning the annoyance of entrenched commercial and clique-oriented curators and collectors. I think it's a sign of weakness and embarrassing new timidity for our institutions to pass on bringing Derek to Chicago. They all have big 'visiting artist' budgets and instead of bringing in some new hot gallery's wunderkind to put dollar signs in the eyes of art students why not expose them to one who knows that art is about changing entrenched and stultifying cultural values. Come on, academia and museums, bring Derek here! He can help re-spark the 'grassroots' criticality that underlies the vitality of any art scene, especially in Chicago.

William Conger
IA (One Question 11.10.2011)

Editor,
Good Luck.

Sir Donald Howerth

Editor,

We live in a Disney world where Koons can become the richest artist in the world for making nothing more than feel good, think less matter that isn't one step away from modern style cartoons.

This is not the richness of culture we have striven for centuries to develop and foster. This is a lost world where no artist is brave enough to face up to the human condition head on but retreats into the barren wilderness of what's selling.

My time at Wolverhampton Art College was one of the best, all round educations one could ever receive. Now art students are fed theory and self-fulfillment as a panacea to their life as grant form fillers.

Andrew M. Beckwith
Taunton

Send all letters to:
letters@newartexaminer.net

IMPORTANT:

Dear Reader,

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

This is the first edition planting roots in the UK, based in Cornwall. If you have interest please consult Google, also Art Cornwall for interview with the publisher Derek Guthrie, who is a painter and keeps his Art Practice private. The New Art Examiner has a long history of producing quality and independent art criticism. Cornwall, as any art scene, needs writers to professionalize otherwise insider trading will determine success in this troubled art world. Simply please subscribe so as we can encourage and find writers to share their visual experience with you. You can directly participate, also, as all letters to the Editor are published.

All editions include the digital issue sent via email. The two interim editions are published June 1st and August 1st 2015.

Subscription to both Interim edition by cheque, Please see page 6 for addresses:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Print and digital UK | £10 + £5 | postage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | USA | \$12 + \$3 | postage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Rest of World | \$16 + \$10 | postage |

Queries: subscribe@newartexaminer.net
Please send your US name and address to:
Annie Markovich: anniemarkovich@me.com

Table of Contents

ARTICLES

DEATH OF THE NEW

John Link p8

SPLITTING THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE USES OF ART

Dr. Nizan Shaked p12

STATE OF THE ART

John Steppling p22

NOTES FROM THE LAST COLONY

Bill Roseberry p34

A CRITICAL VOICE RETURNS

Tom Mullaney p5

I HAVE SEEN THE FUTURE AND IT MAY BE CORNWALL

Derek Guthrie p6

AWE NOW BELONGS TO SCIENCE, NOT ART

Daniel Nanavati p11

SPEAKEASY

ED PASCHKE: New York uber alles: Plural-
ism - Reprinted from February 1982

p10

BOOK REVIEW

Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold
War by Frances Stoner
George Touche' gives a sociologist's view
p37

EXHIBITION

ED PASCHKE: VISIONARY FROM CHICA- GO

Stephen Lee and Daniel Nanavati at the Ash-
molean retrospective p20

EXHIBITION

LEON GOLUB

Stephen Lee on the Serpentine retrospective
p32

LETTERS

CARTOONS by Jonathon Coudrille p 23 Steve Hamann p 39 John Kilburn p40-41

**All cartoon or graphic images welcome. The subject must be on
the state of the visual art culture of the personalities involved.**

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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

The following was the first editorial printed in the first edition of the New Art Examiner, October 1973



The Masthead from October 1973

The New Art Examiner is a new kind of art publication - a monthly tabloid which will cover without fear or favor news or the visual arts in Chicago and the mid-west. Besides reviews of exhibitions - the standard fare of an art publication - we will include behind-the-scenes stories such as the Sao Paolo article in this issue, news briefs, a regular review of criticism in the mass media, coverage of alternative galleries, analysis of various aspects of the art world, and critical coverage of today's agencies of patronage; the museums and the arts councils at both the state and the federal level. We hope to combine in one flexible instrument the qualities of depth or analysis which one occasionally finds in the glossy art publications, with the range or timely information that one now finds in the bi-monthly arts newsletters which have sprung up all over the country.

The Examiner is also meant to be a forum for the artists of Chicago and a vehicle for their communication.

Why such a publication in Chicago? Coverage of the visual arts in our city suffers from both external neglect and internal indifference. The art publishing industry is in New York. Reviews of Chicago art events are few and far between in the nationally distributed arts magazines. In fact we lag behind Los Angeles, San Francisco and even Minneapolis in this respect. But far more devastating to a creative and lively art scene here than the scarcity of national reviews is the tendency on the part of our mass media to report arts news almost exclusively from an insti-

tutional viewpoint and even worse to equate art with entertainment. "Arts and Fun" with a heavy emphasis on the "fun" is the password here.

We believe that art is serious, that it has to do with ideas and values and that it is far more important to our society than the society is ready to admit. The artist is an undervalued man. On the one hand he is the goose that lays the golden eggs for a vast arts industry which rivals the stock market as a money making institution. On the other hand he is supposed to be a clown - a master of legerdemain - on an aesthetic trip that has nothing to do with anything else. We say with a bow to Picasso, "What do you think an artist is? An imbecile who has only his eyes if he's a painter, or ears if he's a musician, or a lyre at every level of his heart if he's a poet, or even if he's a boxer, just his muscles? On the contrary, he's at the same time a political being, constantly alive to heart-rending, fiery or happy events, to which he responds in every way. How would it be possible to feel no interest in other people and by virtue of an ivory indifference to detach yourself from the life which they so copiously bring you? No, painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of war for attack and defense against the enemy."

We believe that the same standards of journalism which apply to other areas can apply to the visual arts - a concern for covering the whole not just an aspect and a respect for the truth - a vision of the artist as a whole man not as a myth or a performing monkey.

A CRITICAL VOICE RETURNS

by TOM MULLANEY



Waking up in Chicago in 2015, following a thirteen year slumber since the New Art Examiner last published, can be quite disorienting. It requires seeing the art scene with new eyes.

The two major museums in town have new leaders and the Art Institute has a Modern Wing devoted to art since 1900. Long lines form outside the Art Institute on weekend mornings waiting to enter the museum, even at a lofty \$23 adult admission fee.

In addition, a new group of museums, previously quiescent, has gained wider acceptance and generated some excitement. University museums at Northwestern (Block Museum), DePaul and the University of Chicago (Smart Museum) have expanded their audience outreach and mounted more ambitious, noteworthy exhibits that have gained critical notice, including reviews in The New York Times.

Since the economic collapse in 2008, the arts are enjoying a moment of strong popular appreciation. There is a new spirit of experimentation in art, contemporary music and literature (graphic novels and zines).

Yet this flurry of good news exists alongside troubling developments in the art world. The market for serious art criticism, both local and national, such as once thrived in The New Art Examiner's pages, has vanished.

Both the Tribune and Sun-Times dumped their art critics. Apart from New City and an occasional re-

view in The Reader, Chicago artists have lost meaningful access to a wider public audience. Online, everyone's a critic but much of what is produced is superficial. Our intent is to be a voice proclaiming art's true value and cultural importance.

We aim to cast a critical eye to the mission of institutional oversight and open up a sorely needed communication channel for artists.

What passes for art coverage nowadays are reports on the art market's excess and the obscene amounts being paid for contemporary art.

As a result of such trends, art power and critical authority has largely shifted from museums and professional curators to big-time collectors and auction houses.

Critical standards are being compromised in the institutional rush for bodies walking through the door. The Museum of Contemporary Art's two record-breaking exhibits in the past decade were its Jeff Koons show in 2008 and last year's exhibit of David Bowie's ephemera.

And the Art Institute has banners blaring that it has been voted the best museum in the world on Trip Adviser. Perhaps not an unimpeachable art source but a key indicator of vox populi.

Such a state of affairs in the current art world is what prompts the return of the New Art Examiner. A voice of art sanity is clearly needed at this moment.

We aim to cast a critical eye to the mission of institutional oversight and open up a sorely needed communication channel for artists. We hope you will come along for the ride and, most importantly, support our efforts with your voices and donations.

STAFF

Derek Guthrie, Publisher and co-founder

Tom Mullaney, US Editor

Annie Markovich, US Managing Editor

Daniel Nanavati, UK Editor

Roland Guerney, West Cornwall Editor

WEBSITE: www.newartexaminer.net

UK Cartoons
John Dunbar Kilburn
Jonathon Xavier Coudrille

US Cartoons:
Steve Hamann

Distributor, Ingrams

Cover Image;

Gaverne, Cornwall. UK
© Emily Whitfield Wicks
www.emilyww.co.uk

ISBN: 978-1-908867-99-5

www.newartexaminer.net

Would you like to write for
the New Art Examiner?

contributor@newartexaminer.net

UK Office:
Rosehill, Altarnun, Cornwall. PL15
7RL. UK.
US Office:
13213 S. Commercial Avenue, Chicago,
Illinois 60633.USA.

Inquiries:
advert@newartexaminer.net
contributor@newartexaminer.net
subscribe@newartexaminer.net

**All Letters to the editor will be
printed without editing.**
letters@newartexaminer.net

EDITORIAL

by **DEREK GUTHRIE**

“I have s

This Edition of the NAE is the first of two, ad hoc intermediate Editions filling the gap before regular publishing commences in September. The NAE originated in Chicago out of Community in 1974, and published monthly for nearly 30 years. The history is amazing, turbulent and colourful. In spite of humble beginnings in the provincialism of Chicago, it became a respected national art journal.

The first Editorial written by the late Jane Addams Allen “Without Fear or Favor” precisely defined the mission of the NAE which was to present art criticism outside the usual orthodoxies of hidden affiliation. It is widely accepted that the current art world, centred mostly on New York and London and emerging Berlin, is in crisis. Criticism, discontent and contempt for the workings of International Art Market parallels the dissatisfaction with the working of politics of the major political parties in Westminster and Washington DC. The realisation has struck that the political and social agenda are not set by the people through democratic systems but are set by powerful financial interests of Wall Street and City of London traders and bankers.

Art is stuck. It maybe under siege and exists in a time of Mannerism. Academia seems not to offer refuge. American art struggle with the problem of making art professional. A hopeless task, in the opinion of this writer, who does not exclude the experience of Art School as a learning experience. The politics of Art Education are a growing concern and more words are penned each month focussing and responding to growing concerns.

It is accepted that Modern Art, or Post Modernism no longer carries the resounding message that the

een the future and it may be Cornwall”

new is ‘good’ and owing to historical necessity is inclined to define itself as progressive. Though the mantra of these words is not exhausted and still has resonance in Community Art. That is Art produced without the benefit of a quality degree.

Remote Cornwall, in English terms, parallels the myth of California, maybe Florida the land of the distant outpost from metropolis of urban culture.

Art is stuck. It maybe under siege and exists in a time of Mannerism. Academia seems not to offer refuge.

English artists for decades have sought inspiration and meaning inside this ancient, mythical and mystic landscape with surface remnants in the form of granite cottages, ancient harbours, prehistoric settlements, obsolete tin mines and extraordinary sea reflected light that arches over the Peninsular. English culture in spite of the “dark Satanic Mills” or maybe because of “these dark Satanic Mills” visualised the New Jerusalem which presented God inside the wonders of nature.

In the Post war years St Ives, a beautiful fishing Village (now unfortunately a tourist trap), was refuge for *avant-garde* progressive artists escaping the bombing of London. Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson, Naum Garbo, their presence planted the idea of Modern Art inside landscape. Their art,

painting and sculpture, took form and forms from a truly unique local experience of urban architecture perched on the edge of the mighty forces of the Atlantic. A northern version of the Greek islands in which civilisation can be seen as perched on the edge of the great natural void of the sea.

So art and Cornwall are good companions. There is a multitude of artists in residence, good, bad and indifferent. The last glory days the Post War years are now history. The urban truths of Pop Art in the 60s laid to rest the romance of the landscape. Now St Ives has a Museum; a Branch of the all powerful London Tate; Falmouth Art School with the help of European money is now a University, and Sir Nicholas Serota and his wife have a second home in Cornwall and are active. Much power from the centre is now in the region. Kestle Barton is a well appointed and elegant gallery with commercial hospitality attached, founded by Karen Townshend and in partnership with Teresa Serota has also purchased a larger community centre in nearby Helston which now houses 30+ much sought after artists studios as indeed are the ancient studios on Porthmeor beach, which provide residencies for international artists.

So Cornwall is on the art map. It will be great interest that the NAE will follow future developments in Cornwall and with support and growth extend art reporting and criticism to the rest of the Country. Referred to by Cornish people as “Up Country.”

Subscriptions Welcome

To Pay the Writers

Page 2

DEATH OF THE NEW

by
John Link



John Link, Painter, Emeritus Professor of Art, Western Michigan University, Professor of Art and Department Head, Virginia Tech, Michigan Editor, the original New Art Examiner, one time member of the New Art Association Board.

Nothing is forever. Different projects within the human endeavor go to different places when they have run out of life. When major movements in art reach the end of their days, they often find a home in the academy of their time: Witness the later French Salon where eye-numbing “great theme painting” found almost unlimited nourishment. The dominating presence and specific canons of the Académie des Beaux-Arts kept the thing on life support so extensive and powerful it looked like it would live forever. But it didn’t. It was sick and had gone there to die. The support it received from its acceptance as the only art of contemporary importance just made it sicker.

Likewise, the university community provides hospice service for many dying ideas, thanks in good part to its being structured much like the infamous French institution. It provides plenty of rules, guidelines, expectations, self-assessments, entitlements, peculiar enthusiasms, and the like. While these processes hardly resemble what goes on in real life, they generate a sense of immortality that can be convincing, a sense that the ideas dying there are “in truth” GREAT ideas. They may not be well understood by the masses, but they are sanctified by an opulent, powerful, and supremely intellectual community’s assessment that they are permanently worthwhile. It is a perfect place for “New for the sake of newness” to spend its last days.

This is not to say all ideas enshrined in universities are silly. Disciplines that are governed by the scientific method do very well in university environments, for instance. But goodness in art must be assessed subjectively, and there is no way to measure which subjective assessment is the best, except by majority rule which, in many humanistic disciplines, closely resembles mob rule.

Thus, the university art community has intellectualized “New Art” as if its rudeness is simply originality in the raw that requires nothing more than academic certification to become the most important aspect of art from now on. The rules for certification have made “New Art” easy to identify, easy to evaluate, easy, even, to quantify, as far as the “vote” is concerned. If most everyone agrees something is

“New”, then it is. The majority is so overwhelming and overbearing that it is pointless to count it up, just as it is pointless to count a mob. To achieve this blessed state, of course, anything proposed as “New” must share many characteristics with everything else that is “New”. Projects that “explore the idea of” or “develop a dialog about” or “redefine the boundaries between” or “push the limits of” or other forms of formulaic out-there-new-art will get you a degree, a grant, or even tenure, depending on where you are when you execute them. You get more points if your project causes normal people to feel guilty about not understanding it. This is because understanding it is considered too complicated for the non-academic, unenlightened mind that resides in normal people.

Intellectualizing art is accomplished by substitut-



Art Must/Should Be Beautiful, study (Norris 2010-11) (Abramovic 1975)

A Yale undergraduate is taught to “re-perform” a feminist attack on the nature of art created by Marina Abramovic 35 years ago, intensified by adding the “issue” of natural, unstraightened black hair.

[Direct link](#)

ing the question “Is it art?” for the question “Is it any good?” The correct answer for the enlightened academic is always “Yes, of course it’s art”. The crazier a normal person regards that answer and its basis, the better. For those inclined to anarchy, we get performances of inane acts, some very disgusting, that involve such “new media” as raw meat, blood from self-inflicted injury, and human feces. On the

pious side of the ledger (a favorite of academics), the miracle and morality play of the Middle Ages has found new techno-life as video conforming to the liberal ethic, gussied up as a hard-charging, intellect-so-high-it-is-incomprehensible, holier-than-thou diddling of the political status quo. For electronic faddists (also popular on campus), there are uncountable instances where Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and other social sites are enlisted to present for the ten millionth time the question of whether non-traditional media can be art. Thanks to the embrace of these “What is art?” questions, the various units within the ivory tower have produced millions of instances of their asking and answering. The only mystery left is why does anyone still find it a compelling exercise?

Academic credentialism not only defines the lay of the land for this ritual of interrogation, it fuels its perpetuation. Cleverness and hyped outrage are applied to recurrent tales of rights denied – women’s rights, students’ rights, gay rights, minority rights, worker’s rights, whatever. You name the violation of the liberal canon, and it becomes a ticket for classroom recognition, grant recognition, exhibition recognition, and peer reviewed recognition, all of which satisfy the academic thirst for prestige. The truth may set you free, but prestige is the hard currency of the university, what pays the money, what gets you ahead.

Without objective criteria to underpin the pursuit of prestige, another basis is required. In the case of art, contemporary opinion provides a good source, but with a qualification or two. University art professionals regard the man-in-the street as a vulgarian, and would never let his values into their elevated midst. But they do seek something tried and true, something that has stood the test of time, because they loath going out on a limb. The beautiful objects housed in established museums can be admired as artifacts from the past, but they are suspect as models for newly minted advanced art because the man-in-the-street likes them too. If art is to be truly new, the less it looks like old art the better. The academy has finally learned the lesson of the Impressionists, the first Avant-garde, and how they led the way into the 20th century. During the ensuing 150 years, the Avant-garde established its credentials while remaining unacceptable to the uneducated, a perfect combination. Further, the Avant-garde has become ubiquitous in learned circles, and so academics know that its value is well established and contemporary, both of which are desirable characteristics. It is inconvenient to recognize that being ubiquitous and

being avant-garde are not compatible. Instead, everyone rejoices that a central “idea” now provides a standard that almost all agree to use. “New” may not be new anymore, but the tired, formulaic nature of avant-gardism is the elephant in the room no one notices. Universities are happy to proclaim they foster “innovative art” (just as they foster “innovative teaching” – another problem worth investigating). They celebrate its obnoxiousness as evidence that it is truly “cutting edge” – so long as it is not too obnoxious – as if there is something remarkable going on. Since everyone says that is the case, it is the case.

University art professionals regard the man-in-the street as a vulgarian, and would never let his values into their elevated midst.

Thus, deans who once wanted to know why an installation piece was included in the student show now want to know why there are not more of them. Faculty who ignore the trends fear that the next team of accreditation visitors will pronounce their contributions “dated”. The history of art

is presented as the history of male artists exploiting subordinate female models. Art education courses teach would-be teachers how to use art projects to manipulate children into believing the liberal world view is the only morally correct stance. These phenomena repeat themselves thousands of times every day in hordes of institutions, year after year, in the name of the new.

Some are scandalized when another odd-ball work by a Richard Prince or a Jeff Koons sells for a high price at auction, yet the amount of money spent on art in that venue pales when compared to the amount spent by the world’s university system. By lavishing resources on the academicised Avant-garde and its promise of morally enhanced newness forever, “originality” has become fat, cheesy, and prone to disease, like the livers of geese that are stuffed with food in order to make their taste more appealing.

The rudeness of the Impressionists may have seemed new, but it was a side-effect of them distancing themselves from the flowing “gravies” of the Academy that failed to satisfy. Because of their simple preference for better art, they could not make contemporary art; they had to be against it. They were robbing the past to escape the credentialed but flabby art of their present. Today there is more credentialed and flabby art than ever before in the history of our species. The majority of it can be found in university art environments. Predicting the future is treacherous, but just as Ben Shahn’s invitation to speak at Harvard signaled the death of Social Realism, the massive acceptance of “New for new’s sake” inside university circles suggests its days are likewise numbered.



New York Uber Alles: Pluralism.

Ed Paschke

Each issue the New Art Examiner will invite a well-known, or not-so-well-known, art world personality to write a speak-easy essay on a topic of interest – whatever it may be.

The critics and curators have all buried it. Before laying it to rest consider: in its diversity and lack of distinction, it may have been the ultimate metaphor for the seventies. Its multiplicity was an extension of the ME generation - of divergent interest groups all shouting for equal rights - of individual morality demanding “get down”, “do your own thing,” and “I need my own space.” It was the personification in paint, plastic, plaster and, yes, “works on paper,” of non-judgmental, non-hierarchical sub-cultures proclaiming “I’m O.K. - you’re O.K.” - and “anything I call art is art.” Literary, narrative, collage, mixed media - it was the essence of a society stuffing sat-in shirts in denim pants and pass as you go. How do you define pay? What is the value of anything ... What is someone willing to pay for it? What is all the business about justice and fair play? There is always force (of course).

Manhattan has 20 blocks to the mile. New Yorkers seem to spend the better part of their time in an area of maybe 40 or 50 blocks. To them the “territory” sounds impressive but it’s only 2½ miles, a distance any non-New Yorker travels for even the most mundane, self-supporting reasons. Granted there’s a lot compacted on the bedrock of the island - one big experience is going on in the compressed mass of humanity. It is in a sense a city full of semi-finalists. A marketplace in which peddlers descend to hawk their aesthetic and practical wares. But how are the natives responding? Do they see more of life? Or do they shut themselves off - sensory overload - and become provincial and smug. Historical tunnel-vision as concept.

How would Leonardo feel about his Mona Lisa as a billboard - wearing Koss stereo headphones? We live in an era of embryonic, computerized lifestyles ... pathetically domesticated and shriveled instincts. Regeneration is a universal phenomenon. To eliminate from one’s life the natural processes

in the name of the seriousness is to indulge in self-deception.

Where have all the people gone? Electronic shadows of their former selves watching video screens, ignoring the right of refusal.

Or perhaps they are driving up in their new Mercedes and BMWs to buy German Expressionist paintings. Do the ladies clutch their Guccis as they strut in Claude (not Joe) Montana and shell out for the newest European cultural imports?

Perception, or what we experience through our sensory apparatus, is being affected by the rapid acceleration of media-related technology. Our view of the world is changing as the “global-environment” expands through media accessibility and the information reservoir gets deeper. My belief is that these elements (good or bad) have woven their way into the collective fabric of our lives. I also believe that any artist always works within the context or conditions that are indigenous to his or her own time and, in doing so, reflects the energy, temperature and attitudes of that climate.

Paint may seem like an outmoded medium but the human imagination is endless.

Ed Paschke (June 22, 1939 – November 25, 2004)

His childhood interest in animation and cartoons, as well as his father’s creativity in wood carving and construction, led him toward a career in art. As a student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago he was influenced by many artists featured in the Museum’s special exhibitions, in particular the work of Gauguin, Picasso and Seurat. This Speak-easy, first published for the New Art Examiner in February 1982 and republished to celebrate the current exhibition at the Ashmolean.

S
P
E
A
K
E
A
S
Y

UK EDITOR

Today, awe belongs to science not to art

by DANIEL NANAVATI

Awe has vanished from art. We may consider that a good thing as misguided religiosity has bound itself like ivy around the image for its own dogma, to do with the myth the image depicted and the architecture in which it was displayed. The image used as part of worship eventually fed into secular society, with huge portraits of the wealthy and officers of State proudly displayed where the human eye could see them in their own pomp and glory.

Hegel incorrectly said God was dead (a ridiculous assertion for how can you kill something metaphysical?), but he set out the philosophy through which awe could effect this change.

The invention of the camera around the 1820s de-professionalised the artist who worked in portraiture or presented the patron in a variety of poses or conformed to the expectations of the Royal Academy. The camera penetrated nature in a way the human eye cannot and later in the movies of the silver screen, amazed and delighted a new audience. This mechanical eye became an essential tool of scientific research and visual consumerism.

The incredible image of the Hubble telescope floating above our planet taking images of the Cosmos' abstract brilliance, inspires awe. A close up of swirling gases on Jupiter exhibits the abstract in and of Nature. We are continually awed by new discoveries and the Sistine Chapel, still a place of brilliance, is beggared by the night sky, and the older myths of societies are rocked by the facts of science, unveiled for us by electronics and mathematics.

The reason we should note the passing of awe in art is because contemporary artists wish to aspire to the high esteem previously enjoyed by artists in the nation's, any nation's, image of itself. Education is built on transferring that idea of nationhood to children hopefully reattained as adult citizens. Duchamp pointed out wisely, that there is art in design



Image: from Hubble Space Telescope

and everything is designed, but the successive idea that 'everything is art' leaves art without a definition and without definitions ideas are stuck in the instability of reason. If art can be everything, it is nothing we can talk about. The struggle to find words to describe Contemporary art exemplifies the problem: you cannot discuss something that cannot be defined. It is as if art disappeared in the twentieth century. Like a metaphysical God you either believe or not, proof of existence is elusive. Conceptualism went one stage further telling us the work matters less than the idea behind the work but if that is true, as the ideas fall from contemporary artists like leaves from autumn trees, they beggar themselves for the artists are not creating art but the ideas of art. One step back from art. Like writing the notes for poems one never writes.

We are left with astonishment at some of the prices attained by contemporary works but now we know all those prices are manipulated through the art market we don't give it any regard as stating anything about our culture. It is just business involving itself in a portable (and sometimes not so portable) object of investment. Albeit potentially with higher short-term returns than the traditional investments of gold and jewels.

Today visual culture is more affected by sport and television than by art works. The Internet, which started as a means of transferring nothing but information, has become the greatest landfill of images in human history.

The true galleries of awe are the high-rises and skyscrapers built by multi national companies. The work of the people in these places is to make money and receive the awe of their fellow citizens for being rich, to be worshipped not to worship. The art works on display in these places are asides.

SPLITTING THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE USES OF ART

by
Dr. Nizan Shaked

First published in [Counterpunch](#) February 2015



Photo: Nicolas Gaby

Dr. Nizan Shaked is Associate Professor of Contemporary Art History, Museum and Curatorial Studies at California State University Long Beach. Her book, *The Synthetic Proposition: Conceptualism and the Political*

Referent is forthcoming with Manchester University Press for the series: *Rethinking Art's Histories* (edited by Amelia Jones and Marsha Meskimmon). She can be reached at Nizan.Shaked@csulb.edu.

In this excellent essay, Dr Nizan Shaked describes how investors borrow money against art collections, underpinned by the trove system and how new systems of art investment threaten the non for profit status of the private/public museum partnership. Abstract art especially runs the risk of becoming nothing more than a semi-liquid asset. The market need to acquire young, saleable artists has run rough-shod over commentary by art historians and critics who are better trained to comment than lay-collectors. Some of the answers to this, she concludes, are straightforward.

Although Marx's thought settled accounts with bourgeois morality, it remains defenseless before its aesthetic, whose ambiguity is subtler but whose complicity with the general system of political economy is just as profound.

— Jean Baudrillard, "The Mirror of Production" [i]

Taking responsibility for the role of the artist in the machine we call "the art world," the artist Andrea Fraser concludes in her essay *L'1% C'est Moi*, that:

"as our survey of Top Collectors shows, many of our patrons are actively working to preserve the political and financial system that will keep their wealth, and inequality, growing for decades to come."

Tracing the direct connection of collectors to the 2008 "great recession," Fraser asks:

"[h]ow can we continue to rationalize our participation in this economy?"[ii]

When it comes to the public institutions, though, my answer is that we don't have a choice.[iii]

To retreat is to leave the future of our collective cultural patrimony in the hands of the upper echelon. The extremely inflated price of art at this moment has increasingly transferred control of content away from the hands of professionals and into the sway of laymen patrons, who unabashedly use the institution to increase the value of their private collections.[iv]

While some may argue that this has always been the case, financial tools introduced on the art market since the 1980s have been gradually altering the playing field such that the ethical and aesthetic consequences of such patronage for museums are now far graver than they ever were.

The invention of the art-credit system in the 1980s allowed collectors to borrow money against art, potentially turning art into a liquid asset. Together with the development of art advisory boards by major banks and auction houses that taught investors how to collect, the art-credit system formed the economic infrastructure that drove the incremental growth of the art market to its unprecedented magnitude, and to the headline-garnishing spectacle of art's auction prices today.[v]

Art has been recruited to serve the capitalistic

venture of inventive profit increase, echoing the broader shift in investment patterns and the boom in market speculation.[vi]

During the great recession (which commenced before its public visibility in 2008), the market for art, like that of other luxury commodities, surged to new heights.[vii]

Having become an acceptable, if not standard, component of a diverse investment portfolio, an asset class if you include real estate or commodities in your definition, art today is fulfilling the potential of its initial liquidation in the 1980s. Consequently, market-based value assessment is exerting direct influence on decision-making for public museums. Rather than divorcing themselves from this structure, public institutions have been subsumed into the system that establishes art's prices. Today we have two simultaneous dynamics of how value gets conferred on art. In their overlap, wealth wins and a critical idea of what contemporary art may mean, suffers.

The museum trove enjoys what we can call for shorthand 'the modern condition', and which was developed in a slow market. The trove ensures the value of art in circulation, as Baudrillard analyzed:

In fact the museum acts as a guarantee for the aristocratic exchange. It is a double guarantee:

—just as a gold bank, the public backing of the Bank of France, is necessary in order that the circulation of capital and private speculation be organized, so the fixed reserve of the museum is necessary for the functioning of

the sign exchange of paintings. Museums play the role of banks in the political economy of paintings.

—not content to act as an organic guarantee of speculation in art, the museum acts as an agency guaranteeing the universality of painting and so also the aesthetic enjoyment (a socially inessential value, it has been seen) of all others.[viii]

Under this modern condition art has a double

The invention of the art-credit system in the 1980s allowed collectors to borrow money against art, potentially turning art into a liquid asset.



J. X. COUDRILLE SWAc
www.coudrille.com representation Mann Rennick



form of value, where works have a monetary measure, a price, (as seen in the recent threats to liquidate the collection of the Detroit Institute of Art in order to pay the city's debt), and also embody a social value, the combination of the two allows the museum trove to function as a guarantee for an active market. Without the infrastructure of social value, art would not be able to circulate.

For the most part, art circulates as a luxury commodity in the sense explained by Michael Heinrich:

Whether or not a particular article is "really" useful for the reproduction of society does not play any role in determining its character as a commodity. A luxury yacht, a video commercial, or tanks are commodities if they find a buyer. And if these are produced under capitalist conditions, the labor expended during their production is "productive labor." [ix]

The artworks in the museum trove therefore have value because of the work vested in them and because value has been retroactively conferred, and valorized, in the process of exchange.[x]

As Christopher J. Arthur observes:

"the logic of exchange imposes the same identical abstract form on all goods, namely the value-form, which then develops to capital as the form of self-valorizing value." [xi]

Commodity's double abstraction in labor and exchange also exists in the work of art, just in different measure.

The process of exchange confers a work's price. If a work is deemed to be of "museum quality," its social value is established through institutional accession, and prices for the artist's works increases significantly. In a slow market, the interval between a work's initial creation and its paced subsequent circulation generally allowed enough time for verification, making its procurement into the trove less vulnerable to error.

Before the invention of art-credit if you owned a work it would be static until you sold it. The art-credit system positioned art as collateral for credit, allowing its equivalent in money to move. [xii]

As an investment incentive, the art-credit system (and the support mechanisms erected to promote art investment) incrementally increased art's market circulation, recently sped even more

by the growing practice of "flipping." While the accelerating market has made canonized art a more stable investment, this is not the case for unverified contemporary art, where significance has not yet been established, and prices fluctuate like fashions.[xiii]

This renders contemporary art an extremely unsound investment for posterity.[xiv]

Prices for young art are unstable precisely because the criteria for the assessment of new practices takes time to be established and

take effect. The recent museum rush to acquire young art is detrimental, increasing likelihood that we will be stuck in the future with a trove of inferior cultural patrimony.

Another danger stems from a systematic problem in the ways in which non-profit institutions have been acquiring young contemporary art. Although museums claim that curators are making such decisions, it is common knowledge in the field that increasingly it is individual donors sitting on acquisition committees or foundations that are deciding which work they "give." [xv]

Contemporary art foundations in the US function as tax havens that serve wealth while arguing that they operate for the social good.[xvi]

We have to ask what types of professional standards, processes, or procedures are practiced in these foundations, and who is it that supervises or regulates them. In many cases it is laymen/women collectors deciding what art is significant or what activities might be considered public service.

When museums have become valorization machines in the service of wealth, the term "anti-trust" may not be far-fetched. Mandated or chartered to



Daniel Joseph Martinez Museum Tags: Second Movement (Overture) or Overture con claqué-Overture with Hired Audience Members, 1993 Metal and enamel on paint Courtesy of the artist and Roberts & Tilton, Culver City, California

hold works “in the public trust,” most non-profit private museums benefiting from tax-exempt status are governed by trustees. If institutional benefactors are serving their personal interest and not a public notion of qualified art, then this is a condition of anti-trust.

Relying on the logic of value largely formed under the conditions of modernism, museums are using the wrong measure to gauge the significance of contemporary art. I am not claiming that professionals can predict the future, however, historians and curators have a better chance of assessing long-term contribution than do laymen collectors. Ideally, professionals possess a commitment to attempt objectivity. Museums should be held accountable to such standards.

Given the new logic of art’s circulation we need to rethink verification and assessment of art’s significance outside its monetary value. In *Value-Form and Avant-Garde*, an account of modern art as a series of negations, Daniel Spaulding shows how the modernist work of art negotiated the boundaries of its own definition, a central limit being the commodity form:

Under capitalism, art is and is not like any other commodity.

Daniel Spaulding

In any given instance of modernism at its highest intensity it was the possibility of the mark itself that was at stake: whether line or colour or shape could be adequate to history and still be recognizable as art, and whether the artist’s subjectivity could be adequate to the making of such marks. Modernism mediated that limit and made it into form. Art courted reification when it failed to confront the limit of its reproduction as an institution – whenever, in other words, it started to look too much like art – yet it risked still more disastrous reification when it exceeded that limit [...]. Either possibility was built into modernism’s basic procedures.[xvii]

Temporality sustained Avant-Garde art as a “special commodity,” progress of time allowing it to remain suspended between the value-form and its negation. [xviii] That “Modernism mediated that limit and made it into form,” was dependent

upon the relative operation of negation (since the moment when value is conferred upon a work is also the moment it is subsumed into the system of capital). Following Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory* Spaulding explains how art sustained its negative work:

“Under capitalism, art is and is not like any other commodity. It is and is not like any other congelation of abstract labor time. It occupies something like a permanent gap in the structure of value’s reproduction, and hence is in contradiction with the value-form even as it is nothing other than this relation to it. During the epoch of programmatism, it was the specific form of this contradiction that accounted for art’s positivity, as a practice that was able to sustain itself, indeed to thrive on its predicament, at least for a time. Modernist art was also negative because it stood for everything beyond the law of value. In certain of those extreme moments that defined its very being, it was nothing less than the concrete figure of utopia. As such, however, it perhaps remained a specific and conflicted instance of the value-form’s own properly utopian content, which is to say its prefiguration of a socialist mode of production that would be even more thoroughly mediated by labor than is capitalism, though under the conscious direction of its human bearers. [...]

Art could play this role only by continually defying its relapse into identity with the value-form. This required an immense labor of the negative. At the same time, art had to assure its reproduction as an image of value’s blocked tantalization, which is to say, as an image of the dictatorship of the proletariat, or the transitional phase, or any other placeholder for a future social order grounded on labor in the form of value and hence on reproduction of the class relation.”

Today the situation is different. Due to the art-credit system any practice that is successful on the market becomes identical with the value-form. Recast as equivalent to money, art has been recruited to serve the logic of financialization as a form of value that mediates between other transactions. This may take place regardless of the method or attitude taken by the artist. Sold in art fairs, Daniel Buren’s conceptual stripes, once subversive, have now, by his own volition, collapsed back into the abstractions they once aimed to critique. I do not intend to deny artists profit from their past glory, but rather to recognize that what were once

gestures of negation have become part of a standardized vocabulary arsenal, a way to derive more surplus value from the art by placing it within a genealogy. Professionalization and networking opportunities offered in lucrative MFA programs have bred a new generation of artists savvy at activating conceptualism as a business model. Postmodernism has allowed for a revival of every mode of attitude and style in art. Figuration and abstraction exist simultaneously and there is little left to negate. Once analytic, today formalist and abstract practice or discourse provides excellent border and culture-crossing currency—ready for consumption by totalitarian wealth from the Gulf to Russia and beyond. Abstraction today is currency.



Daniel Joseph Martinez Museum Tags: Second Movement (Overture) or Overture con claque-Overture with Hired Audience Members, 1993 Metal and enamel on paint Courtesy of the artist and Roberts & Tilton, Culver City, California

As synchronicity and simultaneity of practices are the current logic of art we face a paradox—where a relatively static trove, reliant on the value-form logic of the modern art object, is what confers the possibility of value on a rapid market. In its static form the Avant-garde (as a period, as an idea, as a set of practices) functions as the reserve upon which the circulation of contemporary art draws its claim to value. Since rarity and scarcity are still (and forever) the status of modern art, we can attribute its enormous prices to the conditions of the market. However, for contemporary art, where contradictory claims of oppositional practices have been collapsed for the sake of profit, this is no longer the case. Although often claiming the seriality of minimalism, Pop, or Conceptual art, the vast majority of contemporary art confirms the logic of the limited edition luxury object as types of mass-produced hand-made objects; functioning like the pre-modern master's workshop (with studio assistants replacing apprentices) while banking on ideas whose currency belongs to the “post studio” impulse. For example, up to a certain point in his career, the significance of Gerhard Richter's work is indisputable, but his later production relies on notions of genius à la Jackson

Pollock, negating the cerebral thrust of his early work, and much of is intellectual justification. The world is awash with objects, with no basis in sight to distinguish one from the other. Auction-house blurbs and gallery press releases efficiently appropriate a modernist language of connoisseurship, but to no avail, justifying value with hyperbolic language jokingly identified by the literary journal Triple Canopy as “International Art English.”[xix] Prices, nevertheless, continue to rise.

The current market has pushed museums out of the game—they simply cannot afford the art, leaving them to rely on donations for acquisitions.[xx]

When it comes to historically verified art this does not pose a theoretical problem, but when it comes to contemporary art a blatant conflict of interest is introduced. This is not news; critics and historians have commented on questionable nature of “art-world” transactions.[xxi]

Infamous for lack of regulation and transparency, the art market benefits from the allure of mystery attached to how sales are conducted.

As is also well known, dealers often “place” works in collections, choosing what to sell and to whom, activating the lure of withholding to their advantage. Thus for example a dealer wishing to promote a young artist will sell their work to a new collector on the contingency that the collector purchase two works and donate one to a museum of choice, in effect committing a public institution to years of research, care, and other resources required to maintain a work of art. Another example of accession under coercion takes place when curators make wish lists but foundations eventually choose works by which artist to donate, enforcing taste and opinion in institutions where objectivity is an ethical imperative. Dealers, collectors, foundations, and private museums make sure that information remains shrouded, as employment in many of these institutions is often contingent on signing secrecy agreements.



Daniel Joseph Martinez Museum Tags: Second Movement (Overture) or Overture con claque-Overture with Hired Audience Members, 1993 Metal and enamel on paint Courtesy of the artist and Roberts & Tilton, Culver City, California

With a specific caveat, a recent exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) can prove my point. It is not my intention to call the state on museums—no one today wants to be caught dialing 911, but I do so precisely because I hold it in such high esteem and have written favorably about other projects presented there in the past. As a case study it reflects a structural problem replicated far and wide. Variations: Conversations in and Around Abstract Painting (2014-2015) featured, according to the museum website: “29 artists whose work reflects the language and style of abstraction.” The inaccuracy of calling abstraction a “style,” is indicative of the misguided curatorial attitude, as is the second sentence of the introductory wall-text that reads: “Most recently, abstraction has dominated painting, viable with critics and urged by the marketplace.” Are these the qualifications for an exhibition at an encyclopedic museum? Is this a theory of contemporary art? The contribution of the curatorial gesture in Variations is rendered meaningless, as it consolidates artists whose practices do not necessarily engage methodically with the question of painting or abstraction, thus that the exhibition affects neither a point of view on questions pertinent to painting, nor a statement on contemporary art. Based on recent acquisitions the show does boast several works that have already proven to be of merit, either through their critical import or influence on other artists. However, since they are inappropriately contextualized, their clear and distinct social commentary comes under erasure. The impulse to render them abstract is the impulse to turn them into currency, catering to the collector class that some of the included works are actually aiming to criticize.

For many included works there seems to be no criteria for verification other than market success, as they have little to no track record of critical writing or institutional exhibition. Catalogues produced by commercial galleries do not count as verification, as they have no system of external review. Many of the works in the exhibition, as competent or beautiful as they are, have yet to make any contribution to the field, and many do not have the ambition or the capacity to do so. Why would an encyclopedic county museum accession works that belong on a wall in a domestic setting? In a bubble market the irony is that for the same price of an artist younger

than thirty years, whose success is utterly speculative, the museum could acquire work that has already been historicized. Museums should not participate in the game of speculation.

The paradoxes of the contemporary art world have been the subject of artists engaged in critical practice. Daniel Joseph Martinez and Andrea Fraser have dealt with these questions astutely. Not one of the many critics that attacked Martinez’s contribution to the 1993 Whitney Biennial identified that the piece was conceived in response to the development of the art-credit system, which was gaining traction by the late 1980s and early 1990s and was substantially discussed in news-media. In Study for Museum Tags: Second Movement (Overture) or Overture Con Claque – Overture with Hired Audience Members (1993), Martinez replaced the Whitney’s color-coded museum admission buttons that usually spell WMAA with fragments of a sentence as follows: I CAN’T/ IMAGINE/ EVER WANTING/ TO BE and WHITE, as well as a button including the

What exactly the “verification window” for recent art might be or mean is up for debate.

entire sentence. Falling into the obvious trap of reading the work only through its racial signifiers, critics entirely missed the work’s focus on the moment of box-office transaction,

and the fact that the artist had given visitors a work of art for the price of admission. Visitors, it seems, appreciated the gesture, many hanging on to their entry tag, as evidenced by the empty recycling box at the museum’s exit, habitually full at other exhibitions.

In Untitled (2003) Fraser targeted the transaction as a site of intervention for the contemporary artwork. Through her gallerist the artist contracted a collector, who already owned one of her works, to have a sexual encounter in a hotel room and to produce a video, in an edition of five. The silent 60-minute run of the event is intended for display on a small monitor, perched on a single pedestal, in an otherwise fully lit empty gallery. The real scandal of the work is not the sexual encounter, in which Fraser had relative agency. The artist is not presented as a victim but as a participating agent on equal footing as the collector, focusing the problem on the system and not on the individual participants. The real injury is the subsequent valorization of the artwork independent of the artist, since, as Fraser has emphasized, the work will always be sold for more than she had been paid. “Everyone

was obsessed with the sum the collector paid,” she recalls, and for this reason refuses to disclose it.[xxii]

Insisting on the distinction between price and value, the point is also that the harm of a systematic condition is ultimately registered on the body, showing the relation between the operation of transaction, and the formation of the subject.

Solutions and Ideas

It is not my intension to call the state on museums—no one today wants to be caught dialing 911.

Instead, a simple solution: public museums should stop acquiring young art.

Think about it, what does owning very recent art mean for a posterity-based institution? Public museums should pay wages to living artists for displaying work, but refrain from acquiring it.[xxiii]

Real museum patronage is to support such programs, with no personal agenda. For the price of the work of a young artist the museum could acquire a work by a 1970s-1980s feminist artist whose significance is established not only by critical writing and exhibitions, but also by a living record of influence on subsequent generations of artists. Why then would a museum accession a lesser equivalent? Let us leave the unverified art to private collections—have them take the inevitable risk of buying based on market criteria.

What exactly the “verification window” for recent art might be or mean is up for debate. We could propose, say, a twenty-year waiting period, or a set of interlocking criteria, adding, for example, a requirement that critical texts on the artist exist, written at a historian or critics’ own volition, or for a peer reviewed or otherwise juried institution or publication, again, without any form of persuasion by interested parties. Acquisition processes should be conducted through peer-reviewed systems, or other modes of democratic-process criteria, such that it is not the market or wealth that will determine what is chosen for us to maintain, store, study, display and keep for posterity. Models exist. One major example is the New Museum under the direction of Marcia Tucker from 1977 to 1998.[xxiv]

Describing how the structure influenced radical programming Juli Carson writes:

This administrative model was one that more greatly valued the theorizations of institutional critique by artists [...] than that of nineteenth-century museum practice continued into the twentieth century by museums such as MoMA, the Whitney, and the Metro-

politan Museum of Art.[xxv]

The works of artists mentioned by Carson (Buren, Hans Haacke, Michael Asher, Robert Smithson, and Laderman Ukeles) pointed to the hypocrisies and deficiencies of the art institution and its ideologies. Although many today mourn the agency of institutional critique as defunct, I believe its ideas can and should be revived as institutional policy. Revisiting and developing alternatives offered by artists or figures like Tucker is possible. The first move is to split the public and private use of art, and then—let history be the judge.

Images: Daniel Joseph Martinez

Museum Tags: Second Movement (overture) or Overture con claue - Overture with Hired Audience Members, 1993

1993 Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum, New York
Paint and enamel on metal

12 x 15 in (30.48 x 38.1 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Roberts & Tilton, Culver City, California

Notes.

[i] Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production* (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1975), 39.

[ii] See Andrea Fraser, *L1%, C’est Moi*, 2012. <http://whitney.org/file_columns/0002/9848/andreafraser_1_2012whitneybiennial.pdf>.

Fraser retells in note number 23:

“I began much of this research in the spring of 2010, when Artforum asked me to contribute to their summer issue on museums. Artforum declined to publish the text I submitted, which detailed the involvement of MoMA trustees in the subprime crisis”

The suppressed text was developed and eventually published in *Texte zur Kunst* 83 (September 2011): 114-127.

[iii] See Isabelle Graw, *High Price: Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture* (Berlin and New York: Sternberg Press, 2010).

[iv] On patronage and the development of the art-credit system see my “Something out of Nothing: Marcia Tucker, Jeffrey Deitch and the De-regulation of the Contemporary-Museum Model,” *Art and Education* <<http://www.artandeducation.net/paper/something-out-of-nothing-marcia-tucker-jeffrey-deitch-and-the-de-regulation-of-the-contemporary-museum-model/>>.

Also see Noah Horowitz, *Art of the Deal: Contem-*

porary Art in a Global Financial Market (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011). Horowitz rigorously considers a range of events that led to the current art bubble, but in my opinion underestimates the significance of the art-credit system as the critical event that made art compatible with the neo-liberal global economy.

[v] On the speculative boom see Tony Norfield, "Derivatives and Capitalist Markets: The Speculative Heart of Capital," *Historical Materialism* 20, no. 1 (2012): 103–132, 117.

[vi] Bijan Khezri, "The New Art of Art Finance," *Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 19, 2007, D10.

[vii] Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981), 121–122.

[viii] Michael Heinrich, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital*, trans., Alex Locascio, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2012), 122. According to this logic necessary labor time for an artwork would include the means to sustain the artist and her/his practice.

[ix] I rely here on Endnotes, "The Moving Contradiction: The Systematic Dialectic Of Capital As A Dialectic Of Class Struggle." <<http://endnotes.org.uk/issues/2>>

[xi] Christopher J. Arthur, "Towards a Systematic Dialectic of Capital," 6. <<http://chrisarthur.net/towards-a-systematic-dialectic-of-capital.pdf>>.

[xii] This allows art to fulfill what Heinrich describes as the second function of money, which is to facilitate circulation. See Heinrich, 66.

[xiii] The website ArtRank.com purports to quantify the contemporary art market objectively. Ironies of the word "rank" notwithstanding, it demonstrates the speed in which emerging artists rise and decline. This fickle nature of the art market has created tremendous problems for such novel experiments as the art pension fund. See Daniel Grant, "A Retirement Account for Artists: At 10 Years Old, the Artist Pension Trust Is Bigger, But can it make money?" *The New York Observer* (12 February 2014). <<http://observer.com/2014/02/a-retirement-account-for-artists-at-10-years-old-the-artist-pension-trust-is-bigger/>>.

[xiv] The "informationally inefficient" art market and the volatility of prices are discussed in Jaclyn McLean, "Finance Nouveau: Prospects For The Securitization Of Art," *New Mexico Law Review* 38, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 561–586.

[xv] Several artists have shared with me their observations under conditions of anonymity.

[xvi] Carol Kino, "Welcome to the Museum of My Stuff," *The New York Times*, 18 February 2007.

[xvii] Daniel Spaulding, "Value-Form and Avant-Garde," *Mute* (27 March 2014).

[xviii] Stewart Martin, "The Absolute Artwork Meets the Absolute Commodity," *Radical Philosophy* 146 (November/December 2007).

[xix] Alix Rule and David Levine expose the vacuous nature of much art writing in "International Art English," *Triple Canopy* <http://www.canopycanopy.com/contents/international_art_english>.

[xx] Lee Rosenbaum, "Museums can't compete," *The Los Angeles Times*, 4 September 2007.

[xxi] Graw writes: "Practices that in other fields would be denounced as criminal or insider-trading are commonplace in the art market." Graw, 101.

Also see: Judith H. Dobrzynski, "A Growing Use of Private Art in Public Spaces," *The New York Times*, 16 March 2011.

[xxii] Andrea Fraser, Lecture, California State University, Long Beach, February 24, 2010.

[xxiii] In the US see *Working Artists and the Greater Economy* <<http://www.wageforwork.com/>>.

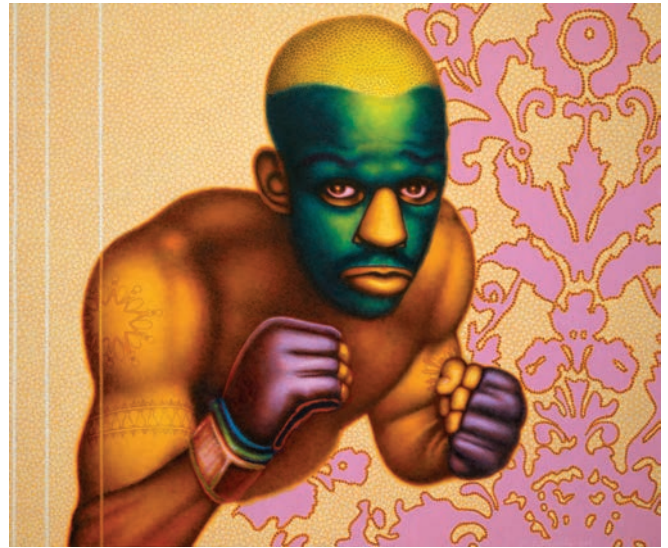
[xxiv] The acquisition program for the New Museum in its original iteration was actually quite the opposite of what I suggest; the original plan was to hold works for only ten years, which proved to be unsustainable. My point here is that we should continuously attempt to rethink received administrative structures. Marcia Tucker proved that rethinking and restructuring is utterly possible. Records of correspondences, board meeting minutes, and other documents held in the Marcia Tucker Papers, 1957–2004, Getty Research Institute Special Collections, reveal that Tucker drove a hard line convincing patrons to follow her vision in persistent and strong terms. Today's museum leadership seems to surrender to patron taste rather than, like Tucker, work to form it.

[xxv] Juli Carson, "On Discourse as Monument," in *Alternative Art New York: 1965–1985: A Cultural Politics Book for the Social Text Collective*, ed. Julie Ault (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press in collaboration with the Drawing Center New York, 2002), 121–157, n.44.

PASCHKE AT THE ASHMOLEAN

Daniel Nanavati

Boxer with Masque 2004



I was fortunate to attend the Paschke show at the Ashmolean in Oxford, UK, with several people who had known the artist. Equally fortunate in that they were honest in their opinions which ranged from a feeling that his few works in the Hairy Who? and the Chicago Imagists were effective but 22 Paschke together was too much. There was one early work in this exhibition from 1968 which certainly has sharper lines and none of the 'neon light' effects of the other, later works.

One has to say there is a cramped feel to the siting of this exhibition with three layers of artwork up the wall in one corner. Other curators might have grouped the Mona Lisa images together but not so they could only really be seen from the first floor bridge in the galleries high above.

Some of those with whom I viewed the show think Paschke is one of the two most significant painters to come out of Chicago since the Second World War. The other being Leon Golub, who, incidentally is showing at the Serpentine Gallery in London and who is also reviewed in this edition.

In part Paschke is the visual experience of the words of Nelson Algren in *City on the Make*. Another Chicagoan who knew the street savvy life-stylers and the gangster mentality of the city and entered into a love-hate relationship with them.

Paschke is complex. On the surface his colour is neon and his subject the icon, whether that be Hitler, the typical policeman, the showgirl or the allure of glamorous footwear. But underneath his colour is an entire city and his subject is what Chicago has made of its people. For like all cities the character of its inhabitants and their traditions are unique, despite our shared humanity. Chicago is as

unlike New York as it is like it. He is figurative in a time when figurative painting (indeed painting itself) was not cared for very much. His colours as brazen as some of his women, his texturing of the background utterly superb in a time when computers were not available to control the flawless flow of the gradients from dark to light.

Yes, there is something of the poster in his work but one has the feeling looking at his paintings that nothing here in the awkwardness he shows us in his version of Chicago, is accidental. One step further and his people may have become grotesques but they remain on the edge of the circus. They are about to perform for us and we are about to watch.

His more traditional icons, the Mona Lisa and Hitler, are for me less interesting than his attempt to make icons of the Chicago people he has painted. That is because they are independent of a history prior to Paschke. He is presenting them to us in their artificiality but with their humanity utterly recognizable. He even paints a star behind Hilda (over right) in the tradition of saintly icons the models for whom were always ordinary folk.

Whether it be hockey players or boxers Paschke shows us what the city does to its people and how its people create the city. He is less than ugly, sometimes bizarre, always begging for attention, unreasonable, completely unpretentious and yet showing us images trying hard to hide a part of themselves. Shoes that are not always just shoes, masked boxers, faces with painterly elements around the features and of course, the gun - that elemental part of the American psyche, that is always pointing at someone.

ED PASCHKE: VISIONARY FROM CHICAGO

Stephen Lee

"You know, 'power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.' It's the same with powerlessness. Absolute powerlessness corrupts absolutely....." Studs Terkel

Colourful, exoticised gangster culture adorns the walls of the Ashmolean Museum. The late Chicago Imagist painter Ed Paschke's paintings are stacked one on top of the other in the manner of a nineteenth century salon display. They confer the chic flavour of Chicago but not its substance. Imagism was a style of painting associated with the city beginning in 1968. It interpreted strands of European modernism: Surrealism, Pointillism and Art Brut from the perspective of Midwest Regionalism and the new art form of Pop Art. The resulting work was closer to Paolozzi than Rauchenberg.

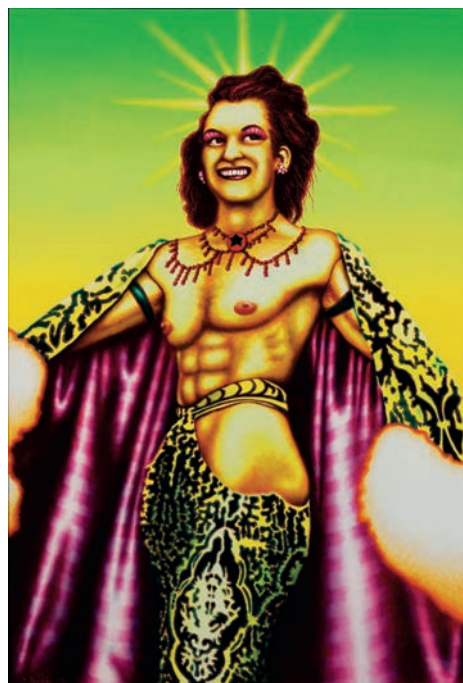
The surrealist sensibility of a collector runs through much of the Imagists work: ethnographic collections at the Field museum, turn of century Tramp Art of itinerant workers, cartoons and found objects and trinkets from Maxwell street market were all reference points for their artwork. Painting in relation to technology was also inspirational for some of the Imagists. The Art Institute's La Grande Jatte by Seurat with its' merging of painting and photography was a progenitor and Paschke's paintings combine the effects of what was, at the time, the new technology of overhead projection and video. For Paschke the aesthetic

of collecting took the form of portrait subject matter. He collected images of people: bar flies, transvestites, circus freaks, boxers, police, history of art and gangster 'glam'. The original Ashmolean Museum collection is likewise a cabinet of curiosities: King Alfred's enamel brooch, Powhattan's mantle- the mantle of the 'King of Virginia' and a beaten up old shoe worn by a John Bigg a hermit and beggar of the seventeenth century. Ed Paschke's curiosities exhibit similar contrasts, images of those with power nearby images of the disenfranchised; gangsters and misfits with camp eroticism in between: for example Hilda 1973 and an image of gangster number one-Hitler. In a similar way to the whimsical taxidermy of early museums which combined the head of one creature with the body of another to create fantastical curiosities, Paschke adopted the surrealist 'cadaver exquisite' method to combine the heads of celebrities with odd bodies in strange androgynous configurations, such as Pink lady 1970.

To understand the relevance and limits of his work it's worth examining which famous Chicagoans are excluded from the roster of portraits. Perhaps one of the Chicago Haymarket anarchists might provide a culturally richer slant on the city's history? Along with Hilda 1973, perhaps a portrait of Jane Adams and her settlement house for vulnerable working class women, accompanied with a text of her investiga-

tions into the methods of coercion practiced by the mob?

Jeff Koons, the richest artist in the world and Paschke's prodigy followed him around the bars learning the ropes. He has contributed to the exhibition catalogue. Again there are limitations to the practice of both Koons and Paschke based on market led kitsch, or parody of culture as celebrity come curiosity. Consider Koon's portrait of Michael Jackson, a magnificent and quintessential product of the culture industry. As an alternative could Jeff Koons or Ed Paschke significantly make a portrait of Frederick Douglas without trivialising and exhausting the dynamic of history and class consciousness that this iconic figure represents?



Hilda 1973

State of the Art

by John Stepling



“As a preamble to their performances, traditional storytellers in Majorca would say, ‘It was and it was not so’”.

David Shields

“The first apprentice we took was an old skateboard-ing friend of mine who was working as a garbageman. He just loved hanging around the shop so we offered him a spot, and now, a year and a half of training really hard later, he’s working as a full-time barber. Because of all the photos we post on the internet, we think we’re making it look more attractive to become a barber, and now we get a lot of guys asking for apprenticeships.”

Bertus, Schorem Haarsnijder en Barbie
Rotterdam

“Artists’ long-faltering, sporadic, but not inconsider-able identification with the working class was largely forgotten, and mainstream criteria of success—identi-fying with your collectors, or at least their bankrolls — were adopted just in time for the emergence of punk and club culture to provide an outlet for unruly excess, with large doses of cynicism and irony.”

Martha Rosler, ‘Artist as Debtor’

“An apparent confusion, if lived with long enough, may become orderly . . . A rare experience of a moment at daybreak, when something in nature seems to reveal all consciousness, cannot be explained at noon. Yet it is part of the day’s unity.”

Charles Ives, *Essay 22/23*

The discussion of art today seems to take one of two directions. Or perhaps three, but I will come to that. The first is the dismissive. The dismissive posture is cynical about contemporary art, or post modern art, and cynically suggests it’s all a lot of junk, and there are too many bad galleries and Bien-nales, and too much money in it. This is the sort of easy and obvious posture that is appealing because it contains a lot of truth. There is an astounding amount of really bad work out there, but then there is an astounding number of artists out there. The ra-tio of citizen to ‘professional artist’ has never been this high I don’t think. I find the dismissive attitude bothersome, though. There can be nothing eas-ier than making fun of bad contemporary art. The dismissive has a toxic effect too, for there are huge amounts of excellent contemporary art. The dismis-sive tone feels self congratulatory, it is comfortable.

*“Rather the existence of trash expresses inanely and undisguisedly the fact that men have succeeded in reproducing from within themselves a piece of what otherwise imprisons them in toil, and in symbolically breaking the compulsion of adaptation by themselves creating what they feared; and an echo of the same triumph resounds in the mightiest works, though they seek to forego it, imagining themselves pure self unre-lated to any model” (Adorno, *Minima Moralia*)*

Of course Adorno was writing about bric a brac mementos and kitsch paper weights and miniature

Eiffel Towers. But it is worth noting that he suggests all great works carry within themselves the echoes of those Eiffel Tower refrigerator magnets. As for the second direction, it is the critical (sic) writing of post modernity. E-Flux publishes a lot of this stuff, much of which makes little sense, to be honest. I stumbled across an essay recently that began with a quote from HBO's Girls. I continued reading anyway, for a while. <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/the-new-depthiness/>

That said, E-Flux also publishes a good deal of excellent stuff, as does Cabinet, or even Brooklyn Rail. The problem resides, really, in a culture betrayed by and blanketed with finance.

"The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living."

Marx

Post modernism, if anyone can even begin to define it, is probably that to which Marx's quote does not apply.

I want to talk about a piece at E-Flux, by McKenzie Wark, who writes;

"The sort of things that get called 'art' these days exist on a continuum which, if it keeps stretching, will probably break. On one end, art becomes a kind of financial instrument based on singularizing money into an 'object' that can have provenance. It can be any kind of object—conceptual, imaginary—all that matters is that there is a document stating who bought it from who. Mind you, pictures work particularly well as such instruments, particularly if they look good in the .jpeg sent to potential buyer's iPhone. What we might designate as the 'art world' is this subsidiary financial market, one with side effects such as dissipating boredom, fostering art-fair tourism, and giving today's rentier class conversation pieces and home decoration. Artrank.com is this version of an art world perfected."

And there is little to disagree with in that paragraph. But the second paragraph cuts to the problem I want to talk about.

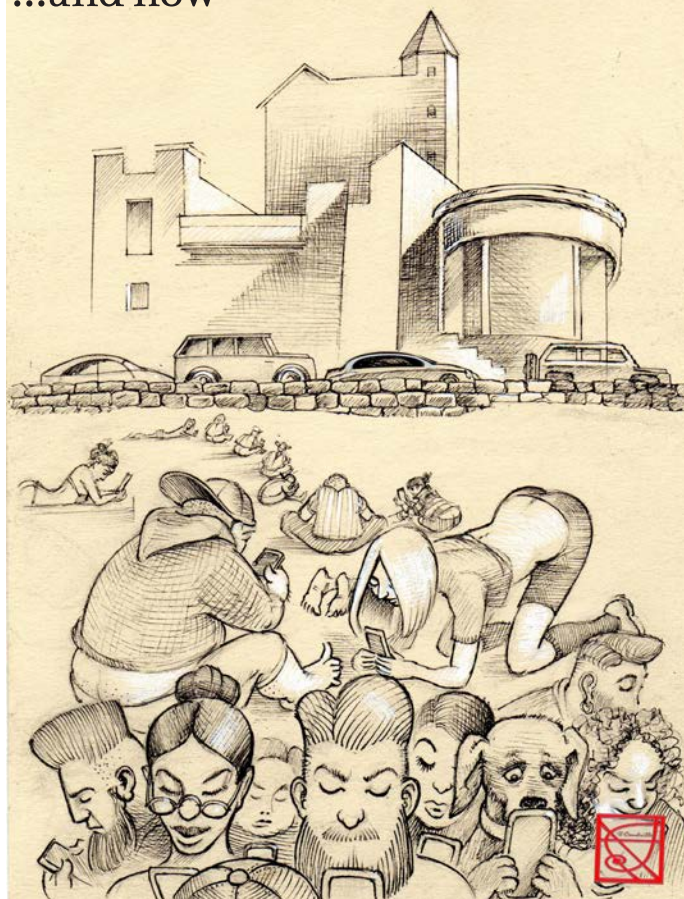
"At the other end of the art continuum, there's the attempt to inhabit those spaces of production that the art world requires as its hinterlands—to do something else. Usually, it takes the form of experimenting in those spaces with practices of everyday life that could either have a negative, critical function or an affirmative, constructive function. Some old-fashioned art theorists insist on the negative role of art, as if still hankering for that industrial solvent smell of high modernism."

This I am less sure about, because it feels like a lot of the misreading of Adorno I come across. It is also guilty, to some degree, of a clichéd one dimen-

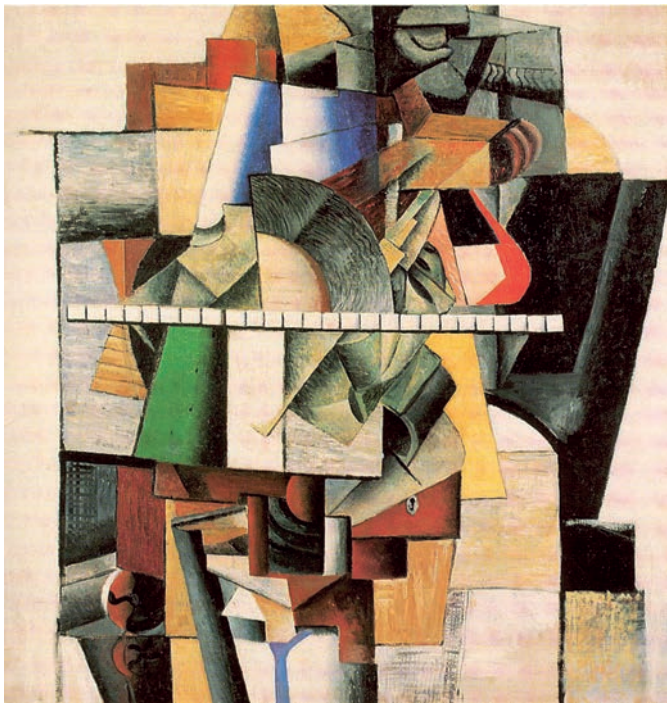
St.Ives
then...



...and now



sional and ahistorical take on modernism. What is it in the cyber enthusiast that wants to believe an insurmountable rift has appeared between the past



Malevich, Kasimir (Ukrainian, 1878-1935)

and the present?

Martha Rosler's essay at Artist as Debtor is quite good(ish). It was linked in the comments thread of my previous post. One of the things she said was;

"From the late 1970s on, students were rapidly being disciplined by debt—indeed, the whole society was persuaded that credit card debt was the rational way to finance one's desires, a pillar of neoliberalism. As Andy Ross has explained, your categorization by banks is that you are a deadbeat if you pay off your debts and a repeater, the best kind of person, if you never manage to do that. Whereas students— and certainly artists—had long understood that those without family wealth would have to live frugally, entering freshmen, and even high school students, were peppered with credit card offers, often on school premises, such as with each bookstore purchase.

The repeated attacks on working-class people's access to education has meant that increasingly it is the children of the upper middle class who are admitted to higher education without crippling burdens, while many fewer students of color from less financially advantaged circumstances can be offered sufficient scholarships."

Add to this the quote from Rosler at the very top of this posting, and one can see a tectonic shift in how culture is viewed by, or at least sold to and encouraged to be viewed by the public. One is not an

artist if one doesn't make a living at it.

There is a sense that from the 1970s on, and particularly from the mid 80s on, the affluent upper classes, and certainly the very wealthy white ownership class, had begun a process of appropriation of art. Of all culture, in fact. The working class sense of identity, fragile enough in the U.S., was eviscerated further. But none of this fell out of the sky. This was and is the logic of capital, the start of a financialized capitalism. The post modern posture and theory was only accommodating itself and shaping its opinions to the forces of advanced capital.

Let me return to McKenzie Wark's piece. He goes on to write about artist as hacker. The entire essay is [here](http://www.e-flux.com/journal/designs-for-a-new-world). <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/designs-for-a-new-world>

Now, Adorno's name is raised a number of times in these sorts of essays, almost uniformly as an outdated champion of modernism, and modernism, as we all know, is so five minutes ago. Most writers on art and aesthetics (both words are treated as corrupted) are entrenched in various post structuralist branches of thought. Which is odd in a way, because structuralism itself had never enjoyed any great popularity in the U.S. And I feel that focusing more on the U.S., partly because I know my native country better, makes sense here. As Hullot-Kentor points out, academic journals from the 1980s onward, in the U.S., simply did not publish articles on Adorno. The difficulty in writing about culture today, then, has to do with an assumption about post modern or post structuralist thought. The various



Amelia Bauer

branches occupied by everyone from Agamben to Badiou, to Baudrillard, Lyotard, Derrida, and Ranciere (who, though, is also a critic of it in places) created new vocabularies and methods, exiling older vocabularies and methods. And logically, along-

side the dismissing of Adorno came the dismissing of Freud. What has been lost, at least the most glaringly obvious loss, is found in the assumption that the arrival of post modernism more or less came about spontaneously. The forces of history are ignored.

Now Wark, who I agree with more than I disagree, perceptively writes...(it's a long quote, but important);

“Perhaps what we’re dealing with now isn’t actually capitalism any more—but something worse. Companies like Google are in the business of surplus information, not surplus labor power. The goal is to build and own an infrastructure that enforces an asymmetry of information, where for whatever information the user gets, much, much more is harvested. It no longer even matters whether this information is culled from work. It can also be extracted from everyday life. And lest one think Google is something of an outlier: take a look at the Fortune 500 companies and it turns out that most of them are now, in part or in whole, in the information business. Even the biggest of them, Walmart. Those big-box stores are just a physical manifestation of a financial and logistical data system. They are money and information congealed into a thing in the landscape. In that regard they are rather like art world works of art.

The ruling class itself has changed form. That’s part of the reason the art world changed form. Art has a new kind of patron. One much less interested in the making of things than in the reaping of surplus from information. Its goal is the commodification of information flows. As such it undermines all of the old gift exchanges via which information used to flow, in the family, the community, via schooling, and so forth. What the capitalists did for the production of things, the new ruling class is doing for the production of information. I call them the vectoralist class. They rule through the ownership and control of the vectors of information, its stocks, its flows, its design.

The “dematerialization of art” was homologous with this transformation of capitalism into something else, something even more abstracted. Conceptual art is a side effect of the rise of conceptual business. But it was more a shift in the relation between information and its material form than a dematerialization. What transpired was an abstracting of information from any particular material expression, but not from materiality in general.”

But let me point to one sentence in the above,

that conceptual art is a side effect of the rise of the concept business. This is exactly so. And this is why Adorno remains crucially important in any cultural analysis.

Labor isn’t immaterial, it remains alienated and exploited. There remains a very neglected realm of discussion in most critical writing on the arts today. And that is the changes in perception that have occurred in the audience. The lack of depth, then, becomes a sort of psychoanalytic metaphor. Adorno’s collaboration on *The Authoritarian Personality* defined the authoritarian as one who (among other things) was allergic to introspection or ambiguity. Mass culture today, the entertainment business, produces work made by people who abhor the introspective, and anything not clearly defined, for people who abhor the introspective and anything not clearly defined. Robert Hullot-Kentor writes of Adorno’s philosophy...“But to present what is at stake here in the most general terms, the critique of domination necessarily remains another form of domination — hardly rare in that gesture of emancipation as domination comprises the whole of ideology — unless there is the possibility in domination itself of recuperating it from its own destructiveness.”

“And we {the Academy} need to collaborate more widely, to be in dialog with very different domains of both technical and aesthetic counter-production.”



Giovanni Bellini, Portrait of Doge Leonardo Loredan, 1501

Mckenzie Wark

Wark's demand for abandoning the specialized realms of the Academy couldn't be more right. Hullot-Kentor could also have turned around his equation; with the gesture of domination as emancipation, with equal truth. And this brings me to Adorno in one of his late lectures, circa the mid sixties.

The dialectic of freedom and conformity. "If the process of societalization continues to advance, and if therefore the elements of freedom that I have told you about are progressively swallowed up by the elements of adjustment, then freedom and what we might call the impulses of freedom, spontaneous actions, will come to appear increasingly old fashioned, or even archaic." For Adorno saw that a certain archaic impulse, a element of the Id, was necessary as a pre-condition for spontaneity. He saw it as connected directly to mimesis.

"The more the ego obtains control over itself and over nature, then the more it learns to master itself and the more questionable it finds its own freedom."

This is relevant on two fronts; one it is an element of pre-history, or pre-ego. And two, it is linked to that extra mental mimetic behavior that always contains some trace of bodily impulse. Adorno later, in an aside almost, says that the exaltation of the ego, in contemporary society goes hand in hand with the "abyss of the self". Now he suggests this idea or vision of inwardness finds expression in Marx. It does so in the sense of revolutionary immediacy. And it seems to me that therein lies an aspect of what is reactionary in post modern/post structuralist thought and its embrace of depthlessness. There is also in this something to be pondered in how spontaneity has migrated from or distanced itself conceptually almost in those of us opposed to the relationships of domination today.

"...the concept of spontaneity, which might be described as the organ or medium of freedom, refuses to obey the logic of non-contradiction, and is instead a unity of mutually contradictory elements." Adorno

In other words the idea of freedom was an invention, in the imagination, of a narcissistic ego. The

...(that) we are both free and unfree, and more ... (that) we are both some form of individual and some form of group, is a delicate edge and one that connects with cultural matters and with art.

bourgeois individual is loathe to admit his dependency or complicity in the irrational. And that implies, in turn, a conflicted relationship between the self and the group. This is even more true today than sixty years ago, in that the contemporary Western psyche is even more defended, more insistent on keeping the animalic

aspect of itself at arm's length. The pathologies, or obsessions of everyone living under Capitalism are designated as sickness only when they prevent one from doing one's job. Or fulfilling their slot in the great machine. The rise of branding, of self branding, in a culture of shopping has meant that this elaborately constructed *self* must assign blame for those flaws one recognizes in oneself. That blame is usually directed outward, but if not, if it seen as a problem *inside* you, then that part that is problematic must be treated. But not just treated, for that is pretty illusory, but confessed and atoned for at the therapeutic alter. The residue of Puritanism, and Calvinism. The acceptance of a model in which one can accept that we are both free and unfree, and more, that we are both some form of individual and some form of group, is a delicate edge and one that connects with cultural matters and with art.

The new University produces something very malleable and abstract, and it has little to do anymore with traditional notions of learning. It turns out mostly obedient information producers. Or, information technicians. My problem with much of Rosler's other writing, like my problem with Virno (who has written some excellent stuff, but not usually) or Hardt and Negri is that the new connectivity, the new matrix of immaterial information, is all true, but it has not replaced the old model(s) of proletarian wage slavery. It is only superimposed atop it, and often serves more as a veil than anything else. Rosler also is herself, paradoxically, trivializing cultural history with a tone of cynicism that tends to be dismissive of earlier movements. She also regularly speaks at events such as the Shanghai Contemporary Art Fair, and is on the board of the Whitney, and MOMA, and is associated with Columbia and The New School, and remains firmly entrenched in the world of Biennales and major

museum shows. That is not inherently corrupt, or I don't think so anyway, but the academics today must take some responsibility for their participation in this system of intellectual peonage. In Rosler's case she takes none, and her writing, even when admirable, is tainted with that feeling of insularity so common to the world of million dollar art commodities, and those brie and chablis conferences.

Now, both Rosler and Wark, and in fact the majority of writers I read at E-Flux this week, and a good many post modern commentators, are highly critical, if not just snarky, about the idea "authenticity". Now there is good reason for this, of course. It is most often a marketing tool. It is a branding concept, and its vagueness and abstract quality make it perfect as such. But, when the elite practitioners of the art world employ this term, they are exhibiting, I fear, a distinct class elitism. The underclass is constantly strip mined for its creative projects. This is established, but it is also subject on the level of community craft to wholesale appropriation. In black urban centers, and to only a slightly lesser degree in Latino neighborhoods, the *barbershop* was a center for social connectivity, and for support. It was also a place where respect was developed from the passing on of craft knowledge. Many barbers I knew were ex-cons. Today, there has been a small resurgent growth in neighborhood barbershops. Some of it annexed already by white hipsterdom, but not all, and that's not the point anyway. The personal style, the maschismo (in a progressive sense), honor, and the dedication to craft is all too easy to ridicule from the perches of elite MFA programs, or from trembling branches of ruling class insecurities. It is not to be dismissed, a tutorial in a hot towel and shave, hand poured pomades, or varieties of shaving cream. The story of the *Scumbag* barbers in blue collar Rotterdam is a sort of fascinating example. And really, tattooing has shown great resilience in this regard, too. I have always said, only poor kids shine their shoes. If you see an adult man shine his own leather shoes, you can be pretty sure he grew up poor, or did time in prison. I never met many messy



Freedom_of_Speech
Normal Rockwell

... the academics today must take some responsibility for their participation in this system of intellectual peonage.

ex-cons, in fact. Some, but those were the broken men.

"What gives knowledge the stamp of authenticity is the reflection of possibility." Adorno (in a conversation with Horkheimer)

The charges of pessimism, when leveled against almost anyone, are always suspect. Reminds me of being told to smile when getting your photo taken in Junior High School for the yearbook. And the snark attached to discussions of authenticity often feel the same. Rosler also enacts a sort of subtle sleight of hand, too. Here she writes:

"Forms, rather than being empty shapes, carry centuries of Platonic baggage, most clearly seen in architecture; formal innovation in twentieth-century high modernism, based on both Kant and Hegel, was interpreted as a search for another human dimension."

This was in an essay discussing Romanticism, and contemporary art. First, that's just not correct. Another human dimension? It is these subtle (or not so) summations that dot a lot of her critical writing, and it's done from her preferred position of sort of mildly putting down everything. Except herself, presumably.

And this returns us to the dialectics of freedom and conformity. And also to questions of aesthetics vis a vis Rosler and post modernism.

Freedom became a topic only with the liberation of the bourgeoisie. It was an external material definition related to the loosening of feudal restrictions. The emancipated bourgeoisie then sought to discover an ur-freedom, or essential sense of human freedom connected to man's nature. This then became a topic for Locke and others, in varying ways. This is only worth pointing out because of the later mystifications of the topic. And because such philosophical debates are related to an investigation of post modern aesthetics. And post modern

aesthetics (and the term post modern is suddenly quite unpopular I've noticed) is linked to, so I believe, a failure to fully appreciate the erasing of mimesis from contemporary artistic production. Depthlessness or this

attachment to and valorizing of surface, contains within it, as a concept, a denial of inwardness as a valid topic. No wonder then that Freud is dismissed. One of the roles of mimesis in artworks is as a factor of awakening to the coercive character of the ego. The re-narrating of artworks, meaning the mimetic engagement with artworks, entails of necessity almost a glimpse of the trauma that is always involved in the development of our personality, or idea of self. Without the space to allow that to happen, and I would argue an aesthetic strategy that privileges surface disallows just that space, then the self is validated. The counter argument to this is to suggest there is another road to the 'inward'. However, though admitting the possibility, partially, that road (to stretch and abuse this metaphor) entails a high toll, and Lambert Zuidervaart touches on this when he writes; "Just as consumer capitalism is the purest stage of capitalism, so post modernism is the virtual apotheosis of reification in culture." The current conditions, ones Wark writes about, ones that Jonathan Beller has written about, and Lazzarato, if accepted on their own theoretical terms, suggest culture is dying a slow sleepwalking death.

The belief that commercials or marketing delve into the deeper recesses of our consciousness (or unconscious) is simply not the case. For the principle of advertising is manipulation, and manipulation is predicated upon a reduction of the model of the world and reality. For the very same reason, sentimental kitsch is predicated upon a reductive world view. The Spectacle, as Debord repeatedly

Police archive photo, with Tina Modotti, recreating possible version of Mella assassination.



... the principle of advertising is manipulation, and manipulation is predicated upon a reduction of the model of the world and reality.

pointed out was the reflected image of the social relations in a society of unfreedom. The rise of a neo-camp aesthetics has come to be the province of hipsterism, of white University educated and relatively affluent consumers. Embedded in this is the really pernicious resurgent and regressive new definition of populism. That somehow The Walking Dead or Breaking Bad are simply the cultural bon bons given over for privileged consumption. Not nutritious, but entertaining and fun. Such products do many things, but chief among the things they do is mask the absence of those narrative qualities that engaged allegory, sacrifice, and mimesis.

A connoisseurship of kitsch cannot but be linked to this new defensive definition of

populism. I was thinking this week, and I digress, of Tina Modotti. Modotti embodied something of a modernist aesthetic that was never, or rarely, overtly didactic, and her best photography was purely modernist, influenced by Edward Weston among others. But her work retains on all levels a quality of radicalism. The photo above however is among my favorite photographs ever as a sort of found-art example of multiple narratives and accidental mimetic depth and complexity. The primal crime is off stage, and hence the photo is almost unbearably uncanny. The emancipation of the bourgeoisie, and the questions of freedom are also linked to post industrial capital, today. Adorno used the example of Hamlet, in discussing the idea of consciousness and freedom, and indeed Hamlet as both character and as Shakespeare's play, is another example of the inescapable inwardness triggered by certain narratives. The Prince cannot act, even when he believes in the action, and as Adorno writes: "This problem becomes entangled with the question of insanity because he finds himself cut off from reality in a way that really does possess structural similarities with madness. For it involves the same withdrawal of libidinal energy from external reality that is one of the typical symptoms of schizophrenia." This is a play about the dialectic of inward and outward, and of freedom and conformity. The medieval mind would not understand this play very well. And I wonder if post modern America understands it very well either. This posting began with discussions of the artist as panderer, today. And with the art stu-

dent as abject court supplicant. Perhaps it is that reminded me of Tina Modotti and her friend Diego Rivera, and other friends and intimates such as



The Exterminating Angel (1962). Luis Bunuel 31

Pablo Neruda, Weston, Xavier Guerrero, and even Dr. Bethune. I think, often, the radical left artists of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, and even 50s, are reduced in the cultural rear view mirror to one dimensional crude social realists. Even many on the left do them this injustice.

There is a through line from Cervantes and Shakespeare to Dostoyevsky and Kafka and Melville. From Hamlet to The Confidence Man to Brothers Karamozov. Hamlet's feigned madness is also his real madness (per Adorno), and Bartelby the Scrivener is also so mad, and Joseph K. Bunuel's *Exterminating Angel* is an expression, too, of this indictment of the age of reflection. The interior lives of hidden madness, and the relativity of that definition. And of the narcissism that is the self. It is easy in comparison, to note the disappearing of the inward in much current cultural product today. In fact it is about keeping thought focused on the surface. And if that is seen as a confusion on my part between registers of metaphor, I submit that it's not. For that IS metaphor, and it is today exactly as Debord and Vaneigem suggested.

The illusory nature of social institutions in the Bunuel, a film that is really an anti-Franco metaphor, and anti fascist, never loses sight of this historical materiality. The dialectic at its heart is also, in its way, a sign of collective madness in the age of reflection. They cannot act, just as Hamlet cannot. The attacks

on modernism are simply so much ad copy, because the topic isn't defined anyway. The logic of Google and Microsoft and that of all the giant information leviathans is one in which maximum exploitation is the end result and desire. And yet, the world continues to become ever more proletarianized. The role of art is not social transformation, but it is interior emancipation and awakening. The Bunuel, like Hamlet, ends in violence, and so does much Conrad and so does Melville, for the truth of our selves is that we must unknot the enigmas of our own trauma, our own birth into violence before we can alter the system of mass violence.

There is a need, I think, if social transformation is to take place, for extra institutional art and critical writing to recuperate what has been lost over the last eighty years. Today the working class finds expression in forms that are both marginalized by the ruling class, but often are more linked to craft and often, in turn, to legacies of servility. Graffiti, or car culture; low riders and custom cars, or even tattoo art, various comic book illustrating trends, are all in varying ways balanced on a thin ledge of resistance and submission. The Latino low rider culture occupies the resistance end of aesthetic representation. It is also born in the southwest and in Southern California where space was delineated by automobile travel. The low rider was and is an expression of cultural defiance, but however sophisticated, is still locked in a dialectic of service and social immobility. It was an incorporation of and reinventing of social restrictions and power dynamics with an oppressive racist police infrastructure as personal and ethnographic style. The aesthetics are complex but shallow. And perhaps in a sense, the aesthetics are not exactly that, for they are ceremonial projects. Low riding was socialization and maschismo. They ingest the legacies of Religious pilgrimage and a Catholic iconography of sacrifice. Low riding is also, of course, a way of pushing back at the fortress city, at the bantustan demarcation of class.

The community displaces creative or Utopian impulses (mimetic) into either co-opted sociological bureaucracies or into relatively narrow aesthetics of folk culture practices. Graffiti of course had some



Tina Modotti, photography.
Mexico 1926.

cross over success, but that only served as alibi for liberal reflexes and guilt.

I'd like to conclude this with some open ended observations about contemporary mass culture, and about the psychological, or rather psychoanalytic tensions of today's audience for art. One point of interest is in seeing just how rationalized mass culture has become. The loss of spontaneity, or perhaps only it's criminalization, is linked to the denial of the regressive or archaic part of human behavior. Acting out of impulses incompatible with an ever more repressive society of surveillance and police authority and impunity has meant that all archaic trace elements in ourselves are designated as pathological. The degree of oppressive restrictions has had the effect, I think, of eliminating those trace elements altogether. Adorno and Horkheimer in conversation said: "...in the framework of total planning characteristic of the culture industry human beings regress to the reactions of amphibians." What they meant was that under a system that so effectively dominates daily life the action of regression takes on, or is replaced by, reflex actions that are de-linked to individual will. They are libidinal dead ends, or cul de sacs. If regression was always reactive in a sense, the change has been to render the secondary implications inert or static. And there are no doubt psychic costs to this mental bludgeoning. And one of those costs is the atrophy of the imagination. And here one might argue that contemporary or post modern aesthetics are reflections of this atrophy and loss of willpower. It is almost a mental double tap, to use the vernacular of drone assassination. The super-ego has ex-

panded its jurisdiction.

The subject today is faced with the intensification of demands on his or her attention. The parameters of the subject, in fact, are expressed by the rise in screen images and sounds, in the non stop stream of information. What Jonathan Crary calls "reality maintenance". Now, the question of mimesis is just unavoidable here, and it is because attention is itself mimetic. The contemporary subject is elastic and adaptive, in terms of perception,

The contemporary subject is elastic and adaptive, in terms of perception, for the flow of image and data changes so rapidly.

for the flow of image and data changes so rapidly. There has been, I suspect, a shift in the foundational character of perception; where it is presumed that most everything looked at or heard is easily replaced with something nearly just like it. Heidegger saw the Greeks as having a self disclosing 'look'. And that this became, and more intensely now, a predatory look. Putting aside the idea

of a primordial clarity, I suspect that predatory look is better described as the wise-shopper-look. The fact remains though that however one imagines this shift, the forces of Capital are technologically deploying a strategy to fragment community. The individual subject however, regressing amphibian-like, is also implanted in a vortex of hyper planning and organization. That one cannot even get car insurance without a cell phone number is only the tip of the iceberg of identity control under way in the West today.

Foucault introduced the idea of 'diffuse' forms of power, which tacitly demanded a certain mental upkeep to track or follow. The subject can never fully engage mimetically for fear of wasting time, and loss of valuable attention. The mental bookkeeping is constantly refreshed. The internal ledger though elicits an acute anxiety. Artwork today, if we for the moment limit this to painting and video and gallery art in general, is instinctively going to reward that which can be processed and noted in the mental ledger quickly. The mimetic behavior of one focusing attention on an object is durational — it takes time, too much time. Time is money.

And herein lies, perhaps, the fulcrum for aesthetic taste today. Warhol ushered in the actual commodity itself, so shopping time was reduced. Since then, much post modern work has been an ironic gloss on Warhol. The point for this posting is to argue that modernism never ended, and post



Nuno Silve



Que Viva Mexico (1932)
Sergei Eisenstein, dr.

modernism never began. What happened were technical alterations of the subject's sense of self in relation to his or her culture. The role of culture today is differently defined. But that happened gradually, starting perhaps all the way back to the 1950s. The taste for surface oriented art, witty, ironic, but resistant to, or immune to, prolonged contemplation, was convenient, as take-out Chinese food is convenient. Jeff Koons is just MSG art. It lends itself to later cocktail party bon mots, or more importantly, to academic post grad theses.

*"The issue of the automatic is crucial within the specifically modern problem of attention: it poses the notion of absorbed states that are no longer related to an interiorization of the subject, to an intensification of a sense of childhood. The inwardness of what Hegel called romanticism is not so much exceeded here as it is paradoxically turned inside out, into a condition of externalization: attention as a depthless interface simulates and displaces what once might have been autonomous states of self reflection or *sens intime*. The logic of the Spectacle prescribes the production of separate, isolated, but not introspective individuals."*
(Jonathan Crary).



John Stepling is an original founding member of the Padua Hills Playwrights Festival, a two-time NEA recipient, Rockefeller Fellow in theatre, and PEN-West winner for playwrighting. Plays produced in LA, NYC, SF, Louisville, and at universities across the US, as well in Warsaw, Lodz,

Paris, London and Krakow. Taught screenwriting and curated the cinematheque for five years at the Polish National Film School in Lodz, Poland. Plays include The Shaper, Dream Coast, Standard of the Breed, The Thrill, Wheel of Fortune, Dogmouth, and Phantom Luck, which won the 2010 LA Award for best play. Film credits include 52 Pick-up (directed by John Frankenheimer, 1985) and Animal Factory (directed by Steve Buscemi, 1999). A collection of his plays was published in 1999 by Sun & Moon Press as Sea of Cortez and Other Plays. He lives with wife Gunnhild Skrodal Stepling; they divide their time between Norway and the high desert of southern California. He is artistic director of the theatre collective Gunfighter Nation.

Dear Reader

The New Art Examiner is proud to be publishing again. We very much want you to get involved with our conversation and support us as we cannot continuously rely on volunteer writers. Your subscription to the interim editions this summer will help us develop and professionalize writers in the UK and in the USA, engaging with Artists in a way that has been missing from the art scene for decades.

You will receive both editions by post with the digital version by email. Please see page 2 for costs and page 6 for the addresses.

GOLUB AT THE SERPENTINE

Stephen Lee, writer and teacher, reviews
'Bite Your Tongue' - 4 Mar to 17 May 2015

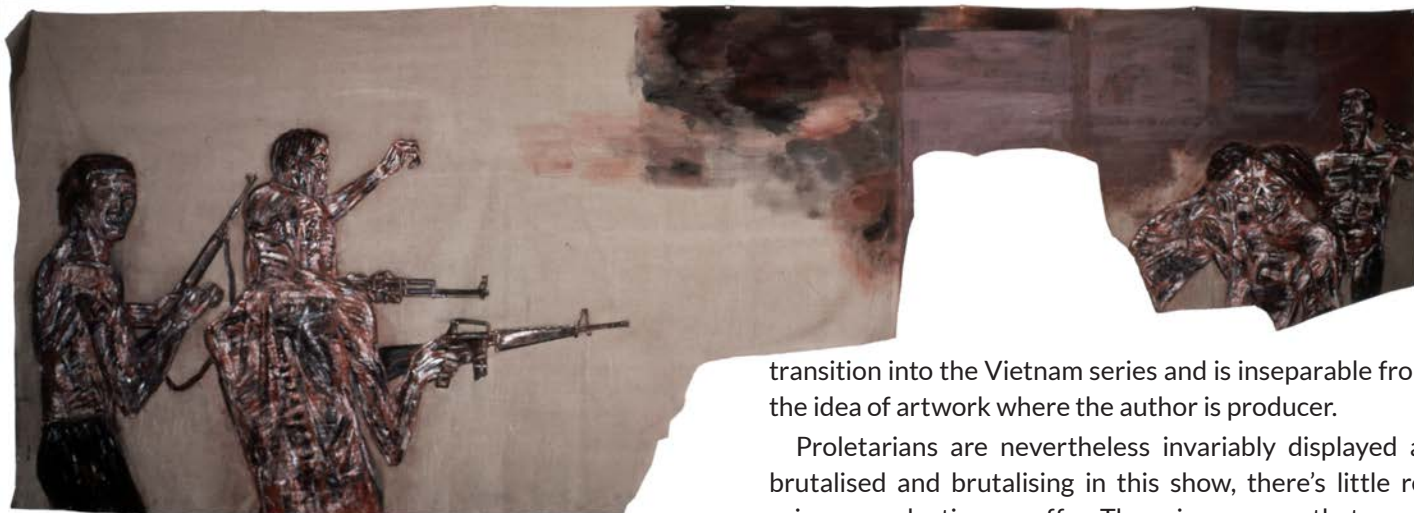
Curated by Emma Enderby



Severed hands..... I recall a talk given by Leon Golub in the mid 1980's where he and Nancy Spero sat with the audience afterwards answering questions. An image of a victim whose hands had been cut off during the Vietnam War suddenly slipped into the conversation. The normally lucid Golub glazed over and became incoherent and appeared mesmerised. Spero 'snapped him out of it', by talking through and remembering where they first encountered the image and resolved their apprehension of this cruel or symbolically evil act of dismemberment.

The title of this retrospective show, 'Bite your Tongue', refers to the blocking of speaking and implies several levels of meaning in the exhibition: The audience may have bitten its' collective tongue, astounded by the aestheticized malevolence of *Mercenaries 1V*, 1980. The author and by extension the audience may in a Freudian sense have experienced loss of speech as a result of sympathetic psychic trauma induced by *Interrogation 111*, 1981; or the subject in this painting of torture by CIA trained Contra agents and mercenaries engaged in covert political activity in Central America, has bitten her tongue and is silent. Likewise some of those who might defend her human rights have been silenced.

Semantic meaning in Art is conveyed through facial expression, figural gesture, titles, statements, discussion and criticism. The depiction of hands gesturing, taunting, pointing guns, tucked in Jeans, holding a cigarette or tethered is overt in most of Golub's works. His response to the severed hands I mentioned is understandable in light of Gerald Marzorati's account of how a person under torture will follow the torturer's conversation and gestures looking for signs of humanness and for hope. Though it is difficult to glean any signs from the brutes portrayed- they



are what we have to work with.

These 1980's Interrogation series are installed in the central domed gallery at the Serpentine, a former tea pavilion in the centre of Hyde Park. They depict interrogators at work or at down time: figural compositions across flat or generic backgrounds: it is ironic that these grand history paintings in the line of Jaques-Louis David, should hold pride of place in the art world yet they 'loudly' display a non-place: a torture chamber.

The show is introduced by the Monster school paintings of the 1950's flanked on one side by Golub's late works or Dog paintings and on the other by the Vietnam paintings. Vietnam 1 1972, is positioned nearby Gigantomachy 11 1966 and the retrospective turns on this juxtaposition. The transition from universal human suffering mirrored from the battles of the gods of the Pergamon alter, visually akin to a naked game of rugby with a raw painterly surface, to the specific consciousness of history painting of the Vietnam war is the politicised focus of Golub's life's work.

A massive misshapen canvas Vietnam 1 1972 inverts the implication of a return to the old orders of figurative painting by cutting and erasing areas of the canvas. The homogeneity of painting is refused and the audience becomes aware of the unusual production of the work. We are left wondering what element of violence Golub would choose to remove. The overall composition of the work reminds me of Degas', The Young Spartans with its' two groups confronting one another, though for Golub youthful energy is transposed onto the violent political stage as one of the young soldiers turns to look at the viewer as participant rather than voyeur. The influence of photography is felt in this posed gaze. Golub collected numerous images from the media as reference material. Both Leon and Nancy Spero were political activists: he joined the artist and writers anti-war group in 1964 and Nancy was part of the Women's Ad HOC committee. The discourse that accompanied these activities informs the politicised

transition into the Vietnam series and is inseparable from the idea of artwork where the author is producer.

Proletarians are nevertheless invariably displayed as brutalised and brutalising in this show, there's little reprieve or salvation on offer. There is no sense that a revolutionary proletariat could politically emerge from these depictions. There is a strong and vivid sense of protest that is coupled with impotence. Goya who is clearly an influence through his Disasters of War series, for example the etching Why? 1810 directly shows a soldier being strangled. His Cappricho series however visually satirically connects the class structure of society with the clergy and aristocrats horsing around on the backs of blind peasants. Similarly Terry Atkinson makes connection with the structure of the means of production with his titles in his WW1 paintings.

Elsewhere, not included in this show, Golub has produced portraits of corporate and military power selecting patriarchal figures such as Franco and Rockefeller. These effigies of power structure are not critically applied to the class structure of the Interrogation, Mercenaries or Vietnam series. Is the aim to reveal a deep fascination with power or to resist this? The Sphinx as self-portrait is a recurring theme. It's possible to imagine Golub as Oedipus asking the sphinx 'what is the riddle of the politicisation of aesthetics?' In the process of destroying the riddle of power he and the viewer alike are implicated through fascination with its' spectacle.

Main Image: Agent Orange 1993

Above: Vietnam I, 1972

Far Left: Mercenaries II, section I, 1975

Photographs - Nancy Spero & Leon Golub Foundation for the Arts

Notes from the Last Colony

by Bill Roseberry



Bill Roseberry attended Columbus College of Art in Ohio and West Virginia University Graduate school of Fine Arts. he is currently retired from the Smithsonian Institute.

Image: with Giotto - "Madonna and Child",

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

"If only we could make this kind of short and extremely simple argument for art. I value art because its existence has had more positive impact than negative in our world. I value art because it helps guide us through life. I value art just cuz. Of course this would all be easier if artists were seen more as working people than wizards who dwell in the mystical." - Victoria Ward

...To begin with, it is simply absurd to speak of the 'art-world' as though it represents a common truth about anything primary to the production of art. Apart from a world of images that artists depict, it's a catch-all term coined during the 1960's to account for the rapid growing number of personalities who began prospering and making news in various arts-related businesses. In other segments of the economy the equivalent is better known as an industry, such as 'the music industry' or 'the fashion industry'. Those personalities included art collectors, art dealers, art critics, philanthropists, art historians, art professors, museum curators,

and museum directors, as well as the select artists with whom they were connected. So, to infer that any current problem within the art industry is unique to an isolated segment of the industry, such as "it's all about the art market", "it's all about the state of art criticism"...the incorporation of culture by institutions", "the power of the collector class", "the relevance of arts education", "gender and race", "politics", "technology", "the artist as celebrity entrepreneur", etc. is mostly a failure to recognize where this trail of misleading priorities begins. Art is not generated by the art-world, nor does art engender itself from nature to be extracted like a plant or mineral resource, or is it there to be colonized like a newly discovered continent. Artists make art and the idea that someone is said to be an artist is in no way contingent to the myths and vicissitudes of the "art-world".

What does that mean "to be an artist"? Does it mean that he or she is a rebel of sorts, unsuited for any other occupation? No. Does it mean that the person has some exceptional talent that will insure their success? No. Does it mean that an artist is a person who is given wider parameters with which to seek their own terms of success? No. Does it mean that the potential artist, like any other career or occupation-seeking individual might possibly also contribute something significant to the growth of a long-term viable example of his or her native community? Perhaps.

What the notion of being an artist does mean is, that unless someone decides they will be 'self-taught' or that they have other means of supporting their hobby, they will begin like everyone else training for their chosen career at a college, university, or private institution. And they will most likely enter into a legal contract that places them first and foremost deeply into financial debt. After completion of a BFA, MFA, or PhD. providing they can afford it or secure additional loans, they will begin to look for work to pay those loans. While they were training to become artists the student artist will have been given skills and techniques that would supposedly prepare them to earn a living and begin repaying the debt they incurred. On rare occasions the art student might have encountered a solitary course of study on the business of art or how best to approach the art industry. More often, and more informally, the typical art student will be exposed to the language of art academia also known as 'art speak' (or International Art English) the common language of critiques and subsequent self-promotion and grant writing. It should be not-

ed that those from whom the student receives advice on the business of art or the vagaries of the market for art are mostly professional academics with little expert knowledge of business or market economics. What the artist student will never have received is the suggestion that they may have entered a fool's errand - that they will spend more money in the course of their career as an artist than they could ever hope to earn. Nevertheless art students are encouraged daily to continue to invest in this false assumption not to theirs but to the benefit of art galleries, art dealers, art consultants, arts administrators, arts non-profits organizations, art therapists, arts publications and the whole gamut of arts-related businesses and non-profits, there ostensibly to assist artists, depend on the cheapest labor infinitely and unquestioningly provided by artists.

The entire art-world economy hinges radically on this thought; only those artists who sacrifice themselves to their work within the premise of the evolving tenets of western modernism and without promise of material gain can ever hope to attain the posterity

of a place on a wall of a museum or in art history books. The making of art is, as we've been told, "a priesthood" (it doesn't occur to anyone that a priest is fed, has a roof over his head, and collect baskets of money every Sunday...). We are led to believe that the making of true art cannot be predicated on the promise of any return value except at which point (the artist is likely deceased) the artwork is assigned a market value by someone other than the artist based on comparative aesthetic and cultural considerations by yet another non-artist. One may argue that this systematically prevents artists from inflating their own worth, and, in fact, it does. Any discussion of the value of art invariably leads either to the unbelievable dollar amount recently paid for a painting at auction (giving the impression that it is the artist who profits) - or to the social benefits of having art in public places, arts in education, or as some manner of economic stimulus to the community - all at the behest of philanthropists, non-profits, educators and wealthy donors - while artists are left to pointing fingers amongst themselves about which of them has sold out and who is playing the system.

... artists are left to pointing fingers amongst themselves about which of them has sold out and who is playing the system.

"As defined by Adam Smith, the laws of supply and demand are still a basic framework for understanding how the economic system works. According to Smith's explanation there is no "supply" of artworks. Looked at from the perspective of this simplified lesson in economics we can see a possible explanation for the peculiar state of the contemporary art world today: The impossible-to-value artwork becomes the object of impossible value."

--Nicolaus Schafhausen, director/Direktor Kunsthalle Wien <http://conversations.e-flux.com/t/kunsthalle-wien-curatorial-ethics-conference-livestream-and-coverage/1349/3>

But the valuation of artworks isn't an abstraction despite its limitless supply. There are accumulated man-hours to be accounted for. There are resources that must be acquired and renewed when they become depleted. There are acquired skill sets, the

cost of materials, rental space for manufacture and storage, delivery, those categories that in any normal professional activity would be seen as overhead but as an artist's responsibility is somehow unaccounted for.

"(Imagine the immediate financial consequenc-

es if, even for just one month, no artist purchased art supplies, read online art blog or cultural journals, visited museums, paid fees for lectures or workshops, fabricated somebody's project, installed a museum exhibition, handled a shipment of paintings, taught an adjunct art class, or even mentioned the word "art.")" - Gregory Sholette

Of course we're assuming that the typical artist is only committed to their art and if that doesn't provide the income to cover costs, what does? There are grants to be had, but in all but a few cases that requires that the artist has already acquired a history of success as determined by likes of the very institutions that are providing those grants - or, by the galleries which in turn looks to the institutions those artist are applying for grants from as a factor in choosing their stable of artists.

To receive a grant it helps to be connected to a college or university or private school in more ways than one. But now we are back to the original source of the problem. With a degree or two in hand the debt-ridden art student has limited alternatives (1) to provide an income for themselves (2) to provide for the continuation of their work (3) to repay

the debt. The obvious choices are to begin teaching art as a part-time adjunct professor - a dismal prospect - or to find work to which he or she is qualified in an arts-related field, bearing in mind that most of those positions will pay little more than a volunteer receives working for a non-profit organization.

That so many art professors and those with arts-related incomes aren't always aware of the stark realities of a life devoted strictly to the artist profession isn't their fault - they're teachers and their curriculums focus on the tools, materials and theory of art, not economics. As Educators, artist academics generally declare teaching as their occupation and primary source of income and often file their art-related expenditures as in income loss or deduction to the IRS. Their academic standing and eligibility for tenure requires that they continue to make art and exhibit as often as possible and that counts as an occupational expense. A full-time artist may deduct similar expenses as a small-business owner but is limited to how often he or she can file at a loss and still qualify as a small business. (I don't have the numbers and I don't know if they've ever been compiled but my hunch is that the vast majority of art shown in commercial galleries is by artist/educators. While that may not be significant in itself it does give a hint towards the dwindling numbers of artists who are not somehow dependent on colleges and universities to fund their creative work.)

Looking at the larger picture we see that modern culture (and to some extent the complete history of western culture) proposes an unspoken dichotomy as it pertains to artists; art is either an occupation that produces goods and services for which the artist receives nominal compensation as with other workers in other occupations, or, that art is the singular byproduct of independent individuals for which compensation could be viewed as a liability to its veracity and the independent nature from which it manifests - the accidental or naive genius on the verge of discovery. Art is either a career or a vocation, it cannot be both:



*"The artist creates" - (after Van Eyck)
digital collage, 2014. By the author.*

"The seamless screen of bohemian oratory maintained by artists of the New York School in the 1950's masked the fact that with them originated today's model of art as a career to be manufactured, in opposition to the older model of it as a vocation to be followed." Bradford R. Collins, "Life Magazine and The Abstract Expressionists"- The Art Bulletin, Vol. 73, No. 2, Jun., 1991, p. 295.

But like all false dichotomies the premises are misleading; before artists began visibly signing their work art wasn't a 'calling' or a 'vocation' where acolytes willingly enter a life of bare necessity in search of some abstract accomplishment. It was a trade, a craft, a career, a means of livelihood, work for which one negotiated somewhat standard compensation depending on their proven skill. But that leaves a serious problem when it comes to distinguishing 'art' from mere production. The solution: to inflate the value of art to the degree it becomes more important economically and socially than the artists who produce it. Whether art is defined as an object or an act, the primary foundation on which to establish art as a commodity, a business, or an institution is precisely to devalue the artist practitioner in favor of both blanket social theory and the precious object of posterity. What purpose this false dichotomy serves today is to mask the real source of a multibillion dollar industry while endlessly mythologizing its own noble aims.

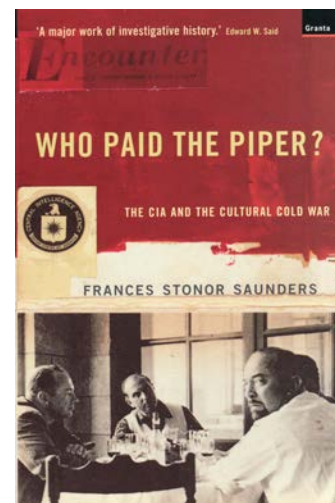
As with those who once argued the value of sugar and cotton to the southern economy, the very production of which could not exist without the benefit of slave labor, the purpose this dichotomy serves between art as art as industry and art as social meditation is to force any dialogue about the value of art and culture from fact to supposition, from substance to speculation; literally. Perhaps the true value of art is no more than the value of honest and equitable labor, tenacity and qualified skill of artists? At this present day and age what thought could be more radical, more truthful, more inspiring?

WHO PAID THE PIPER

THE CIA AND THE CULTURAL COLD WAR

BY FRANCES STONOR SAUNDERS

REVIEW BY GEORGE TOUCHE'



Saunders provides an informative historical description with case specific accounts to investigate the cultural Cold War. Her attention to the cultural and the political is refreshing. She commendably moves beyond arguments in the literature that tend towards pure structural reductionism (or explanations of political-economic causation).

The book is impressive from the opening. The emphasis on secrecy is important to introduce the Central Intelligence Agency and the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Ironically, the typical political pundit might suggest critically that words such as secrecy conjure up wild notions of unobservable conspiracy. Saunders, nevertheless, opens provocatively with a qualified emphasis on the intended secrecy of the cultural propaganda programme in western Europe. She then establishes groundwork for the cultural Cold War by recognizing the establishment of the CIA under the National Security Act of 1947 and the successive expansion of CIA functions to battle the Soviets for the minds of men in the Great Game of manufactured consent (through the self censoring media). In all, the book effectively investigates the secret agenda of cultural and psychological warfare conducted by the CIA and its network associates in the multifaceted Congress for Cultural Freedom.

The introductory chapter provides several interconnected questions to guide the reader. Inquiry centers on whether the values of freedom advanced by the CIA's agendas of propaganda and mecha-

nisms of deception had translated into a kind of un-freedom where people, in fact, are bound to forces beyond their control. Further inquiry addresses whether the ideological commitments and normative contingencies of the CIA had affected the provision of financial aid and the selection of intellectual contributors. Such lines of inquiry underpin basic conceptualizations of truth and choice that warrant the entire cultural struggle to sway western Europe to the American way, as suggested by the appeals of President Truman and General Marshall who called for American intervention to assist free peoples in their choice to resist the subjugation imposed by opposing forces of terror and oppression.

... she demonstrates how the CIA countered the cultural agenda of Soviet propaganda by using financial aid and propaganda of its own to influence beliefs and behavior .

Saunders addresses these questions as she demonstrates how the CIA countered the cultural agenda of Soviet propaganda by using financial aid and propaganda of its own to influence beliefs and behavior – to align the value of free choice with the agenda of the CIA and those subsidized by the CIA in the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Specifically, she documents how the CIA selected authors and selective texts based on criteria of cultural exclusivity.

The example of the former editor of 'Encounter' Dwight MacDonald is insightful, as it reveals that even the writings of established contributors had been subject to censoring or rejection. Saunders also provides detailed accounts of the CIA selectively promoting exhibits of fine art and performances

of music. The example here is that of Abstract Expressionism, which the CIA and its associates with the Museum of Modern Art had promoted to counter other styles of painting that had conveyed aesthetic representations of socialist realism.

So, the big picture question to cover the catchy title of the book: who paid the piper? This is the overarching question to hook the reader from beginning to end. The immediate answer seems to follow from Saunders' direct investigations of the CIA. For example, the Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949 provides some formal transparency on the initial expansion in budget, manpower, and operations of the CIA and Office of Policy Coordination.

The authorization of the CIA director to spend funds without accounting for disbursements then substantiates Saunders' opening emphasis on the intended secrecy of the cultural propaganda programme and suggests the informal extent to which the CIA also had paid the piper covertly. Of course, as exposed by Saunders, big business interests such as the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations also had contributed direct and indirect payments in these regards. In my interpretation, however, it is the people who paid the piper in the ultimate sense – the people who had produced surplus value in the Ford factory system and the people whose taxes had funded the government. Indeed, the following quote from the epilogue substantiates this basic contention (p. 421):

“Well, who’s gonna give the money? The little old lady wearing sneakers from Deduke, Iowa? Will she give you a million dollars? Well, I mean, pipe dreams! Where will the money come from?”

The scholarly concern is that Saunders does not speak sufficiently on this basic point. Tracing the money back to the people unavoidably leads to structural questions of a relational manner. My critique here does not detract from the book with reductionist logic. Again, I think that the strength of the book is in the detail of covering the intended secrecy of the CIA to illustrate the importance of the cultural and the political. From a sociological perspective, however, scholarship must explain relationships of culture to structure and to practice. Recognizing conceptual and conditional relationships among these factors need not lead to structural reductionist arguments, as cultural

sociologists suggest that culture can have effects that reproduce structure and arguably – with interactively mindful practice – effects that (actually) change structure.

My intention is not to spark debate on a sociological Goldilocks criterion for specifying exactly how much structure is appropriate in a book that indeed is best characterized as an investigative history of the cultural Cold War. Yet, a relational sociological critique is warranted because Saunders does cite sociologists and does mention sociological concepts throughout the book. Sociologists are trained

to define their concepts in the abstract and then to make case observations that test their thesis arguments on how the concepts are related. From a sociological perspective, therefore, Saunders could better define the terminology of the classic-modern theorists. Examples might include the dialectical reasoning of Hegelian idealism (as compared to the historical materialism of Marx), Weber on bureaucracy and disenchantment, Gramsci on hegemony, and the Italian School of Pareto, Mosca, and Michels on the composition of elites relative to the masses. Comparative points on liberty might even address the utilitarian space of John Stuart Mill. Regardless, sociologists by training like to see a chapter that elaborates the key concepts and specifies how the author draws from the literature to develop the author's own thesis on the theoretical relationship that the case descriptions in the book refute or support.

The sociologist of perhaps most relevance to dialogue on the Cold War is C. Wright Mills. For Mills, the sociological imagination is the quality of mind to grasp the relations between biography and history in the wider society. Though focused in the domestic power structure, the ‘Power Elite’ by Mills does relationally address Saunders' cultural minded inquiry as to whether the ideals of freedom had translated into conditions of un-freedom where people are bound to forces beyond their control.

The power elite – as observed by Mills during the Cold War of the 1950s – exists in the higher circles of the primary political, economic, and military institutions of modern society. Accordingly, interlocked and interchangeable elites positioned atop these institutional hierarchies come from similar social origins of education, maintain informal networks

Well, who’s gonna give the money? The little old lady wearing sneakers from Deduke, Iowa? Will she give you a million dollars?

of cultural exclusivity, and intermingle in cumulative expressions of wealth, power, and prestige. They together make the decisions on the public issues that transcend the plurality of interests in the middle levels of power and hold consequence over the personal troubles of the relatively powerless people in the fragmented mass society.

Saunders could have elaborated comparatively on Mills and the Power Elite without succumbing to political determinism, as theoretical arguments of formal logic that relate concepts of culture, reason, and power differ in causal direction and typically conclude with reciprocity of discourse. Either way, comparative points of conversation do follow from Mills and Saunders. Most notably, Dwight D. Eisenhower exemplifies the character of the power elite – from the initial interchange of the general becoming president to the final farewell address on the influence of the military industrial complex. Eisenhower, however, also spoke with cultural meaning and rhetorical persuasion on the chance for peace

... a collaborative network that included the CIA, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and the Museum of Modern Art.

under clouds of war – under conditions in which the situational way of life had come to reflect the uneasiness of a threatened humanity hanging from a cross of iron.

The comparative relevance to Saunders reveals itself aesthetically in the art of the

age, as Eisenhower had sanctioned modern art as a pillar of liberty to stand against the tyranny of totalitarianism. Yet, the aesthetic of liberty itself had translated into an abstract expressionism that served the interests of the power elite and the cultural Avant-guard through a collaborative network that included the CIA, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and the Museum of Modern Art.

Detailed by Saunders, this network of association enhanced the image of the United States as a free society of liberty by promoting the experimental and the abstract over the representational and the real. The irony, as suggested by the counter-enlightenment philosophies of the time, is that the ideal of liberty had assumed a negative form and a



positive form – a freedom from and a freedom to – with enlightened reason turning to critical un-reason on the altar of modern history. Indeed, the art of the age had revealed the basic relation of culture to power in that the ethic of liberty itself necessitates an ordering of law and a backing by force to distinguish the rights of privilege from universal nature. Domestically and internationally, the aesthetic cognitions and expressions of the cultural Cold War illustrate that the cultural is political and that the political is cultural.

So, upon reflection, the cultural Cold War finally came to an end with media images of the Berlin Wall coming down – a symbolically meaningful message to conclude the piper paying aftermath of World War II that marked the Promethean struggle at the modern apex of human history. We now live in a world of different conditions, as social media facilitates new forms of networking and neo-liberal finance circulates capital globally. Yet, the sociological imagination remains crucial to relational studies of culture, reason, and power. Catchy-titled books such as:

‘Who Rules America?’ by William Domhoff and ‘Whose Running America?’ by Thomas Dye show how sociologists and political scientists continue to engage in debates on the domestic structures of wealth, power, and interconnected decision-making. Further, the literature of international politics and contemporary globalization includes insights to transformations in the cultural flows and power boundaries of the larger world. Yet, Saunders’ book focuses at the defining moment in modern histo-

ry to encapsulate the timeless though dynamicaly changing nature of these fundamental relations that have manifested themselves in different forms and expressed themselves in different aesthetics. I therefore conclude my review commentary with a quote in tribute to the final paragraph of thought written out by Saunders in *Who Paid the Piper* (p. 427):

“Behind the ‘unexamined nostalgia for the “Golden Days” of American intelligence’ lay a much more devastating truth: the same people who read Dante and went to Yale and were educated in civic virtue recruited Nazis, manipulated the outcome of democratic elections, gave LSD to unwitting subjects, opened the mail of thousands of American citizens, overthrew governments, supported dictatorships, plotted assassinations, and engineered the Bay of Pigs disaster. ‘In the name of what?’ asked one critic. ‘Not civic virtue, but empire.’ ”

George Touche' earned his sociology PhD at Texas A&M and worked full time as a research associate at George HW Bush Presidential institute.

Who Paid the Piper?: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War
by Frances Stonor Saunders

Paperback: 544 pages
Publisher: Granta 4 April 2000
ISBN 978-1862073-2-72

In the next Interim Issue of New Art Examiner

Derek Guthrie interviewed by Sam Thorne, Director of the Tate, St Ives (audio available)

Roland Gurney, West Cornwall Editor, on Frances Stonor Saunders

Tom Mullaney, Chicago Editor, editorial

Daniel Nanavati, UK Editor, editorial on a quote about artists and their place in society from

Adolph Gottlieb

Jonathan Ball, co-founder of the Eden Project, on the Venice Biennale 2015

Plus your letters, emails and thoughts.



Adrian Stokes (1854 – 1935), *The Harbour Bar*, 1889, oil on canvas, Leeds Museums and Galleries

Cornish Light:

The Nottingham 1894 Exhibition Revisited

20 June – 5 September 2015

In conjunction with

Exhibition sponsored



PENLEE HOUSE

 Gallery & Museum
 PENZANCE



PENLEE HOUSE GALLERY & MUSEUM

Morrab Road, Penzance TR18 4HE

Tel. 01736 363625 www.penleehouse.org.uk

