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Saint Gery

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Why talent is still not enough

Jane Addams Allen on Georgia O'Keefe - The human face of an American icon.

Speakeasy: Spencer Hutchinson 'The Problematics of Black Representation'

Plus: Reviews from New York to Milan

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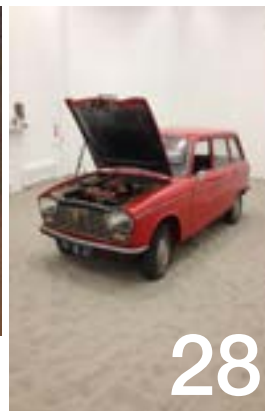
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EDITORIAL

As the economy recedes, and as the political crisis deepens, the USA is a land of apprehension. A long way from the post-war boom. That time witnessed the triumph of American abstract art. Art follows the money. Embedded in millennial thinking is the Van Gogh syndrome and also the less spectacular introvert voice of Paul Cezanne, who lays a claim to the Modernist 'Old Master' status. Both are the artist as a survivor, individual genius, and outcast. Both were autodidacts.

Right now the frenzied turbo charged international art market supported and manipulated by the rich elite, is questioned. It is hope and also fear of many, that it will collapse. Museums, academia, and national arts management are suffering as confidence drains away; the legacy of the avant garde is now suspect. The history of the collapse of Victorian art world (including the USA) is a stark reminder of how a confident elite art culture can disappear. Art is defined, and the redefined, as the visual narrative of history. Cultural issues and social change are interwoven into the art story.

Courtesy of the President we may see a game changer called Impeachment. Trump does not impress with manners, social graces, taste or cognitive ability. He reinforces class, gender, racial division and ignorance.

Washington is safe as the Nation's capital, from the ultimate horrors of decline that sank Detroit and threatens Chicago with near junk bond status. Though Washington is paralyzed, what remains is a well-educated citizenry (which does not mean informed), with a high brow inclination to reach out for elegance and decorum. Some say they are stuck in American history.

The visual arts culture is not as portrayed in American exceptionalism or its newer version 'manifest destiny'. The market is rigged. A left over undercurrent from the CIA hiding behind The Congress for Cultural Freedom.

Autodidact artists, who invented modernism, are still revered but they were European. New York captured the avant garde, while Washington captured the rear guard. Washington follows Congress, it does not innovate. If Washington is the Nation's theatre, the stage for performance is Congress.

We hope the tie that binds convention to art and political positioning can be loosened.

A PETITION TO REVERSE ELISABETH MURDOCH'S APPOINTMENT TO ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Sir Nicholas Serota
Chair of Arts Council England
Arts Council England
21 Bloomsbury Street
London
WC1B 3HF

ACE decision to appoint Elisabeth Murdoch to National Council

Dear Sir Nicholas Serota,
Artists' Union England calls on Arts Council England, to reverse the decision to appoint Elisabeth Murdoch as a member of the ACE National Council. We were dismayed to discover last week that Ms Murdoch, a business woman and heir to Rupert Murdoch's media empire, has secured a place on a public policy making body.

We question the appointment of an under-qualified and non-representative member to the council and urge Arts Council England to consider the significant conflict of interests that we believe played a part in this decision.

As a trade union representing cultural workers, we are particularly troubled by the Murdoch family's views and actions on employment rights and union busting. We fear that a council member opposed to collective rights at work is a further threat to artists' livelihood in already difficult circumstances for artists and workers.

The Murdoch family, through its international network of media outlets, has consistently proved to be an antithesis to the values Arts Council England claims to promote, including diversity and equality, fair pay and above all, the distribution of public funding in the interest of the public good. The Murdochs, in contrast, have regularly promoted hate, bigotry and Islamophobia, through their ownership of The Sun, The Times newspaper, Fox News and their many other media outlets. In the interest of private capital, the Murdoch family empire has a shameful record in employing unsavoury tactics to influence public opinion and public policy and we believe this appointment is another attempt to expand its damaging influence.

We therefore ask that you explain the reasons behind this appointment, considering Elisabeth Murdoch's lack of relevant experience in the sector. We are aware of Murdoch's significant financial contributions, through the Freedlands Trust, to the Tate under your leadership and to various organisations led by your wife Teresa Gleadowe and feel it is your duty as Chair of Arts Council England to be transparent about the decision to appoint Murdoch to this influential public position. Furthermore, we demand that Arts Council England makes a public commitment to keep processes behind future appointments open and transparent, to ensure that financial contributions are not a key to participation in decision making on any level and to guarantee that its actions are never beholden to private capital.

Yours Sincerely,
Artists' Union England Executive
CC MP Karen Bradley

LETTERS

Please send letters to:
letters@newartexaminer.net

Codswallop

Dear Editor

Cheers to Ken Turner for his courageous performance in St. Ives, Codswallop reviewed in the last issue.

While raising awareness around town pulling a fish in a wagon, Turner asks questions to the public and to the cod.

Where is the art critical dialogue? What's going on in the art world today? Do you know what is happening?

The New Art Examiner offers concise analysis of the art world that desperately needs good writing and criticism. Wake up St. Ives, of all places to slumber with lethargy when great art once prospered in your town, Alfred Wallis, Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Rose Tremain, Bernard Leach, Roger Hilton, Liz Hunter created important work in St. Ives. Extricating the status quo from the noose of conformity is hard work, it's people like Turner who remind us of the great responsibility to refuse to be silent.

Annie Markovich 12/11/2017

Extravaganza

Daniel,

I thought you might like these. I didn't take any photos earlier but I thought you were very good and the way the absent actor was coped with was very good. Whole thing was memorable and zany. The people next to me did not realise Ken's first intervention was part of the show at first. Dyhano remarkable.

I wrote a bit about the exhibition Alternative Visions in Falmouth which Jane Sand did not like. It's on my blog if you want to read it. If you want it in NAE you are welcome.

<http://4maryfletcher.blogspot.co.uk/>

Happy Christmas and New Year,
Mary Fletcher 20/12/2017

Derek,

You know what's funny, I did a lecture once that briefly discussed the real hidden values of experiencing art and culture... the argument was that the financial and material value of experiencing art happens at such a snail's pace, it is near impossible to measure. How much does having a painting like

Edward Hopper's Nighthawks add to our stock market just from its existence? The power of art, music, films, to inspire us acts as a driving force... makes us just a little sharper, a little faster, more enlightened, and this has actual monetary value. I know I'm probably sounding a little pretentious, but there seems to be a direct link between the power of a culture's influence in relation to its position in the world.

But I don't know, living in Chicago I've always had to find a way to translate creativity into something more tangible, something that a businessperson could understand... staring at something for 10 minutes means I'm actually working... allowing myself to pause, to think, that's when the great ideas happen, was never an easy sell in the past, and is looking to be an even harder sell now. Fortunately, I work for great people and have great people around me that get it, but for years it wasn't the case.

But I don't know, my biggest concern is when I talk about the experience of viewing art, is not my feelings of guilt, but rather that I'm boring someone to death... like I am right now, explaining all of this conceptual nonsense.

Michael William Foster, 23/12/2017

QUOTE of the Month:

“We, the painters, are the true heirs, those who continue to paint. We are heirs to Rembrandt, Velázquez, Cézanne, Matisse. A painter always has a father and a mother; (s)he doesn't emerge out of nothing”.

Pablo Picasso

MIDCULT/MASSCULT

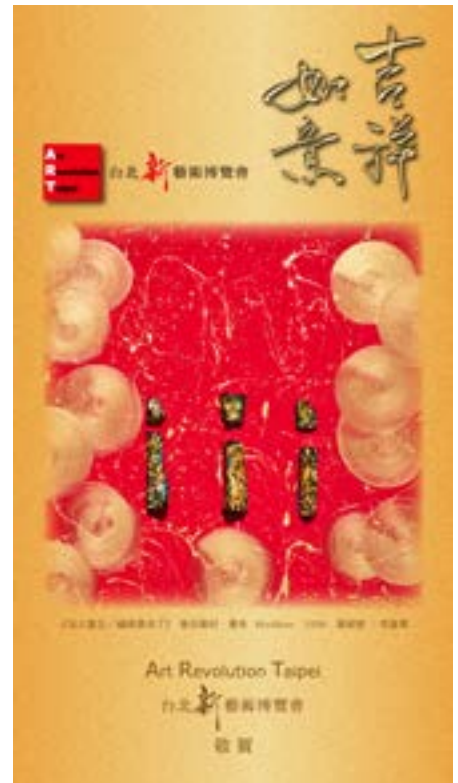
Editor,

Daniel Nanavati's revisit of Dwight MacDonald's Midcult and Masscult could not be more timely and prescient. In terms of how one chooses to see art in the 21st century, no other essay could have a greater significant forewarning than MacDonald's insights. They are absolutely providential.

Masscult is the dispelling of culture into a primarily popularist format on a grand scale. "Watering down" the quality of art-work to banal standards is our society's omnipresence's market of seamless consumption. MacDonald alerts us to this subversive driving force of how every facet of culture, as we may know it, is absolutely bleached forward. What makes his insights invaluable and incisive is the degree to which these filters of culture have grown. Exponentially. He lays the ground work from his mid 20th century view point, how would he have ever seen the advent of electronica, Hollywood's blockbuster routs, computer into social media, cell phones, the massive on line flow of messaging, information, news ... six international media companies control 96% of the world's communication. Every important thing squeezed through relatively few outlets. Communication dominance of the overwhelming masscult flood creates power, and so acts like a mold of prerequisite control, preordained, preformed through which the popular culture spigot pours upon us. It is in a sense "pre-seen". Chosen, edited, controlled. The sheer enormity of this phenomenal wave has effectively drowned out any cultural competitions that may be

up for consideration. This constant beast-beat has become the dynamic of the ART World. Indeed, the art world directly mirrors the social real world for consideration. Art becomes a safe brand, an amelioration. It is packaged, sanctioned and permitted in the art world "insiders". Alternatives to the major thrust of art world narratives are simply ignored, never hyped, mentioned or actively acknowledged so not known to 'us'. Witness the effect of this at the local or community basis. The Masscult culture resonates down the cultural ladder until the bottom rung choices made about local culture are subjected to the sieve that mimics the big boys. The after effect changes his continued practice to widespread habit, followed by rote, programed to the micros of this world-mind atmosphere. Can you hear constant howls of media in your head, agendas roaring in the cross winds? You may know what to expect but did you know it has been "expected for you". This is often a very subtle process but the suitability factor dominates. I is the social art snowstorm.

Alternative art spaces or outside the box establishments, this is so constrained, development comes only when it is hyped, broadcast or mythically described. Nothing but cul-de-sac or niche culture, confined to a non influential space, and it struggles to gain recognition or realization. It is the lost present art history. Many fine artists have been ignored, rarely to be discovered at a later date. Like so many out of vogue artists, lost. Cultural sanctioning made to fit the political and commercial intents of the minders of the media, has taken a mighty toll on the consumers of



WITHOUT FEAR OR
FAVOR

A BRIEF HISTORY AND
PROPOSITION FOR THE
FUTURE OF THE
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Spencer Hutchinson

Spencer Hutchinson is graduate from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). He is a student at the University of Chicago as well as a member of the Borderbend Arts Collective and is a founding member of Agitator Co-operative Gallery in West Town.

Since 2014 he has been working heavily with found objects in the conceptual/ neo-dada vein of artists such as David Hammons, Jasper Johns, Joseph Kosuth and Marcel Duchamp.

One of Hutchinson's current ongoing projects is a serial piece called "I See My Light Come Shining" that focuses on issues pertaining to Black racial identity and social history through the use of sound and found objects. Spencer Hutchinson lives and works in Chicago.

message, namely, their conformity is to the message "filing-filling" down.

MacDonald writes that midcult wore the pretense of playing to higher culture but inevitably failed because it never addressed the standards or real terrain of established culture i.e. it just made it more easily consumable. This predigestion of culture plays out in crippling an art scene, often by hampering or pre-disparaging the standards and fruits of critical success. You have all heard it, what is the "price"? But moreover, with this smokescreen in mind, what is the real price? That is the highly corrosive atmosphere of artist betrayal and the subversion of "real" new art. Has that ever existed? What would that look like? Please, let us know.

If the art distribution system

psychologically and intellectually, we have to pay is always drifting to the lower common denominators, i.e. if artists are in a state of constant competition either with the system or each other, no one wins? For the public becomes a thing ramping in on itself as a mass, not a group of individuals. Success or "messaging the guidelines of achievable status", is achieved either through market strategy, or a desired political outcome, or a set chute of non-intentional habit formed repercussions. What is the individual artist's "play" in these preset cultural causeways?

Especially if she or he refuses to melt under competition or market tension,....obscurity.

Many artists pander to the media, and are absorbed by the power, the Masscult, of open acceptance. Their work is materially acceptable

constantly has to wedge itself in the "omnipresent market" a condition that informs all things, where can it go? The homage

because it has commercial value.

"Known quantities" are preferred but the market will define the so called cultural product as now "acceptable", for by so doing it becomes masscult. The work will never have a chance if there is no organic discussion and interplay with other artists as an incubation process, as successful artists traditionally have done. Art schools are adjuncts of the media. Their critical apparatus is compromised by masscult standards, i.e. the interlaced tube of achievement, burdened by self directing, corruption spitting out Masscult like a machine, before the artist can ever ask who am I? This process churns and voilà! Post modernism. This process is so subtle. Unknown to those upon whom it is perpetrated. Where will this stop? The role of the critic is to sense the masscult pitfalls and traps, the wind of media, the crossed agendas, the attitudes and moreover to bear witness of critical standards for which we may value the art. The challenge is to pierce the veil of Masscult. Can this be done? What may we see?

Al Jirikowic 24/01/2018

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



speakeasy

Spencer Hutchinson

The Problematics of Black Representation

Interviewer: Do you consider yourself a painter or a black painter?

Basquiat: Oh I use lots of colors not just black.

I'm not a betting man, but I'll wager \$10 that 15 years ago the average MFA student would have been hard pressed to name 10 African-American artists contemporary or otherwise. Today, the task is much easier: 1. Julie Mehretu, 2. Sanford Biggers, 3. Rahsid Johnson, 4. Kara Walker, 5. Mark Bradford, 6. David Leggett, 7. David Hammons, 8. Adrian Piper, 9. David Hammons, 10. Kerry James Marshall; and that's not even including Jean-Michel Basquiat, Theaster Gates, Coco Fusco, and Kehinde Wiley, titans in their own right. The past 15 years have witnessed a sea change in the artworld. Black Artists have become more visible now than in any time in history. So what's the problem?

Nine months ago a painting in the Whitney Biennale sent shock waves through the artworld. Dana Schutz's painting of Emmitt Till created a controversy that was immediate. The outrage from the black cultural elite, and the Whitney's tone deaf response was a case study in "you had one job", the failure for a major institution to meaningfully tap into the feelings of the people they claim to represent. Schutz defended her piece, and rightly so, and the Whitney defended Schutz, and rightly so. So what's the problem?

About 6 years ago I was living in my hometown of Oak Ridge, TN. As I was out taking a stroll I decided to stop by the local art center and ask if I might submit some work. My response was "I'm sorry, we only show black art in October". The rage shot through my body like a thunderbolt. Fast forward 5 years. I'm at a critique showing a large abstract painting and getting consistently negative feedback from one particular participant. At one point he asks, "what's your motivation as an artist?" to which I respond "Being an African-American, I am expected to make art that deals with race, and I as an artist, I reject that" to which he replied "That's what I want to see!" The problem with black art, is that it's

trapped in an echo chamber of self-referential subject matter. Nothing for the black artist exists outside of blackness. All other work is suspect. The expectation for black artists to "speak from their experience" keeps them in a gilded cage where almost nothing relevant to the broader art world comes in or goes out. That is the problem. Keeping black artists shackled to identity politics is nothing more than a manifestation of a genteel brand of racism, "you can live above me, but you can't live next to me". And that's where the ire of Schutz's piece comes from, the perceived gentrification of black subject matter made even more ironic because it was part of a show meant to embrace multi-culturalism, tragic because the controversy diverted attention away from work in the show actually made by African-American artists. When a white artist wants to show solidarity with the black community, they shouldn't be punished. Today one can name 10 black artists off the top of their head, but that's only part of the battle that's been won. Why this phenomenon is peculiar to the visual arts is anyone's guess. Perhaps it has to do with the fact that the very concept of art has always been a European one, a concept that literally formed at the same time as racism was becoming theorized. The notion that Europeans have the power to "name the world" through science, technology, philosophy, and yes art, and that "The Other" possesses only the power to name themselves and their oppression. In the ancient story of Narcissus, Narcissus is so beautiful when Echo emerged to embrace him and was spurned she wilted away leaving nothing; her echo may be the fate of the black artist who dares approach the canon of western art history. Will the day of reckoning come when the Art World's own specific brand of narcissistic cruelty will be revealed to them? Perhaps. Perhaps the critical mass of black artists, with more on the rise every day, will force the gatekeepers of culture to ask the questions that are too difficult for now. In the meantime, let us appreciate this art for what it is, and celebrate the battles that have been won to create a more just artworld attempting to live up to its highest ideals.

Gaining recognition: the dream denied and now defined.

Argument: The corruption that infects the art world is not one of the heart, but one of control. The liberal condition has become one that hides decision making and takes constructive criticism as an attack. The malaise in the community arises from accepting that, because there are more choices and more artists, the culture is necessarily healthy, inclusive, diverse and meritorious. In fact the opposite is true.

The career paths in the art world are, for several reasons, rigged against community artists to such an extent that to be a community artist is to be a loser, even when one sells to the local, art loving buyers. For selling in and of itself is not success, it is who you sell to that matters for your future as an artist. You can retreat into your own creativity and purity of your unique expression but you delude yourself if you think you are being an artist. Once something is created it belongs to the world - and individual artists should wonder why the world isn't being told about them. It cannot be because they are not artists. The reasons the system is rigged are almost banal - they are the same reasons that corrupt every system humanity creates: personal vanity, private wealth and the search for status amongst one's peers.

"Behind the artist in the act of creation stands the collector. His piggish eyes are gleaming, and his right hand firmly clutches the bulging money bag at his belt. Greed, as the 16th century drawing 'The Painter and the Connoisseur' by Bruegel makes clear, has always been a part of the world in which art is made. But the dizzying expansion of the world art market over the past five years has created hothouse conditions for the growth of speculative collecting, and many of the old illusions are being crowded out by the new jungle-style trade." (Jane Addams Allen: Speculating; A Fine Art March 1986).

The Academies fell because they dictated to the nations what art was, based on a graded scale, and completely failed to recognise the possibility that there was art being made outside of their definition. Art that was better. To be fair, the first exhibitions of the Impressionists did include several Academic works so there were painters who recognised the sensibility, dynamism and skill in the new works. But in the main, it would have been impossible for the Academies to have encompassed a Picasso, let alone the realities he dealt with in his Dada, Cubist, Symbolist and Surrealist excursions.

However, while they lasted, the Academies ruled their art world and what they said was art, was art. The four



The Painter and the Connoisseur. Pieter Bruegel

stages of art, like badges in the Scouts, were the proven ranges of skills requisite to be known as an artist. They did not wholly fall by the wayside when photography began to gain ground. Those who did not engage in photography did not accept the photograph as an art form while those that did, championed it as an art form from the beginning. But systems have a tendency to make people within them myopic. And today, people living inside the creative world of self-expression and exploration, have a tendency to believe they are necessarily free and unconfined. They are not. They are defined by the arguments that define the cultural system in which they work. Every cultural system that has ever existed has come to a stage where it needs to be broken. Why? Because human thoughts evolve and with them, creativity itself and while human beings have tried valiantly to destroy each other, artists have produced from the blood-soaked soils the only thing peace ever gives us: the tranquility to think.

Today, in the wake of a hundred and fifty years of art history charting the fall of the Academies and the rise of 'just about everything else', we have the endless worship of the 'new', the machine-made ready-made, installations

and conceptualism so rampant that art critics like Waldemar Januszczak can say we are all intrigued by the Turner Prize. Really? All? I know he feels he founded the Turner Prize in its incarnation with Serota and Channel 4, but he doesn't speak for the nation, just the urban nation and even then, not all of the cosmopolitans spend their afternoons in any of the Tates. Not because they don't like the objects on display as much as they find their art outside the diktats of that new Academy; the Arts Council. That Government quango which defines what art is and who is an artist with every grant it gives to the visual arts.

The Arts Council became the new Academy the moment it started to fund buildings and then to grant aid those who filled them with the Government's liberal agenda: inclusivity, gender-blind relevance, diversity, audience development, etc., even to the point that they have an 'Exceptional Talent' category. (The only reason we have an Arts Council is because no critical eye exists that can determine the best talent in any generation. The William Hazlitts of the country are few). These are the mantras of anyone who is not an artist. Artists are exclusive thinkers waiting for the generation that will accept their ground-breaking cultural analysis. Artists are thinkers who speak through their work of a world that is not yet born. Unyielding critics of the established where it leaves communities and people behind - which has always been the political inheritance of the status quo. Artists are philosophers beyond philosophising on the metaphysical because they deal with the relationship we have with objects, with each other, with nature, with the joy dug out of the pain of living. They teach us about space, how to interpret shared experiences, the coinage of insight and the heat of constructive criticism. The creative spirit understands frustration and knows anger and the endless drivel of liberal consensus, teaching by being led by the student, gearing all learning towards prostituting one's talent to the highest bidders is not the way of the artist. It is the way of the 'creative'.

The Arts Council, working as the new Academy, is only interested in what brings in the audiences. That is why art has been infected with the narrow vision of being 'new' with no pretensions of being universal; of being controversial with no appetite to talk to generations to come; of being marketable to a 'whatever next' syndrome with no attempt to delve deeper than the surface statement, the casual observation or the deconstruction of skill into the clever joke, affected sex, practice pieces put out as the finished work and so forth. It debases language itself and had led us to the brazen



Newlyn Orion Gallery, Newlyn.



Arnolfini Galleries, Bristol

denial of facts, to marketing as an end in itself, to celebrity actually being an aim for an artist. There was a time when an artist, finding their creative tour-de-force, lost themselves because they became part of the conscience of the human race. A place of personal sacrifice to keep alive the collective hope that we can do much better than we do, as society and as individuals. No artist of worth ever created anything saying 'I must make this relevant to Blacks and Whites' because the very premise is absurd to them. Politics, not art, defines differences that have all the relevance of Platonic 'attributes' - in other words they do not get to the heart of true definition; they are merely passing references. No matter the colour we are all human beings, no matter the disability we are all thinkers, no matter the gender we all share life. Artists pointed out the ludicrous nature of anti-Semitism five hundred years before the United Nations Human Rights Charter (The Merchant of Venice), and two hundred years before the founding Fathers of America artists railed against anti-black racism (Othello). Who can forget Iago's final silence when asked why he

betrayed his commander. The silence of the bigot who does not wish to be defined as a bigot. The Romantic Poets of the eighteenth century scorned chauvinism. None of these artists was liberal, what they were was liberated in their minds. What they were was elite.

In our heavily controlled Arts Council world we have decisions taken with no sharing of the reasoning behind the decisions. Recently the Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol lost its Portfolio status. So cowed are they, they would not share with the NAE the reasons given for this loss. The Newlyn / Orion was granted another four years secure funding (what Portfolio Status means amongst other things) and the only difference between the two, on the surface of it, is that Newlyn comes with a name that reaches into art history, The Newlyn School and that name confers a status. And who benefits from that status? The artists? We cannot draw that conclusion. We know Nicholas Serota is involved in both, and the Tate St Ives and Newlyn have an interest in CAST in which Teresa Gleadowe (Serota's second wife) sits as a trustee, as does Karen Townshend who runs the high end retreat at Kestle Barton, also in Cornwall. We also know the Arts Council gave CAST £500,000 before Serota became its Director, therefore avoiding conflict of interest by two years as he is a CAST Board member. While he sits as Board member on the BBC and Teresa sits as a Trustee on Art Monthly. We begin to see how the Arnolfini might not fit into the picture, but we can only speculate about the land-grab going on in Cornwall.

It is this lack of transparency that fools community artists into thinking they too, have a chance to be exhibited and make a name for themselves. That the autodidact can still shine through on their own merits, yet none do.

Curators like James Green at the Newlyn Exchange do nothing but play the game they are told to play and win favour because, by so doing, money flows from the Arts Council into Cornwall. Yet they will corruptly deal with those outside their system, such as the NAE, which is a magazine of discussion, a champion of free speech. Free speech, which, we were told in December 2017, is the keystone of university education by none other than Jo Johnson minister for Education in May's Government. The rules for higher education do not apply to the art world ruled by the Arts Council. Equally the NAE is banned from the Exchange Gallery by James Green and from the Newlyn / Orion over which he holds sway and, in a strange twist, by Penlee House in Penzance where



CAST, Helston, Cornwall

the curator was very favourable to our Publisher Derek Guthrie who knows about the Newlyn School. But the idea of inviting him to lecture vanished overnight and the only reason we can see is that the curator at Penlee House is James Green's wife. Is this how managers treat constructive criticism? How they treat a magazine filled with writers whose knowledge of the modern art world is second to none? Publishing to an international readership from their doorstep. We can but speculate.

It is this lack of transparency that fools community artists into thinking they, too, have a chance to be exhibited and make a name for themselves. That the autodidact can still shine through on their own merits, yet none do. They are chosen. The reasons they are chosen are not shared, all we know for certain is that across the Western world right now everything is art and therefore it is not the art object itself that is important. It is its message. And that message, being always 'new' has a short shelf life for nothing is 'new' for very long. And what is 'politically correct' has nothing but a constrictive effect upon the creative instincts for it engenders a climate of fear. There is absolutely nothing one can say that does not offend someone. Not to offend is impossible. Liberal opinion itself offends far right thinkers and the moment liberal thinkers decide they should not do that, we are all lost. And this administrative control attempts to be absolute. In order to gain the status conferred upon them by administering the Newlyn Gallery, Green sought and attained, the ousting of the Newlyn Society of Artists from their own gallery. And what did the Society do? They looked for a new home. Artists who don't fight are not artists.

Curators do not go out looking for new artists, look at the Jo Clarke interview in this issue about Susan Daniel McElroy and the Art Now Cornwall Exhibition in the St Ives Tate.

"The exhibition, publication and education programme aim to discuss the major themes that are emerging from artists' practice in the region and how they relate to the wider

context of artists' practice in the UK. Some trajectories that appear in the exhibition link to various artistic strategies such as Surrealism, appropriation, formalism, interpretation, nostalgia, childhood memories, play and narration, amongst others. Certain works were selected in relation to the gallery space or because of particular formal associations between them, but in all cases new and often surprising dialogues begin to emerge. " Art Now Cornwall 2007.

We are living in a new era of control and when art history is written those inside this controlled system will not be relevant. Art history will look to those working outside of the chains of conforming-to-values so diffuse they cease to be values, and if you think this is mistaken, write to us and tell us where the greatness lies. Our challenge to every reader – prove us wrong.

All newspeak. Curators get invited along with Trustees and collectors, to select shows in select art colleges. They get invited to those galleries that are in a circuit of the knowing. Doesn't everyone want to be in that circuit? Entranced by the money to be made, the status to be conferred, the exhibitions to be given? Well no, not everyone does. The community artist does their own thing, looks for their own exhibiting galleries, breaks away from the controlling institutions and immediately makes themselves irrelevant to all but those who find

out about them. Social Media helps get some of the message out there but there are millions of artists in the world and serious critics do not derive understanding of art objects from digital images. Without the marketing expertise, paid for by patrons, the community artist stands zero chance of being known to a wide audience.

Unless they make a controversial splash. So this is where we are today. Millions of artists practising, exhibiting everywhere they can, in exhibitions run on a shoe-string or funded by patrons like the Art Council. Everyone is an artist, everyone has a chance, no one can say negative things about the art and be invited to select gatherings - and what is the result of shutting down cultural thinkers? We have the rise of overt fascism in the Western World. My challenge is to say this is because the artist has not been doing their job. But perhaps it is better to say the artist has not been allowed to do their job. They have had to cow-tow to that patron The Arts Council, the political lackey of politicians whose whims are seen to change with every newspaper headline.

We are living in a new era of control and when art history is written those inside this controlled system will not be relevant. Art history will look to those working outside of the chains of conforming-to-values so diffuse they cease to be values, and if you think this is mistaken, write to us and tell us where the greatness lies. Our challenge to every reader – prove us wrong.

letters@newartexaminer.net

The New Art Examiner is the product of the thinking and life-long contribution of Jane Addams Allen.

We thank you in her name for reading her independent journal of art criticism.

If you have an interest in our venture, please consult Google, also Art Cornwall, for an interview with the publisher, Derek Guthrie, a painter who keeps his art practice private.

The New Art Examiner has a long history of producing quality and independent art criticism. Chicago and Cornwall, as any art scene, needs writers to keep a professional eye on art activity. Otherwise, insider trading will determine success in this troubled art world.

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The Omission:



Derek Guthrie in Conversation with Jo Clarke.

Originally published in 2008 in Proof Magazine.

Jo Clarke has consistently been the foremost curator in Cornwall for twenty years. Although he no longer wishes to engage with the New Art Examiner we republish the interview Derek Guthrie held with him when he was running the Goldfish Gallery in Penzance.

Derek Guthrie: When did you open Goldfish?

Joseph Clarke: I started in 2003.

DG: What inspired you to open a commercial gallery in Cornwall? Because you must have known it was going to be very difficult.

JC: I didn't really consider whether it be difficult or not it was just a case of looking to provide a platform for work that I believed in, and I suppose that the work that I responded to was by artists that I felt shared a similar purpose to myself.

DG: ahh. What would you suggest that purpose was?

JC: These are things that I still ask myself questions about. It's to do with the pursuit, a questioning of the world around me and the things that are going on inside my head. So I suppose the pursuit towards finding human truths: elemental, spiritual, environmental, emotional.

DG: Yeah, but we can say that about all artists. I mean, I see that there is a "taste" in your gallery, in a way. And how can we come to terms with what may be the general "taste" of Goldfish – not everybody, but mostly?

JC: It's very difficult – people have said that it has a very existentialist feel...

DG: Okay...

JC: ... and for someone who's tried to read a bit about existentialism, it's quite a difficult thing to categorise.

DG: I think that's a good comment. Because when you say existentialist, I always think of Paris – before New York stole art from Paris. Of course Sartre, but Giacometti rejected the avant-garde as defined by Surrealism and Breton, and in a way with his renewed interest in ancient art that he got very passionate about.

JC: I think there's been a pursuit by artists, certainly in the 20th century – in my mind going into the 21st century, the pursuit of the primitive. But from a very

early age I was very aware of the absurdity of the human condition and the acerbity of the pursuit of progress, in my mind has often taken us further away from our species. And it's that dichotomy that interests me: our willingness to get in touch with ourselves and our environment, and the fact that it is very difficult to. And, you know, this crosses very different realms, from the environmental crisis, to religious crisis, to all sorts of sociological crises.

DG: There's a kind of gentle pessimism, or pathos...

JC: Well I think there is facing up to the pessimism that may be there but also an attempt at transcendence through acceptance of those things.

DG: I agree and of course the other factor is that there is a personal narrative.

JC: This is interesting. I think again it comes across in my taste. That, where it's looking at human concern, the mirror's pointed within, which become a case of personal narrative. But I think my taste does broaden into our place within the world around us, so I'd like to think it was broad enough to look out and in.

DG: But in a way all art is narrative; we can't help it. All creativity is narrative, but you can get a kind of focus on what's inside from outside – that's a metaphysical point. However, it doesn't alter the fact that if you go to a lot of your exhibitions, you get the feeling that the artist is telling you stories, and the stories about their environment, or an aspect of their environment, and it's to do with their own personal narrative.

JC: I'm very interested in the reasons that someone would choose to do this. I spoke to one artist recently who said that making work, for them, was like making prayer, and it was to try to get in touch with something slightly out of reach. I think that's what interests me – the thing that is out of reach, that thing we're reaching towards. It's a questioning process and so often I don't think it's about finding the answers – it's interesting to me that we can't – but it's about the reaching. The reaching towards something else, not towards a kind of progress...

DG: It is not accepted pattern post modernism, where it's relativity. And it's almost a bit dated. It reminds one of Beckett, or James Joyce even.

JC: I think some people may see it as dated; to me they're

timeless human concerns. And people have said to me that my ideals sometime sound a bit romantic. So be it, if that's the case. I don't see it that way.

DG: Well, I don't think the issues are "in" – an avant-garde always says it's not dated. The whole point of an avant-garde is "we're relevant now, and were on top of it".

JC: It seems to me that mankind hasn't learned an awful lot of lessons over the years.

DG: No, precisely.

JC: So these issues that artists have concerned themselves with for millenniums are issues that are still there, facing us now. As a society we tell our children not to bully each other at school, yet we go to war. We make the same mistakes again and again. And I think it's art's job to be a monument to these facts.

DG: You've worked very hard, and you've developed a market. Not only in Cornwall, but you developed a market in London.

JC: I think the interesting thing is that even though the work has been made here it's not specifically about place, it's about human concern. Therefore, it's often been easier for us to achieve recognition outside of Cornwall. And the artists have achieved an element of success, yeah.

DG: I'm a bit worried about this whole "place" business, because people are very self-conscious about it. Look, you're walking down Commercial Road in the east end of London – it's not the same as walking along the cliffs in North Cornwall.

JC: No

DG: Period. And your art is not all about walking down Commercial Road in London, or walking around Manhattan. It's different narratives – which is to do with where artists choose to live.

JC: There are different advantage points to view the human condition from. Artists like Gilbert and George can view it from the scum-fucked streets of East London, and see the absurdity of the human condition. And others can see it from an advantage point further away, where they're happy to look.

DG: I know, but what I'm saying is the choice of environment is something to do with the nature of the artist.

JC: I think so, yeah.

DG: That's all I want to say. I'm not saying one is better than the other, I'm just saying...

JC: But for me, the thing, the transcendence I'm looking for, I feel I can find it in Cornwall, and I don't think I can find it in the scum-fucked streets of East London.

DG: Fine. So you developed a market in London as well as in Cornwall?

JC: Further afield as well. There's an outsider art collection in the States that just purchased work by a couple of our artist and,

DG: Who?

JC: The *Anthony Potchulo Outsider Art Collection* in Milwaukee

visited the gallery, and wrote a foreword and purchased works. And then we sold work to David Roberts – one of the foremost collectors of art in the country. So, yeah, we've achieved a certain amount.

DG: So, you've made inroads there. So after years of study you finally balance the books, right?

JC: Balance the books, make tough choices and continued in doing what I believe in.

DG: And you felt that you didn't compromise to reach the lower end of the market?

JC: Any compromises that were taking place early on was soon... eliminated.

DG: Fine. So, you're going along and in 2007 Susan Daniel McElroy, then artistic director of Tate's St Ives, put on an "Art Now Cornwall" show, and this show had an enormous impact, because, you know, the Tate is the premier institution in Cornwall, maybe even in the South West of England, yes? So it's a premier, prestigious institution that does have the very great difficulty of having to respond to local artists. And I do feel very



Susan Daniel McElroy, Director, Tate St Ives 2000 - 2007



Art Now Cornwall 2007. Installation

sorry for museums when they have to respond to local artists, because there's no yardage in doing local shows for curatorial reasons. They only get brownie points from doing smart shows, and that means importing artists. Now that's a fact of life everywhere.

JC: Right.

DG: Anyway, circumstances finally did it and it was her swan song. And it was a good idea it was a swan song.

JC: It was very interesting because the show took place in January – February 2007 and it started to reach awareness amongst artists and people involved in the art scene in Cornwall around about October or November 2006 so we're only talking a very short time before. There had been little or no engagement from the Tate prior to that event, so when it was heard that this exhibition was going to take place, an early press releases stated that the Art Now Cornwall exhibition was there to represent the leading lights of contemporary Art in Cornwall, it seemed to me a little bit suspect and a little bit strange that they were able to do that.

DG: I don't think it was suspect at all; I don't see what else the person easily could have said. I mean they can't say we're here to represent "not the leading lights of Cornwall".

JC: But it was suspect to me that despite their lack of engagement they were in a position where they felt they were able to do that.

DG: Well now, their lack of engagement is one thing... But the press release is quite predictable.

JC: But the press release changed when it attracted more controversy. I believe early on it was planned for this exhibition to show 16 artists. That gradually went up to 32 in the end as it became more and more controversial.

DG: So the process got wobbly?

JC: It got wobbly. I mean, there rumours were coming back where the selectors were saying "we had no idea any of this was going on in Cornwall".

DG: Who were the selectors?

JC: I believe it was Susan Daniel McElroy and Sara Hughes, who was a curator at the Tate. They were visiting artists' studios and dumbfounded that this art was taking place in Cornwall at all. Obviously this pointed towards more and more irony, that they were in this position

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where they were able to reflect art now in Cornwall, without embracing or being involved in what art now in Cornwall actually was.

DG: What does this mean? I don't know what you mean.

JC: There was a lack of engagement from the Tate in the contemporary art scene in Cornwall.

DG: Yes, but when they said they saw there was a lot of art around, that obviously gave them a problem – if they suddenly found lots of stuff all over the place, where they didn't know it was there before.

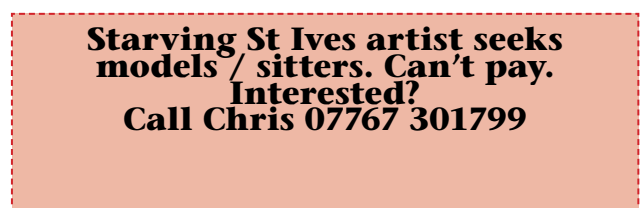
JC: It was difficult to put your finger on why certain artists were selected for studio visits or selected for the exhibition in the first place. There were certainly a lot of artists that didn't seem to have been considered and it was opaque how the selection took place.

DG: I saw the show and it had no shape to it; in other words, to me it was like a smörgåsbord.

JC: Well, originally the decisions were made for curatorial reasons.

DG: Which were?

JC: It's very difficult to say. Based on your assessment of the show – and you were not the only one to make that assessment – is difficult to see any curatorial response that had been made.





Silenus. Tim Shaw

DG: Okay and the catalogue was very defensive as far as I could see.

JC: Debate took place after the exhibition that involved certain artists and they were visibly wincing as the catalogue forewords were read out. So it seems to me that the artists...

DG: You mean the artists suffered?

JC: Some artists that were involved –

DG: Which artists?

JC: Well, basically all the artists that were on the panel of the show.

DG: Who were they?

JC: Amanda Laurens, Hadrian Pigott, Andy Hughes – all seem unconvinced by the introductions that were made in the catalogue for them, by Susan Daniel McElroy.

DG: About anything in particular or just in general?

JC: I think it was the tone. The tone didn't seem to demonstrate empathy towards the work.

DG: Well, yeah, but it's not a question of empathy, I mean...

JC: Understanding then, of the work, of the artist's practice or pursuit.

DG: What do you think she missed?

JC: Again, it's difficult for me to answer, but it seemed to me to miss the mark with the people who were involved

in the show as well as those who weren't.

DG: Okay, so they felt, to use a fashionable word, they felt that "definition" was not made about their work, even though they were included in the show.

JC: Yeah. Subsequent conversations I've had suggest certain artists who were in the show certainly feel they came away from the experience without feeling that anything had been defined whatsoever.

DG: So the show failed in definition?

JC: The show seemed to me to fail in definition, and I was perfectly glad for that to be the case, because that was the worry; that it would define without engaging first.

DG: That's what Brian Sewell said when he was at the Acorn in Penzance in his lecture.

JC: It was interesting with Brian Sewell, because he obviously visited the show that we put on, which we haven't discussed...

DG: Your protest. That was your protest show...

JC: Yeah. Brian Sewell had obviously visited our exhibition which I decided to do for various reasons.

DG: You decided to do it as a protest because none of your artists were included or visited.

JC: That was in the first instance, yeah. Up until that point I'd taken a fairly benign standpoint, I was happy to be there in the background, put on the shows that I believed in for the reasons that I believe to be right. Stand back, be as enigmatic as possible, as anonymous as possible, and at the same time achieving results for ourselves, for our artists. And it became quite clear when I dug deeper than I began to understand the politics of the Art Now Cornwall exhibition, that being benign wasn't going to get either me or my artists very far. So I felt it was important to make a stand against it. I believe in Cornish art. I believe in it for the artists that I represent but also for the artists in the Tate show. The art scene is a big one, and it's a complicated one. And I believe that it demanded close scrutiny before definition was made.

DG: It's very fortunate that Sewell came down when that show was on. He walked into your gallery by accident and saw Tim Shaw's famous Silenus, which is a large sculpture of primaeva man with cock, and he possibly responded very favourably to that, and also to Kemp's Icarus wings (Heavy Harness for a Light Romantic) that was on the wall. Now these things are in Sewell's entrance because, as he said, he's interested in ancient art, the history of art, and it's quite reasonable that he should like artists to take inspiration from the past, as he himself does.

JC: The interesting thing about Silenus, the piece in

question that Brian saw and responded to, is that was the piece that sold to the David Robert collection – he's one of the foremost collectors of contemporary art and it's the piece that was also in Vyner Street during our exhibition, that a guy took an iron bar to, so, it's the piece that...

DG: Because he thought it was obscene, right?

JC: Well, he thought it was idol worship, so it was a complicated issue.

DG: Okay, so he thought it was evil?

JC: It's a complicated one to go into and it's difficult to get into the mind of someone who is capable of doing those things, so his reasoning is... subjective.

DG: Well all these things are subjective...

JC: But what I'm trying to say is that what interested me in the work that we've shown, a piece like Silenus (Tim Shaw's work), is that it's ancient. It speaks about primal concerns and it's something that someone like Brian Sewell responded to. But not just Brian Sewell.

DG: Others as well, yeah yeah. One is afraid of it and the other worships it.

JC: It's interesting at the time Tim had already been made the recipient of the Kenneth Armitage bursary, so he was receiving acclaim for his work. When Tim was visited by Susan Daniel McElroy, after he insisted that he be visited by Susan Daniel McElroy, she's allegedly supposed to have asked why his art wasn't more Cornish! Anyway, he didn't make it to the short list of people chosen to be in the Art Now Cornwall exhibition.

DG: So, in a way, what has happened is that real issues of criticism and consideration and thinking about art have been sparked by the Tate during that show.

JC: Absolutely, at the time, when asked if they would do this show again, they said that it would depend on its success. There's been little in the way of engagement or its gone very quiet since then, so, to a certain extent, that subject is unresolved. But prior to that there was a buzz of artists working in Cornwall, something was happening, but newspaper column inches were going towards tourist art or derivative art until that point. So it created a platform and an energy were other things could come and go into the mêlée and debate could take place.

DG: The greatest problem with any kind of provincial

art scene – and Cornwall's provincial, though it has a history of not being provincial, because of St Ives in the old days – is that there is no form of articulated discussion. And unless artists are chosen by institutions they don't have an opportunity to discuss –

JC: We are blessed in Cornwall with more than enough publicity, where everything that could be tenuously be called art is publicised.

DG: But publicity not criticism.

DG: Yes. They're the only people to control criticism, and the criticism they generate is the same as putting out a party manifesto.

JC: Well, all I can say is that I don't think I'm part of that process myself.

DG: Well you're not, you're not.

JC: I don't think that we were prior to Art Now Cornwall, which is when I believe that it was time to stand up and say something. And I don't honestly believe that has changed since.

JC: There's nothing in the way of criticism other than that controlled by the funded organisations down here.

DG: Yes. They're the only people to control criticism, and the criticism they generate is the same as putting out a party manifesto.

JC: Well, all I can say is that I don't think I'm part of that process myself.

DG: Well you're not, you're not.

JC: I don't think that we were prior to Art Now Cornwall, which is when I believe that it was time to stand up and say something. And I don't honestly believe that has changed since.

DG: There's no way it can change. Because the one thing that funded agencies will never do is give grants or money to loose cannons. They will only give money to people who go down the route that they approve of, and can see where the finishing line is. They have to approve the finishing line. They will not give money to independent voices.

JC: I've been led to believe, in terms of searching for

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*Martin Clark, Artistic Director
Tate St Ives 2007-2013*

support for unestablished artists and trying to get behind emerging artists, that funding support would only come my way should I set up a graduate program, make political choices and involve myself with other political arts organisations that are presently in Cornwall.

DG: When you say political what do you mean?

JC: Funded organisations in Cornwall.

DG: When you say graduate program, in other words you will get a grant if you help University College Falmouth to give programs for their graduates to be involved in?

JC: There's an anxiety about a "brain drain", that graduates who are brought into Cornwall shouldn't just be allowed to leave. Whereas, my argument would be to support those who choose to stay.

DG: That's too politically correct for words. Because this is nonsense! If a graduate gets up and goes to London and three years later he's been very successful, they'd be very proud to claim that. I've got a lovely story which has nothing to do with Cornwall but it absolutely illustrates what were talking about. Jeff Koons, the New York successful multi, multi-multimillionaire artist, and as well known an artist as possible, once spent a couple of terms in the School of the Art Institute in Chicago. And there were some guys on the faculty there called the Chicago Imagist, and they're all involved in kitsch art, and the MCA had just put on a big show. But Jeff Koons' work is now surrounded by all this art and all these teachers and all this stuff in Chicago. So what's happened is Jeff Koons has become the greatest attraction there, so they're claiming his success. But he was in New York and they stayed in Chicago! So the point is, the whole game of what is provincial and what isn't provincial doesn't mean a thing, because it's all relative. Nicholson worked in Cornwall. Yeah, he's an international artist – he was

both. Hepworth worked in Cornwall – she was both. Henry Moore worked in Yorkshire. The point is every boy is a local boy from somewhere.

JC: Absolutely.

DG: And James Joyce had to go to Paris, but it didn't stop him being Irish.

JC: This is the reason that I wanted to do the show in Vyner Street in the east end of London during Frieze Art Fair (2007 ed:'Move' when the gallery was in Bethnal Green). Because it was all very well having this local – to some, parochial (although to me the issues were very real) show, and the showcase of contemporary Cornish artists going on in Cornwall was one debate. But to show those artists outside Cornwall, in the cutting edge part of the east end arts scene, is to me a very interesting idea, and it becomes a very different show.

DG: Look. Either we're going to get an intellectual life down here in which you've got good artist talking, or writers talking, or critics talking, and either ideas are going to be defined here, or they're not. That is the only issue. And they have to happen here because once they happened in St Ives? The point is it happens, and it's either going to happen again or not.

JC: Well it has to be defined, like you say, by the artists and the people who are here: the lifeblood of it. It cannot be defined by organisations that are paid administrators, that are here to do a job – it cannot be defined by those people. As an indicator of that: when we did the show at Vyner Street in east London, I had a letter from Nicolas Serota, of congratulations for our efforts and the work that we were doing. And part of this letter said, "you must contact Martin Clark. The Creative Director from the Tate would be very pleased to hear from you."

DG: He's the new one, right?

JC: Who I have spoken to on a couple of impromptu occasions. But I have left five messages from Martin Clarke specifically about this, and didn't receive one response back. This, to me, seems a fundamental problem: that people are putting the energy in but don't get it back.

QUOTE:

"Real revolutionaries are banned; pretend revolutionaries are welcome."

Derek Guthrie

Behind the blind spot, Demystifying Sol LeWitt

Miklos Legrady

Sol LeWitt's vision grasped the underlying mathematical structure of spatial composition; he generally worked with structural sequences, shapes and colors, of dynamic simplicity and complexity. But LeWitt is also a highly respected art theorist whose statements on conceptual art establish him as one of the leading intellectual lights of that movement.

Unfortunately Sol LeWitt's theories do not make sense. It's an ill omen for the arts that no one has questioned his assertions. He remains a brilliant artist and a pleasant companion but he's also a person who describes himself as a mystic who overleaps logic, which in him, is just an unacceptable excuse for fuzzy thinking. Without logic, descriptions and parameters lose definition and the subject dissolves in the boundless. Logic is a study of arguments, a valid argument being one that has a specific relation of logical support between the assumptions and their conclusion. LeWitt claims he's beyond this reality check, which calls me to review his words.

"Ideas alone can be works of art," Sol LeWitt proposed in his epic *"Sentences on Conceptual Art,"* a primer on the ins and outs of postmodernism. Ideas "need not be made physical," he continued. "A work of art may be understood as a conductor from the artist's mind to the viewer's. There's the possibility that the idea may never reach the viewer, or that the idea may never leave the artist's mind. But all ideas are art if they are concerned with art and fall within the conventions of art."

The contradiction is obvious; if a work of art is a conductor then any idea that remains in one's mind and never reaches the viewer cannot conduct... and so is not art. LeWitt's language betrays him when he speaks of a work of art, for work means work. Intellectual effort, the work of thinking, is only seen after it takes pragmatic form. A further critique notes art is not a conductor, the medium's the conductor; art is the product. As Goethe says, "Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do."

Sol LeWitt said that an idea was art but he was wrong; an idea is science. Science that systematic enterprise that builds and organizes knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions about the universe. These are ideas. Art is a diverse range of creative human activities. That is production and effort in the physical world. Art requires a reality check and a higher standard



The young Solomon 'Sol' LeWitt

than a professional product. Art then is a product... of conscious and unconscious production, will and intuition. It's evident "the art" of anything means more than just thinking about it. An idea needs to be realized to be effective. This means an idea believing itself to be art is mistaken and cannot be science either; it's simply a mistake. That no one has ever thought this through proves respect for tradition can sometimes be the enemy of inquiry.

Sol LeWitt laid out the terms for conceptual art in his seminal *"Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,"* published in the June 1967 issue of *Artforum*. "In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work," LeWitt wrote. "When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair." Yet when the execution of anything is a perfunctory affair the results are always bad.

LeWitt denies his humanity when he goes on to say "the idea becomes the machine that makes the art", although such a process cannot occur if at the same time the idea is already art; we surmise LeWitt is not thinking things through. Further on we learn of how crucial the



*Mark Stivers, detail, 2016
Miklos Legrady*

actual production is to clarify an idea since the mind can err and needs a reality check. “He maintained that like an architect who creates a blueprint for a building and then turns the project over to a construction crew, an artist should be able to conceive of a work and then either delegate its actual production to others or perhaps even never make it at all.”

The Art Story, Museum Art Insight, a quasi biography, says... “LeWitt would provide an assistant or a group of assistants with directions for producing a work of art. Instructions for these works, whether large-scale wall drawings or outdoor sculptures, were deliberately vague so that the end result was not completely controlled by the artist that conceived the work.”

A consideration neglected so far is the quality of the work would suffer if his drawings were executed by poorly paid and badly motivated museum workers. Quality must enter the work somehow, for without any quality to make the work outstanding it won’t stand out hence it wouldn’t be art. Quality comes from the care and sensitivity that goes beyond a perfunctory execution, it is created by dedicated and thoughtful effort.

Sol LeWitt produced fascinating art from his unique talent and energy, not from any autonomy of the idea. Any idea’s an expression of the individual – LeWitt’s theory is redrawn as artist using tools which include other people. When he left instructions vague the talent and skill of the workers certainly influenced the work for better or worse.

Sol LeWitt modestly undervalued his talent and vision when he mistakenly said the idea was all. In consequence today, artists of lesser talent but aggressive academic credentials strongly promote the ideas of lesser talents.

A stronger objection to a perfunctory execution of art is the etymology; it is during production that creative

changes occur, the making is a pragmatic experience that transforms both the idea and the material into something greater than the sum of their parts. The art of woodcarving implies an exceptional carver, a strong argument for effort in making anything of value. Tennessee Williams, in the introduction to *The Glass Menagerie*, wrote that it is not poverty but success that is the wolf at the door. Once this thing called success happens to you, security dulls conflict and dissolves your inspiration. Humans were made to wrestle with life but if, instead of work, we only need an idea then there’s no call for effort... because effort is production, not idea. Without effort we have bad art.

“For LeWitt, the directions for producing a work of art became the work itself; work was no longer required to have an actual material presence in order to be considered art” (*Art Story*); which questions how LeWitt reconciled that with his own work in painting. The creative process embedded in making an effort rewards the practitioner with an expansion of consciousness... likely accompanied by a release of neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine. LeWitt may have conflated the creative experience with the result because art is always the product of the discipline practiced; the “practice of art” is but shorthand for the discipline of making art.

Art is a sequence of progression through reality checks in the real world handling real material, because matter itself has irrational qualities. Ideas are the most ephemeral of things; matter is the hardest and most durable. When idea and matter interact, both are transformed and that is how the cultural enters the world. LeWitt believed it was enough to think, but the mind is prone to error and so the corrective influence of objective fact is called a reality check. When an artist or scientist, when anyone with solid professional experience in their field applies their idea to the material world, matter will resist and in doing so transform that idea, adapts it to the real, just as the matter is spiritualized by the idea.

Inspiration, (from the Latin *inspirare*, meaning “to breathe into”) refers to an unconscious burst of creativity in a literary, musical, or other artistic endeavour. The concept has origins in both Hellenism and Hebraism. The Greeks believed that inspiration or “enthusiasm” came from the muses, as well as the gods Apollo and Dionysus. Inspiration is prior to consciousness and outside of skill (*ingenium* in Latin). Technique and performance are independent of inspiration, and therefore it is possible for the non-poet to be inspired and for a poet or painter’s skill to be insufficient to the

inspiration.

Lawrence Weiner, in an e-flux conversation with Benjamin Buchloh, said that art is not about skill. How are we to understand this if at the same time skill needs to be sufficient to the inspiration? Does this mean Weiner's inspiration is wanting? We note that Weiner identifies as a "non-artist" whose assistants do his work, in which case Weiner's work is "non-art", or simply put, Lawrence Weiner's work is not art. It is no more than what it always was, sentences written on a wall. Nor does he need skill himself but his assistants do need the ability to execute the work. This finessing of meaning calls attention to exigent rules, definitions, processes. Definitions indicate technical limitations, a red line beyond which the work isn't art. Lacking such limits art could not exist because if everything is art, then nothing is. If everything is art then there's no need for a word like "art" since we already have the perfectly suitable word "everything". Art is specific and it has boundaries such as we're considering at the moment. It's possible to deny but then one suffers the consequences of living in denial; for example Duchamp's Readymade denied the need to make art. Eventually Duchamp lost his motivation and ability to make art and retired to play chess.

This concern with limitations and their consequence occupied our thoughts even in antiquity; the I CHING or Book of Changes is one of the Five Classics of Confucianism and under a chapter on limitations we read that unlimited possibilities are not suited to people; if they existed, our life would only dissolve in the boundless. To become strong, one's life needs the limitations ordained by duty and voluntarily accepted. The individual attains significance as a free spirit only by surrounding oneself with these limitations and by determining for oneself what one's duty is. Composer Igor Stravinsky adds that "My freedom will be so much the greater and more meaningful the more narrowly I limit my field of action and the more I surround myself with obstacles... and the arbitrariness of the constraint serve only to obtain precision of execution".

In "*Sentences on Conceptual Art*" LeWitt also contradicts his earlier words; "The artist cannot imagine his art, and cannot perceive it until it is complete.", which conflicts with the statement that an idea can be a work of art. Ideas are imagined at the moment they are conceived, so obviously an artist must imagine his art to have an idea of it, in order for that idea to be an art whose performance is then perfunctory. LeWitt retorts that "Conceptual artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach." There are no



Sol LeWitt, Tower, Figge Art Museum, Davenport, Iowa, USA, 1984

conclusions that logic cannot reach, even illogical ones. Logic is pragmatic and realistic while a mystic is a visionary, but because we live in a competitive world of budgets, credibility, power and status, we cannot accept mysticism as the definition of conceptual art. When LeWitt writes of being a mystic who overleaps logic he means that he wishes what he said was true, else why this effort to evade logic?

Until now a work of art meant an exceptional meaningful accomplishment. Duchamp made it senseless by stripping away the senses to make art intellectual. LeWitt makes art senseless by making it illogical, a "mystic overleap" that one need only think about. Sol LeWitt is an amazing visual artist, a genius... although Walter Benjamin insists that geniuses do not exist. Benjamin is a great writer but a terrible sociologist, LeWitt is a great artist but fails at art theory. Their words do not make sense and are debunked by simple reasoning. And yet no one so far dared judge and contradict these art gods. The most influential art theories of our time are flawed yet remain the base for academic teaching and practice. That's like when the garage mechanic says your brakes are shot, but people still go for a drive.

Human Face of an American Icon

Jane Addams Allen 1987

SUMMARY: Georgia O'Keeffe cultivated an image as hard and austere as the bones and mountains that were her favorite subjects. But a National Gallery of Art exhibition featuring rarely seen works and many of O'Keeffe's personal letters offers another view and makes clear that she was an intensely alive artist, passionate about her work.

We are used to thinking of Georgia O'Keeffe as an American art icon — too severe and reserved to be quite human.

By the time she died last year at the great age of 98, her face had the same flint-hard purity as her favorite subjects; skulls burned white by the sun and mountains eroded by time and the elements.

That was the public O'Keeffe. There was another O'Keeffe though, a quicksilver dancer to nature's liveliest rhythms, a woman who trembled and laughed and darned socks on the floor to bring her soul down to earth.

It is this intensely alive artist who is the primary subject of "Georgia O'Keeffe," a centennial exhibition at Washington's National Gallery of Art. Built around a core of 45 rarely seen works from the artist's estate, the show of 120 drawings, watercolors, pastels and oils helps cut away the calcified myth of austerity (in large part her own creation) that has grown up around the artist and brings her art back to pulsing life.

It will not be a show to everyone's taste. Many of the poster-perfect images like "Cow's Skull — Red, White, and Blue" and "White Canadian Bam No. II" are not in the exhibition. Her famous flower paintings, which figured so largely in the 1970 Whitney Museum of American Art retrospective, are relatively minor players here.

In spite of negative speculation, the estate works prove to be hoarded treasures rather than also-rans. The participation of O'Keeffe's companion Juan Hamilton as a joint curator with the National Gallery's Jack Cowart was an indispensable catalyst to a broader view of the artist, not only in the selection of works but also in a selection of letters reprinted in the catalog. These are witty and endearing documents that help us know the artist better, both as a compassionate and loving friend and as an intelligent participant in the ideas and issues of her time.

The opening two galleries are biographically and

artistically the most intense in the show, which will travel to Chicago, Dallas and New York after it closes Feb. 21 in Washington.

Intimate and hexagonal in shape, these galleries contain the charcoal drawings and watercolors that first brought O'Keeffe to the attention of the photographic artist Alfred Stieglitz and New York. These vibrant early works reflect not only the spontaneous delight she found in nature but also her self-doubting and always passionate quest to be true to her sensations.

Although they were daringly abstract for their time, they are not sophisticated in the urban sense of the word. Most of them were made during teaching jobs in Columbia, S.C., and in Canyon, Texas. They emerge from an individual, not a collective, aesthetic adventure.

One reason they are so compelling, in fact, is that they reflect two incompatible yearnings that were to plague the artist until she moved permanently to New Mexico in 1949. She loved isolation and closeness to nature but detested the pettiness of regional America. She longed for communion with great souls.

Her letters to her dear friend Anita Pollitzer, to photographer Paul Strand and to Stieglitz himself swing wildly between exultation and despair, between ecstatic descriptions of nature and frustration with her own efforts to express what she feels.

"Is it our theory of life that stunts us —" she asks and answers in the same sentence, "Most of us are not even respectable warts on the face of the earth —"

But in the very next sentence she adds, "Anita I'm [sic] feeling fine and feel as if Im just having time to get my breath and stand still and look at the world — it is great sport."

The show's five 1915 charcoal drawings from her South Carolina stay are strongly influenced by three



O'Keeffe's 1915 charcoal work "Special No. 9" is a representation of a headache

sources. The first was Alon Bement, who encouraged her to make abstract drawings to music. The second was Bement's teacher Arthur Wesley Dow, with whom she studied just before the Columbia job. Dow emphasized that the landscape painter's task was to express a unique emotion. And finally there were Stieglitz's publications "291" (named after his gallery) and "Camera Work," which not only discussed such ideas but also presented the work of living artists such as Arthur Dove and John Marin, who were forging a new American art.

Each of the 1915 drawings in the show suggests an increasingly mature merger of these influences with Georgia O'Keeffe's intrinsic sensitivity to natural forms. Her progress, like her personality, was swift and embracing. Derivative of art nouveau but beautifully rendered, "Special No. 2" depicts a shiny black egg nesting high in a symmetrical fountain of water. In "Special No. 4" and "Special No. 5" rhythmic vertical forms suggest liquid sounds.

"Special No. 13" introduces three forms, abstracted from nature, that remained essential to her artistic vocabulary: a series of ascending rounded stone or treelike forms, a jagged lightning bolt and a flat, wavy shape like a river. This beautiful drawing has a rapt, dreamlike quality as if she had simply translated a vision that sprang unbidden to her mind.

"Special No. 9," perhaps the most individual of the drawings, represents a headache. It must have been a hell of a headache. Implacable writhing waves rise from the lower edge of the drawing; above, soft drip forms bore holes in a soft gray mass.

These drawings are doubly important because they are among those Anita Pollitzer showed to Stieglitz Jan. 1, 1916. It was a nervy thing for her to do. Stieglitz was a great man; she was a mere student at Teachers College at Columbia University. But O'Keeffe had told her in a letter, "Anita — do you know — I believe I would rather have Stieglitz like something — anything I had done — than anyone else I know of" and her good friend had responded.

So did Stieglitz. Pollitzer reported him saying, "Why they're genuinely fine things — You say a woman did these — She's an unusual woman — She's broad minded, she's bigger than most women, . . . tell her . . . they're the purest, finest, sincerest things that have entered 291 in a long while."

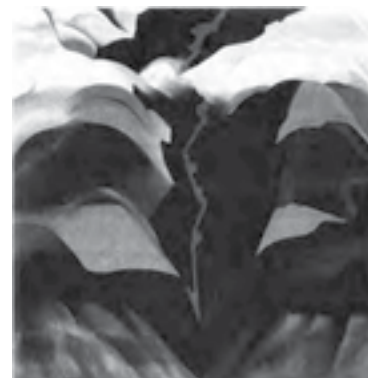
Thus began one of the century's great romances. They exchanged letters. In May 1916, without her permission, Stieglitz hung her drawings as part of a three-person show.

Indignant, she went to demand that he take them down. He was charmed; she was already primed to give in by her admiration for his work. The pictures stayed.

It is good to know, though, that Georgia O'Keeffe's basic artistic vocabulary was in place well before Stieglitz took her in hand. Years later, after they were married, she wrote, "I feel like a little plant that he has watered and weeded and dug around." Maybe so, but the mature plant was already implicit in the seedling. This is made doubly clear by the next group of works: a joyous series of watercolors from Canyon, where she was head of the West Texas State Normal College art department.

It took courage for the National Gallery to show these small and sometimes unresolved paintings in a major exhibit. This is not the classic O'Keeffe of later years. Three nudes show her experimenting with her own image — the human figure is rarely seen in her oeuvre. Another is a fluid abstract portrait.

She was as prescient in Canyon as she was in Columbia. Two paintings, "Starlight Night" and "Sunrise and Little Clouds II," introduce the horizontal patterned structure and close-toned harmonies she used at the very end of her life in her airplane series, "Sky Above Clouds."



Black Place III

In spite of her exhilaration at the Texas landscape, New York was like a magnet pulling her back. Her correspondence with Stieglitz grew to daily letters. Meanwhile, she was worn down by her efforts to fight provincial lethargy and prejudice.

At one point she raised a storm by asking the local drugstore not to sell Christmas cards with anti-German legends. (It was during 1918, the last year of World War I.) Finally she fell severely ill with influenza and took a leave of absence. Stieglitz sent Paul Strand to bring her back to New York.

"I was never so happy in my life," she wrote in August 1918 from Lake George, the Stieglitz family's summer home in New York. For the next 10 years, the two were inseparable. They married in 1924.

After her return to New York, she applied her new spirited color to the South Carolina abstracted forms. "Series 1. No. I" (1918) is like the top of a surging rosy wave, a focusing in on one of the curling geysers from

“Special No. 2.” In 1919 she began actively working once again with the analogy between art and music in lush, pastel-toned compositions such as “Music — Pink and Blue, II.”

One can imagine the hothouse atmosphere in which these works grew. Petted and constantly photographed by her husband, O’Keeffe joined an exalted and elite group of artists and writers, all far better known than she. On the one hand she was treated almost as a child of nature; on the other she was encouraged by Stieglitz to develop her talent in larger, more ambitious works.

Moreover, the press realized with unerring acumen that her striking looks and independent style were good copy. In 1922 she was featured on the pages of *Vanity Fair* as a new woman and a “Life Giver.” Freud was all the rage, and the sexual aspects of her paintings were much commented on.

It is a tribute to her resilient spirit and capacity for hard work that her art survived at all. It did, but the early spontaneity was lost, at least for a time. There is a self-conscious honing and polishing in her abstract works from the early 1920s. She learned to weave monumental compositions from simple motifs, but it did not come easily.

Her sensations before nature were still her best guide. One of her finest New York works, “Red and Orange Streak” (1919), seems based on a double memory of Texas. On the one hand it fits her description of a Texas storm: “sheet lightning with a sharp bright zigzag flashing across it.” On the other she cites an aural source for the painting in her Viking Press book, “Georgia O’Keeffe.”

She wrote, “The cattle in the pens lowing for their calves day and night was a sound that has always haunted me. It had a regular rhythmic beat like the old Penitente songs. . . It was loud and raw under the stars in that wide empty country.”

Lake George, her country haven from New York, was also a fertile source of images. In “Lake George” (1924), a night scene, the landscape is wonderfully cold and remote, emptied of everything save mist and moonlight.

In spite of all the distractions and mounting demands from Stieglitz, who was aging and often ill, she worked constantly. She began the flower paintings in the early 1920s and they quickly became her trademark images, both for their accessible subject matter and for the sexual meanings that could be read into them. For the painter, though, one suspects that they were at least in part defensive. One rather pathetic painting from 1928, “East River from the Shelton,” centers a pink vase or green

leaves in front of a colorless New York dawn. It was as if in blowing up the flower image she could blot out all the things about urban life that distressed her.

When the lurid publicity about her so-called sexual imagery got too much for her, she painted small, objective still lifes. “I suppose the reason I got down to an effort to be objective is that I didn’t like the interpretations of my other things,” she wrote in 1924,

As the 1920s wore on, her life with Stieglitz became more and more burdened with mundane cares extraneous to her art. Worse yet, just as his demands on her time became greatest, he started a passionate affair with a young married woman, Dorothy Norman.

Reading O’Keeffe’s letters amusingly recounting Stieglitz’s complicated medical treatments, it is easy to get indignant on her behalf. “Castor oil every 15 minutes,” she I wrote in 1928, “and so on — divide those 25 — or is it 21 ounces into 5 meals — 8 until the girl who helped me grind and measure and rub the stuff through the 2 sieves actually got hysterical laughing about it.”

And then one contrasts the great man’s concurrent letters to Dorothy Norman as quoted in her recently published “Encounters: A Memoir.” “It is our spirits that merge - our very souls merge into an eternal Oneness of Being,” and much more of the same. No doubt, she helped him forget his aches and pains.

It is no surprise that Georgia O’Keeffe finally succumbed to her longing for the wide-open spaces of the Southwest. From 1929 she began spending her summers in New Mexico. A breakdown precipitated by her failure to finish a mural commission, but also in pain brought on by her husband’s affair, led to her assertion of a more independent life, although she continued to spend her winters with him until his death in 1946.

The last half of the show includes many of the great familiar works — her brilliant series of vertical New York scenes, where she paints the city as an organism driven by the same elemental rhythms she found in nature; her red Southwestern mountains and bleached white bones; the late sky paintings done from drawings she made in the air while flying round the world, A high point is a stormy landscape that still belongs to the estate, “Black Place — ID” (1944), and must be the object of feverish speculation by the nation’s museums.

But it is the small works she made at the outset of her career that give the keenest, most unexpected pleasure. With this fine show, the National Gallery has both humanized the O’Keeffe myth and added luster to it.

Carol Levin's Battleground Horse



Without doubt the most exquisite exhibit that ever went up on gallery walls was a few years ago in the Selden Gallery in Norfolk Virginia. A photo of the piece here highlights its sheer agony and sheer beauty. The Battleground Horse by Carol Levin, along with approximately ten other pieces of sculpture, was both here and not here; the profound sorrow could be felt greater than all sorrow because of the way it revealed itself as all sorrows—and all at once—to represent us or for us crucially en masse: human, and animal. Although there were few materials, all of those used worked just right: depicted by mere twine, cloth bandages, a glistening eye. Despite this utterly destroyed animal, its prescient head was still lifted. Thanks to Carol Levin, with such a pliant divining sense for anatomical perfection, life has been shown here on its veritable edge of existence: one of sheer genius.

We want to know what makes this so. How is it both a captivating extreme, and yet plangent: so very simply, on the mark? It is an accomplishment that has straddled several lines of potential in answer to our most fervent viewer wishes for that 'special thing,' the promise that's

almost always beyond the horizon.

After witnessing something of such strengths, with an unusual, compelling access to a mysterious beyond that may be called 'empty reality'—implying there is one truth pitted against another—then it's natural to want to follow the puzzle with hard questions. It can begin with a wide stretch of art histories that resonate throughout their disparate ranges, and their most honored critically fine work, searching through the scalloped unevenness, the inconsistent eras of creative talent, for mental-spiritual dispositions and material techniques: what it all entails. There are the theories that support ultra sensitive psychological treatment, that may underlie the physique of living organisms and also the supporting physiognomy of the creature's profile in which every detail supports the body and its individualized movements; and, in this, supports the living creature that we can readily suppose exists there, knowledgeable, philosophically within. This would be the 'Existent' and the 'Being' itself, the so-called 'ontological' and 'deontological': that in which we deeply, involuntarily—even religiously or inveterately, believe.

It doesn't come from nowhere but it does, definitively, leave its mark. Yet I hesitate here when I think what Carol Levin might tell us that could humorously fall clattering like two imperatives into aluminum buckets; neither would help us, or satisfy the reach of our more arduous scholars or thinkers. These are "curve balls" that have become chronic replies. Can we avoid words like 'taste' (which is one obvious choice)? or the clichéd 'feeling' that rocks against the less favored 'thinking' (suspected of carrying unwieldy baggage)? how can we sidestep 'feeling' and 'subjectivity' and the smug catch-all 'universal' that provides an adequate filler, allowing the human posture to spread out in a sustaining balletic poise?—or the hieratic signifiers, semiotics, or the less predictable aleatory—systems of categorical use. All these usually lead straight into all those tin buckets quickly deployed. But peeping between interstices I've noticed available opportunities that can be generated with little effort, useful enticements, then replacements, made to order to proceed in order elsewhere. It's probably a nascent process we're looking for that can be freshly understood, cleanly elevated and fused into a future that we'll become (more naturally) attuned with, in accord.

First, I need mention that such ingenuous, faithfully rendered yet startling work as Battleground Horse is not always appreciated, often not properly recognized. This multiple-jointed schism, quietly questioning any simple

explanation, is incredibly knotted. Too many examples have existed in art, in literature, in philosophy where credit was denied, even (or maybe especially) by relatives, clan-members, for elegant work that had awed and effected others yet made into less to some autre controlling model—going beyond legitimate influence to one that would dominate entirely. This is considered hegemonic—hold on to that concept, hegemony—and oh how interesting it is for the contemplation of social bondage, controls, and alertness, in that hegemony in most eras lead, mitigate, limit or control allegiance. And intelligence. Excellent works have sometimes been destroyed, partially or wholly reconstituted, neglected.

Mundane taboos or tendentious assumptions exist everywhere, can often strengthen inside personal differences, biases, injunctions, sanctions, and so on, seemingly haphazard. These socially divisive standards are lined up, so we're told, on a level playing field. But their roles and purposes, despite being in abeyance, merely lie in wait for a slight shift of shapes and shields curved unseen round bitter preludes. They rest on such variables as content, meaning, expertise, technique. At the head, there's locality, environment, and venue: context. Context is still the lead.

Cultural boundaries apply here, obviously, to aid build-up of condemnation but without the deeper knowledge that had surrounded a (now) diminishing protection of the Arts and Humanities. Mundane taboos or tendentious assumptions exist everywhere, can often strengthen inside personal differences, biases, injunctions, sanctions, and so on, seemingly haphazard. These socially divisive standards are lined up, so we're told, on a level playing field. But their roles and purposes, despite being in abeyance, merely lie in wait for a slight shift of shapes and shields curved unseen round bitter preludes. They rest on such variables as content, meaning, expertise, technique. At the head, there's locality, environment, and venue: context. Context is still the lead.

Giving into the artistic power of Battleground Horse at another level might be 'transcendent forces' that could include 'second sight' and 'extrasensory perception' hovering on the edge of mysterious energies outside our immediate or liminal (psychological) line of enticing grasp. These tend to form interesting links that may not

have substantial credibility or a dependably unfolding logic unless one develops enough patience to follow such languages as conditional logic, Venn, the intertwining of latent traces, events, Gödel-Escher-Bach, secrets of dreams, vicissitudes of memory, layers of phantom-limb syndrome and other recurring, replenishing threads, the niggling promises of by-ways, that may never be complete even for the artist or author who realizes the (promising or vicious) closing-in of any of those but without seizing an actual close. The saving moment. The change. Nonetheless, to discount these as "out-of-hand," especially in such an amazing instance as in the Levin piece, could be a loss or foreshortened query clamped over a concomitant gift-giving, principle-expanding cosmos. Any use of outré properties could presume a new form despite unfamiliarity of coincident peripheries, either their resistant or residual commonalities, any fine invitational gloss, or glamorous encouragement that enters into 'poetic' fluctuation (mythopoesis) as possible. They are there despite ordinary hesitation that often begins agreeing with the appeal of introduction—on the other hand and in unadorned opposition a critical 'immediacy of grasp' can mean a reading, reread phantom, without separation between entries into any fixed comprehension, a compliant or measurable position on the pre-real-presentative, pre-conscious (or, on a different level of precognitive learning—an opened celebratory scale of receptive acceptance, a Welcome).

These differences of scale or precognition remain in an ambient, therefore, uninvestigated state that does not delimit return. This is called metacognition assumed as a 'near clarified-clarifying state of alternatives' but existing, importantly and necessarily, apart from "human desires and needs.' In trying to explain why there is such a different state we'd need consider that there is a possible position in which we can share a sheer drop in function, in temperature as it may be, and in such saving grace as Reason. Add precognition to this list of possibilities, which is one of the recently reconverging considerations of learning potential due to emerging states of discoveries underneath the compunctual, or the dutiful second thoughts, or hesitational thoughts, that disallow or allow various fortuitous or unexpected and in a serendipitous way, finely articulated and in some way 'critically' truthful manner. But, more immediately, let's take on the concept 'animal' and the specific figuration 'animal,' and the thing as 'phenomenon' that passes into, enters 'cosmos' or 'world' as we know it.

How is it that we know the natural world? To understand and accept it, live inside it? This is the

question that makes us stop and consider “selflessness” which I take to be a Levin trait, dispensing with the ego, and countermanding the often over-looked consideration—that exists in the simplistic or unconcerned actuality, enabled to dispense with self-condemnation or self-judgment, seen as a realistic pragmatic allegiance—and her exquisite (unbearable) knowledge of ‘horseness’, dispensing with the ego, and countermanding the often overlooked consideration—that exists in the simplistic or unconcerned actuality, enabled to dispense with the bouncing regurgitating guilt of self-condemnation or self-judgment, called a realistic pragmatic allegiance—where the moments of creation suspend a dialectical process, since dialectics, or argumentation actually act soto voce within this very ‘nature of reality’ itself’. This means, strangely enough, that all the true-false, good-bad, healthy-sick, black-white and other likely symmetrical arrangements (contrasting, seen as ethical or moral arrangements; faced by our biblical Job and many others who fought against ‘god’s will,’ the ‘nation,’ or ‘sovereignty’) are held in abeyance. This is the “open reality” mentioned earlier.

It denotes a strength of artistic control that extends so

far into a realm of art making that it seems nothing else is in contest beyond it or beyond its very moment. It is at this point that the mark is set, where “subjection of the real” seems complete. There’s nothing else that needs to pass beyond, nothing needs be mastered beyond this point. No negative, no negation, no hostile reality comes under the sign of the artist’s will or beyond that creative power.

There is only the horse. Inside, outside, dying and fully cognizant.

It also seems to indicate that there’s one powerful and dangerous use of transformational language (from the Functions of Language [by the theorists Roland Barthes and Roman Jakobson]) that seems to present a danger to any outside judgmental procedures. That is INTENT—the one criterion that may need for a congruent trial and conviction. Intent, I think Levin would agree, is ‘realistically’ (even systematically, cumulatively) impossible to detect. And pursuit of that, in Levin’s amazing strength-beyond-illusion sees only the sign and mastery of the will, and creative power.

Carol M Dupré

Pittsburgh

Haylee Ebersole at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts



flow freelydownsput

In continuation of a long standing tradition the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, known for its support and promotion of regional contemporary art, selected Haylee Ebersole, from a group of nominated artists, for the emerging artist of the year for 2017. Her work appears on the second floor in the back three exhibition spaces of the facility. For the exhibition, entitled *New Works*, Ebersole has included all non-representational work including: a preponderance of free standing and wall mounted sculpture where she used a method of casting

and dehydrating gelatin transformed into hardened crystallized structures augmented with a small grouping of framed monotype prints.

One of the most engaging sequences of work occurs in the second exhibition space. Here we see what looks to be ten otherworldly, brightly colored, rust embedded, very large snake skins on the wall, at times reaching and touching the floor in what is entitled *flow freely/downspouts*, dehydrated and crystallized gelatin approximately 108” x 5” x 2”. We know that they are not snakeskins based on their coloration, however once the connection is made it can’t be broken. Also, in this space are seven framed monotype prints entitled *cosmic dandruff*. In these prints Ebersole’s mastery of the medium carries the day. There is a dialogue here, referencing some of the sculptural tendencies – flattening out what looks to be skin or tissue of some kind but yet they also feel like they could be overhead shots of floating island topographies. The control that she exerts in these prints is missing in most of the sculptural pieces with the exception of some of her larger floor works. She combines a delicate line sensibility, creating a webbed like structure

which resembles fishing net with one small opaque area trapped within it. The combination of these pieces, their respective placement and the more sparse arrangement within the space is very effective and induces a feeling of tranquility. She mentions in her statement that the process she used for the sculptures entails using the cast gelatin molds which are somewhat volatile and where the process dictates to some extent the outcome. I prefer the prints. We get a much better sense of her hand in the outcome and her delicate, graceful, nuanced approach to color, line, and form provides the viewer a rich and deeper experience.

Too often, she crams the exhibition spaces with work arranged haphazardly and this takes away from the pieces that are visually interesting. The sculptural wall pieces in the third room look like they could be paintings on slightly skewed surfaces and are clunky in comparison to her crafted prints. We do see evidence of her sensitivity to materials and craft in some of the floor sculptures, which possess a light, airy, quality but only sporadically. Perhaps this incongruity is connected to how Ebersole applies meaning to her work. Instead of letting the work speak for itself, which at times it does very effectively

Ebersole's heavy handed overreaching emphasis on an elaborate meta narrative about what the work means best illustrates and or reflects the art world's subservience to our language dominated culture and its preoccupation with attempting to legitimize itself because of its perceived inferiority complex. And is all of this somehow a by-product of our art educational system? Why can't we just respond to the work without being directed? After all it is non-representational.

Again, I think we have to reconcile as artists, art educators and art audiences what we can truly expect from our collective visual output in regard to how we attempt to frame it in writing. Are we establishing unrealistic expectations via our heavy handed language centered constructs for our visual output? In her statement Ebersole opines, I view my work as a metaphor for empowerment and resistance by revealing the links between the multiple, the body, and capitalism through use of gelatin and the forms of serialized manufactured goods. Huh, well there you have it. How can the work possibly live up to these lofty heights?

Scott Turri

New York

Still a No-Fly Zone

Back in New York for a visit after four years away, I was taken to see the Oculus, Ground Zero's most distinctive new building, The World Trade Center transportation hub designed by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava.

This colossal building is a colossal waste of a colossal sum of money; four billion dollars. I cannot describe it better than by quoting Martin Filler in the New York Review of Books:

"What was originally likened by its creator to a fluttering Paloma de la Paz (dove of peace) because of its white, winglike, upwardly flaring rooflines seems more like a steroidal stegosaurus that wandered onto the set of a sci-fi flick and died there."

It's possible these jutting white ribs would be effective if you came upon them in the middle of a huge empty space, a desert or a prairie. Sandwiched between skyscrapers they are simply bizarre and absurd, even more so because there was not sufficient room for the full sweep of the roof, so at the back entrance where one side of the roof is suddenly truncated, the bird, even if you can imagine one, is broken winged and made me think of an injured gull about to leave its usual calling



Jim.henderson - <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

card.

I wondered too if this strange design was in part planned or chosen because of the stories once circulating that a mosque might be built at Ground Zero and therefore something as unlike a dome as possible was wanted. That at least it is, and the vast interior is arched, not dome. It is an impressive space but just that; big interior spaces are impressive by definition. However its blank whiteness soon dulls the imagination and even sooner when you take in the fact that this is another

cathedral to shopping, another big-name mall.

My architect brother-in-law pointed out that the snowy marble floors are already developing stains and cracks and worse, lead without warning to a staircase with no rails. The rails at the far side, apparently put in later when the danger became obvious, are clearly not sufficient. Nor is there outside the building any indication, or inside any celebration, that this is a

transport hub, a glorified subway station. Tourism and shopping is all.

What a relief, after that, to revisit Grand Central, whose beautiful functional interior still somehow holds the excitement of travel, the sense of a great continent beyond, and still, after all these years, takes my breath away.

Frances Oliver

Milan

Souvenir of Luca Vitone

Entering the PAC of Milan for the retrospective of Luca Vitone (the Genoese artist, who lives in Berlin, has exhibited in various international galleries and at the Venice Biennale), the visitor is immediately struck by a kind of commemorative plaque of an eye inside a triangle. The title, "Souvenir d'Italie (Lapide)", ironically represents the symbol of the P2 Masonic lodge, the secret organization that aspired to bring about an anti-democratic change to Italy. A very long list of names occupies almost the entire wall opposite the plaque: they are the members of the lodge (title: "Souvenir d'Italie, Foundations of the Second Republic").

If with this work Vitone makes us descend into the historical-political reality of the second half of the twentieth century, through the forms of power aimed at subversion (from the list of members: bankers, politicians, journalists), his other works speak to us of the same theme using different materials. "Imperium" is the title of four monochromes, painted by mixing watercolor with the dust collected from four prestigious German institutions: the Central Bank, the Parliament, the Pergamon museum, all symbolic places of economic, political and cultural power. Power is also represented through an "olfactory sculpture": a perfume (created by the artist himself) that diffuses in the air, first in a pleasant way, then becomes nauseating.

In the next room, the attention is directed to a multitude of flags (black, edged with red, with writings and a red wheel in the center); looking at them more closely, one can see that the flags are without a pole because they do not represent national power, but they address the condition of the Romani people (the wheel is a symbol of their ethnic group) and that of migrants in general.

The writing on one of the flags, "Il movimento è tutto, il fine è nulla" (Movement is all, the end is nowhere),



Last Journey

refers not only to the continuous movement of these populations, but also indicates the process oriented approach as a fundamental element of contemporary art.

Souvenir of power, which transforms people and places, and at the same time a memory of a youthful experience, is also the installation "Last Journey": an old red Peugeot 204, with the bonnet raised, stuck in the middle of a sea of sand (real). In 1977 the artist drove with his family in a car like this one from Genoa for an adventurous journey to Iran, but a breakdown forced them to have an unexpected stop in the desert. The individual memories of an unrepeatable experience overlap with the unrepeatability of a historical condition, of a world profoundly transformed by recent events.

Vitone offers us an exciting, complex itinerary that leads us to reflect on current issues using heterogeneous materials for a particularly original visual (and olfactory) experience.

Liviana Martin

Washington

Michael Ryan's photos are almost too private to be seen. However, luckily for us, they were in a recent exhibition of his work in Marx Tavern in Mount Pleasant in Washington D.C. Ryan's work is very inside himself, in a dark room. He makes photos rather than shooting them. It is almost as each picture is carved, a mono print so to speak, there really are no editions. Just similar shots. And his choice.

He makes long use of his darkroom as the central focus of his work, between himself, light and photographic paper or infrared film and perhaps a basic sense. Mike makes his own pinhole cameras, usually from a plastic bucket with a pinhole exposing light through the hole onto tapped photographic paper. The challenge is to calculate the time he must expose light through the hole onto the paper. Each shot is developed, if you will, by hand, as it is an experimental process to print each shot. He does not use any tech assist or photographic equipment, this is all accomplished through trial and error – a discovery process.

If he is not in fields a far taking pinhole imagery, he uses a simple box camera with infrared film. These shots are then once again "come upon". He must tape the camera shut, light safe, so as not to expose and spoil his ever so sensitive film. A precarious process in the unloading or loading ... it must be in the dark. The result is a luminous dreamlike picture that he "sees over" as it



End Fence

comes into fruition as he carefully brings it up. Many will be cast aside as he decides if they do not "work". He insists on the most elemental of techniques in photography, the relationship between light, a basic lens, his solitude, journeys to locate a new print and an ongoing critical eye. His images are both historic or the touch of nostalgia, as photography of the ninetieth century, or even the camera obscura. How history beckons. Photography at its basics comes alive as Michael works and then appears in his time.

Al Jirikovic

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Open Call for Idiots

It does not happen all the time but it should not happen at all. It is despicable. It is called plagiarism and should be considered a prisonable offence.

I know that almost everything that we can imagine has been done before in one way or another and that it is very difficult to do something completely new but I am not referring to that. Nor am I referring to the remakes, or interpretations with other mediums, or techniques of iconic artworks, which homages to talent, and a channel of inspiration for some artists who acknowledge the debt, somehow. Neither I am referring to the logical and healthy influence between peers working at the same studio or sharing the same experiences – as the masters did – no, that is “peccata minuta”.

I am referring to the worst form of plagiarism that sometimes occurs out of competitions to be part of an exhibition or open calls for artistic ideas. The “iter criminis” flows as easily as this: First, you, innocent hopeful victim send your design, your artwork or your proposal for a contest or an open call which demands a particular idea or type of work. The reasons to do so are multiple; some do it for the prize money they desperately need; others are looking for publicity, promotion or future commissions to kick-start their careers; for leisure, for ego, but I am sure everybody puts their heart into it. Whatever the reasons, participants deserve, at the least, professional respect. Second, you might receive a formal laconic statement saying either that unfortunately your proposal was not selected or that the contest was dropped because, according to the jury, no entrant reached the desired quality. With this excuse they don’t spend any money on prizes and they dishearten artists at the same time. Cool. Sometimes they will wish you success in your career and not invite you to the private or public view of the winners. Cruel.

We could dismiss this as the way natural selection works in the art world, or to accept this is just life was not for the cat that, out of serendipity, one day, shortly after, you discover that your rejected and disregarded work, that was supposed to be confidential, has been plagiarized and camouflaged and used for commercial purposes. You recognize it as a mother would recognize her child and alike in the Bible’s story of “The Judgment of Solomon” you discover yourself proud of the recognition that lies underneath the criminal action rather than furious for the appropriation of your ideas without receiving so much as a pat on the back. It is always the Shakespearian dilemma “to be – even



Letras Camuflaje. Rojo

plagiarized – or not to be”. But this should never be.

The professional protection and confidence expected of these highly organized, and sometimes renown, private or public calls, is broken, and an orphan feeling of injustice emerges, forcing the artist into surrender. It should never happen, but to denounce these practices legally is brutal, evidentially difficult to prove, long, and most of the time not worth the effort – and they know it. So most artists are silent, as many are who have been abused. Nevertheless, from time to time, some bold chosen few hit the nail on the head. A contemporary art icon or two admit to the plagiarism that places their talent in serious doubt, and renews the controversy of the complex plagiarism debate. To mention some recent ones, the sentence of Jeff Koons for the work “Naked” and the suspicion on Damien Hirst and his diamond skulls. And you cannot entrust the law to establish what is right and what is criminal taking into consideration the particular facts of each case because they are not art experts.

It is imperative to organize a symposium to establish the thin red line between inspiration and plagiarism and to outline the structure for an international, regularly updated ruling on this important question.

In passing I need to mention nepotism, cronyism, of all colors in commissioning public art.

I would like this article to be a warning to all. Come to your own conclusions. Take your own precautions. Having faith is not always enough.

Susana Gómez Laín, Madrid

Toronto

Geoffrey Farmer, *A way out of the mirror*, 2017, Canadian Pavilion in Venice.

Andrew Witt reviews Geoffrey Farmer's Venice show with generic talk spun by the yard. Farmer's view on the art-marketing machine made to wax shiny on dull art. Not to deny Witt's abilities as wordsmith but it misleads an innocent public who will walk away from Geoffrey Farmer's show with broken hearts, crying hot bitter tears of disillusionment.

Witt's review is called *A Disobedient Object* but others call it *Anarchy Lite*; "It's everywhere, and it all looks the same. Broken sticks, loose wiring, busted bricks, sheet metal, ripped paper, all signs that when an artist shows work anyone could do, it's not inspiration on display but their cleverness at getting by without working. They were able to look-act the part, and smart enough to play the art world by posing as worthy of admiration. Many of our best known artists are actually posers. These broken sticks however function as symbols of broken ideology. The collective unconscious may be projecting a semiotic hue, an icon that says we broke art by faking it.

We could say Joseph Beuys' or Geoffrey Farmer's art

consists of posing as a conceptual elite to follow the money. What else was Beuys doing, endlessly parading his felt, fat, and fur while consistently lying about his past and his work, all for an artist's fee? Art escort? Farmer's formal practice consist of denying tradition with a dose of ennui while disturbing nothing in our cultural heritage except for the budget. That is clever; there is no art in Canada's pavilion in Venice, nothing to judge, it's very minimalist. There is rubble that any workman could claim, and the fact that Farmer hired workers to break walls does not qualify or sanctify that rubble, no more than if Farmer or the janitor had done it themselves; this pile is generic as rubble gets, no art here, nothing to see folks, just move along. Oh, I forgot. They raised the roof in Venice by a few inches. Facebook devotees announced it only seconds after that headline was leaked to the press! The roof was raised, but obviously not high enough to reach the dignity of a work of art

Miklos Legrady, Toronto Editor

Chicago

Revoliutsiia! Demonstratsiia! Soviet Art Put to the Test

The Art Institute of Chicago's grand celebration of pre-Stalinist Soviet art, kicked off this past autumn, 100 years -- almost to the day-- after the October Revolution of 1917. Touted as the largest exhibit to commemorate the centennial of the founding of the Soviet state, this beautifully mounted exhibit sprawled throughout the museum's Regenstein Hall to provide an exceptionally rich, though somewhat tattered overview of arguably the most radical artistic changes of the past century.

The exhibit tracks the fluctuating relationship in the merging of that revolutionary art with an equally revolutionary society. The convergence of social reconstruction and the new art of Constructivism brought on a "perfect storm" of change for artists chafing to align their art with the principles of the revolution.

The tracking is broad as it spreads across media and into the factory. In doing so, it offers a number of highlights hard to find elsewhere. Especially engaging was the life-scale construction of a kiosk, a realization of one of many unbuilt designs by Gustav Klutis intended

to aid the dispersal of print media. Just as impressive was a reconstruction of Lenin Workers' Club by Aleksandr Rodchenko, originally designed for the 1925 *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in Paris.

Arguably the most important reconstructions, however, were those of sculptures by Rodchenko, Carl Ioganson and the Stenberg brothers, Vladimir and Georgii, originally exhibited in the Constructivist Group's section of the OBMOKHU (Society of Young Artists) Exhibition, Moscow 1921. Ioganson's work introduced the first examples of tensegrity structures, which Kenneth Snelson later elaborated into his sculptures of tubes and wires.

Ioganson's sculptures each comprised a single unit of an octet truss built such that tension wires held three unconnected struts in a stable suspension. The octet truss, an integration of octahedral and tetrahedral geometry, acted as the basis for space frames patented by Alexander Graham Bell as part of his experimentation

into aeronautics. Among the original public applications of Bell's patent were light and quickly erected observation towers for use on World War One battlefields. Bell's innovation also went into building massive cellular kites for lifting scouts above the fighting. Ioganson's genius was in mating Bell's truss with the techniques of aircraft construction where thin struts guyed by taut wires integrated maximum stability with minimum weight.

Ioganson's employ of the octet truss also underscores a disappointing gap in the organization of the Art Institute's show: no category for architecture. Constructivist architect Constantin Melnikov had subsequently adopted this truss, using a 1926 structural design by engineer Vladimir Shukhov to span the cavernous 8,500 square meters of the Bakhmetevsky Bus Garage. Melnikov's 1925 design for the Soviet Pavilion at the Paris Exposition, while less spectacular than the garage, nevertheless spoke a full-throated paean to Constructivist values. As did his subsequent work.



Aleksandr Vesnin. Proposal for A Monument to the Third International, 1921

Equally disappointing was the exclusion of engineering genius Vladimir Sukhov, whose design and erection of radio towers at Lenin's behest monumentalized Soviet aspirations. Searching for a structure to produce maximum strength with minimum material, Shukhov had engaged a mathematician in 1896 and settled on the hyperboloid of revolution, a curved surface generated by a grid of straight lines that could be manufactured from steel bars. Sukhov first applied a single hyperboloid to build a water tower. Sukhov's radio tower design, however, called for nine tapered levels of hyperboloids stacked to a height of 350 meters – 50 meters taller than the Eiffel Tower, but with only one third of the steel used by Eiffel. Unfortunately, civil warring caused severe steel shortages that limited the

finished towers to half their planned height – still impressive nevertheless.

The Constructivist agenda of bracketing art into more and more rarified intellectual regions seems antithetical to a peoples' art, but the upshot of such Platonic inquiry was that art needed no single auteur and existed as a set of rational principles to be accessed by anyone.

Sukhov makes a single uncredited appearance in the show where the artist Efim Pernikov's poster "Radio Front" includes a crude image of one of his towers in a poster design. Melnikov never appears, except for one line in the catalog.

Ioganson sculpture also exemplified a Constructivist trend to achieve purity of structure by means of the barest minimum of material. In fact the goal was to seek a formal purity for art of a degree rivaling that of mathematics. In this light Ioganson's drawings combined with words and equations to ape the presentation of geometric theorems. Rodchenko had followed a similarly reductive approach in his series of Linearist paintings comprising only straight lines and circles, including works featuring three, two and even only one line, drawn on graph paper. Rodchenko once averred that art was a branch of mathematics.

The Constructivist agenda of bracketing art into more and more rarified intellectual regions seems antithetical to a peoples' art, but the upshot of such Platonic inquiry was that art needed no single auteur and existed as a set of rational principles to be accessed by anyone. These were to be uncovered by the *Laboratory Constructivists* as Rodchenko and his adherents were dubbed. Instead art could just as well be a group product, a social collaboration, applying these artists' research to communal design and factory production. Under Rodchenko's direction this agenda dominated the curriculum at the VKhUTEMAS (Higher State Artistic and Technical Workshops) resulting in the ouster of founding artists Wassily Kandinsky, the first director, and Vladimir Matiushin, color curriculum. Kandinsky's theosophical bent and Matiushin's millenarist views on the revolution smacked too much of spirituality for the faculty. Kandinsky left to replace Josef Itten as head of the first year curriculum at the Bauhaus.

Kandinsky is mentioned briefly in the catalog and Matiushin not at all. Neither has work in the exhibit.

By neglecting the contributions of artists like

Matiushin the show skimps on artistic development preceding the Soviet era and emphasizes instead the cultural reception of Constructivism in the pre-Stalinist Soviet regime. The movement's theoretical and aesthetic underpinnings are not addressed in any depth. Granted these are heady and heavily intellectual, generated by a stew of ideas including philology, logic and poetry not readily comprehended by most viewers. Constructivism questioned the most basic means by which language, geometry and rational logic bring sense to the world. Especially important in this regard were the *zaum* poets, most notably Aleksei Kruchonykh and Velimir Khlebnikov who were frequent collaborators with Kasimir Malevich.

Zaum is a term coined by the poets that merges two Russian words: beyond and sense. Their poems sought to flout rational logic, which they regarded as hampering perception, and construct alternate paths to meaning. For these alolist poets and artists like Malevich meaning resided in experiences built from novel sensations that conventional reason could not register.

An important feature of *zaum* poetry was that it was hand written or, more appropriately, hand drawn (The Russian word for write, *pisat*, also translates as paint.) This painterly scribing added visual and spatial experience to the apprehension of the poem. Though the show unfortunately has no examples of this poetry, Marsha Chlenova's catalog essay on Constructivism in the theater pays excellent homage to *zaum* use of language and its role in constructing theater leading to Vladimir Tatlin's citation on the constructive equivalence of language and material: "the word is a building unit, material is the unit of organized volume".

Most likable were items such as children's books and children's drawings, especially two crayon drawings from 1937 by 11 year old Svetlana Allilueva for her father Josef Stalin. Sweet and precocious, the drawings ape official documents and mimic the colors and composition of Soviet graphic design.

Representing Constructivism's expansion into theater was a lively room of theatrical models and props primarily designed by the major Constructivist women artists, including the painters Liubov Popova, Alexandra Exter and Varvara Stepanova. Reconstructions of furniture props designed by Stepanova for a production of Vsevolod Meyerhold's "Death of Tarelkin" activated the space and brought a sense of immediacy to Soviet



El Lissitzky. Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge, 1920. Ne boltai! Collection.

theater.

By far the most copiously represented medium was graphic design, signaling the successes of Constructivism in communication design and advertising. Some editing could have well served this area by removing repetitious images and thereby freeing up space for the aforementioned gaps in the curation. Some catalog discourse on word and material and perhaps an analysis the influence of *zaum* on the effectiveness of the graphics would, as in theater, have tied the graphics to the essential goals of the Constructivists.

The final stop in a circuit of the exhibition examined the penetration of revolutionary art into the home. At this stage the aesthetic messages of the art had been all but muted into prosaic household objects. Most likable were items such as children's books and children's drawings, especially two crayon drawings from 1937 by 11 year old Svetlana Allilueva for her father Josef Stalin. Sweet and precocious, the drawings ape official documents and mimic the colors and composition of Soviet graphic design. The documents feature officious orders for her father to take her to the movies.

These pieces of domesticity belie the brutality with which Svetlana's father was curtailing the artistic experiments represented in the exhibit. The show itself does nothing to reveal the horrors that coerced an end to this the period in art history. Endings like beginnings are not a strength of this exhibit.

Stephen Luecking writes on art and science for journals on the humanities and mathematics. His paper "A Man and his Square: Kasimir Malevich and the Visualization of the 4th Dimension" (<https://depaul.academia.edu/StephenLuecking>) was shortlisted by Princeton University Press for the best mathematical writing of 2010.



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Cornwall

Artwallop

A beverage that is highly sought after and extremely expensive? A derogatory term for said beverage? Being beaten on the bottom with a canvas?

You choose. No, I mean it, you really do choose. In this most eccentric of exhibitions now showing at The New, New Gallery, St Ives, you can, quite literally choose your poison, frisson or particular fetish. This exhibition very much takes as its theme the idea of prostituting oneself for one's Art and gives people the opportunity to do just that.

Controversial from start to finish, and even those terms are rather weasel words for the exotic scenarios that assault the ears on entering the gallery, this exhibition is a WOW! or very possibly, an OW! with the public.

Rooms are set aside for each exhibit and it is hard to see where the idea of a seedy Chicago Night Club ends and an Art Gallery begins – in fact it is difficult to see where anything ends and begins. You literally pay your money and make your choice.

The New, New Gallery may well be rueing the day it agreed to mount – every word tells a story – this new exhibition as many of the public, having paid exorbitant

amounts for a ticket do choose very expensive poisons/frissons/fetishes indeed and streams of delivery vans from Harrods, Paxton and Whitfield, Dior, Rigby and Pellor, Vaseline, Swarfega and many more arrive at the front door and disgorge baskets and baskets of costly merchandise as hordes of highly paid cleaners stream in and out of the back door doing a lot of giggling.

And the Artist responsible for all this? Marcel Frottage, the transgender leader of the New Exhibitionist Movement is saying very little and doing even less. The press have declared that he has been gagged to ramp up the publicity – or something - although a Police Van appeared to deliver a number of items before the start of the exhibition.

Whatever Frottage is doing, he is doing it very quietly and in the privacy of his own Premier Suite in the lower gallery of the building.

After New Exhibitionist Art, where can the art world go next? Where can we go for honey? (Actually, I think I can see some being delivered now.) Man Ray, Manuka? You choose. Personally, I think I need a very long walk in the fresh air.

Maxine Flaneuse de Cornouaill

Art Extravaganza

THE ACORN Theatre in Penzance recently hosted arts magazine the New Art Examiner's Art Extravaganza. A satirical piece of theatre and overt, hard hitting protest on the culture of art politics and its corrupt influence on the Cornwall art scene, particularly in Newlyn, Penzance and St Ives.

The Acorn Theatre being once a Methodist Church but now slightly converted into a town theatre, is a convenient venue for such satire. It resonates with the expectations of a past generation with metal folding chairs from the sixties, cabaret style around square white tables. The audience downed pints while the New Art Examiner troupe exploded onto the stage with digs at the Turner Prize, off-the-shelf career paths, overblown marketing and incomprehensible art jargon.

PERFORMANCE ART

The main actors, Daniel Nanavati (UK Editor), Maxine Symons (flâneuse), Dhyano Angius (media editor) – best remembered in St Ives for his work with Kulture Break in the '00's – Pep Morgas (Catalonian artiste) and Ken Turner (artist and writer) made the satire come alive, like a circus or county fair. There were moments of wild confusion and amusement, dis-jointed events and activities, which somehow all connected in the end like a perfectly cooked pastaciutta of performance art. The audience were left with a few questions about what is really happening in the art world, or rather, not happening.

Natalia Hammond 'Bridges' at Daisy Lang in Penzance

This exhibition was in sharp contrast to many such exhibitions held in Metropolitan galleries, where an artificial atmosphere and air of pseudo-sophistication of aesthetic interest and social prestige, often prevails.

This small exhibition, in Penzance in southwest Cornwall, of ten paintings of bridges on paper in an upstairs gallery, was vital and alive. The gallery had a warm feeling; the lighting was soft and delicate, like the paintings. No one had carefully considered their outfit for the show because this was Penzance, where people can meet senza fronzoli (without frills). People came to see the paintings, not to exhibit themselves. Natalia Hammond herself is from Newlyn, an important name in Cornwall and international art history

She paints connections or the loss of them, bridges that also go nowhere, while others that do. She creates an imaginary narrative in which the protagonist crosses various conjured bridges.

The storyline of the first half was Jack, threatened with homelessness due to developers, being sent on a journey to become an artist by the Genie. He meets Old Sewell, a cat, a mealy-mouth curator, a friend who introduces him to a man from the Tate, and finally a marketing genius who makes him into a brand name. The second half takes us into his new factory floor studio where he stands by as everyone else does the work. The songs were delightful and sharp. The jokes plentiful.

WILD MUSIC

The colpo di grazia (final attack) was the actors' creation on the entire stage of an action painting directed by Ken Turner with the assistance of dancers Stephanie Richards and Justin Holland, which was then ceremoniously and to wild music, torn into pieces and given to the audience. Unbelievably to me they took the pieces home. Original souvenirs handled as if pieces of Turner's artwork.

Most of the audience enjoyed the show, though there were a few sour faces who left straight away and with no comment, at least at the show. The Acorn were delighted and hoped to see the troupe again and a few commented that it was good to see political satire was not dead.

The film of the Art Extravaganza will be edited by Ken Turner and Hew Wohl and be available on YouTube and from www.newartexaminer.net by the New Year.

Pendery Weekes St Ives Times & Echo 05.01.2018

Some of her bridges are dilapidated and provide a fragile crossing; others are web-like; requiring dexterity of eye to overcome the puzzle of crossing. Her bridges are a symbolic mid-point, a structure designed to create and to answer some of life's questions. How do we link a past to a future? A piece of land to another piece of land? One community to another? Her message is straightforward, a bridge is a vital transitional place in all journeys.

This thought-provoking exhibition also exposed the need we have for more bridges in every sense, with some bridges having more stability than others that can last centuries like the Roman bridges, or even the Iron Bridge over the Severn River, now nearly 250 years old. Artists act as bridges who can help overcome the differences that divide us; thanks to their uncanny vision. They are engineers of colour.

Price range from £180 to £375

Pendery Weekes

NEWS IN BRIEF

Deconstructing Walter Benjamin

I'm going to hurt your feelings and it's going to upset you, but Walter Benjamin did not say what you think he said, nor what they said about him; his best known work is Marxist propaganda that fails a reality check. At the core of Benjamin's argument is that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. He's wrong; books and prints are made by mechanical reproduction yet Munch's *The Scream* remains haunting, as haunting as any Raven perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door. (Contemporary Aesthetics vol 15 RISD.)

Penwith Company AGM

At the company AGM Ross Williams, a Trustee, reported the Company was £2,000 in the black. Jason Lilley, a subscriber, as a point of order, pointed out they were actually £9,000 in the red and had transferred £11,000 from 2015/16 to 2016/17. Antony Frost, a subscriber to the company, told Jason Lilley 'Why don't you fuck-off out of the meeting' and went on to say if those present put it to the vote they would all want him to leave. It will be interesting to see if this is recorded in the minutes.

Metropolitan Museum of Art will start charging visitors from outside New York State mandatory admission of \$25 beginning March 1, 2018.

Smithsonian Archive of the New Art Examiner 1973- 2004

Approximately 45 linear feet of material generated in the publishing of *New Art Examiner*, consisting of a full run of the magazine; documents relating to board meetings and development policy and procedures; financial documents relating to advertising, subscriptions, and grant applications; internal correspondence; photos and slides; and information collected by *New Art Examiner* about other publications and art galleries and museums.

This represents the fullest archive in public hands but does not include two known complete archives in private hands and a significant portion of 1973-2004 in the UK.

For any of you wishing to investigate the history of art in America, the Chicago scene, the key writers who today hold powerful positions, and the work of Jane Addams Allen and Derek Guthrie, this archive is your first port of call.



Elite Stone Gallery, London

Elite Stone opens in London to attract Architectural elite

The Italian marble company opened their first UK showroom, ELITE STONE GALLERY, at Margaret Street W1, Central London.

Tetyana Kovalenko founded her company in Rome in 2000. The company relocated to Verona in 2013. Two vast buildings in the Valpolicella area just outside the City, Slab Division, and Atelier, display

racks of marble for private and corporate clients. There is an array of opulent room settings featuring the E-light system where panels of marble and onyx are backlit to show the beauty of natural stone. This is an innovation which has taken the Elite Stone technical team ten years to perfect.

AVAILABLE FROM :

UNITED KINGDOM

Arnolfini Books; Capital Books, London; Camden Arts Centre Bookshop; Charlotte Street News; Daily News; HOME; ICA Bookshop, London; Walther Koening Books, Serpentine; White Cube Bookshop; Tate Modern.

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

Banned from: The Exchange Gallery, Penzance, Newlyn Orion Gallery, Newlyn, Penwith Gallery, St Ives, Anima Mundi, St Ives, Tremenherr Sculpture Park, Penzance; Penlee House, Penzance.

CONTINENTAL EUROPE & ASIA

Athenaeum Boekhandel, Amsterdam; Do You Readme?! GbR, Berlin; Multi-Arts Corporation, Taipei; Pandora Ltd, Istanbul.

UNITED STATES

Chicago: Hilton | Asmus Contemporary, Corbett vs Dempsey Gallery, Firecat Projects, Kavi Gupta Gallery, Linda Warren Projects, Printworks, 57th Street Books, Martha Mae Art Supplies.

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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