

# NEW ART examiner

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OF THE VISUAL ARTS

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**INTERVIEW** Norbert Marszalek with Derek Guthrie  
**Daniel Nanavati** from Venice  
**Jane Addams Allen** on sculptural form  
**Mary Fletcher** in Cornwall  
**Annie Markovich** in Washington DC  
**Lynda Green** at the movies  
**Liviana Martin and Lily Kostrzewa** in Venice

**From one caged animal to another:**



**NEW WAYS OF SEEING**  
**KEN TURNER**

*Partnered with*

THE ST. IVES  
**TIMES & ECHO**

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

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

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

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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.

## LETTERS

### AN OPEN REBUKE TO GALLERIES

Dear Galleries,

I've wandered diligently in your empty wildernesses and I've carefully studied the spaces in between. I've searched for scraps in the deep ravines of nothingness and I've appreciated the stillness and beauty that exists in the void. I've worked hard and now I'm weary. Now I drag myself past empty walls and across vast floor spaces in a red mist of irritation and disappointment. I have 'Seriously?' emblazoned across my brow as I pass the cash desk and vow never to return.

Can I please remind you that visitors come to see art and not your empty gallery space? Your obsession with purity of presentation is running amok and has become an affront to visitors and to artists who are desperate for gallery space.

Sheelagh Barton

### THE DISEASE OF GRADE INFLATION

Stephen

Your article gives a very real and sad picture of the academic environment in universities today in the US, but could also focus on the evolution of how children have been raised over the past decades. Children once freely played outside in their backyards, at parks and playgrounds; parents once read with their children. This no longer is important to most parents, since there are easier ways of parenting today – video games.

Reading abilities and attention spans have diminished over the decades, as video games gradually entered the lives of children starting in the 70s with Asteroids, then moving on to Pac-Man, Mario, Nintendo's Gameboy, the Warcraft games, Sony's PlayStation 2, Xbox, the Wii, and Minecraft. As the games became more addictive, we have witnessed a sharp decline in learning. With 2.2 billion gamers worldwide today and 65% of households having at least one person who plays video games, it's truly no surprise that university level courses have had to be watered down to meet students' diminished academic capacities. We have all seen small children sitting in trolleys at the supermarket with their handheld devices, totally concentrated and avidly

playing their games while one of their parents shops, missing out on the visual and audio experience of what's going around them. Everywhere children at restaurants wait in absolute silence for their meals to arrive, while clicking away, same for their parents on their phones. This goes on until they go to bed, addicted to their devices, but not to learning. The future looks bleak as the minds of these children and adults are taken. I ask you, do we still need universities for these minds? Call it education.

Jane Alexander  
01/06/2019

Jane,

What a pessimist you are Jane! Instead, look at how many artists are employed in creating computer art for video games around the world. It means these artists haven't had to hold second jobs to support themselves.

Matthew Benchley  
01/06/2019

Hey, Matthew,

You think drawing pictures for a video game company is art? It sounds like your brain has been taken too, along with all the other game addicts out there. What is art in your opinion? I hope you have the courage to answer.

Walter Spencer  
02/06/2019

### SPEAKEASY: NOT SO EASY

Dear Viktor,

It would make sense if the conditions of the art market changed with the new European Union ruling on having to verify the identity of a buyer making a purchase of 10,000 euros or more. However, I believe that very little will change with this ruling and dealers, and buyers will only get more secretive than they already were. It's the auction houses that will be taking a loss, as high priced art works will only go underground and be sold outside territorial waters on boats or on private jets in undisclosed locations, like with drug dealers.

Here's the article:

"European Union tightens anti-money-laundering rules in the art market Dealers will be compelled to verify

identity of customers buying art for 10,000 or more"

<https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/eu-extends-anti-money-laundering-rules>

Adrian Connard  
29/05/2019

Hi Viktor,

I found your Speakeasy very thought provoking and wondered if we could start a conversation on it here in the comment area. I agree with you when you wrote "...a call for more democracy, transparency and equality for artists is required. But artists have to make this call. Are we up for the task? An artist network based on mutual friendship, support and exchange of ideas is the most effective tool against an art market that primarily follows a trail of money." This call for "more democracy, transparency and equality" needs to be enacted for our governments, the media, the healthcare and welfare organizations, not only for artists. These key elements are sadly lacking from our lives today. I was wondering if you could go one step further and elaborate on how you envision this network for artists.

Pendery Weekes  
29/05/2019

Viktor

Thank you for your comment and question. I am happy to elaborate a bit more.

When I was writing this Speakeasy, I had something very concrete in mind: blind submissions. A "blind submission" is when an Open Call for artists asks for anonymous portfolio submissions or exhibition proposals by artists on projects. Unlike the majority of Open Calls, a "blind submission" withholds the name of an applicant when reviewers sort through the submitted material. In most cases CVs are not even part of the submission.

As a practicing artist, I spend a good amount of time responding to all sorts of Open Calls: exhibition opportunities, online publications, grants, residencies, etc. In the past decade of applying to various calls, I have come across two "blind



submissions” (and these showed up within the last two years). It is possible that there are more “blind submissions” out there, but even so their number is minuscule and shockingly low.

Reviewing panels that go through applications as part of regular submissions pay extra attention to where artists graduated from, where they exhibited, where they might have been reviewed. Any artist with a raised professional profile will automatically raise the profile of the respective organization, institute, gallery, non-profit, etc. that is reviewing these submissions.

If there were more “blind submissions” for Open Calls and if some commercial galleries would agree to host one annual “blind submission” call, we would dramatically increase the radius of participants beyond the pool of the usual suspects. We cannot be preaching about the principles of democracy as they apply to politics, but then play by different, more murky rules within the art sphere. That is hypocritical. And the idea of implementing more “blind submissions” is a very simple suggestion, but one that I believe is easy and realistic to apply.

When it comes to the network of artists that I suggest in the Speakeasy, I have a network in mind that is not based on a similarity of art styles, subject matter or a particular “school” or movement (for example a group of figurative painters only or a group of photographers who all work on social documentary issues). What matters is that these artists realize that they have power over the art market if they decide to work together. It is no secret that to this day a personal recommendation (usually by a more seasoned artist) can lead to an exhibition for a younger, emerging or less-established artist. In order to avoid the formation of a clique (which is the most common form of any art collective) that will only advance its own members, we have to become more generous and less selfish. And this is also the most difficult part: in short, we have to become better human beings who stop thinking “what is in it for me?” I am not naive to believe that this can be changed. All I can do is to lay out how we can begin to change the art world. As you

correctly point out in your comment, there is a very resistant, stubborn unwillingness of people to change. Let’s look at healthcare, welfare, and – probably most pressing – climate change. We are letting things slide because the way things are, they work for some of us. I believe deep down most of us know that conditions have to change – no matter if it is the art world, the state of global politics, the attacks against journalism and facts, or the well-being of our planet.

Viktor Witkowski  
07/05/2019

Hi Victor,

I agree with you that people are very resistant and unwilling to accept change in their lives. However, it is through change that we renew ourselves and learn new coping mechanisms. Change is unsettling; it can create stress and discomfort. However, it is through change that we become problem solvers and definitely more creative, that is if we accept change and don’t refuse it. When we cannot embrace change, it’s when we suffer from anxiety, panic attacks, and ensuing depression.

Kevin McKenna who is from the Observer and is also the Executive Editor of the Daily Mail, makes several suggestions for climate change, one of which would help lower our energy consumption, and also teach us to live with less electricity: “Compulsory lights out. Every family would be required to spend one day a week without any form of energy supply. This would be monitored by smart meters and Alexa (who we all know is spying on us anyway). Not only would it make us carbon-neutral more quickly but it would engender a sense of community and family togetherness in the candlelight. It would also boost the Scottish population, which an independent Scotland requires for a buoyant economy.”

(<https://www.theguardian.com/profile/kevin-mckenna>)

Leaving aside the tremendous issues we have with the environment, I think that it would be extremely exciting to see more blind submissions in the art world on a large scale. It would definitely lead to change in this climate of doomed culture we live in, where

culture is just manufactured and put on our plates to eat as our daily diet. No hard decisions to make; we’re shown what is “good” art, and we all more or less just accept it as good. With exhibitions promoting blind submissions we would visit shows, looking forward to making discoveries, instead of already knowing what we were going to see.

Craig Brothaigh  
07/05/2019

Craig,

Change is inevitable. There is much anxiety and resentment out there. Art is about change. A substantial problem is political correctness. In our Western Culture the critical or lone independent voice is suspect or not welcome, unless a deal is struck or it is safe socially. As Daren Jones the NY Editor wrote, the Critical Dustbowl is present in America. Serious critical discourse seems to be not possible. Unless there is a deal, this can happen in many ways; tacit agreement is usually the case. The present art world, except for dealers and collectors, suffers from cowardice, which is usually camouflaged under the shroud of good taste or the latest trendy fashion. If our culture is to be saved, artists, writers and publishers will have to play their part.

Derek Guthrie, co-founder NAE  
12/05/2019

Derek,

Hi, you wrote, “If our culture is to be saved, artists, writers and publishers will have to play their part.” What about the buyers, shouldn’t they also play their part? I think people have forgotten that it is possible to fall in love with an artwork and to desire it as intensely as one would desire a man or a woman and not necessarily look at it as an investment. I think the buyers (society) today have lost their sense of aesthetics and purchase art as a commodity and not as a work of art. Artists themselves, should stop “producing” what they think the market wants or expects and start painting or sculpting again from the soul. Though, of course, this is Utopian, it would make for a much more interesting visual art environment.

Margot Fortier

12/05/2019

Hello Margot,

Thank you for your comment and question.

I agree that the buyers have to play their part too. And you are absolutely right to point out that some buyers/collectors do it out of passion: they will only buy a work of art that resonates with them. In that case, it does not matter to them if it is a work by a well-known or entirely unknown artist. I remember reading an interview with the art critic Jerry Saltz in which he mentions that he and his wife (art critic Roberta Smith) often go to flea markets and buy most of their art there. I love that idea! But this is an exception.

I also do not want to generalize too much and make things simpler than they are: I do believe that many collectors/buyers out there care for art – whatever their motivation might be to buy art (whether it is for speculative reasons or because they truly love art). But that is also why I think that artists can’t just point to the art market and blame it for everything that is going wrong with contemporary art. Artists have some agency and they can take a look at the current situation and come up with strategies that will strengthen their position within the art market. One first step as an artist is to become more aware of power relationships within the art market, be critical of them, find other artists who think alike, get together and try to figure out what can be done to reclaim some of art market and change its dynamics: find a gallery, art-space (non-profit or artist run) or curator that you like and approach them as a group of artists, have some ideas about how you envision an exhibition, for example. Or maybe a panel discussion or an open call or a collaborative project... This is, of course, being done by artists across the globe and it is no guarantee that it will replace the art market (it won’t). But it is better than hoping that the ultimate goal for an artist is to be represented by a gallery or to be showing at an art fair.

Viktor Witkowski  
19/05/2019

Hi Craig,

Thank you for your comment and helpful feedback – I really appreciate it!

I hope you are right: if we all start taking small steps in the right direction, maybe at the end we will actually find changed conditions that are truly more inclusive and lead to a better, healthier (art) world.

Viktor Witkowski  
29/05/2019

Viktor,

The above conversion is pertinent; we have a globalized world with a flight of money and wealth to the top 1% richest. The situation emerged with the birth of modernism. The isolation of the artist is a time-honored problem that befell the art scene around the emergence of modern art. Simply the mass public could not identify with the modern artist. Our Postmodern era has witnessed the rise of media as a political and cultural determinant. See Orwell 1984 and Animal Farm, also The Road to Wigan Pier. The American Modernist Avant-garde is fading and past its sell-by date. Somehow artists and writers are going to make their own individual case, which I see as very difficult as our culture is strangled by class warfare that we call the art world.

Derek Guthrie, co-founder NAE  
29/05/2019

Derek,

I agree with your description of “class warfare” with regard to the art world, if we think of the “art world” as the world of art fairs. Just today, I saw somebody post an image of a striking Egon Schiele watercolor on Instagram that is on sale at Art Basel. My first thought was: this work should be part of the collection of a publicly accessible museum. Instead, it might end up on another yacht.

I am not sure that I agree that the “flight of money and wealth to the top 1% richest” emerged with modernism. I think it emerged with capitalism and then capitalism took hold of the art market by imitating what it was already doing in other sectors of the global economy: if there is a desire by the private sector to buy art, surely we can put something in place that will generate money even for those of us who do not really care about art. And this system works for some artists (the

1% as well).

The question then becomes: how do we (people of the arts) come up with ways to critique the art world and at the same time offer alternatives to how art fairs are covered/discussed and how the art world is much bigger and more diverse than what happens at art fairs.

Viktor Witkowski  
13/06/2019

## MAKING LOVE TO THE WORLD

Editor

“I think the most important is to be yourself.” Gehry, on the other hand, is a very special self, especially since he was a truck driver who became a world architect. The guy’s a genius, I’m jealous; I was always intimidated by architecture. Then Gehry says there’s a lot of satisfaction in finding yourself. I listen to this truck driver architect and him I believe. My own instincts lead me to think life’s about finding yourself, that’s when you do your best work. And the same thing’s in the I CHING, the Book of Changes, one of the five Classics of Confucian thought. Follow your inner voice, no matter what the cost.

Miklos Legrady  
11/06/2019

Miklos,

What a powerful message you wrote in your comment. The problem is that technology is covering up this inner voice, meaning that many people will never find it, since their “ears” are only listening to social media or to their video games. I wonder if people under thirty even read anymore, though maybe someone will design an inspiring video game of I Ching with nice, artistic images.

Corey Davidson  
13/06/2019

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## EDITORIAL

What if we all spoke our minds? What would happen if writers of art criticism took off their horse blinds and wrote what they really thought? What would the art world be like today? Would we be any closer to discovering truths? Digging down to see what is there in front of us is what the writers of the New Art Examiner do and have been doing over the past four and a half decades, since 1973, fearlessly. Though the magazine has had a strange and unusual history with some interruptions and challenges, it is still very much alive and kicking, ready to take on anyone or any institution in truth and in sincerity. We will not be put down; we will not be put to sleep. Funny, we are even growing, uncomfortable as we may be to the “established” art world. It is with passion that I write, that I stand up in support of Derek Guthrie, the man who asked me to take his place as Publisher of the magazine he and Jane Addams Allen founded in 1973. However, it is not an adieu for Derek, as he’s taking on a new role, one that he knows how to do best – inspire writers and question their thinking. As Derek says, “we should imagine an art critic as a spy who reports back to the handler what’s going on”; what could be more compelling and exciting? “The New Art Examiner came from community, existed in community and now the community speaks back as an act of self-empowerment.” We “will add another chapter in the unusual story of the NAE, supporting the idea that wealth is not the only determining factor of art.” (Derek Guthrie, 2012) As I believe in the power of words, these same ideals I transfer to the magazine. How can we reach more readers and leave a meaningful experience in their minds and create the desire for them to examine artworks more carefully and to become involved in what is going on in the visual arts today? How can we turn more readers on to art to make it come alive for them? Derek believes in the saying, “if you stand in the middle of the road you are hit by traffic moving in both directions.” We’re not a middle of the road magazine; we take a stand on issues, and we’re ready to go out on a limb for them. “We are not ARTnews, nor Art in America, nor Art Monthly, and we are not worried about profit, though we probably should be. Our reviews and articles are not ethereal words that are embellished to bore just about any mind, but our writing is read and not left abandoned on coffee tables, nor is it just glanced at superficially on our website. Instead, our over 33,000 readers in the month of May alone (with this trend calculated at around 400,000 a year) are actively reading us from all corners of the world. Take a look at the online map we have,

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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. Al Jirikovic lives and works in Washington DC and is our DC Editor. A long-time reader of the New Art Examiner he ran the famous bar in Adams Morgan, 'Chief Ike'.



## Phillip Kennecott of the Washington Post reviews Martin Puryear at the Venice Biennale

Philip Kennecott reviews Martin Puryear quite favorably as the American contribution to this year's Venice Biennale, 'May You Live in Interesting Times', however to my mind, his was a highly conditional, contradistinction to so many other entrées in the Biennale that this quality, "in itself" was almost as disturbing as the engineering of this review itself.

The world scope of the Biennale unwraps itself around the many venues of Venice with clusters of exhibitions espousing social justice, all, of course, at the behest of freedom. Shows demonstrating for dignity, clean environment, justice for one and all in your face suggestive of a warning call. The quest of such art spared very few countries' entries. The Biennale took on the mantle of a world-wide temperature-taking of our current social and global discomfort of our abuse of planet earth and its human animal. All it demonstrates is a jockeying for position among artist. The loud and painful cries for help



One of the Martin Puryear installations in his "Liberty" exhibit in the U.S. Pavilion at the Venice Biennale

as fingernails on the blackboard screeching at a mega pitch. Entry after entry, country to country, pavilion to pavilion; all to present the artists of the Biennale as being so in touch with the fury of our planet as a social justice theme cry that, of course, if we heed the warnings we are all on the road to Nirvana at last. Our pleas for help from the art gods will be met and we will jet home with a good feeling in our stomachs that at last art is relevant.

As Daniel Nanavati points out in his coverage, this is all bile, fantasy and feel good guilt tripping of the most pathetic liberal nature. Social justice art can never change the world nor is its intent on doing so as it is trapped in an expensive art fair that caters to a privileged class that if anything, ironically, contributes more to the dysfunction of the social world than any other class. So, therein lies an immense problem itself; what does art do to be sensitive to the writhing of planet art on planet Earth? Especially at a Biennale that attempts to demonstrate it is sensitive, as do the good people who visit, although 'the people' are really not invited except if you run a well to do gallery and you may be able to foist some of this, oh so sensitive, feeling art on the masses who are sure to bathe in the glory and heart of such humanly sympathetic to the pressing cause of nature. Amen, says Venice. Listen and we are saved, once again. The Sermon on the Island.

Of course the American entry, Martin Puryear's work did not swim with the hoopla of the masses or the hoi polloi of lucky attendees. No, according to Phillip Kennecott we were above this rabble this year, despite our unctuous, politically irritable, irascible selves (a situation which emanates from our current administration whose thinking is so infectious globally). We showed some cool above this

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## NEW WAYS OF SEEING



Ken Turner reprising Diogenes

I have chosen to respond to James Bridle's series on the BBC 4 channel concerning his observations on Berger's 'Ways of Seeing'. It is presented as a series of broadcasts on his understanding of Berger's insight on visual art. Later I will cast some doubts on Bridle's thinking around the internet and its influence on thinking and doing.

However, John Berger was wrong in choosing the artists in the 50's as representing social realism. The artists themselves, in time, reacted and became either abstract or less 'soviet' in style. I knew most of the painters and saw their style change to become more personal, less observational on contemporary life, more an exploration of form. My feelings about Berger is that his art criticism was exciting and fresh, but his novels go further in depth of feeling in giving attention to detail and poignant expression about life.

A few days before his broadcasts Berger was standing in front of large posters on London's underground platform and realised what his starting point would be for his TV series. He needed to speak about how advertising was corrupting people's ideas on visual form. These posters did not really benefit one's life, but ensnared a public into believing that they did and of course still do.

I want to bring Codswallop into this discussion because

Codswallop from the depths of the Atlantic remains a constant irritant on the failings of human kind. He says, "why not rely on our feelings?"

We all realize the dangers of over production in a product driven world, we all can see the looming catastrophe of climate change and the effect on biodiversity, and we, perhaps though not all, see the dangers of the internet.

Bridle, as a digital artist and broadcaster, is saying that we need to have more control over the digital communication network, to understand it more and deal with it from a position of knowledge. He is saying that in its operations, it creates a better world in communication, information and knowledge. What nonsense is this; do we have to give ourselves over to a world of algorithms in a world where feeling is absent? As this tendency grows, I think Berger is turning to return because the world of images on the internet are in themselves losing art's function, of interpretation, of seeing life through art. "Look at your art," says Codswallop, "look at its form, feel what it is expressing. See the dangers of losing the ability to play, and a kind of play that opens up your amazing ability to use your imagination, and, importantly, see what lies outside the material side of life. Seeing life and art



differently is being pushed aside by dazzling displays of products that you don't need". Berger again turns.

However, what are the displays portrayed by the 'art market' as it is today? Duchamp a while back was playing and amusing himself with found objects. But he was a mischief-maker. And perhaps mischief itself casts spells on ways of seeing that shake us out of a torpor, or a dullness of mind to look at art as a way of thinking, which after all is the job of art, or at least one of them. But what about the sense of feeling in these works? I leave the reader to think on.

Art is something that takes its time, a kind of time outside our own normal dimensionality of time. It is not hurried into life and surprises people by its 'deconstruction' of form. I use this word of Derrida's carefully because it is often used sloppily. The word is close to the process of how art is made in its forming of form from the un-form, and thus, evolves as a new sense of reality realized through many layers of seeing. Incidentally, this is a sure way of escaping from the internet's hold on culture and its cruel hand turning the screw on knowledge.

Like Derrida I may be surfing the language to find sense, but this is also the language of art in its process of making.



'The artist talks to his model' - Ken Turner: pastel on paper. (private collection)

### QUOTE of the Month:

"... but in fact human discourse is intrinsically addressed not to natural existing things but to ideal essences, poetic or logical terms which thought may define and play with."

**George Santayana** (Materialism and Idealism in American Life')

Most importantly, I want to escape the confines of bird cage life. I want to escape the logical reasoning of academic constraints and abstruse intellectual arguments. I also want to free myself from the speed of the internet in collapsing and compressing time and space, where the imagination has no place. Slavery has not gone out of the window, it has flown through the back door and taken us by surprise. Slavery that is, to technological advance, and as it is suggested, to a better life. Thus, cooking the goose twice over, once through greed and once through convenience. Hah! A job done quickly is a job well done! (?). Also, mischief raises its head again, or is it that mischief can be art. Duchamp says so, call it art and it becomes art. So, mischief and deception are one and the same, perhaps?

Let's get back to ways of seeing. Take Jeff Koons and Kaws, how do they see? Quite easy, both are entrepreneurs, both aspire to fame and money, both are egocentric individuals and revel in glamour and publicity because this enhances their art price. The auction houses and collectors also see to that. And industrialisation plays its part in enabling works to be made without the hand of the artist.

And the art market thrives.

Freeze everybody, freeze, not the art fair, but the unfair inequality and muck-spreading money sucking greed that dismantles the aspirations of playing in the territory of the creative spirit. Greed and slavery to money through entrepreneurial practice is undermining democratic rights and destruction of aesthetic and subjective visions.

James Bridle has suggested that Artificial Intelligence is nearer the truth and makes our lives easier, blimey, that's not the way of an artist or creative thinker, life is hard work and needs to be so in order to live and feel more deeply. My sense of being is about knowing the unknown and finding the unimaginable truth in things.

Ken Turner

## All We Have Lost

"I think the nice thing about Biennale Arts, it happens every two years, it's like a clock and I like the idea that it is a way of taking the pulse of what's happening in art but also in the world."

*Ralph Rugoff, Curator of 'May You Live in Interesting Times', the title of the 58th Venice Biennale in 2019.*

I will contend in this article that Ralph Rugoff is wholly wrong, that a Biennale by its very nature cannot deal with, or inform, 'the world' and indeed that the attempt is wholly wasted. That in trying to do so artists become followers and cease to be forward-looking.

Art, which may well have begun for humans with the manufacture of flint tools, became a philosophy with Plato and Aristotle. Since their time in the fourth century BCE, individual artists have had an intimate relationship with pure ideas. Ideas which the New Art Examiner has always described as the 'visual experience'. Ideas of place, the human condition, polity, belief systems, down to colour, light, material and, above all, message.

Take two famous artists. Leonardo da Vinci is a byword to describe an artist with an overarching interest in things few people were thinking about in any other terms than as a daydream. Anyone reading Mark Rothko's personal journals on his journey as an artist cannot but be struck by his depth of thinking in fathoming his own creativity.

A survey of a few of the titles of the Venice Biennale in 2019 will demonstrate how artists have fallen into the trap of being nothing more than acceptable liberal conscience of our societies: After Illusion (Saudi Arabia), The Future is Now (Andorra), Altered Views (Chile), Find Yourself: Carnival and Resistance (Antigua & Barbuda), How we Live (Bulgaria). It doesn't take long before you realise that these artists, in an attempt to open our eyes and expand our thinking, have become deeply enmeshed in the narrowed thinking of the art world clientele who can afford to fly to Italy, travel to Venice, stay a week and take in the views. That they come out of the stable of high end museums and galleries, selling in the richest cities in the world, and a few sops thrown to those who do not wish to. This is not the world. This is not even a significant part of the intellectual segment of the world. I know, I've been there. The names of artists are barely known there, not because there is no interest in art but simply because what these artists talk about we all know. There are better ways of dealing with the pain of modern life than walking around a gallery being told about the pain. Most real thinkers make attempts at solving the causes for the pain, not simply publicize



*Artist react to Trump's policies, but if artists had not been lost in the field of self regard for fifty years Trump would never have been elected.*

them. This Biennale was an exercise in countries marketing themselves to each other through their chosen art community.

One of the reasons artists have fallen prey to this is that those in power have always distrusted ideas that hold political criticism as a legitimate way of thinking and no artist working today at the Biennale – or any art fair – can do so without a patron and patrons by means of their wealth, not by verity of their interest in art, hold social power and not a little political power. Patrons demand something and grant systems have requirements and both these elements are antithetical to art.

The artists at the Venice Biennale in 2019 dealt in their way with the environmental emergency now facing the planet because of human acquisitiveness. They visualised identity, trawled history to pronounce upon repression, and the outliers told tourists to go home. The Venice Biennale is its own idea – not demonstrated by the title given it this year – but by the fact of countries having pavilions and exhibiting their own vision of themselves. The powers that be amongst the art-going elite, had decreed there were several 'in' shows amongst which were the application powered game in the British Pavilion and the immersive ocean-like experience of the French Pavilion. Chile and the Philippines also ranked in some writers' top ten. Readers latch onto top ten lists like limpets onto rocks waiting for the tide to cover them again so they can eat. Projectors abounded – nearly all white – cleverness was





*A feeling of emptiness prevails*

everywhere from the Italian Pavilion's labyrinth suggesting the viewer could choose their own path through the works, to off-the-shelf holographic-imitative fans. All interplayed with 'sounds'. I once heard a wordsmith on the BBC in the 1980s saying they were waiting for the first poet to get the words AIDS into a poem. Fashion, it seems, has become the rule across the arts in recent generations. In the next biennial there will be more video and a lot of 3D printing, much more criticism of China and works about the growing crisis of social injustice in the USA. You may even see the first grapheme-enabled works and I wouldn't be surprised to see the first dirigibles taking people into the skies to watch huge holographic fireworks.

Thankfully, I am not much interested in predictions. Like fashion they make for a light meal.

What does interest me is why artists spend so much time today making statements about the ills and glories of the world, when few are listening, given from where they are speaking. Not one thing changed in the world because of all the money and work put on in Venice this year, despite the artists crying for the need for change. Nor will Venice ever change anything for the better, for the people who have the money to travel there and stay a while are not those with power and certainly not those interested in

making change more than talking about it over Italian coffee in a back 'calli' they first visited when they were seven years old.

Now, as individuals many were deeply effected. They laughed, mourned, danced and sang. Whatever emotional sensibility they felt, they wholly felt. Proving partly, of course, how personal the visual experience is, but also proving how empty the work is at doing anything positive to make change. There was nothing really startling in Venice and at least one third of the passing conversations mentioned the city was sinking. So, it was 'see it while you can.'

In Venice, as in all galleries around the world, preaching is being projected to the converted. They are not the problem. But then these Biennales only make use of artists; they are not that interested in change either. Venice wants to maintain an eminence. Every pavilion wants to be the go-to venue. Fashion has transferred itself effortlessly from the dress of the elite to the artwork and by so doing neutered the artist. The conversation has become far too incestuous to be of value.

Let us take one idea – the environment. We now know biodiversity is vital to the well being of the planet. We now know recycling is the preeminent conundrum facing the

industrialised world. We can now see humanity has been like a child in a sweetshop running around in glee tasting every new sweet without the slightest thought to the wreckage it is leaving behind in its wake. We now face our own extinction.

How does talking about these issues in Venice change a thing? The first speeches were given on environmental awareness centuries ago, they gathered pace in the 1920s, they have become profound in the last twenty years. Contemporary artists were born into the crisis, though it seems they have not yet dealt with that fact. Nor the fact of shipping materials around the world without telling anyone if it was done in a carbon neutral manner. And the hundreds of flights into Venice ... let us forget them.

On the CVs of these artists you will now see Venice Biennale 2019 xxx pavilion, what you will never see is 'my work changed policy because ...'

Artists have to escape the amber of too much social

awareness and bring that empathy and feeling into evolving the human race. It's a centuries old struggle and there will be more suffering and more war than anyone could stomach the thought of before we get close to the end. And when those crises hit artists across the world, artists will be on the front line. They always are because irascible and disconnected to mainstream thinking as they have often been, many of them have never lacked for courage.

But looking at this Biennale, you would wonder where such courage exists in the second millennium. The French pavilion should have dredged up a few tonnes of the British Channel. Let the people see and smell what three hundred years of neglectful and selfish industrialisation has destroyed. The single, unrepeatable installation that doesn't need a name because it has all our names stamped upon it.

Daniel Nanavati

Continued from page 6



*Puryear's New Voortrekker cart sculpture (Antonio Calanni - AP)*

rapturous world and presented some settled art, contemplative in nature and realized in craft and maturity.

Martin Puryear's selection as the representative of American settled art was a bold pick against the blistering

sounding howling from our art world at our indifference and sordid international planning. And we may be proud as we did not succumb to the blasting keening of social outrage and environmental intemperance as they compete





Martin Puryear, *Big Phrygian*, 2010–14, installation view  
photo - Ron Amstutz

for the sensitive feeling brains of artists in just enough pain to create art but quite enough to make a difference by not shipping art around the world and not taking money for it. And certainly not by dancing with billionaires from city to city and delighting in the handshakes of wealthy galleries.

No, America prevails with settled art like settled law, firm, truly contemplative, with a crafted sensitivity that never gives itself away in a single glance or a snap judgment. Our representative, a mature African American, who cedes his work often in wood craft, who explores the raucous history of the American state that is not given to insta-grasp or fairytale but a conscious slow burn of historical-will, of deep introspection of form and material. This work of settled art, aesthetically conceived and executed, brimming with the hardships both of the making of the American state of mind combined with its slowly suggestive burying. His work will never unleash specifics, just layered myths of complexity and complication.

This is our answer to the braying world of hurt and art social fantasy justice and dream quest. Like we know something more than other nations with our maturity and

#### Cont. from Editorial page 4

and at any given time of day, it's possible to find readers from Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Malaysia, India, Europe and the US, Canada and more. But look at the right website, the real New Art Examiner at: [www.newartexaminer.net](http://www.newartexaminer.net)

I firmly support Derek Guthrie when he says, "Criticism is not only talking about art. It is the sharing of opinion. It may be philosophy, ethics, aesthetics, critical theory, cultural policy, literature, poetry, or polemic but it is a requirement of a civilized and a thinking society."

depth of understanding. The rest of the world is now wishing it had our answer to all those issues about which artist clamor and scream.

Wow, what a switch.

In Phillip Kennicott's mind, Mr. Puryear is refreshing as he is almost classical compared to the retinue of youngsters experimenting with feeling, techniques and style, cramming themselves into Venice to get noticed. Which of them doesn't want attention, markets, fame, glory and respect from the Venice Biennale. They can move their sensitivity on as the earth burns.

The Washington Post did what the Washington Post usually does. It creates

a liberal lozenge to be swallowed with the predigested acceptance that ensures liberal palatability. The reviewer is safe at home with no disputes and the score wins the game of 'acceptance given, acceptance taken'. The lozenge goes down easily and completely as Phillip Kennecott engineered the review with the liberal acceptance catcher's mitt completely in mind and execution; no trouble, no bad calls, no complications except the aesthetically non-determinant soundings of Mr. Puryear's echoes of history. Such echoes can easily be accepted as being aestheticized by the meandering of time and distance. Yes, we will acknowledge we had slaves, *long ago*; oh yes, it was bad and painful but now muffled and contemplative and general and no pinch but our social ache will once again refasten itself to our liberal, deep concern.

And we do suffer for them. We do, at fancy art shows in Italy.

Al Jirikowic

Now, I ask you, what are our objectives? Where do we see the New Art Examiner in one year? In five years? I invite you all to comment and to participate in our struggle for truth and to join in our renewed growth. Thank you for reading us and in supporting us in the art world and thank you to our writers for the wonderful work that you do.

Pendery Weekes

## Scouting the Blogs

### with Miklos Legrady

CURATORIAL AND EDITORIAL CONTROL.



24" x 34" - 60.96cm x 86.36cm, acrylic on cardboard, May 11, 2016

Why is it CND art journals, including Canadian Art magazine, publish theme based issues, themes chosen by an editor or editorial team, instead of publishing articles on

subjects writers wants to write about, that artists are driven to explore?

On the same theme, why is it that curators also have such power, that curators set the theme of the visual art the public will see? Current conditions mean editors and curators use writers and artists to create work for them, based on their ideas, that they personally lack the talent to execute.

I raised this question years ago and a local curator instantly put me in my lane by asking if I realized how hard a curator's job was? I stood informed that a curator's comfort was the measure of artistic production. As an artist and writer I reject this dominant-subordinate oppression, I write what I please and paint what I want. Then it's on me to create something worth seeing, outside the cultural canon.

AN IMAGE LIKE THIS.



I was raised to scorn paintings like this; we were taught

that exciting art was anti-aesthetic and unattractive. Most of my writing today examines this phenomena. Viewed in context, postmodernism may have nurtured the post-truth era: if art is prognostic, the future looks problematic. Can art change the course of history? Medicine speaks of art therapy, a term that suggest postmodern non-art and iconoclasm likely cause social disturbance. The more disturbance we have the more we think it's a solution. Breakfast in the ruins.

Anyone who has done paintings like this one, replete with long practice, time, and effort, knows how one's mind is enhanced by the making. The level of analyses, the complex thinking generated during the painting process shape the mind. This development has an organic base; the brain itself changes physically the more knowledge we acquire, as brain folds develop and neural patterns grow around the function we're practicing.

If you played Pokémon video games extensively as a kid, there's a good chance that a specific region of your brain gets fired up when you see the characters now. In a 2019 study, researchers from Stanford University showed test subjects hundreds of Pokémon characters. As you might expect, the brains of longtime Pokémon fans responded



more than those unfamiliar with the game. But what's more surprising is that a specific brain fold responded, an area just behind the ears, called the occipitotemporal sulcus. We know that Einstein also played the violin, and like others who learn music as children, had an omega-shaped fold in the lower right at the back of the brain. In 1990 Neuroscientist Karl Friston developed an imaging technique that was used in a famous study to show that the rear side of the hippocampus of London taxi drivers grew in volume as they memorized maps when applying for a taxi license.

It would be fascinating to compare the visual cortex of an experienced artist with the population at large. It's not that phrenology is making a comeback, but rather that data

confirms knowledge resides in neural networks. The brain like the rest of the body is improved by practice, by repetition, by acquiring experience that turns into skill, knowledge, and mastery.

The effort that went into the painting also transforms the viewer. Today we understand painting and drawing as a visual language encoding complex ideas just like writing, and just as reading information changes our ideas and behavior so does the non-verbal content embedded in an image. At it's most materialistic, we have a photograph of a murder victim presented at a trial, at a more spiritual level a painting like the one above can soothe the mind and promote a healthier train of thought.

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SLOW LOOKING.



Photo: © Rikard Österlund

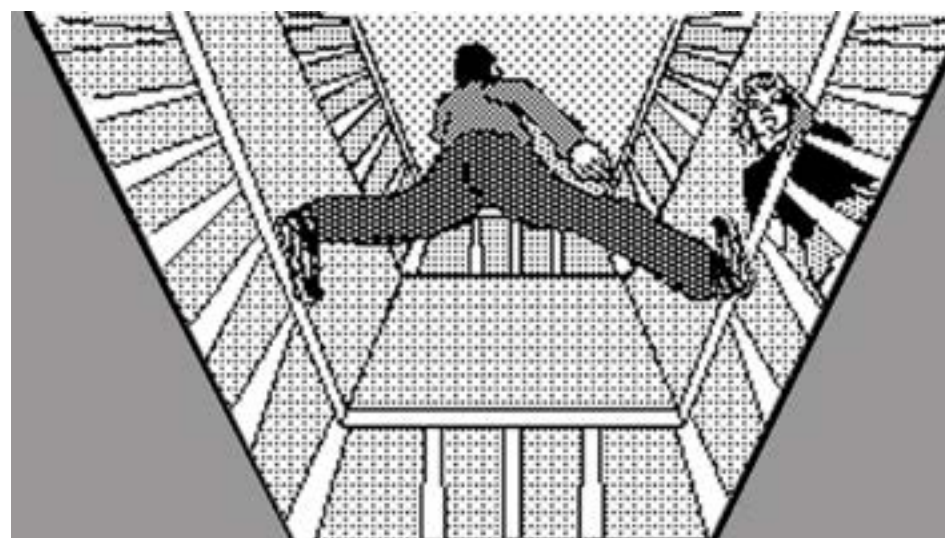
The Tate Gallery published an article telling us we should take our time looking at the art work they display, complaining that people rush by the work without really looking. It seems to me that when people rush by a work it's not when the work is fascinating or amazing but when it's boring. A Museum of Modern Art curator has a video on youtube telling us how to see Duchamp's work. If we can't figure out how to see an artist's work and have to be told, perhaps the artist's message is unclear.

I'm assuming a good work of art would attract us, so we don't have to be scolded into looking at it, and I'm hoping that good work makes a

statement, so we don't have to be told what to think about it. That is a failure of postmodernism, it's often just not interesting no matter how loudly the marketing says it is! Postmodern art is proudly difficult, anti-aesthetic, unattractive and undesirable; this thrills art experts, but are those people experts or just brilliant mistakes?

According to William Deresiewicz's article in the Atlantic, today's art is on show not because that work's our highest achievement but because the artist was a superb salesperson who fits snugly in the curator's comfort zone. And that is why we need a shake up, a reformation, some would even settle for a plain old-fashioned revolution.

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/guide-slow-looking>



Miklos Legrady, Digital image, Superpaint, 1991

# Rebel with a Cause, an Interview with Derek Guthrie

**Norbert Marszalek:** The New Art Examiner was originally published from 1973 to 2002. It had a long and rousing history. What made you want to relaunch the magazine in 2015?

**Derek Guthrie:** I love art and I like talking about art. I am an artist on the side but I don't exhibit. I thought the demise was unnecessary. Though the then new regime listed me as publisher emeritus it meant I could no longer write for the New Art Examiner (another example of Chicago heavy-handedness). I found a colleague in Cornwall, Daniel Nanavati, a small publisher also with a degree in Theology and Philosophy from Balliol College Oxford. We evoked discussion and given my past experience and with the enthusiasm from previous colleagues, it seemed a natural development for all of us. Given the problems of art and culture, I sensed an opportunity to revive the New Art Examiner. Many people tell me they miss the publication. I am devoted to creative and intellectual adventure. This is not complicated, the art world is. I like art.

**NM:** What are some of the major differences between publishing the New Art Examiner in 1973 and the relaunch in 2015?

**DG:** The art world has changed. Dealers are hurting. Money is in short supply. The avant garde culture has retrenched or faded. Academia is now run on corporate lines and has lost imagination. Social media has made artists dumber. People no longer read. The control of money is well dug in. Collectors and tax write-offs are more important than art. Museums have to kowtow to collectors. Optimism is in short supply. Public relations has replaced criticism. The worst aspects of populism are dominant. Anti-intellectualism is dominant. The deal is all that counts. Power plays are the cultural game. Generosity of spirit seems to have faded. Class definition seems to rule the art world. It seems as most people are waiting for the Messiah. The dream that art signaled is faded.

In short, the United States is in decline—it no longer is the beacon admired by the Western world. My colleagues and I publish the New Art Examiner simply as it is an intellectual adventure and our humanity is put to the test. We keep dialogue on the visual arts alive. Even in a declining culture art can flourish. A session that history teaches. The relaunch of the New Art Examiner includes other locations than Chicago. We also cover Washington



Front cover of the interim issue, June 2015; after a year of discussion the NAE was back

DC, Toronto, London, Madrid, Milan, and Cornwall. Simply there is not enough generosity of spirit or finical resources in Chicago. I am reading the famous book Don't Make No Waves. Don't Back No Losers: An Insiders' Analysis of the Daley Machine by Milton Rakove. The New Art Examiner is in the tradition of Jane Addams. She cared about losers and the ideals of America.

**NM:** With your last answer you say: "Social media has made artists dumber." Don't you think social media has made it easier for artists to promote their work and that it also makes the art community more accessible to each other? Plus, I know more than a few artists that were picked up by respectable galleries through Instagram.

**DG:** Social media has helped some artists but things are lost also. The market is not the only issue in art. Much bad art is sold on the matter. We respond to art whether it is economically successful or not. Do you respect Thomas Kinkade? Many of our artist heroes did not originally sell like Van Gogh and Cézanne yet their contribution is





Derek Guthrie featured in 'Cornwall Today' 2017

enormous. The issue of quality will not go away. Social media has helped the New Art Examiner in that we have an international audience. Does publicity outweigh serious criticism and informed debate? Trump has trampled on human dignity and rights all in the name of the deal. Many Artists who were economically successful have faded from sight and history. Economic success does not guarantee originality or quality. The public today is not necessarily more informed than before.

**NM:** Yes I see your point. We both agree that social media can be a good thing if used wisely. You mention that social media has helped the New Art Examiner attain an international audience. Overall are you satisfied with the readership and attention that the New Art Examiner is getting so far?

**DG:** Naturally, I am pleased that social media has ensured a great success for the New Art Examiner. At the time of writing, we have reached over 11,500 visitors. A point of consideration is our visitors increase month by month. I suggest we examine this in context. The rejection

of the New Art Examiner is well established in Chicago. I can provide ample evidence. So why does the New Art Examiner have a growing presence on the international art scene? Simply, the international art scene responds with emphasis and interest. I suggest the simple answer is a respect for quality and intelligence.

After many years of trying I had to face the fact that Chicago is so political and culturally repressive. Two favorite expressions that define or come out of Chicago: "Make no waves and don't back no losers" and "Nobody wants nobody that nobody sent." There is an institutionalized sleaze. Chicago is its own swamp. Insider trading. The New Art Examiner is a unique achievement yet shunned. Nobody else has produced quality art criticism or practiced such a liberal philosophy. We acknowledge and publish all the letters we receive. I speak with candor. I will be satisfied when I can publish intelligent art talk and not be afraid of retaliation. I have achieved this internationally but not in Chicago which in my opinion is mired and doomed to sterility as long as it stays in its present culture. All the universities, museum and suburban

art centers should have an interest in the amazing success of the New Art Examiner which emerged from community. They have not. History will provide the answer.

**NM:** I noticed something odd. Why are there currently two New Art Examiner websites?

**DG:** There are two websites calling themselves the New Art Examiner. I as founding publisher control one website. The other is controlled by Michel Ségard who was working with me in Chicago in reviving the New Art Examiner. Michel Ségard attempted a coup, better defined as a hijacking. We were informal. Michel Ségard was the designer but did not have much art experience. In fact, he was quite naive with little knowledge of the art world.

I was secretly expelled by underhand manipulation. Our lawyer, appointed by Lawyers for the Creative Arts, has just received notification from the Trademarks Commission that they have awarded the Trademark "NEW ART EXAMINER" to me and my colleagues. Now Michel Ségard and his friends are in default. Previously, we shared a Facebook page and a bank account. They stole both and have collected revenues in our name.

If Michel Ségard and his friends had the courage and drive to start their own magazine I would have wished them well. It is not acceptable to steal the long and noble tradition that the New Art Examiner has earned over many decades. This feels like Chicago—the gangster city—and very provincial. As Nelson Algren says, "City on the Make".

In response to being shut out of Facebook, we started a website, New Art Examiner – Without Fear of Favour, which has capitulated the New Art Examiner into international status. We average over 350 new readers a month. The harm done falls on Chicago as the second city once again gives evidence to an inherent tendency to provincialism and small-minded banality.

**NM:** If you and Michel Ségard were working together on reviving the New Art Examiner what caused Michel Ségard to attempt the coup? And why were you secretly expelled? There must be more to this story?

**DG:** All was fine until Michel Ségard objected to a cartoon illustration that originated in England. He said it was too "old-fashioned". This was an example of a designer challenging the publisher's decision. I pleaded with him to no avail. It was agreed that the United States editor was responsible solely for American copy and likewise the British editor to have sole responsibility for British copy and

the publisher to have the final say. His response was to suggest that he become a joint publisher and the Chicago group to have total domination. They cut me out from Facebook which I originated and shared with them as colleagues. I have to assume I was secretly expelled when Michel Ségard claimed the title of publisher. Annie Malkovich responded to an ad hoc poll saying that she supported the publisher's final authority as opposed to a committee for editorial decision.

They then called the New Art Examiner an English New Art Examiner. I suggest you ask Michel Ségard for his version. I think it was Chicago opportunism and chauvinism. They forget that the New Art Examiner from 1978 was supported from two offices, one in Chicago and the other in Washington DC.

After I and Jane Addams retired from the New Art Examiner in 2002, it took two years for the New Art Examiner to die. Chicago is not large enough to support a viable art magazine and does not have the imagination or generosity of spirit to accept critical discourse. There is a long story here that needs to be aired.

The New Art Examiner is now represented at Art Basel, the most important art fair out there. We have increased readers and overall brand awareness and offer advertising at the give away cost starting at \$12 and yet Chicago is non-responsive and hostile.

**NM:** It definitely appears that you and Michel Ségard are not working in concert so it's bizarre to have two New Art Examiners. So are you saying that Michel Ségard believes he is doing the American version of the New Art Examiner and you are doing the British version?

**DG:** There is only one version of the New Art Examiner. The New Art Examiner responds to all communities. Not a question. We have been awarded the title by the Trademarks Commission. Therefore, Michel Ségard is publishing illegally. If he wants he can start his own magazine but he will have to create his own name and brand. The New Art Examiner is not a name he can use.

**NM:** This whole situation must be very disheartening for you. Have you reached out to others of the Michel Ségard version of the New Art Examiner team like Tom Mullaney or Annie Malkovich? I thought they were your friends and colleagues.

**DG:** Annie Malkovich stayed loyal. Michel Ségard and Tom Mullaney dumped her when she disagreed with the



course they were taking—removing me from the bank account and from the shared New Art Examiner Facebook. Michel Ségard and Tom Mullaney were my colleagues. We shared all until they threw me out. The situation was dreadful ... however, I survived. The New Art Examiner is flourishing. We now have a new Detroit editor. Michel Ségard's version in Chicago, unfortunately, is withering on the vine.

NM: As you previously stated, since the trademark of the New Art Examiner has recently been awarded to you do you believe that Michel Ségard will now stop and desist?

DG: I understand they might appeal the decision.

NM: Well, good luck.

DG: Thank you.

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 Norbert Marszalek lives, works and was born in Chicago. He received a Bachelor of Arts from Northeastern Illinois University and has also studied at the American Academy of Art and The School of the Art Institute of Chicago.



Form no. 7 with syringe needle.

*His paintings, works on paper, and sculpture have been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in galleries and museums throughout the United States, including the George Billis Gallery in Los Angeles; the Richard Levy Gallery in Albuquerque; the Fort Wayne Museum of Art in Fort Wayne, Indiana; and the Beverly Arts Center in Chicago. Marszalek also has work in numerous permanent collections, including the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art in Iowa.*

## Washington

### Contemporary Art at Smithsonian Museum of American Art

The National Museum of American Art is a repository of portraits, historical paintings and contemporary American paintings located in Washington, D.C. Carefully selected works dating back to post WWII are presented in a quiet, well-lighted space where visitors are encouraged to walk, reflect and use the imagination.

A visit to the National Museum of American Art on a bright Sunday was a worthwhile trip. In particular, we went into the 21st-century contemporary section. The resident exhibition was a collection of painting and sculpture affecting a balance that hovered between modernism and postmodernism.

Differences between sensibilities, and a museum is a place where all sensibilities which pass the test of importance are put on view.

Derek and I visited to see if Tom Nakashima's painting, "Sanctuary" was still exhibited between Sean Scully and Martin Puryear, Yes, it was still there, holding its space like all the others in the Portrait Gallery, looking old-fashioned,

as all the flash and glitter screamed for attention.

Reflecting current trends certain non-white painters are included. The well known Chicago artist Theaster Gates had a wall sculpture, "Ground Rules, Free Throw", constructed of salvaged gymnasium floorboards from South Side high schools. Created in 2015, the sculpture was impressive because the golden brown of the vertical slats was intercepted with bright small geometric leftover color shapes used as organizing markers for basketball.

This was an attractive piece as its powerful draw rested in both form and nostalgia.

In contrast Tom Nakashima's 1992, oil on canvas painting, "Sanctuary at Western Sunset", a surrealist image had a painterly urgency from the high day of modernism. For Nakashima painting is a form of meditation. His well-known solitary pilgrim fish was flowing through the temple of life.

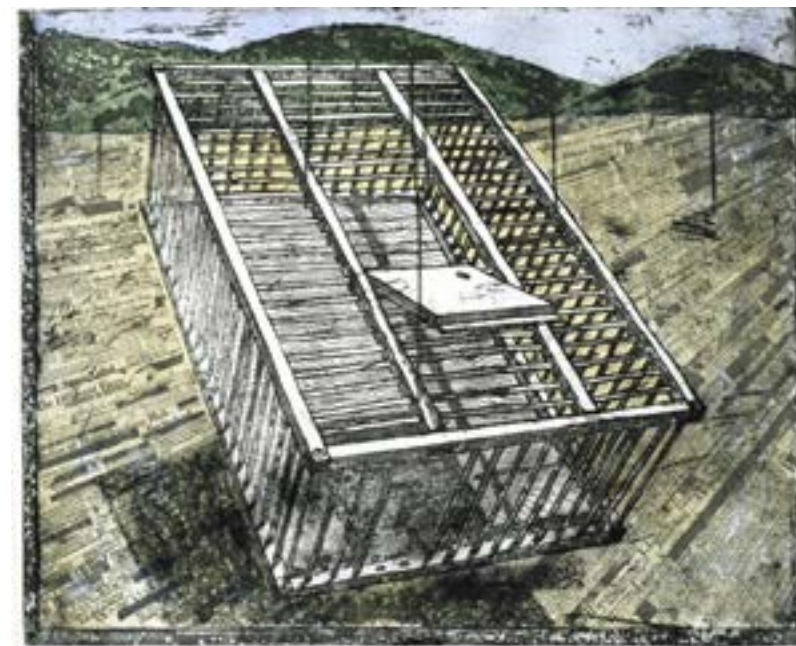
Kerry Marshall presented well-rendered realist painting, acrylic/fiber, "SOB SOB", of a black girl sitting on top of the

stairs in a suburban-style house sobbing while reading the History of Africa since 1413, Kerry with painterly finesse has resolved the painting of black people in diverse settings.

The spectacular neon light show that diagrammed the U.S. with nearly a hundred television screens playing themes ranging from anti-war to Martin Luther King sermons by Naim June Paik called "Electronic Highway, 95-96, mesmerized its viewers.

On exiting we noticed the dull and not so worthy Frankenthaler titled "Small's Paradise," 1964.

The star of the exhibit was the profound installation of abstraction by David Hockney, "Snails Space with Vari-Lites," Painting as Performance 1995, oil/acrylic. Hockney believed that painting can save us from the sterility of despair.



'The Cage', Tom Nakashima 1990: hand colored etching and photo etching paper.

Annie Markovich & Derek Guthrie

### A quick review of Cuban Art today

A trip from Michigan to visit Cuba, in late October 2018, seemed intriguing on many fronts, not least the warm weather, nice beaches, an unusual destination, a big history between Cuba and the USA, and mostly for me the reputation that Cuban art and culture were of a high quality and present throughout the country.

Our plane landed near Havana and for the next seven days we stayed in the area, except for a day trip south to the old towns of Cienfuegos and Trinidad. During this time we sought out Cuban artists and art administrators, went on several cultural walking tours, visited the National Museum of fine Arts of Havana (Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de La Habana) and a few private galleries, and saw a performance of the Cuban ballet under the direction of Alicia Alonso, who is known to be a world renowned Cuban prima ballerina assoluta and choreographer. Her company became the Ballet Nacional de Cuba in 1955.

Among the people we interviewed was Sindy Rivery, a Cuban woman of French heritage with extensive experience as an exhibit curator and art writer. She also represents some forty Cuban artists. She talked about Cuban artists as having incredible potential within a Cuban society that highly esteems their work. Sindy's prime example was the

artist Wilfredo Lam (1902-1982), as an example of one Cuban that had solo art exhibitions on the world stage. She also stated that the art community was supported mostly through internal (non-government) organization as opposed to direct Cuban government support. She had never been out of Cuba.

Another interesting character was the artist Requer (Renier Quer). Just back from Europe, he was living in Havana in the home his family occupied for three generations, and this home was also his art studio. Now 35 years old, he studied at the San Alejandro Fine Arts Academy, and he was currently making art based upon cultural images and what those images represent, and then injecting technology into his work to transform the cultural images into a message - peace, war, invasion, love, destruction.

Sometimes, it almost feels as though young Cuban artists try too hard to be trendy, to be like American contemporary artists. In fact, they have so much to tell us from within their own isolated society. I hope they will realize this soon.

Lily Lihting Li Kostrzewa

## Leon Radegonde

Leon Radegonde's work is a reminder that the Seychelles isn't just about a tropical paradise. His use of everyday materials - salvaged waste, old sheet metal, shop keepers' notebooks, sackcloth and rags - intimates the social struggle these islands have witnessed. He honours many of his people who would decorate their wood and tin walls with layers of pages cut from magazines, and mend and remake bedlinen.

Radegonde's studio in Mahe, Seychelles, is also his gallery and home. An uncluttered white space in which there is a sense of beauty and harmony. Agricultural implements hang alongside small photographic portraits printed onto plywood and mounted on dark wood. Ropes of painted rag beads frame the photographed portrait of a young man printed onto rust-pitted sheet metal, half of whose wistful face is hidden in shadow. Radegonde cites Rembrandt as an influence in his portraiture.

Pages of handwritten mobile phone numbers from the notebooks used by the corner shops which top-up customers' credit are applied onto burnt canvas stretched on plywood and displayed in threes. He shuns colour, saying it "acts like a parasite, preventing you from looking at the content of the art".

His current works are his tapestries - created from large sheets of unstretched sackcloth sewn together, then wrapped around wet rusty iron for days, resulting in criss-

## Daniel Dodin

Tiny, black spindly figures carrying large loads on their heads, set amidst floating clouds of rust and blue acrylic paint: this is Daniel Dodin's 3 metre long painting in the Seychelles Pavilion at the 2019 Venice Biennale. I saw the painting in Dodin's studio at the Seychelles College of Art where he is a lecturer, while it was still unfinished.

Seychelles is determined to put its art on the world map. While Ghana, Madagascar, Malaysia and Pakistan are exhibiting at the Biennale for the first time, this is Seychelles' third appearance. George Camille is also representing Seychelles, for the third time.

Dodin chooses a subject he believes has not been covered before: the men (mostly young, around his age, 32) who

## Seychelles

crossed brown patterns. Used engine oil creates shades of grey and brown, and drips of white emulsion paint reference Pollock. Small pieces of patterned cotton may be sewn on by women in a sewing shop. He adds random letters, numbers and symbols in epoxy resin or charcoal, saying these could be secret messages - the interpretation is our own. I found them sombre and mesmerising.

His other main area of work are his totems - small free-standing pieces of found wood or old planks, bearing remnants of paint from their former existence. They are scoured and embellished by Radegonde in repeating patterns sometimes suggesting a human figure. They resonate tribal art and inspired meditative contemplation in me. From the 2015 Venice Biennale we see a series of smaller totems formed in a circle in front of a mirror.

Radegonde finds, recycles, re-purposes and transforms. He represents Seychelles' past and present in delicate and original ways. He strikes out on a different path from the local traditional domestic and landscape art, and is highly regarded for doing so. He is collected in Germany particularly - he had a solo exhibition in Munich in 2011. His work is hauntingly beautiful, and there is a message here for us in the current disposable age.

Victoria Howard

## Venice



*Miserable Joy*

collect empty PET (plastic) bottles in gunny bags and walk miles to recycling centres to redeem them for a few rupees.

Some would say this is their employment, that they are performing an essential service. They take risks - I have seen them putting their bare hands into rubbish bins, searching for their means to buy food, alcohol or drugs. Filled gunny bags form part of Dodin's installation, along with projections of his images onto archival film, showing Seychellois also going about their day to day business 60 years ago. Then and now....

Dodin is not judging these men. He portrays them. The title of the Seychelles Pavilion is "Drift"; the men (and they always are men) are drifting around a white void, not going

## Sokurov and Rembrandt

In only one day, we could not possibly hope to see everything at the 2019 Venice Biennale but we walked through the Arsenal and the Gardini Gardens and managed to look at more than 30 exhibitions (there are at least 30 pavilions of nations.) Amongst several very good and memorable pavilions, the Russian exhibition stood out as far superior. It is set on two levels of the Russian exhibition Hall and is curated by Hermitage personnel and comprises ideas from some of the themes central to the art found in the world-renowned Hermitage Museum. A cast of the legs of Atlantis, a copy of a self-portrait by Rembrandt, an etching and two sculptures based upon Rembrandt's "The Return of the Prodigal Son", and copies of paintings from the Flemish School. The impact of Rembrandt's sculptures is enhanced by surrounding mirrors which project the image in changed and twisted forms again and again, the meaning symbolic of a torn world that might be healed by forgiveness. The installation is designed by the celebrated film director Alexander Sokurov and showcases the turmoil of war that lies beyond its walls. As we headed down to the lower floor connected by a walkway to the upper hall, we became bathed in intense red light. This exhibition highlights the Hermitage and its tie to the Flemish School of painting. Here we encountered copies of Fish market by Frans Snyders, which deals with the subject of sacrifice, the Bean King by Jacob Jordans, concerning a feast during a time of plague, a falsely appointed King and the New Market in Amsterdam by Bartholomeus van der Helms, depicts children, an elderly woman, vegetables, and lurid meats and has the feeling of a crucifixion scene. The Hermitage houses these three most popular paintings of Flemish daily life painted around the 16th century, and these pictures drew viewers from all over the world. In this gallery, they were copied in black outlines with red

through it, not facing the pain or emptiness within which lead to their predicament. The medium matches the subject. To me their massive loads are reminiscent of wings; there is a resigned dignity about them. This is their path and something helps them get through each day. Carl Jung believed that we produce in art and story the inner images which the soul needs in order to see itself and to allow its own transformation. There is great potential here to hold up a mirror to others

Victoria Howard



*Ground floor of the Russian pavillion, Venice 2019*

background on simple plywood by artist Alexander Shishkin-Hakusai. They are highlighted by a mobile installation with many outlines of almost life-sized human figures running up and down which are moved by mechanical cables. According to a guide of the pavilion, the red colour is symbolic of Jesus's blood and the wine in the form of the Eucharist and is used to reflect the inner meaning of these three chosen paintings. The contrasting noise and speed made by members of the public riding on a Merry-go-Round emphasized the nature of consumption and the conflict between the museum as a scientific/cultural institution and the entertainment space alongside it. Nowadays, it often seems as if materialism has replaced the fundamental purpose of museums and this is surely a subject that all art institutions should be thinking about.

Lily Lihting Li Kostrzewa



## Madrid's Montmartre



*La vie a Montmartre 1897*

If you expected to find in Caixaforum's futuristic premises a retrospective solo exhibition about the art of famous and iconic painter Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, or if you long for something new, technological, exciting or bizarre you may be disappointed by these elegant, relaxing and scholarly lessons in art and life called 'Toulouse-Lautrec and the spirit of Montmartre'.

I felt as though I had become a student attending an interactive lecture given by an invisible and silent teacher, the curator Phillip Dennis Cate. It feels as though he is explaining to me through the notices beside the drawings, lithographs, illustrations and publicity posters not only the modernist, flat linear style of the avant-garde gang of artists like Toulouse, Bonnard, Ibels, Faverot, Signac and friends but also the discourse of cultural movements like the Naturalists, Incoherents, Symbolists and Nabis. This is the essence of the mentality in a period of time at the end of the 19th century that existed in a neighbourhood of Paris peculiar for the expression of personal freedom and amusement.

These artists were critics of the establishment and what was seen as politically correct in social behaviour. There was a relaxing of habits and open war on social hypocrisy that brought down the borders between classes bringing together, without any agenda artists and prostitutes, writers and dancers, aristocracy and circus, cabaret and theatre, syphilis and cafe-concerts.

Wrapped in red velvet, smoke and the green vapor of absinthe you see and even hear the bold cancan of the Moulin Rouge and the popular Balls in the Moulin de la Galette; morally dubious performances at the cabaret 'Chat Noirâ'; the irrational and satiric humour, 'fumismeâ', of the Incoherents; the unconventional and fascinating life of the circus troupes; the evolution of Naturalism in drama at the 'Theatre Libreâ. This is the collaborative spirit found in intellectuals that preceded the fusion and cross over in contemporary art and, in general, the lights and shadows of an epoch called Bohemian that society, after more than a century still yearns for. All this is documented in the ephemeral and yet eternal imagery produced by these groups of artists mainly for the purpose of giving promotion to all those events, performances, balls, concerts and plays taking place in the neighbourhood. Art applied to everyday life. It gave a voice to a community and recognised the importance of newspapers, magazines, catalogues and printed and published material in general to broadcast and spread both ideas, works and a lifestyle.

Montmartre was an inspiration for many other artists. It was where Picasso's 'Senioritas D'Avignon' was painted which changed the World of Art forever. This picture has visited Madrid and has been feted in one of the most lively, old, eclectic and charismatic neighbourhoods as if it was an old friend to reverence.

Though many cultural and highly interesting activities

accompanied the show to give it a wider picture, and though extremely worth seeing, they seemed to lack the warmth that I found just outside the door strolling the surrounding area. It may be that you just cannot confine

life inside the walls of an exhibition hall however hard you try.

Susana Gómez Laín

## Goodbye and thanks for all the art



<https://exitinternational.net/>

"It looks like you're going to get into a vehicle and you're going to travel....."

The Biennale of Venice, defined by Codswallop artist Ken Turner as a funfair, has unveiled an installation that is really the "ultimate" in design. A very stylish pod, reminiscent of the pods in the 1956 film, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, encases an easy-death casket. Here it's nitrogen that snatches the body. Actors only need to push a button to experience this final performance and high-tech dream. Now this is living! It's at Venice Design 2019 which runs alongside La Biennale di Venezia, – "What could be better than having your family and close friends over for lunch, a glass of champagne, wine, and hop into the Sarco and off you go, a quick and imaginary flight to heaven." (Sally Curlewis, Australia)

Originally presented at a 2017 conference in Toronto and displayed at the 2018 Amsterdam Funeral Fair as a wooden mock-up, it is re-presented at Venice Design, Palazzo Michiel. This 3-D printable wonder enables people

worldwide to print their own final event, making this available where it's not yet legal. Australian inventor, Philip Nitschke, (no relative I'm sure of the designer of the Embryo Ash Studios jewellery) and Dutch designer Alexander Bannink are navigating in elysian fields with this hot item.

Easy disposal and ecologically friendly (an important aspect of contemporary design today), it is reabsorbed by the soil in record time. As euthanasia becomes more and more trendy, design criteria of this final moment is gaining respect from critics of the sector. Well done Dr. Nitschke and Alexander Bannink; your mothers should be proud of you.

New Art Examiner readers who want to join in the experience are invited to contact Dr Philip Nitschke for their international exit at: [contact@exitinternational.net](mailto:contact@exitinternational.net)

Video: <https://exitinternational.net/sarco/index.php/history/>

Pendery Weekes



## Hybrid Sculpture, Disciplined Form

**SUMMARY: Nancy Graves has taken her sculpture past her initial success with camels. Her work features an uncanny ability to meld disparate materials decisively. She clearly has a superb eye and an inventive mind: Only an adherence to American modernism holds her back.**

Colorful, budding bronzes bloom in the sculpture garden of the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington. Sprouting fans and mollusks, as well as palmetto leaves and bean pods, Nancy Graves's eccentric creations remind one of the line from Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress": "My vegetable love should grow vaster than empires and more slow." Though there is nothing slow about this artist. Most of the 49 large and small sculptures in "Nancy Graves: A Sculpture Retrospective" — which later travels to Santa Barbara, Calif., and Brooklyn, N.Y. — suggest a tropical rate of growth. Accompanied by a "Catalogue Raisonné," with color photographs of each of the 242 three-dimensional works she has created over the past 18 years. The show, organized by the Fort Worth Art Museum in Texas, pays tribute to an astonishingly prolific sculptor.

One of the most appealing qualities of the 46-year-old's best pieces is the decisiveness with which completely unrelated components are knit together. One has the illusion that the finished sculptures coalesced with uncanny rapidity — that the pod and leaf ends, the calipers and Chinese cooking scissors, the carob beans and sardines were irresistibly drawn to each other under the galvanizing force of the sculptor's swift eye.

Actually there is a good deal of truth in this description. She neither casts nor welds. Technicians at the foundry where she works cast the plant forms and found objects and then weld them together under her direction. The catalog notes about one sculpture, "The work was assembled in twenty minutes, although the cast parts were made over an eight-week period."

For the most part, the New Yorker's hands-on involvement consists of finding the original models for the casts and applying the final patina, enamel or paint. One reason why her bronzes seem so light and bouncy is that there is virtually no record of manual fatigue in their construction, no sensed hesitation before that difficult weld.

But the sculptor's work confounds critics who feel that it is difficult for artists to be creative with metal unless they weld and cast themselves. With the help of her collaborator, Richard Polich of the Tallix Foundry in Peekskill, N.Y., she

has pushed the vocabulary and syntax of contemporary bronze sculpture in three areas — casting, welding and color.

The variety of her cast shapes and surfaces is extraordinarily rich, ranging from the most delicate organic forms through heavy industrial tools to rope, bubble wrap packing material and caning. Her constructions use new welding techniques to cantilever elaborate bundles of objects off a slender stem or to balance heavy masses on such naturally fragile objects as bean pods or paper fans. And finally she emphasizes the lightness and wittiness of her sculptures by articulating their forms with rich and rare patinas, baked enamel and poured acrylic.

Visually, the bronzes are a far cry from the lifelike camels that brought the artist fame in the late 1960s. One of them, looking moth-eaten and truculent, hunches in front of the entryway to the Hirshhorn show. Made of wood, steel, burlap, polyurethane, animal skin, wax, acrylic oil paint and fiberglass, "Mongolian Bactrian (to Harvey Brennan)" (1969) seems unnaturally situated in the precincts of the muses. It would be more at home, one feels, in the nearby National Museum of Natural History.

In view of the personal history of Nancy Graves, that is not surprising. The daughter of a New England museum director, she had observed first hand the creation of dioramas and models of animals. Years later in Florence, Italy, her dormant memories of museum taxidermy were revived by the work of Clemente Susini, an 18th century anatomist who made realistic wax models of human bodies and human and animal organs. Her initial experiments with small stuffed animals led by degrees to the creation of nearly a dozen life-size replicas of two-humped camels complete with dirty, matted brown fur.

These hairy beasts made a sensation when they were exhibited in New York City in 1969. Some critics hated them, others related them to the soft sculptures of Claes Oldenburg and still others thought of them as the ultimate expression of conceptualism in their implicit questioning of the relationship between nature and art. It was not long, however, before Graves moved beyond the replication of a particular biological model to a presentation of more general sculptural concepts.

The formalist milieu in which she matured encouraged object lessons in abstract sculptural categories rather than uniquely interesting forms. The artist responded by calling attention first to the constructive nature of taxidermy in such works as 1970's "Inside-Outside" and then to the abstract qualities of animal bones. For one large installation







*Jato (Pendula Series) 1985*

the same year she modeled 36 Pleistocene camel leg bones in wax and positioned them upright as if they were walking.

Built into this sculpture is the kind of doublespeak that was endemic to the American art world of the time. Old skeletons fascinate us because death is scary, and long-dead fossils remind us of our own mortality. Leg bones that trot about without bodies are particularly suggestive of ghosties and ghoulies and things that go bump in the night. Yet the sober title for this piece, "Variability of Similar Forms," suggests that the true connoisseur would suppress these atavistic thoughts and concentrate on the aesthetic appreciation of leg bones as abstract forms. The piece plays head games with the viewer.

The success of her bronzes also rests on the tension between her conceptual approach to construction and the associational power of the objects she assembles. But in these works she uses the associations more creatively to enhance her form and extend its meaning. Thus, "Cantileve" (1983), with its top-heavy headdress and lotus-leaf face, seemingly sways on the tips of two raffia fans like

a Chinese woman tottering on bound feet. One does not really know the sculptor's attitude toward this Oriental allusion; it is simply there to be taken in.

It is quite instructive to compare Nancy Graves's work with that of Paul Klee, whose retrospective is currently attracting crowds to New York's Museum of Modern Art (Insight, March 9). Both artists steeped themselves in biology as preparation for the creation of abstract forms. Both are fascinated by the laws that govern structure in both nature and artistic design.

But where Klee's grounding in German Idealism allowed him to make further conscious leaps into metaphor, metaphysics and the nature of the human condition, Nancy Graves, weighed down by bedrock American pragmatism, contents herself with cautious references to archaeology, anthropology and — above all — to art history. Thus, "Agni" (1982), made following a trip to India, twists yellow bean pods into an approximation of the god Siva's dancing arms and legs. And "Bianx" (1982) suggests a Degas bronze dancer. Picasso and David Smith also appear

in colorful guises.

Graves's sculpture is most effective when it is most direct and least labored. Former Fort Worth senior curator Diane Upright and others from the museum have included a good selection of pieces from the early 1980s, when the artist was in top form. Such sculptures as "Colubra" and "Kylix," both from 1982, and "Et Sec," made in 1983, are magical in their transmutation of clearly articulated, relatively simple forms into works of rare personality, grace and wit. The polychrome patinas coloring these efforts are more subtle and resonant than the dripped polyurethane paint the sculptor currently favors.

The later and more florid works, several with moving parts, are less successful. Their complicated structures seem to have little point, and their bright paint spatters are funky but not particularly arresting or meaningful. Still there are such moments of delight as "Wheelabout" (1985), an outrageous spoof of Smith.

## A Window on our Souls

Materially and spatially transcendent, High Windows is an organism, a system, within which we are asked to confront evolutionary mechanisms of life, time, and function through the body—an anthropocenic arc of birth and decay.

A post-war print house in a district dense with demolition and new construction is the site of Mateusz Choróbski's first solo show with Galeria Wschod. The chaotic, entropic atmosphere of the space and its environs sets the stage for this subtle yet powerful performance in three acts. The facade is home to the first work, a chameleon of corrugated steel and cupping glass blending seamlessly into its surroundings. Once inside, the space is overwhelmed by a subtle hum, like the hiss of a plastic inner tube being deflated. The sound echoes up and out from a sculpture at the bottom of a spiraled stairway, an unending exhale increasing atmospheric anxiety. Above, a rectangular halo of LED lighting panels mounted on a tent frame evokes an institutional yet somehow spiritual tone, this piece becoming the platform to contemplate boundaries and binaries—interior/exterior, divine/quotidian, organic/inorganic—these themes repeating throughout the exhibition. This piece is a standout; the one object that could be relocated and still retain its embodied power. The final space is chapel-like. Objects composed of radiator parts and thermal filler glass mimic light cutting through stained glass. Hanging in the corner like a cocoon, a

Judging by the sculpture on view at the Hirshhorn — through April 26 — the featured artist has a superb eye and a restlessly inventive mind. She also has trained herself to penetrate beyond appearances to the structural laws that govern natural forms, so the internal rhythms of her assemblages are rigorous and disciplined in spite of the Dadaist spirit of invention that animates them. It is difficult to think of any other contemporary American sculptor who has her range or her dynamism.

But one senses a confusion in Nancy Graves's sculptural aims borne of the disparity between her wildly inventive imagination and the straitjacketing influence of doctrinaire American modernism. Missing are the emotional connection and aesthetic coherence that would allow her to compete with David Smith in the front ranks of American 20th century sculpture.

Jane Addams Allen 1987

## Poland

sculpture made from an anti-bedsores mattress produces a more visceral hum. Its mechanical cadence is the inhale, breaking the previously held tension by completing the cycle of breath.

This exhibition has stayed with me. It's rare that such subtle works feel so matched, so innate, in a space with such commanding architecture. Choróbski, like a trickster, has coaxed something soulful, something deeply contemplative from these material parts. Each site becomes a chapter of a meditation, revealing something found for which we didn't even know we sought.



*Tent Frame; LED panels*

Kathryn Zazenski, 2019

Mateusz Choróbski, High Windows, 24.05-22.06.2019, Galeria Wschod, Warsaw.

*Kathryn Zazenski is a visual artist/writer/curator/teacher/community builder. She is two-time Fulbright Fellow to Poland where she is co-director of Stroboskop Art Space. Zazenski and is a visiting lecturer in Visual Arts at Dartmouth College.*



## Milan Design Week 2019 – Collateral Events

April, Milan. During the design week experts of the sector, tourists and members of the public give life to one of the most crowded and creative events of the year - where objects of design are almost a pretext to exhibit in noble palaces that reveal their beauty to the public on these special occasions or are shown inside fanciful installations.

Passing through the Bastioni of Porta Venezia, which originally marked the boundary between the city and the countryside, visitors are surprised by an unusual view: the two neoclassical gates, once used to levy tolls, are covered with hundreds of sacks of jute. The work is by the Ghanaian artist Ibrahim Mahama, called to Milan by the Trussardi Foundation. Either one decides to ignore it and move on, or curiosity forces the visitor to want to understand more. Coming closer one can see that the material is old and torn, ruined by the wear of time, but also with writings of the product it was supposed to contain. The bags were in fact used to transport cocoa, of which Ghana was the largest exporter in the last century. They tell us about working hands, about the labor and sweat of the workers. They talk about migration, globalization and the movement of goods and people across borders and nations.

Just as the sacks used to distribute food rations of the Marshall Plan, they served Alberto Burri as inspiration for his work. Mahama's sacks are also fundamental elements of his research: symbol of the Ghanaian markets, they are woven in Asia and imported to Africa for the international transport of goods (cocoa, rice, beans ...). Torn, patched, marked with various logos and names, the bags are the gauzes that wrap the wounds of history, symbols of conflicts and dramas consumed in the name of the global economy.

At the Università Statale di Milano, among other works, there was an installation that denounced man's exploitation of the environment: *La Foresta dei Violini* (the forest of violins) is a tribute to the woods of Paneveggio in Trentino, which a storm destroyed last October, razing 12 million trees to the ground. Among trees destroyed, there is also the prized red spruce from Val di Fiemme, which has always been used to make the harmonic cases of the finest violins. On a huge easel two 12-meter red fir trees from these woods were placed, under which for the entire design week students and professional musicians from the Conservatory played music. It was a celebration of nature, raped and neglected by man for years, as an invitation to look after our natural elements and to respect them.



*Ibrahim Mahama dresses up Porta Venezia*



*La Foresta dei Violini (Piuarch)*

These events increasingly emphasize the current situation, inviting us to reflect and sometimes indicating strategies to try and solve them.

Liviana Martin

## Venice 2019

The 2019 Biennale of Venice, with its successful and less successful artworks, undoubtedly achieved its aim of involving viewers by provoking our senses, challenging us with difficult installations, testing our intelligence and sometimes even bringing patience to a limit. In the French, Venetian, Philippines and Italian pavilions, to name just a few, one feels disoriented.

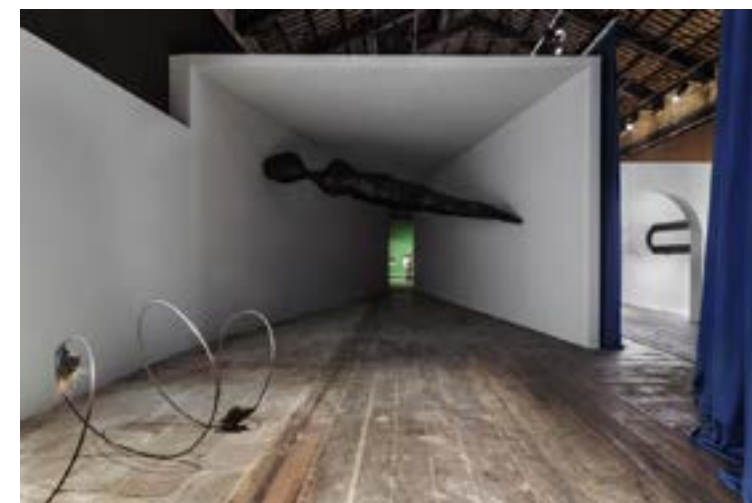
Laure Prouvost in the French pavilion has created a "liquid" installation, *Deep Sea Blue Surrounding You* (*Vois Ce Bleu Profond Te Fondre*), where from the entrance objects that look as though they come from a shipwreck are scattered on the floor. Entering a dark room where a video is projected, the heart of the installation, again one feels a sense of precariousness, due to the sinking of the carpet on which visitors walk (the liquid universe of the sea) and the images of the film: a sprawling octopus is a recurring figure, a representation of a fluid and globalized world in which different realities meet and mix. The actors, of various ages and each with different abilities, begin their journey from Paris to reach northern France and finally Venice, the floating and sprawling city par excellence. The pavilion offers an immersion in the blue of our deepest being in search of our own identity.

The Venice pavilion also represents the city on the water: visitors are invited to walk through a tunnel on the "liquid" floor of an inflatable structure. An enveloping experience that (almost) solicits all five senses: while walking on the water visitors are immersed in the fog (a very frequent element in this lagoon city), the sense of smell is stimulated by a mix of smells accompanied by background music. The characteristic mooring poles of the boats are deceptive like the fog: they are made of marble, not wood. At the end of the tunnel, a film by Ozpetek allows visitors to savour once again the nuanced and ever-changing beauty of Venice.

In the Philippines pavilion, *Island Weather*, through a series of mirrors and LED lights, visitors feel as if they're free flying over the islands that make up the country's archipelago. Standing on a glass platform and looking inside, one sees a sort of infinite depth with objects such as lighthouses, marine vegetation, wrecks, bottles, images of life on the islands, worlds moving between land and sea. Just like the islands, art keeps us afloat, says the artist who



*Laure Prouvost Vois Ce Bleu Profond Te Fondre*



*Neither Nor Italian Pavilion Venice Biennale 2019*



*The Philippine Pavilion's 'Island Weather,' curated by Tessa Maria Guazon*



created the work; it supports our spirit.

Neither Nor: The challenge to the Labyrinth is the intriguing title that the curator of the Italian pavilion, Milovan Ferronato, chose for the works of three young artists: Enrico David, Chiara Fumai (who recently died at 39) and Liliana Moro.

The labyrinth, which subtends a non-linear exhibition path, lets the viewer choose the direction to take and offers multiple interpretations. It is a challenge; Ferronato refers to the illustrious precedents in Calvino and Borges, among the greatest scholars of labyrinths.

Venice itself is a great maze, where people easily get lost in its calli (streets), in alleys that do not lead anywhere; visitors are forced to retrace their steps, and perhaps focus on a particular bridge, sub-portico or channel to orient themselves.

Trying to untangle myself in this pavilion: at the beginning a sign indicates the choice of a left or a right pathway; each direction is good, and there's no need to hurry. I take the left path. The music of "Bella Ciao", symbolic song of the fight against Nazi fascism resonates at the entrance in 15 different languages: the work of Liliana Moro shows us the values that we must not lose sight of, especially in these dark times.

In front of a mirror Enrico David's sculptures are placed and reflected: unstable shapes, they search for support points in the surrounding world. Precarious figures, bent over arched architectural motifs, bodies that seem to liquefy, small heads that suddenly appear, archaic, primordial forms that speak to us about the body and its metamorphosis.

The curator has reconstructed Chiara Fumai's mural interrupted by her premature death and exhibited for the first time. Ferronato compares it to the Antro della Sibilla in a cave of artists. The work runs along all the walls, like a common thread of the journey, like Ariadne's thread that guides us in search of symbols, maps, words like mysticism, magic, power, enigmas drawn and written by a restless artist, who loved disguise, esotericism and mystery.

On a curve of the labyrinth are works of Liliana Moro, made using different techniques and materials. She uses paper, foam rubber, glass, as well as neon lights. Avvinghiatissimi (Very Clingy): two foam rubber mattresses tied together with red straps to the structure of a bed tell us of an



Christoph Büchel's migrant boat is seen at the Arsenal during the 58th International Art Exhibition on May 7, 2019



A general view shows the Italian artist Lorenzo Quinn's Building Bridges, a sculptural installation showing six pairs of arching hands creating a bridge over a Venetian waterway in the Arsenal former shipyard, in Venice on May 8, 2019.



Cathy Wilkes | Untitled, 2019 (detail) | Mixed Media | Dimensions variable | Installation view, Cathy Wilkes, British Pavilion, Biennale Arte, Venice, 2019. © British Council. Courtesy of the artist, The Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow and Xavier Hufkens, Brussels.

enveloping passion, a stringent and suffocating love. Tango music is played by Piazzolla. The Sword in the Stone is a blown glass composition on the ambiguity of political power, never completely transparent. Finally, the neon installation Né in cielo né in terra (Neither Heaven nor Earth) seems to allude to a third possibility, as the title of the exhibition suggests.

The affirmation of Jimmie Durham, awarded the Golden Lion, seems to best exemplify the spirit of this Biennale: "If I make a piece, I don't want it to say what I would say, because then it becomes me talking through the piece. I want to understand if I can make the object establish a conversation with anyone who observes it. ... to see if I can make the object talk, on its own, with me, and with the audience. Not to have a pre-recorded speech for the audience, but to engage in a kind of conversation."

Liviana Martin



Voluspa Jarpa, "Subaltern Portraits Gallery: Hysteria 2". Series "Altered Views", 2019. Photo Rodrigo Merino

## Cornwall

### BA show Falmouth, May 2019

There is work from about 86 students in the catalogue, which is without page numbers. I take an hour and a half to see it plus a performance after lunch. No prices are next to the works.

I start to notice what there isn't; no overt politics, scarcely a mention of feminism, no climate change, very little autobiography, nothing about Falmouth.

I go through the catalogue later, trying to classify the work. The largest category is work with abstract use of materials. Then it's nature, surrealism, myth, nostalgia, and calm mood.

One mentions social ills, one is luridly sexual, two relate to sport, there's a tiny bit of science and technology, the body, self understanding.

One is very like Basquiat, several have unintelligible bullshit in their statements.

Are today's high fee paying intake less rebellious? From a different sector of society, as the poor don't get enabling grants?

One of my favourites is a short performance by a Hong Kong student, Darren Chung in which he introduces five of us to the Cornish names of various colours, getting us to guess which is which, pointing out that to make for example the Cornish for pink you put white and red together - gwynnrudh. It's lighthearted, interactive and links to

Cornwall.

A student called Oak Matthias has made an enormous finely crafted wooden, egg which I find out later it is possible to sit within as an experience of being alone in the world.

Maria Manini has a kitsch room with 50's music and TV clips, huge squishy pink animal cushions etc. It's fun, it's not tackling life's problems, more decadent sugary escapism.

Bianca Cocco has made a project connected to the pearl making industry but links it to ideas like the possibility of an irritant being a productive part of society. She has a booklet which makes this clearer and uses video, diagrams and various materials in her environment. She is my favourite because her scope is wide, her intention to question the way things are.

I emerge with my senses awakened, noticing stuff, thinking and feeling more vividly. It's hardly surprising young students aren't very clear, - there's a sense of trying things out. How many can possibly make a living through their art?

Nevertheless, the years at art school will have been of value.

Mary Fletcher

## Not There Yet

'Cinema Between Two Worlds' is a painting about six feet high, the subject being some people in a cinema, although the film screen looks more like a painting or a shot of a painting in the film. It is painted fluently, the seats look plush, it is a cinema with small tables between seats, and two young men are turning to speak to a young woman. It evokes comfort and enjoyment and escapism.

'Peckham High Street' similarly has a scene that seems to be on a canvas in a room. One seated figure inside the room looks out at a figure outside on the canvas, or outside a window painted on the picture within the picture. Other figures outside look in. The paint is sloshed on, the colours are luscious, there's plenty to look at and notice and it reminds me in a way of Gauguin - a frieze with life going on but with the feeling that you don't know what exactly is happening except just whatever passes by in a place somewhere where people pass by. The way the paint is put on reminds me a bit of the work of Michael Andrews, painting swimmers.

'Insight' A couple in a jungle, maybe somewhere like the Eden project but with monkeys, or on a stage set with a painting of monkeys, but the leaves from the trees are intruding into the space where the couple are seated.

## Writing Returns to Art

Ex Libris was curated by Dr Ryya Bread and the preview was full of people, many of them artists who knew one another, and the event had a lively buzz which erupted after the introductory talk.

Each work had the writing that inspired it also on the wall, although it was not always exhibited at a good height for reading. Some of the writings were very well-known poems and it was a challenge for the artists to respond with any visual art that could rival an often well known and loved piece.

The Newlyn Society having lost its original Newlyn Gallery space has found Neil Armstrong's attractive gallery next to his remarkable sculpture park, restaurant, shop and plant stall, a useful alternative. Members, selected from applicants by a committee, have to submit their works on a chosen theme for further selection each time the Society mount a show.

There is enough variety amongst probably 50 works for visitors to find something to like or hate, to make them think or of which to despair of making any sense.

The exhibition seems to show Rebecca Harper playing with what is a painting or a painting within a painting. Her subjects come from contemporary life, from her own experiences and the scale of the figures being life-size helps to make the viewer feel part of the scene.

There is a lot in the blurb issued by the gallery about 'the diasporic condition', about 'global citizens with itinerant lifestyles', but to me this is imagined. There is nothing to say whether these people are travellers or have lived in these spaces all their lives. I don't see the work as very profound or having something political to say. I do see it as very enjoyable, confident and exuberant.

Somehow, by producing such large scale works, Rebecca Harper is claiming attention and it seems she has launched herself successfully into a high priced circuit of exhibiting and selling, an arena which has helped her to be chosen for projects and galleries. It will be interesting to see what happens next.

Mary Fletcher

Rebecca Harper at 'Chameleons and Urban Nomads' Anima Mundi, St.Ives, March-April 2019

Upstairs Susannah Clemence quoted from Milton's Paradise Lost where Eve is wondering whether to tell Adam about the tree of knowledge and her richly coloured oil painting showed Eve amongst foliage, holding an apple with the Serpent nearby. I hadn't thought about this, that if the woman gave Adam the apple to eat, there was a moment when she could decide to keep it for herself.

Nearby there was a painting of the coast from St.Agnes, showing patterns of light on the water. This was by Stuart Ross, but made more noteworthy by the words next to it 'Painting of a rice cake' which referenced a thirteenth century text, 'a painted rice cake does not satisfy hunger', and commentary about this, about the nature of reality and painted images. The two works held up equally as worthy of attention.

Andrew Swan had etched on aluminium an image of a female head representing homeless women next to statistics about this outrageous circumstance and a stamp with the same head replacing that of the Queen, provocatively next to the lyrics of God Save the Queen.

Downstairs Duncan Walters offered a chalk drawing of a computer on slate done so understatedly and cleverly that I at first walked by it thinking it was a laptop. It was on a table with one leg propped up on books and called 'The reference section'.

Gordon Ellis - Brown offered 'Houston we have a problem', as a title but also printed on his aluminium panel next to a group of women like Steptford wives, a smiling but sad looking group, almost merging into the background, maybe the wives of the spacemen, maybe representing the parallel exploration of how to rethink the status quo to accommodate the feminist demands of women in the second half of the twentieth century and beyond.

Karen Lorenz made reference to a Roland Barthes essay.

## London pays Homage

Paintings by these three artists are well known to me from images in books, but I still have a such a strong urge to see the actual works that I am willing to spend considerable time, money and energy to get myself to London from Cornwall. Even an English breakfast that is so lukewarm and disappointing that I tell an American in my hotel lift that I feel I should go around the dining room apologising for it hasn't dampened my joy at the prospect of first hand encounters with the pictures.

The Bonnard evokes the south of France so powerfully that I can smell the mimosa, taste the cake and want to rush down to the sea. He's a rare artist whose pictures of his bathing wife seem suffused with love, not exploiting a woman's body to leering glances.

There's old black and white footage of him holding his little dachshund, looking sensitive and slight.

How did those colours in those proportions come to his mind, vibrating like cicadas through the afternoon?

I want him to be as wonderful as his art and wish I didn't know he was unfaithful to his wife and his mistress killed herself. After all who knows the circumstances? I share those lingering moments of joy he depicted.

With Van Gogh and Munch I also know quite a lot about their lives.

Vincent portrays the heavy, solid grief of a woman so strongly, and the wild, hot landscapes with twisted tree trunks and brush strokes that make a dance all over the surface. Everyone viewing the picture wants a moment to be in the centre of the Starry Starry Night, to take their own photo of it, a hot glittering night of passion, of beauty,

Her work was about dementia, the death of the person in a way as broken up jumbled images on video played within a printed book, the text upside down and a tiny paper house on top. This was not only clever but eloquently sorrowful.

This is an exhibition with many memorable images which repays time and attention The demands made on the artists to grapple with ideas shows a welcome trend to endeavour to comment on contemporary life seriously.

Mary Fletcher

'Ex Libris' - in response to chosen writings, Newlyn Society of Artists at Tremeneheere Gallery, Penzance, Cornwall 3 - 21 April, Tuesday to Sunday, 11 - 4.30 Free admission.

despite a lonely life, an unsuccessful career, a brother who although he was an art dealer couldn't sell his work.

Munch is even more tragic, a claustrophobic space, very dark, the pictures and prints on a scale so much more impressive than on a page. I keep seeing people with white tragic faces, identifying with Munch. When I come out there's a man slumped on a seat looking so sad and full of grief as if exhausted by it all

In each case the artist has balanced the subjects and the content with the form so exactly that I can't separate them.

The gift shops are a light relief, a bridge back to the everyday life outside. I buy a knitted dachshund to make myself feel more like Bonnard, who my art teacher at school sincerely told me painted like me. I avoid a Vincent key ring, insufficiently like him, or a Munch Scream pendant, too gruesome to wear.

Yes, it was worth the effort. Yes, art IS an experience that enriches my life and a sustenance through sorrow.

Mary Fletcher

Bonnard, Van Gogh and Munch, all exhibited in London, April 2019 at Tate Modern, Tate Britain and The British Museum respectively.

The C.C Land exhibition, Pierre Bonnard, the colour of memory 23 January – 6 May 2019, Tate Modern

Edvard Munch, Love and Angst, 11 April – 21 July 2019, British Museum

The Ey exhibition Van Gogh and Britain, Tate Britain until 11 August 2019



## Too Invisible a Narrative

Downstairs Chesney has a 3 screen video making a loud roaring sea sound. On the left a lighthouse, in the centre an arrow shape, on the right a buoy with flashing light, seen at various times of day and night. It makes an impression, the dangers at sea, the immense power of the sea is evoked.

Upstairs she has acres of pencil graphs and screenprints of data that make my heart sink. They are about deforestation and sea levels.

Stawarska-Beavan shows paintings of places, complex images in greens or browns. She has a desk with a map of Zanzibar and cleverly projected video of the sea on the page of a book. The projector is secreted within the desk lamp. I got so interested in how this was done that the why escaped me.

Himid shows an old dressing table with paintings inside the drawers. It is unusual but the meanings again were

uncertain. On the stairs she showed a very small painting on zinc of the sea, placed subtly and easily missed, and an abstract painting of rough coloured overlapping lines.

I have heard curator Lubiana Himid speak interestingly on past projects about images of black people. I found the book provided about her fascinating.

However, although this show is intriguing up to a point, it's an inconclusive foggy point leaving me all at sea as to whether or not these works say anything in particular when exhibited together.

Mary Fletcher

Invisible Narratives - new conversations about time and place. 23rd March to 15th June 2019 at Newlyn Art Gallery, Cornwall.

## Wildness at Play

Hannah Light's paintings are bold in subject and style and do not shy away from the issues that have preoccupied the painter for the last forty years.

They are often filled with animals, sometimes with human features. This is a world where a man in evening dress embraces a goldfish, where an immense crow-woman totters, hunched over, staring at the ground. Hannah Light's protagonists are forceful and ask uncomfortable questions. These are creatures that will not be ignored.

'Cave Beasts' has three such creatures. The central figure is blind in one eye and dominates the stage, the two figures either side are soft and passive and are in turn surrounded by lesser actors who face inwards focused on the central creature. There is a strong feeling of evolution here as the tiniest of sperm-like creatures seem to evolve into colourful

fish, birds and sea horses. There is more the feeling of water, or the Earth as a background than the darkness of a cave. The central creature is also evolving and shedding a skin. With one clear eye, she looks both to the future and the past and both questions and condemns, in the other she is sightless and it is that sightless eye that draws us inexorably in.

Is this a beginning or an end? We cannot know but the strong sense of accusation in this painting forces us to pause and take a little time to question what we are doing with our world.

Maxine flaneuse de Cornouaille

Hannah Light – Redwing Gallery, Penzance 4th May, 2019.

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## Film Review

**Wise Blood** - director John Huston

Wise Blood is a Gothic drama, shot through with dry humour and set in the Deep South. It is based on the novel by Flannery O'Connor and directed by John Huston, who also takes a cameo part.

Hazel Motes, played by Brad Dourif, is a disillusioned young man back from the Second World War. Dourif's performance is intense, his blue eyes shine with righteousness. He travels to the town of Taulkinham, 'to do some things I ain't ever done before.' His early years have been spent with his grandfather, a bible thumping preacher, we see in flash back his dreary childhood. Mistaken for a preacher by a taxi driver, he insists, 'I come a long way since I believed in anything.'

When Asa Hawkes, a supposedly blind evangelist, played deadpan by Harry Dean Stanton, appears on the street rattling a tin, collecting money from the crowd, 'give up a dollar for Jesus, a dollar for Jesus' he vows to start his own church. The Church of Truth without Jesus, a church where the blind don't see, the lame don't walk and the dead stay dead.

Enoch Emery, a lonely young man, is sympathetically portrayed by Dan Shor. He endeavours to befriend Motes, and when he is brutally rebuffed, and in public, Enoch, bewildered, looks like a faithful spaniel which has just been kicked. He tells Motes, 'the people here ain't friendly, you don't come from here but you ain't friendly either.'

In an effort to ingratiate himself, Enoch offers to reveal

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★★★★★ A brilliant black comedy

**John Huston's WISE BLOOD**

Based on the novel by Flannery O'Connor

Michael and Kathy Fitzgerald present an Ultra-Artistic Co-Production of John Huston's "WISE BLOOD" Starring BRAD DOURIF - NED BEATTY - HARRY DEAN STANTON - DAN SHOR - ART WRIGHT - MARK NELL - SAM BROOK - Music by ALEX NORTH Associate Producer HANS BROCKMANN - Screenplay by BENEDICT FITZGERALD Produced by MICHAEL and KATHY FITZGERALD - Directed by JOHN HUSTON From NEW LINE CINEMA



where the blind preacher lives with his daughter, Sabbath Lily Hawks, played coquettishly by Amy Wright.

When Motes tells him he already knows where they live, that he lives there too now, Enoch says profoundly that if he hadn't known he'd know now because he would tell him. It's a scene which, though amusing, has great pathos.

Motes also casts aside the offer from a slick opportunist preacher to help him get rich from the crowds who gather to hear about his new church.

"They don't need to pay to know the truth," he insists.

He tells his half hearted listeners, "Jesus may have been crucified, but it wasn't for you."

### RECOMMENDED READING:

**The Visual World of French Theory: Figurations** by Sarah Wilson. Yale University Press 2010.

Edited by an artist who hosted Jacques Derrida at the Courtauld Institute in 1994 and has been inspired by Lyoutard and Jean Genet. A sometimes subjective book but definitely worth a read by anyone interested in the French theorists.

**Feminist Aesthetics. Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories**, Korsmeyer, Carolyn (2002). Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2004.

Available to read at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-aesthetics/>. "... to refer to feminist aesthetics is to identify a set of perspectives that pursue certain questions about philosophical theories and assumptions regarding art and aesthetic categories. Feminists in general have concluded that, despite the seemingly neutral and inclusive theoretical language of philosophy, virtually all areas of the discipline bear the mark of gender in their basic conceptual frameworks."

He becomes so obsessed with truth that he kills a man for pretending to be a prophet.

The drama ends badly, Motes descends into a hell of his own making. Convinced he is unclean, he goes to a number of novel and not so novel extremes to show penance.

John Huston's film has strong characters who display an array of human needs with pathos and humour.

The soundtrack is lively and sometimes foot tapping. The Tennessee Waltz in various tempos is an inspired delight.

Lynda Green

**Man and his Symbols – Conceived and edited by Carl Jung** (introduction by John Freeman. Picador paperback - Aldus Books 1978)

Getting away from the obvious gender bias in the title, and not expecting it to be definitive, Carl Jung's examination of the significance of symbols in dreams and art will strengthen the supposition that we are ruled by our unconscious not conscious minds.

Part 4 is an examination of symbolism in art but the part 3: Process of Individuation is worth studying.

**The Shape of Time: Remarks on the history of things.** George Kubler (Yale University 1962)

Expanding the understanding of art to embrace tools, writing and all man made things, Kubler discovers for himself that general history is one and the same with the history of art. An interesting exploration into a unified theory of mind.

## IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

**LETTERS, REVIEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD INCLUDING:**  
**AL JIRIKOWIC IN WASHINGTON DC**  
**SCOTT TURRI IN PITTSBURGH**  
**NEW WRITING FROM BARCELONA**

**REVIEWS FROM CORNWALL, CHICAGO, TORONTO, LONDON, POLAND, PARIS AND MADRID.**  
**NEW WRITERS FROM JAPAN AND TAIWAN.**

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### NEW ART EXAMINER NUMBERS

The New Art Examiner passed 340,000 unique visitors in two years in June 2019, with an average now of 30,000 a month in 2019.

#### UNIONISE

Artnet: Guggenheim Employees Complain of Low Pay and Long Hours in a Bid to Unionize. The museum is consulting with the National Labor Relations Board to discuss a potential vote.

#### FAKE OR NOT IT IS GOOD

As 'Debunking This Picture Became Fashionable': Leonardo da Vinci, Scholar Martin Kemp on What the Public Doesn't Get About 'Salvator Mundi'. The art historian dishes on the art world's favorite saga ahead of the publication of his latest book, "Leonardo by Leonardo."

#### TIMES ARE CHANGING

Dealers have their reasons for keeping prices close to the vest. In an industry built on the asymmetry of information, knowing what is selling for how much equals power. But the art market's unspoken, unofficial customs are now coming under unprecedented pressure as galleries seek to balance the desire for discretion with the need to expand their client base and stay relevant in the age of Big Data and online comparison shopping. (Artnet June 11)

## Attacks in Australia

On June 4th the Australia Federal Police raided the home of News Corp Australia journalist Annika Smethurst, seeking information related to her investigative report last year which exposed the fact that the Australian government has been discussing the possibility of giving itself unprecedented powers to spy on its own citizens. On June 5th they raided the Sydney headquarters of the Australian Broadcasting Corp, seizing information related to a 2017 investigative report on possible war crimes committed by Australian forces. In a third, also

ostensibly unrelated incident, another Australian reporter disclosed that the Department of Home Affairs has initiated an investigation of his reporting on a story about asylum seeker boats which could lead to an AFP criminal case, saying he's being pressured to disclose his source.

I'm still staggered by the power of this warrant. It allows the AFP to "add, copy, delete or alter" material in the ABC's computers. All Australians, please think about that: as of this moment, the AFP has the power to delete material in the ABC's computers.'



**The Americanization of Popular Culture Should Terrify Us All**

The verdict is in, and Hollywood has won the global culture wars, according to Violaine Roussel, a French scholar and professor who has had unusual access to the California entertainment industry. In her view, American culture, packaged neatly in film and television for global consumption,

has cast a shadow over cultural products in much of the world.

"The influence of Hollywood has definitely grown these past years, these past decades," the University of Paris professor tells Truthdig Editor in Chief Robert Scheer in the latest installment of "Scheer Intelligence." "That's true in the realm of cinema, and, of course, maybe even more as far as TV is concerned." (Truthdig)



Blue Monochrome - Philippe Pastor



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