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OF THE VISUAL ARTS

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Leung Suk Ching from Hong Kong
Shilpa Gupta, Venice
Artemisia Gentileschi and Giorgio de Chirico, Italy
The Pre-Raphaelite Sisters, London
Elkins on Art Criticism (Books)
Max Levin and Todd Parola from Washington, D.C.

Josephine Gardiner



The Art of

extinction rebellion

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. You can participate directly by sending letters to the editor which are published unedited.

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Two recent articles in this magazine discussed Ayn Rand and her torrid bestseller novel 'The Fountainhead'. While it celebrates genius and artistic integrity, this book is really an exposition of Rand's philosophy, which promotes ruthless egotism, unrestrained capitalism, and greed.

Celebrated author Bill McKibben in his new book Falter: 'Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out?' devotes two whole chapters to Rand and how much her pernicious philosophy is responsible for lack of action on climate change and our whole anthropocentric political and economic mess. How sad that one who may have been the most influential woman of the 20th century should be the apostle of deregulation, selfishness and disregard of the natural world except as material for human hands.

We can only hope that Greta Thunberg, the Joan of Arc of the climate crisis, will redeem us in the twenty-first.

Frances Oliver

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.

IN THIS ISSUE YOUR CONTRIBUTORS ARE:

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VICTORIA HOWARD was born in the Seychelles. She was raised for a few years in the London area, then Cornwall, which remains her home. She is a chartered psychologist, who specialised in organisational and occupational psychology in the corporate and not for profit sector. Numbered among her clients were many arts organisations including galleries, theatres, community arts and art centres. Now retired she is very involved in volunteering, walking, sailing and church activities. She has never tried to be an artist but brings her love of art to her home.

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MIKLOS LEGRADY is a visual artist, writer, anti-hero and protagonist who's expecting trouble. He steps out of the art world's blind spot, uncovering myths and deconstructing fictions. A hybrid between scholar, ad buster, and poli-sci commentator, he moves through political and cultural intrigues and events; like the Energizer Bunny, Legrady just keeps on going and going. He has a B.Sc. in Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, N.Y and an M.F.A from Concordia, Montreal. he is co-founder of N.Y. performance group The Collective Unconscious. He is represented in the National Gallery of Canada and Canada Council Art Bank, private collections, internet artwork in Rhizome Artbase. Since 2017 he has been the Toronto Editor of the *New Art Examiner*.

Editorial 33.6

Dear Editor,

Are you suggesting that American philosophers no longer exist? What about David Abram, philosopher, ecologist and performance artist? Marilyn McCord Adams, who recently died? Owen Flanagan with his work on the philosophy of the mind? David Carrier, American philosopher and also art critic? Have you heard of Professor Michael Slote, professor of ethics? The list of well-known American philosophers could go on and on for pages. The American mind is not all superficial and social media focused; some people here still think they can think.

Stanislao Davis 27/11/2019

Hi Stanislao,

Don't you 'think' that artists are also philosophers? Perhaps not all artists, but many try to portray the meaning of life in their work, giving a visual aspect to wisdom and human thought. Philosophy and art are very closely connected in their study of aesthetics, but not only.

Rory Churchill 28/11/2019

Editor,

(disclosure... I have vested interests, being a NAE writer. That out of the way, everything Daniel Nanavati said is admirable.

Miklos Legrady 16/11/2019

Museum of Modern Women

Can you imagine the uproar if this exhibition had been of 50 (men) painters instead of 50 (women) painters?

Charles Barton 15/11/2019

Hi Charles!

Well, sure. And I believe the uproar would be just. The reason why we celebrate an exhibition of 50 women painters in 2019 is because it's

still a relatively rare occurrence, and it carves out space for perspectives that have long been silenced/underrepresented. It is not however a rare occurrence to have an exhibition of only male artists. In fact, I just read this morning in *The Washington Post* that the Baltimore Museum of Art will only acquire works created by women in 2020. From the article: "A recent survey of 26 of America's top art museums found that even as the industry has signaled a desire to elevate the work of women, the art world has made minimal progress in the past decade. Between 2008 and 2018, only 11 percent of all acquisitions and 14 percent of exhibitions at the prominent museums were of work by female artists, according to an investigation by Artnet, an art market information company, and "In Other Words," a podcast and newsletter. Of the 260,470 works of art that have been added to the museums' permanent collections since 2008, only 29,247 were by women, the survey found."

This pretty clearly signals why it is important to celebrate exhibitions like 'Farba Znaczy Krew', and why I'm also looking forward to the day when this becomes a historical moment to a more inclusive, nuanced, and multi-dimensional future art world.

Link to *Washington Post* article:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2019/11/15/baltimore-museum-art-will-only-acquire-works-by-women/>

Kathryn Zazenski 16/11/2019

Kathryn,

I completely agree with you Kathryn about "the complex and interconnected narrative of female experience", which by far surpasses the superficial male experience. In that "these bodies are also full of desire, power, and humanity" is what our fundamental core message is here, something all women

can well relate to. I find it amazing that 50 women, perhaps also converted women, showed their works.

We need to redefine what is female, especially considering our role in the art world and the importance shown so far. More!

Isolde Matthews 06/11/2019

Dear Isolde,

Thank you for your comment! I agree that the definition of female is one that is currently being reshaped, along with so many other outdated labels and concepts. The female experience has only ever lacked a platform, never validity. Thankfully today we are working towards a new world that doesn't exist in binaries but rather recognizes and makes space for complexity and variation. I do however disagree that the female experience surpasses the 'superficial male experience'. Traditional notions of men and women are full of stereotypes and sweeping generalizations that leave no room to acknowledge the depths of either traditionally-recognized gender, or more holistically, the dimensionality and nuance of the human experience. I tend to support the argument that the historic (and still widely accepted) narrative of the male experience doesn't create space for men to cultivate and explore the emotional depths that they in fact are capable of and instead has largely reinforced the behaviors that contribute to toxic masculinity. Women have been expected to nurture and expand on our empathic traits while men are expected to quash theirs. Both expectations are stifling and false. It is up to us to use this opportunity to not simply reinforce old power dynamics and to strive for omnipotence, but rather to reshape and redefine what power is and how it is used to support as many bodies and as many experiences as possible, no matter the gender. Empathy is a human trait that needs to

be nurtured in all bodies.

Kathryn Zazenski 13/11/2019 4

Kathryn,

Kudos for your article and also for common sense in your reply above, sweeping away gender stereotypes. Justice is never found in pointing the finger claiming "they are bad, we are good", but in an empathic response that opens trails all can follow. The world needs people who can lead from an inclusive viewpoint, and who write as well as you.

Miklos Legrady 16/11/2019

Miklos,

Thank you. One ripple at a time, change comes in many forms

Kathryn Zazenski 26/11/2019

Hi Kathryn,

What is the contemporary notion of beauty in Polish society? Is it different from the contemporary notion of beauty in American society?

Adrian Connard 05/11/2019

Hi Adrian!

The idea of beauty in Poland is just as simultaneously one-noted and complex as it is in any other Western, capitalist country. National adverts largely promote lean, light-skinned bodies which is a reflection of the extremely homogenous demographic, a very standard totem in the contemporary canon of contemporary public, feminine bodies. But, as with other Westernized international cities, there are international brands that promote a broader face. But what I think is perhaps more interesting to consider rather than a Polish/American duality is how beauty is perceived generationally. I stand to believe that there are greater similarities between a 25-year-old Polish woman and her American counterpart than either has with her *babcia*.

Social media connects previously-bounded spaces, people can much more freely experiment with aesthetics and their cultural and conceptual underpinnings in ways that have never before existed. This, in my opinion, has the greatest bearing on how beauty lives and breathes in a given place, as physical location is only one small aspect of our contemporary lived spaces.

Kathryn Zazenski 13/11/2019

Hi Kathryn,

I wish you could write more on the "terrifyingly thin skin of shame" you write about in your conclusion. It highlights one of the hidden issues women face today; sometimes it takes a lot of courage to go out there and partake in what's rightfully ours.

Is the catalog of this exhibition available anywhere? I searched for it online, but didn't find anything.

Eugenia Tattersall 25/10/2019

Eugenia,

Unfortunately the catalogue is only available in Polish, I would recommend contacting the museum for purchasing details. And to your comment, you're spot-on. The courage it takes to stand up to the abuses, being overlooked and undervalued, from the most 'mundane' to the most egregious instances, is monumental. Transgressions occur everyday to the point where many of us don't even notice them anymore. It's never easy to be the first in any category, but I believe that what makes this 'skin of shame' so complicated and palpable is the twisted expectations and perceptions related to contemporary notions of female sex and sexuality that continually de-humanizes and objectifies, especially in places like the puritanically-rooted US or Catholic Poland. Just over one year ago Christine Blasey-Ford testified during a public Senate Judiciary Committee

only to be subjected to a circus of abuse and scrutiny by peers, colleagues, strangers, media, politicians, her abuser, and the President of the United States of America. Even now, as the tide of the #metoo movement ebbs, women who have come forward are largely revealing that speaking out hasn't in fact provided the relief and justice that perhaps the early days promised but rather has forced these bodies, mostly female, into the public with stories of pain and fear and suffering, condemned to perpetual skepticism, blame, and doubt. Does this mean we should stop talking about this cultural epidemic, stop reporting our rapes and assaults and threats and discriminations? No. Does this mean it will be any less humiliating? Will it become more safe for victims? I don't know. But, what we all already know is that it simply cannot continue as it stands. So, hopefully with each public washing of this shame it will become thinner and thinner to the point where we will no longer be responsible for it anymore. I believe this day will come I just don't have a clue as to when.

Kathryn Zazenski 13/11/2019

Hi Julia,

Would you be open to my curatorial group of students perhaps writing an essay or article on their thesis exhibition. The subject is Darkness/Night....migration movement, surveillance, hidden economies and so on.

They could write it collectively or someone could take the lead. It would not necessarily even be about their actual show, but more the subject.

Would that be of interest?

Darren Jones, Editor New York

(Yes! Ed.)

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EDITORIAL

Jeff Koons is not a name to toy with. When he was asked to create a memorial to the victims of terrorism in Paris one may assume the French authorities had lost their minds asking an aesthetic dedicated to Disneyfying the cities of America, to suddenly find the soulfulness of tragedy within humanity and make it tangible. Perhaps they mistook Koons for an artist. One never knows how these committees think – if they go further than ‘who’s got a name?’

The initial response was so hostile from those outside the committee room that, though commissioned in 2016, his suggestion was less than universally appreciated. One thing we are sure of, but the French had to learn, is that Koons lacks imagination. They took three years to bring his work into bloom. When it did bloom, the tulips in a hand, it was as we always knew it would be, a statement of flower power 40 years too late, and irrelevant to the battle against religious terrorism now facing the West, though, if history repeats itself as a joke, and if this present war is a ridicule of the Crusades which were the most barbarous and vile series of religious wars in the last thousand years, then Koons’ laughability is, at least, historically nuanced.

But lets not get too philosophical after all, Koons never has.

Let’s go back to France and the French and wonder at this aesthetically great country so often part of the avant garde, being taken in by American advertising. We can accept the UK would be suckered as there is no language barrier between us and the USA and our hunger to make money has found the USA our greatest ally. Capitalists, like second rate artists, always stick together. If artists leave the herd they are likely to be picked off by the hunting thinkers, philosophers *New Art Examiner* critics and aesthetically cultured of the world.

Koons’ tulips were ripped into by the French. Philosopher Yves Michaud described the sculpture as “11 coloured anuses mounted on stems.” Twitter suggested Parisians will now think that tulips are giant coloured marshmallows. Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo said that it is a “magnificent symbol of freedom and friendship.” Somehow, I cannot see this being a symbol of France the way the French Statue of Liberty has become the symbol of America.

But then it was never meant to be. This ham-fisted monument to kitsch culture was to commemorate the murdered, and how the French could imagine the sugar-puff sculptures of Koons could ever rise to that challenge is baffling. Thankfully the best aesthetic thinkers France has, see the fraud, know it and say it.

Daniel Nanavati



JANUARY 2020

Volume 34. No. 3

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURES:

- 7 THE ART OF EXTINCTION REBELLION** *Josephine Gardiner from the UK*
- 10 REBELLION IN HONG KONG ART** *Leung Suk Ching*
- 12 I LEFT MY HEART IN LEIPZIG** *Viktor Witkowski, USA*
- 13 IF IT WORKS, DON'T FIX IT** *Frances Oliver, UK*
- 14 FERVID ART FROM THE EDGE** *Jane Addams Allen, New York*
- 17 SCOUTING THE BLOGS** *Miklos Legrady, Toronto*
- 33 BRZEZANSKA'S STORIES FROM EARTH** *Katie Zazenski, Poland*

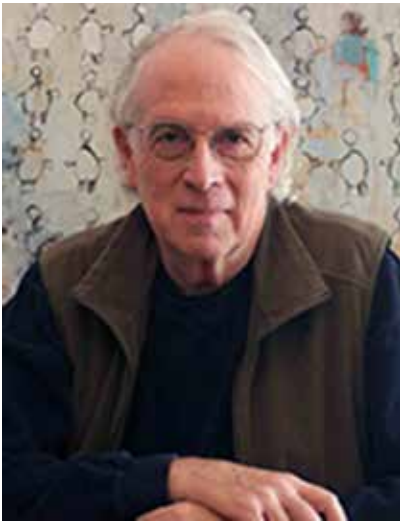
DEPARTMENTS:

- 2 LETTERS**
- 4 EDITORIAL** *by Daniel Nanavati*
- 6 SPEAKEASY** *by Professor Richard Siegesmund*
- 37 NEWSBRIEFS**

REVIEWS:

- 19 ARTEMISIA GENTILESCHI:** *Graziella Colombo*
- 20 GIORGIO DE CHIRICO** *Loretta Pentinato*
- 21 THE PRE-RAPHAELITE SISTERS** *Maggie Livingstone*
- 23 ANIMA MUNDI AND REDWING** *with Mary Fletcher*
- 25 INDIA IN VENICE** *Anita Di Riezno*
- 26 FOUR INTO ONE** *Mary Fletcher*
- 26 WHITE HOUSE PAINTER** *Max Levin*
- 28 WEAR YOUR MANIFESTO WITH PRIDE** *Todd Parola*
- 32 TRUMAN CAPOTE** *Lynda Green*
- 35 JAMES ELKINS ON ART CRITICISM** *Victoria Howard in Cornwall*

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. Richard Siegesmund is Professor of Art and Design Education at the School of Art, Northern Illinois University. He has served as a Fulbright Scholar to the National College of Art and Design, Dublin, and the Faculty of Sociology at KU Leuven, Belgium.



The *New Art Examiner*, when first founded, was distinctive for recognizing the social, economic, and political contexts in which the visual arts existed. Art was not a rarified world of visual excellence. It

was a messy, contentious, humanly fallible process that was susceptible to self-aggrandizement and greed. Powerful forces benefited from what sociologist Pierre Bourdieu called cultural commodification. the *New Art Examiner* promised to challenge this world head-on without fear or favour.

Much has changed since the *New Art Examiner* first went to press. The principal art world has abandoned its older buildings that leant to staid Greek columns and Brutalist architecture and replaced them with the flash and whimsy of Frank Gehry fantasy. The deconstruction of Modernism has held to the triumph of spectacle. Art is no longer concerned with form; it's all about experience. And with attention spans running at about five seconds, experience can be fast and furious.

In this age of hyper-aesthetic taste, issues of substance, training, and pedigree get pushed to the side. This is bad news for art academies. The idea that you need six, seven, or more years paying tuition for a degree seems increasingly irrelevant. How does an academic degree prepare you for the networking and marketing that drive the art world? In this sense, the art world is far more transparent than it was when the *New Art Examiner* was founded. The pretenses have melted away.

There is more bad news for art academies. The neo-liberal policies of the European Union have largely decided that the idea of stand-alone national art schools is obsolete. Efficiency demands consolidation, and independent art schools have been swallowed whole into research

universities. How does this get digested? Several peculiar permutations have resulted.

First, as research universities regard the PhD as the terminal degree, European art schools have abandoned the MFA and introduced the PhD in studio practice. What does this mean? It's anybody's guess.

Second, as art schools arrive in research universities, they can lay claim to university research funding. What does research mean in art? It's anybody's guess. Some universities, trying to force progress on these issues, now require that internal research funding proposals include collaboration with the arts. How do our arts of spectacle and limited attention span contribute to other disciplinary forms of research?

This is all chaotic, but chaos can provide opportunities. It's a time to allow for some rethinking of what art is and might be in the future.

To begin, perhaps assimilating art schools into research universities offers a new opportunity to imagine what art can be, by cutting it loose from the spectacle of the contemporary art world. There could be a decisive separation from an economically speculative commercial art market. The biennials and art fairs could stand alone for what they are: trade shows. Markets have their own history — like the Dutch tulip boom of 1637. In contrast, art schools inside of research universities could focus on philosophical progression and forms of substantive social interaction. These efforts could be held to rigorous standards.

Of course, museums get caught in the middle. Ostensibly run by scholars, museums are ultimately controlled by boards of trustees who are heavily invested in the art market. Inevitably, trustees exert pressure on the scholars to put their connoisseur's thumb on the scales to subtly manipulate evaluation to the trustees' economic advantage.

There is no solution to that problem. But the assimilation of art schools into research universities presents an opportunity for a place where art could make a clean break from market forces and rethink itself in new aesthetic terms.

The Art of Extinction Rebellion



*The Red Rebel Brigade, Trafalgar Square, October 2019.
Photo: Catherine Ames*

On August 11, 2019, on Porthmeor beach, St Ives, Cornwall, crowds of holidaymakers are doing what holidaymakers have always done on blue and sunny Sundays at the peak of the season. Unannounced and seemingly out of nowhere, lines of bizarre silent figures appear, each swathed from head to foot in flowing red draperies, their faces deathly pale, movements slow and stylised as if directed by an unseen voice. A procession of banners and flags in their wake makes clear that this is an Extinction Rebellion protest about the impact of climate crisis on the sea. The tourists move aside to let them pass, smiling or looking baffled; children point, people raise their phones. The robed figures pause, lifting gloved arms in a baroque crimson tableau on the sand, Tate St Ives art gallery rearing up like a cliff behind.

But one man stays put, kneeling on the beach at their feet. Isolated now, naked to the waist in his holiday shorts, he continues to do exactly what he was doing before, which was digging a big hole in the sand. A child (perhaps his own), has lost interest in this hole and stares uneasily around. The man cannot possibly be unaware of the red spectres, or that the space around him has emptied, but he certainly acts as if he is - doggedly digging - and when occasionally he does look up, his gaze is

always directed determinedly away from the action. Finally, the red figures walk away together into the sea up to their waists, garments pooling like blood on the waves.

The poor man may simply have been embarrassed, or resistant to crowd psychology, but it would be hard to come up with a more precise metaphor for the climate emergency, simultaneously illustrating fossil fuel extraction and resolute denial of its effects on the planet. The filmmaker (Senara Wilson Hodges) confirms that the incident occurred spontaneously and was not staged.

Along with the distinctive black hourglass symbol, the Red Rebel Brigades have become one of Extinction Rebellion's most vivid motifs, flaring up like wildfires across the world, lending wordless support to actions and protests. Their power seems to derive from two sources. The first is incongruity, as seen at St Ives: an unexplained, unnerving presence in the mundane backdrops of normal life – which instantly questions that normality, so that the artless reactions of passers-by become suddenly eloquent, the idea of the 'innocent bystander' contentious. This effect was repeated in Truro, Cornwall, during a protest about fast fashion. The Red Rebels stood as if in mourning over a shopping street strewn with the prone bodies of demonstrators acting dead. Right in the middle of all this, a group of four people remained seated on a bench, oblivious, eating pasties. Shoppers paused, faces registering curiosity or anxiety, while others just walked on by. The film of this event is both beautiful and melancholy, capturing the slow drift of scarlet veils

Along with the distinctive black hourglass symbol, the Red Rebel Brigades have become one of Extinction Rebellion's most vivid motifs, springing up like wildfires across the world, lending wordless support to actions and protests.

reflected in the shopfronts of Primark and New Look. The second, more subtle, power of the Red Rebels lies in a teasingly elusive visual familiarity inspired by the costumes. You feel you have seen them somewhere before, perhaps in a Renaissance painting, a film, a history book, a carnival, an allegorical fresco: the headdress and grave expressions recall Bronzino's portrait of Lorenzo the Magnificent (1560), Jan Van Eyck's *Man in a Red Turban* ▶



Robert Campin: Portrait of a Man



Bronzino: Lorenzo de Medici

(1433), Robert Campin's 15th century *Portrait of a Man*, or perhaps Walter Sickert's wraithlike Minnie Cunningham at the *Old Bedford* (1892). The use of red is deliberate, signifying vitality and mortality, the "common blood shared with all species", while the style of the costumes was adapted from those created by an older group called Invisible Theatre. Red compels the eye, setting up an automatic contrast with grey urban settings and green rural ones alike, and a contrast also with the gentle, hypnotic gestures used by the actors. It's a colour that taps into archetypes and folktales (Red Riding Hood, blood on snow) and literary memories, the most apt of these being Edgar Allan Poe's story *Masque of the Red Death* (1842). In the latter, a coterie of the rich and powerful, fearful of the red plague (described as a sort of haemorrhagic fever) quarantine themselves in a castle (gated community) while the common people die outside. When an uninvited guest appears at a grand party tactlessly costumed as the Red Death he provokes fear and rage, though when he is unmasked there is nobody under the costume – the face of death is everyone's and everywhere, and everybody is fatally infected.

Historical echoes haunt photographs taken at various XR actions, an effect amplified when the Red Rebels are in

the shot. Compare a picture taken in Trafalgar Square this October by Catherine Ames, for example, with a colour print from 1793 in the midst of the French Revolution. The latter shows a fete in honour of the Supreme Being – semicircles of red-clad figures in the crowd, while Ames' 2019 photo seems abstracted out of time, a swathe of yellow at the edge of the windblown sky echoing an almost identical sky in Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* (1830). The sense of cultural recognition triggered by the Red Rebels may also owe something to the unconnected but fortuitous appearances of red handmaids as agents of protest, following the TV adaptation of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Extinction Rebellion has only existed for a year, but a striking design aesthetic emerged fast. Within months the hourglass symbol was becoming as recognisable as the CND peace sign or the hammer and sickle; posters appeared with varying messages but a shared graphic identity – a solid black typeface reminiscent of Futura Bold, on green, mauve, blue or yellow. No doubt this cohesive look was seen to be necessary, given the scale and complexity of the climate and biodiversity crisis and the multiple targets addressed - past protests and rebellions, even revolutionary ones, have had narrower,

human-centric aims. Most obviously new was the hard-edged, unsentimental quality in the design – nothing dreamy or New Age, no watercolour flowers, nothing wholesome or reassuring: the bee woodcuts are stark, anatomically correct, likewise the butterfly and the sheep's skull. These graphic principles seem to be providing a frame within which local groups are creating their own posters, banners and paintings. While most of these creations will be instrumental in intent and execution, others, more original, raise questions about borderlines between propaganda, mythmaking, art as rebellion, and art of lasting importance. Crises and revolutions have produced all of these in the past, and the French revolution is a good example – Jacques Louis David was a propagandist for the revolution, then a mythmaker for Napoleon; he was also indisputably a formidable artist.

Artists often say that their inspiration is idiosyncratic and subconscious, and this, combined with the enormity of the questions posed by the climate emergency, make it difficult to generalise about how they are responding. A recent article in the *New Statesman* (5 December) accuses both the curators and the exhibitors in the Royal Academy's current Eco-Visionaries show of melancholic self-indulgence and political passivity: "a lachrymose hand-wringing that fails to meet the emergency of the climate crisis". But artists are not politicians or corporations, and may not be temperamentally inclined to activism; if the value of individual response is discounted, then so is the value of all art, in all its forms. It might be instructive to contrast the work of just two artists. In September 2019, just three weeks before the start of the October Rebellion in London, Damien Hirst

exhibited decorative colour wheels composed of dead butterflies – thousands of them, wings detached from their bodies. You might say, as Jonathan Jones wrote in *The Guardian*, that these works are "mystical, ecstatic paintings" or alternatively you might call it a grotesque display of ecological vandalism. Judging by the photographs, a curious effect of his rigid patterning of multiple species is to nullify and sterilise their iridescent beauty, creating migrainous mandalas in homage to the idea that the natural world is a limitless resource to be raided by humanity.

Meanwhile, in Wales, another artist, Ceri Leeder, has been creating paintings which combine a powerful emotional connection to nature with grief at its destruction. But Leeder's work contains that mysterious extra element, a hidden narrative, or perhaps an objectivity - the splinter of ice that separates art from decoration or illustration of a message. In *Sea Vision*, the figure of the artist stands at an easel to the left of the picture, painting the calm seascape outside, while a great wave surges in through the window, surf washing over the floorboards around the painter's feet. In its twin, *Sea Dream*, we are in the same room, but the sea is now everywhere, a huge fish swimming beside a bed containing a small sleeping figure. These pictures (executed in egg tempera) are open to multiple interpretations, and convey terror, beauty, and an odd sense of inevitability or submission. Her ink drawing titled *We Can Fight This* recalls Samuel Palmer's moonlit sheep, until a closer inspection shows it to be a row of detached heads lying amid ruins - a serene image of destruction that is countered by her studies of a leafless tree titled *Mars Rising*, *Still Hope* which point to sources of optimism in

nesting birds, a single wild flower. Ceri Leeder says that Extinction Rebellion has "tapped into a huge resource, a democratisation of art." Hopefully there will be people who survive to judge this defiant explosion of innovation and creativity in the future.

Josephine Gardiner



The Sea is Rising and So Are We and Fast Fashion is Killing the Planet: Short films produced and edited by by **Senara Wilson Hodges**, On The Beach Productions, 2019. Available on YouTube.

Ceri Leeder: *Sea Vision*, *Sea Dream*; *We Can Fight This*, (left) *Mars Rising* - Some Hope and many other works can be viewed on Ceri Leeder's Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/Ceri.Leeder>

Rebellion in Hong Kong Art

Ho Siu Nam exhibited his latest photography series “The White of the Tree” (2018). The work records the face of the super typhoon Mangkhut that hit Hong Kong the same year. The strongest tropical cyclone since the 1980s caused extensive damage to Hong Kong. Thousands of tree branches broke and were uprooted. The artist captured the body and wounds of the trees after the



Ho Siu Nam: Two Wood Carvings



Ho Siu Nam: Sponge Bombs



Demonstrators

‘Force Majeure’ means that when there are unforeseen, uncontrollable natural phenomena or social phenomena (such as riots, strikes, government interventions, war acts), the parties in the contract cannot perform the contract, and the defaulting party could no longer have any liability for breach of contract, the responsibility may be waived.

natural disasters, recording the vulnerability of the individual under strong violence, such as during the shooting.

In addition to the photographic works, Ho Siu Nam also exhibited two wood carvings. Every living plant, in the time and space that it survived, must have been associated with people and things around it with different stories and memories. For these works he used the names of daughter, bridge, and mother.

People set up monuments for heroes and memorable events; Ho Siu Nam commemorates trees. Just as after the typhoon, people will return to ‘normal’ as soon as possible, and will not think twice when they quickly clear the broken branches and leaves, and all the things that hinder normality will disappear.

Mr Ho once left the sky blank in one of his photographic works, and then randomly filled in the squares in 12 colors. He deliberately chose only yellow, blue, green and red to fill the sky. ‘Yellow’ represents demonstrators who advocate peace, rationality, non-violence and support for renegotiation. This color is derived from the 2014 Yellow Umbrella Movement. ‘Blue’ stands for those who support the government and support the police, ‘Green’ is the uniform color of the Hong Kong anti-riot police, and ‘Red’ is the color of the Chinese government. The four symbolic colors in the photo shrouded the earth, while they summarized and fully reflected the current social situation in Hong Kong.

When I was a child there were only iron bars on the window and no glass. Every time a rainy day came, my mother would place a long rubber sheet on the window to protect us from the wind. Since childhood, Ho Siu Nam’s impression of the pitted rubber sheet is to protect his family and guard his home. In the recent political

movements in Hong Kong, anti-riot police often use long sheets to protect themselves. Whether confronted with demonstrators or advancing to disperse people, the police hold up long shields and knock on the ground to create a giant whistle to warn demonstrators. Is the role of these anti-riot long shields for protection or to drive people away? Because of the similarity of the shape of the windshield and the police anti-riot shields, the artist copied a whole row of anti-riot shields with transparent pitted panels and installed them on the exhibition window. Ho Siu Nam's self-made rubber sheet long shield is also titled "could not be intimidated artist". What about the general public? What can they do?

After the super typhoon Mangkhut, Hong Kong people who are eager to restore their city's appearance will redefine the word 'normal' in this ongoing political man-made storm.

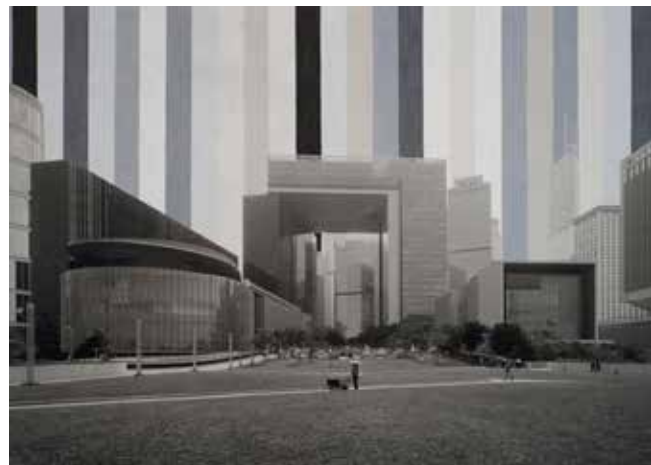
There is another response to the political movement: the sponge bomb. Despite its cute name, it is obviously a lethal weapon. The artist gives it a bright color to make it even more appealing. The truth is that the momentum of shooting with firearms is definitely not the general idea of a 'sponge'.

Since June, a wave of millions of people have marched and demonstrated in the streets and more have continued to emerge. During the protesting, everyone has shouted slogans and made demands. Ho Siu Nam recorded many demonstrations and recorded these slogans. The audience is invited to listen carefully, understand the demands of the demonstrators, and understand the mentality of the demonstrators at this time. In the latter part of the video, the impact begins. When the exhibition opened, the movement was still developing; what will happen in the future?

After the super typhoon Mangkhut, Hong Kong people who are eager to restore their city's appearance will redefine the word 'normal' in this ongoing political, man-made storm. As a resident of Hong Kong, I have experienced countless typhoons, lived in public housing, and been touched by the development process of this political movement from different perspectives. After viewing this "force majeure" solo exhibition, there is an indescribable deep experience in my heart.

Leung Suk Ching

Hong Kong Blindspot Gallery September 10th - November 2nd, 2019



Not Every Day II



The Umbrella Salad XIV



Every Day

I Left My Heart in Leipzig



Installation shot of Paula Ábalos' video Diarios de Trabajos (2019)

After three months at an artist residency in Leipzig, I am now back in the Vermont woods. With temperatures plummeting, another storm now on the horizon, I keep thinking of my last days in Leipzig. Since I visited this city for the first time in the winter of 2018, I have fallen for it. There is no other way to describe my affection for a place unlike any other I know. Its long tradition of print and book culture, music, and the visual arts, paired with a free-spirited people, makes this city a unique destination which has, by and large, stayed under the radar. For much of the time since the fall of the Berlin Wall, it has been overshadowed by places like Dresden to the east and Berlin to the north. It is only a question of time until Leipzig becomes a new cultural hotspot on a global scale. Leipzig is already the fastest growing city in Germany. And with capital and talent pouring into the city, the rising cost of living and gentrification are starting to take

hold of its neighborhoods. This is impacting low-income households and artists living there. My hope is that Leipzig and its people can maintain their fierce independence, sense of agency and creative problem-solving in determining the future of their city.

There is a lot of painting there: various manifestations of what painting is today, not only figurative, but also conceptual and anything in between, no matter if it is an installation, sculpture or a two-dimensional surface. You want it, Leipzig has it. But instead of deciding what paintings to discuss, I kept going back to a video that I saw as part of the film festival called DOK, which takes place every year in Leipzig and is one of the longest-running documentary festivals in the world. Part of the programming for DOK includes a selection of films and videos that are closer to video art and art film pieces than to documentary film. This exhibition is titled 'Paradoks'

and featured several works, among them a two-channel video by Leipzig artist Paula Ábalos. Her 30-minute piece *Diarios de Trabajos* (Work Diaries) from 2019 is exactly what the title describes: a video diary of various odd jobs Ábalos held over the past five years in order to finance her artistic practice. These jobs included working in retail, as a kitchen assistant, preparing sausages in a stadium, and working in a package distribution center (where she was the only woman among her co-workers). Ábalos explains how the project started when she did not have enough time to make work because of her supermarket job. She “decided to transform the space of her job into her studio” and by doing so, the video diaries “became a way of recovering lost time in which the author [Ábalos] rents her body to companies, trying to reappropriate those hours, so they don’t vanish.”

Paula Ábalos’ video is remarkable because of how it ties together various aspects that govern the lives of most artists: a dysfunctional labor market which relies on cheap labor, capitalism which happily partakes in buying and reselling art but ignores the economic strains which dictate artists’ ability to produce work, and lastly, the double-role of artists who deliver products meant for consumption – either working in retail, in the service industry, etc., or by producing art. Ábalos touches on all of these layered and interconnected aspects. We witness a version of Charlie Chaplin’s worker in *Modern Times* with

... works like Paula Ábalos’ *Diarios de Trabajos* are more successful at dissecting the internal structures of our time ...

the exception that there is very little comic relief in Paula Ábalos routine. Similar to Chaplin’s worker, Ábalos is absorbed by the mechanisms she is trying to describe, represent and critique. Her work relies on her odd jobs and the jobs she performs have long become part of her artwork. Her matter-of-tone voiceover only adds to the repetitive and detached activities we see her carrying out in her work diaries. There is no pleasure or attachment to any of the performed acts. It is pure necessity and survival. As a painter myself, I would be the last person to point at contemporary painting and question the impact it can have on how we see the world we live in. But works like Paula Ábalos’ *Diarios de Trabajos* are more successful at dissecting the internal structures of our time and by doing so, it makes me hopeful. There are still artists who are not looking away, who take notice and reclaim agency over a system that wishes they did not exist in the first place.

Viktor Witkowski

If It Works, **Don’t** Fix It

I love the Cornish Riviera Sleeper, the night train that runs six nights a week between Penzance and London Paddington Station. The beds are comfortable, the very pleasant lounge car offers free hot drinks and biscuits, the staff are uniformly helpful, kind, friendly and polite. I love this train so much that I was one of those prepared to spend a night lying on the cold floor of Paddington station in protest at the threat of its termination. (Will someone tell those pompous souls who compose standard train announcements that when a train comes to its last stop it’s the journey that terminates, not the train?) Happily, with no need for this dramatic demo, the Sleeper was reprieved, and long may it flourish. So it distresses me to write this article.

The Sleeper, alas, has been redesigned. The compartments now have more curves than angles: curved mirrors and a curved sink-top and sink. There are needless cupboard doors hiding the hangers for clothes, only one hanger

being high enough now to hold a coat. There is a large pull-out table over each bunk, too large to put down when you’re actually in bed. The wonderful little net against the wall which safely held your book, spectacle case, phone and whatever while you slept is gone, and there are now some kind of seat backs on either side of the pullout table, presumably to lean against if in daytime the bed converts to a seat. This makes the bed so much narrower that even a small person like myself, especially with the year-round thick duvet that takes up yet more wall space, is likely to fall out of bed. I should add that the new reading lights are excellent.

So why? Why has a tried and true basic sleeping car design been ditched for more up-to-date-looking ‘modernity’? The new design (it’s tacky anyway) would make sense only if passengers, as in the old long-distance 1st Class Sleeper compartments, planned to spend both nights and days there and needed conversions to daytime use. This is

never the case with the Riviera Sleeper, where the beds are already made up when you get on and you expect to get off when or before the night is over.

Form follows function, said the renowned art critic and historian Wilhelm Robert Worringer, and that should be the aesthetic of good design. The new form does not serve the Sleeper train's actual function as well as the old. This brings me to the title of this article. What works is constantly being fixed, using more of the world's dwindling resources and ending up no better and often worse. In the wake of the admitted climate crisis and Extinction Rebellion (at last!) fashion is now much criticized and rightly, but fashion at least was change by definition. It is not just clothes that sport constant change, it's everything we use, everything we buy. The words 'new and improved' are devouring our planet. New may or may not be true, improved is doubtful. In any case the real function of 'new and improved' is to make the old look too old, even if it was better, and to make us keep buying and buying because if we don't our economy will grind to a halt. There are countless examples, but I'll mention just two things I have used most of my life, the toothbrush and the mountain boot.

The toothbrush, the basic toothbrush, has a basic shape. It's a handle with a little brush at the end, which used long ago to be natural bristle on wood and is now plastic. It makes sense to have different texture brushes, for more or less sensitive teeth, but go to any druggist and look at

the amazing array of shapes and handles, each one no doubt first advertised as the 'new and improved'. Does anyone need all those shapes and handles? What we do need is all brushes to have changeable heads to save all that throwaway plastic.

The mountain boot: in my parents' youth there was one boot, for walking, climbing, everything. It had a rubber sole with metal prongs, the Tricouni sole. Then came the Vibram sole, thick black rubber with cross and bar reliefs, crampons put on over your boots are then worn for new ice. The Vibram sole was a huge improvement. I have walked on other soles and never felt the same security. So why all these intricate new sole shapes? And why, with metal hooks now replacing holes near the top of the boot (yes, the hooks too were a real improvement) do my latest boots have a useless extra hook, which does nothing but get in one's way when lacing up?

What we and the earth clearly need is not unending 'new and improved' products we don't need, but a new and improved economic system, which prices and taxes things according to their ecological impact, preserves good design and fosters better public services instead of more greedy, destructive, pointless consumption. If I had internet skills, I would start an 'ifitworksdontfixit' blog to which people could contribute their own examples. Does anyone want to try?

Frances Oliver

Fervid Art from Life on the Edge (1986)

SUMMARY: THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART'S "BERLINART: 1961-1987" IS MARRED BOTH BY SERIOUS OMISSIONS AND THE INCLUSION OF TOO MANY ARTISTS. NEVERTHELESS, THE SHOW IS IMPORTANT AND WORTH SEEING BECAUSE THE ART PRODUCED IN THAT UNIQUE CITY REFLECTS THE ROLE OF POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ISSUES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ART IN THE 20TH CENTURY.

The moment you enter it, the Museum of Modern Art's "Berlinart: 1961-1987" plunges you into an atmosphere as dark, dense and edgy as the city itself.

The brooding cityscapes that open the show in New York are like an operatic backdrop. On the right is the looming facade of K.H. Hodicke's "War Ministry." On the left is Paul-Armand Cette's deadpan photographic survey of trees spreading their leafy branches over the parks of



Helmut Missendorf Flugzeugtraum 1982



Baselitz's mock heroic Die Grossen Freunde 1965

Berlin's bombed-out palaces and embassies.

Dead ahead is Georg Baselitz's mock heroic painting of two Wagnerian figures in lederhosen standing amid ruins; a fallen flag lies at their feet. Collectively, these works and others near them speak eloquently of a great city brought low by war and isolation but still intensely and dangerously alive.

Step a little farther into the show and you are struck by Bernd Zimmer's paint-splattering, gold-and-lapis impression of Berlin nightlife hanging next to Hodicke's "Nocturne," a painting of the city as a stalking cat playing with a speeding car. And then there is Helmut Middendorf's "Airplane Dream," a vision of the ultimate 20th century nightmare — a huge plane flying over burning buildings lit up against the night sky.

It is impossible to detach this art from the geographic-political situation of West Berlin as an outpost of the

West isolated within the Soviet bloc. It is no accident that the bracketing dates of the exhibition begin with 1961, the year the Berlin Wall was erected by the East German government.

The opening gallery is a portrait of Berlin as a pressure cooker with the valve stopped up. Its powerful paintings engender a sense of recognition and identity that caused President John F Kennedy during a 1963 visit to say, "Ich bin ein Berliner."

Unfortunately, the show does not sustain this intensity. Curator Kynaston McShine has tried to convey the multiple levels and different constellations of artistic activity in Berlin and its history and atmosphere over 26 years. But it is simply too massive a task to accomplish in a single show.

The exhibition includes 55 artists from 10 countries, many of whom made only fleeting visits to Berlin. ►



Rainer Fetting Grosse Dusche 1981

Christo's project of wrapping the Reichstag, the German Parliament building burned in 1933, exists only as a drawing. American artist Jonathan Borofsky stayed long enough to execute one of his trademark running men on the Berlin Wall. The government of West Germany subsidized numerous foreign artists to do their thing in Berlin; too many have been included.

Given this overload, it is not surprising that the show bogs down in its own complexity. Artists who are really identified with Berlin — Bernd Koberling, Dieter Hacker, even Markus Lupertz — never have the opportunity to gain definition or come to life.

McShine also lavishes vast wall space on relatively minor figures, such as the Austrian Gunter Brus, or on rising reputations, such as Eva-Maria Schon. Overall, the show has the catchall appearance of a local survey rather than a considered distillation of the immense influence Berlin has exerted on recent contemporary art. It seems like a glorious opportunity missed.

McShine does have his heroes, though. Chief among them, and rightly so, is Baselitz, who with Eugen Schonebeck published a landmark manifesto, "Pandemonium," in 1961, the fateful year that begins the show. Reasserting their ties with the German expressionists of the early 20th century, these two artists, both of whom emigrated from East Germany to study in Berlin, revived the tradition of intensely emotional, gestural, figurative painting that has since become the hallmark of recent German art.

It is almost as if the building of the wall functioned as an amnesia-curing trauma. In the century's first decades, Berlin was where expressionism's widely scattered seeds

flowered into the most intense bloom in writing, theater, the visual arts and film. All this activity was brought to a grinding halt by the Nazis.

Immediately after the war, German artists wanted only to rebuild their links with the international avant-garde, then dominated by the New York abstract expressionists. German nationality and art history were forbidden territory.

Baselitz is represented in the show by 22 paintings and drawings, far more than any

other artist. For those who are familiar only with his later paintings of upside-down figures, these early works are both enlightening and impressive.

Several galleries are devoted to conceptual and performance artists, many of whom belonged to a loose alliance of latter-day Dadaists known as Fluxus. Particularly memorable is the work of Wolf Vostell, whose savage collage series "Berlin Fever" recalls the collages of an earlier Berlin Dadaist, John Heartfield.

Recorded in photographs, the metaphorical playacting of performance artists makes a kind of absurd sense in the politically pressured atmosphere of Berlin. The most famous German performance artist, Joseph Beuys, swept up and exhibited the refuse from a May Day parade.

In Berlin, the extremes of conceptualism and expressionism were played out against a conflicted backdrop of harsh political realities on the one hand and generous cultural subsidies from the West German government on the other.

American Allan Kaprow built "A Sweet Wall," concrete blocks cemented with bread and jam.

A third nexus of significant activity, represented in the exhibit, is the Moritzplatz group consisting of Rainer Fetting, Middendorf, Luciano Castelli and Salome — known collectively as the New Wild Ones. These four take expressionist defiance to new levels of violence, filling vast expanses of canvas with images of transvestites,

nude men, artists as martyrs. At best, their works convey a seething mass hysteria. At worst they expose the core of nothingness that often lies behind the fury of expressionism.

As the catalog makes clear, there is one important strain of Berlin art not represented — the critical realism of Wolfgang Petrick, Peter Sorge, H.J. Diehl and Ulrich Baehr. The absence of their social and political commentary makes the show's portrayal of the city less credible.

In Berlin, the extremes of conceptualism and expressionism were played out against a conflicted backdrop of harsh political realities on the one hand and generous cultural subsidies from the West German government on the other.

It is interesting that the group of artists who tried to

portray directly the ugly realities of the situation instead of romanticizing them has been read out of Berlin history in this exhibit. Instead, the curator has chosen to include the work of publicity-hungry, peripatetic avant-gardists such as Christo and Borofsky, who bring out the same bag of stale tricks no matter where they are.

Despite these serious omissions and the chaotic feel of the show, "Berlinart: 1961–1987," which runs through Sept. 8, is well worth seeing and pondering. New York bohemianism is an artificial construct; Berliners truly live on the edge. As a result, their art revives the passionate engagement with political, social and cultural issues that played a profoundly important role in the development of 20th century art.

Jane Addams Allen 1986

Scouting the Blogs with Miklos Legrady



Francis Bacon: Personnage

Hyperallergic:
Brooklyn Museum Is Trying to Sell a Francis Bacon Painting the Artist Wanted Destroyed.

<https://hyperallergic.com/522727/francis-bacon-brooklyn-museum/>

I never thought highly of Francis Bacon. This painting doesn't differ that much from his other work.. Since the value of a work of art consists of the artist's reputation, with marketing, this painting will sell for \$6 million.



Luchita Hurtado: I Live I Die I Will Be Reborn, installation view, Serpentine Galleries (© 2019 Luchita Hurtado, photo by Hugo Glendinning)

Hyperallergic

<https://hyperallergic.com/522996/luchita-hurtado-at-the-serpentine-gallery/>

Luchita Hurtado's show at Serpentine is being sold on her age, another brand of art identity. In 1986 she was even

invited to be one of the Guerrilla Girls. All of which means nothing because it's the work that counts. Painting requires a special relationship with the visual cortex and Hurtado has it, definitely someone working well with non-verbal visual language, a show worth seeing.



Activists crash private party at the Museum of Modern Art to demand prison divestment.

The protesters gathered outside the museum to call on MoMA and its board member Larry Fink, CEO of BlackRock, to divest themselves from private prison companies.

<https://hyperallergic.com/523358/activists-infiltrate-moma-party/>

Some issues are so serious we have to act on them, private

prisons fall in that category. One thing that concerns us with activism is mob mentality, so this moment can serve as a look at the negative and positive sides of activism. In this case activism is a good move.



Pravin Mishra has filed civil defamation charges against an independent journalist, following a number of similar suits as the #MeToo movement grows in India.

<https://hyperallergic.com/522642/artist-province-mishra-files-defamation-lawsuit-against-his-sexual-assault-accuser-in-india/>

Artist Pravin Mishra files defamation lawsuit against his sexual assault accuser in India

The #MeToo movement is changing our social awareness by spotlighting abusive behavior protected by tradition, wealth or influence; those tempted by bad behavior will know they'll be exposed for it now or later. Since we live in an imperfect world, false accusations do happen, as with the *Rolling Stone* article "A Rape on Campus" by Sabrina Erdely. *Rolling Stone* retracted the story in its entirety because it failed scrutiny. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Rape_on_Campus .

Paul Chan's 'Odysseus and the Bathers' at Greene Naftali in NYC. The sculptures recreate Cezanne and Picasso. Art historian and critic Barbara Rose complains of ignorant and lazy artists whose thinking stops at the



Cezanne's Bathers: Blake Gopnik

idea of putting a found object in a museum. Nor does it have to be a found object, an artist can be just lazy or lack personal vision. Whoever imagines this to be art truly lacks right brain functions, for the right brain informs us of shades and subtleties, and tells us what is valuable and what is not.

<https://www.facebook.com/blake.gopnik/videos/2715828111810131/?t=0> - video credit: Blake Gopnik



David Fisher is in Collingwood, Ontario: "A portable piece of entertainment technology that has lasted 50 years. No upgrades, no compatibility issues... doesn't even require overnight charging."

I'm a painter. It doesn't help that the auto-focus in my paintbrush is busted. I've also upgraded to auto-focus and colour correction built directly into my canvases. Yes, it does make for a bulky battery package on the back of the stretcher, but that's the price of creativity. I'm now saving up for that paint which scans your mind for your favorite image and recreates it for you on the canvas, all you have to do is sign the finished product. That leaves the artist to concentrate on his or her vocation in art, which is marketing. Only proper marketing can make an artist.



Paintings by Sarah Bell
at Chapel Street
Art Penzance
chapelstreetart.co.uk

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Artemisia Gentileschi: **the** painting of the 17th century

At Christmas the Diocesan Museum of Milan traditionally exhibits a masterpiece, and this year the choice has fallen on *The Adoration of the Magi* by Artemisia Gentileschi. The painting comes from the Cathedral of Pozzuoli, near Naples.

Born in Rome in 1593, the daughter of the painter Orazio, she became acquainted with the Rome art scene at a young age. She was influenced both by her father's style and Caravaggio's works. Resolute and talented, Artemisia succeeded in realising her childhood desire to become a great painter despite many dramatic difficulties in her life. She was the first woman accepted at the Accademia di Arte del Disegno in Florence in 1616, where she was also involved in a terrible rape trial. Once back in Rome in 1620, she became a well-known painter with commissions from princes, cardinals and noblemen.

After a short period in Venice, she moved to Naples for many years, and then to England where she worked with her father at the court of Charles I. Back in Italy after the death of her father Orazio, she moved to Naples where she remained until her death, around 1656.

During her first period in Naples, Artemisia received a first public commission by the Church for the renovation of Pozzuoli Cathedral, spared from the Vesuvius eruption in 1631. The Spanish Bishop, Martin de Leòn Càrdenas, commissioned three oil canvases for a triptych in the new, large choir; one of these was *The Adoration of the Magi*.

Naples in the 1630s was an important city with flourishing commerce, culture and art, where the heritage of Caravaggio was still present and alive, as was his influence on the local painting style and artists, even if clients preferred more classical styles and moderate effects.

In *The Adoration of the Magi* Gentileschi combines a calm and devotional atmosphere with measured naturalism through the use of different shades of red, brown, blue and yellow. She focuses on reality, the looks on the faces of the characters, through pictorial representation of light and shadow.

The Virgin, portrayed as a woman of the people, gently presents her Son to the Magi so they can adore Him. Young and beautiful, Mary shows both dignity and sweetness, while the Magi, kings or astronomers or wise-men from the East, express the amazement of the mystery of god in front of the Mystery Of God, who becomes flesh to save all mankind.



Adoration of the Magi by Artemisia Gentileschi

Here Artemisia Gentileschi faces a traditional subject very differently from her first dramatic works. Her painting shows some inexperience, for instance in the odd proportions between the Virgin sitting on a rock and the imposing size of the Magi, but the quality of the painting is undisputable.

Artemisia Gentileschi was not the only female painter of her time, but she was the most famous, the most appreciated and sought-after. It was said that "she was the only woman in Italy who has ever known what painting, colours and impasto are".

Graziella Colombo

Giorgio de Chirico

Among the many Italian artists who lived in the past century, the painter Giorgio de Chirico was undoubtedly one who always managed to stir up emotions and astonishment, as well as much criticism. In order to celebrate this 20th-century master, Palazzo Reale organized a retrospective exhibition which includes hundreds of artworks, including juvenile paintings, portraits and mannequins, all displayed in a thematic itinerary made up of hardly repeatable comparisons and combinations.

Born in 1888 in Volos, Thessaly, de Chirico was the son of a railway engineer. After his father's death he left Greece with his family and travelled to Italy and abroad. He always stayed true to his Hellenic roots and to classic mythology, and thanks to his amazing technical ability he was known as "Pictor Optimus". He managed nonetheless to modernise classical art, dispossessing art of its usual content, rules and tendencies.

Fascinated by Nietzsche's philosophical theories, including the idea that the whole world was a "non-sense", he considered art as a product, born from enigma, and the mystery enclosed in all things, especially the most simple and insignificant ones. He transfigured ordinary objects, and his paintings are filled with cookies, set squares, maps and all the other objects present in his home and life. He also turned myth into enigma, giving birth to a new artistic avant-garde movement called 'metaphysical art'.

He exhibited *La Matinée Angoissante* as early as 1912, including all the elements later found in the famous series 'Italian Squares', which are the core of his metaphysical art.

Squares are envisioned as encased in rectangles, in which a clock, a tower, statues, a train and the perspective escape from the ever-present archways and piazzas. Everything is overcast with a feeling of suspense, and appears under an unnatural light; shadows take on a physical presence that stand out upon a clear horizon.

De Chirico made Nietzsche's concept of super-human his own. He believed himself to be the best and in 1912 he painted an almost narcissistic self-portrait, depicting himself like Nietzsche in a similar posture to that held by the German philosopher in the famous painting.

He was very sarcastic and caustic regarding life, he enjoyed scandalizing the art community: he portrayed himself wearing only his underwear, dressed up as a bullfighter and once also with his torso petrified.



The Disquieting Muses

Criticisms didn't bother him and he kept switching from figurative to metaphysical art, though always staying true to himself and his origins.

In 1992 he painted *The Prodigal Son*. When painting the statuary father who hugs the mannequin son, his goal wasn't to represent the Gospel parable, but to allude to the necessity of returning to the rules of the old masters after all the avant-garde experimentations. All this represented de Chirico moving back to his homeland and to classicism after the years he spent in Paris.

In 1934 he created the fascinating series 'Mysterious Baths', where these same elements can be found in every art piece: boats, men both dressed and naked submerged in 'water' with the floor of the pool having a parquet motif. Everything appears still and mysterious in a surreal perspective, as if it were a visual "non-sense".

By the end of the 50s, with his painting *The Disquieting Muses*, he began a new journey, which was almost a repetition game: he returned to his old themes and subjects. Together with his brother Savinio he started to replicate his metaphysical work.

He combined past and present, truth and falsehood through irony; he took part in everything even though he belonged to no one, as he lived in his own world, that is the world of the Greek myths of his youth.

He died in Rome in 1978.

Loretta Pettinato

London

The Pre-Raphaelite Sisters

During a recent visit to the National Portrait Gallery in London I saw an exhibition showcasing 12 women who form part of what the organisers of this show call the hidden Pre-Raphaelite Movement. It is curated by Dr Jan Marsh, art historian and writer, who has a particular interest in 19th and early 20th-century painting by women.

The director of the National Gallery, Dr Nicholas Cullinan, writes in the forward to the exhibition catalogue that after two centuries the Pre-Raphaelite movement and its associate members are still popular today. He goes on to say that the gallery has never hosted an exhibition of the work of this group and feels it is time to redress the balance with a particular emphasis on the importance of the women in the group. However, there are a number of paintings by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Millais, among others, illustrating the importance of the female muse as model and sitter.

In her article in the catalogue, Dr Marsh discusses this Pre-Raphaelite sisterhood and lists the 12 women. The female painters' work exhibited here is well worth a view. Of Joanna Boyce Wells, who died in childbirth aged only 30, Dante Gabriel Rossetti said: "She is a great artist sacrificed to bringing more kids into the world". [Marsh Jan Dr. 2018 p.95]. Ref catalogue.] Other painters include Maria Spartili Stillman, whose work was admired by Henry James among others. Originally a model, she trained with Ford Madox Brown (a PRB member). Evelyn de Morgan trained at the Slade School and had some of her authenticated work cited as that of Burne Jones, though this was rectified eventually. Lizzie Siddal, one of the first models/muses for Dante Gabriel Rossetti, was self-taught, and her work here demonstrates an understanding of the use of colour, with her characters' fluidity of movement clearly visible in work such as *Lady Affixing Pennant to a Knight's Spear* (1856). It is a successful painting in spite of the lack of technical skill.

The premise of this exhibition is to show the group as worthy of a place in history. Part of the argument centres on the notion of the life as a model and draws parallels with the modern day models who, like the Pre-Raphaelite women, are not passive mannequins but active participants in the artistic process. Another important historical milestone is that the Brotherhood/Sisterhood was one of the first to have a black muse/model, Fanny



Madonna Pietra degli Scrovigni by Marie Spartali Stillman (1884)

Eaton (who, sadly, little is known about). She modelled for many paintings, some of which can be seen in this series, such as *Study of Fanny Eaton* by Joanna Boyce Wells (1861).

Christina Rossetti, who did draw well (see exhibition room about her) was a very good poet, probably most famous for her poem "Goblin Market". She often wrote with the group and they illustrated a number of her poems, (see Goblin Market illustrations). Her portrait by her brother Dante Gabriel is here, showing a very thoughtful profile.

This is a wide-ranging exhibition with many hitherto unknown biographical details; the importance of these background figures is demonstrated by inclusion of important partners who managed their husband/partners' lives. Effie Gray Millais, a reasonable water colourist, had been married to John Ruskin, himself a supporter of the



Joanna Boyce Wells, Study of Fanny Eaton

male PRB. Effie's marriage to John was unconsummated and various reasons have been given for this. One of the more colourful stories claims Ruskin had only seen prepubescent sculptures of women without pubic hair when he studied Ancient Greek and Roman Art. Effie's first biographer, Mary Lutyens, says this is the reason he found her "unclothed person repugnant". (*Guardian Review*, Thorpe Vanessa, March 2010). Ruskin biographers have denied this. Once her marriage to Ruskin was annulled, she married John Everett Millais, becoming his muse/model and business partner. As well as a mother, she appears in some of Millais's paintings (See: *Study for the Eve of St Agnes*. Marsh Jan Dr. 2018). Another wife/business partner is Jane Morris (also a model), married to William Morris, a PRB supporter. She was a very good embroiderer and became a business partner to many of the men and women, organising sittings, costumes etc. as well as acting as a model for her husband and other painters in the group. (see *La Belle Iseult* by William Morris 1858, or *Study of Guinevere* by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1857).

This article just dips a toe in a subjective non-academic way into a world inhabited by these painters, models/muses/business partners. It is for the viewer to decide their place in history, but it is at least worthy of a visit to the National Portrait Gallery before January 26th. It has not been possible for copyright reasons to include all

images of the works. It is also worth noting that Dora Marr, muse of Picasso, has an exhibition of her work at the Tate Modern, London, until March 2020. Perhaps it is time to look again at those women who are both the invisible and visible symbols of their male counterparts.

Maggi Livingstone

The Pre-Raphaelite Sisters, National Portrait Gallery Publishing, 2019. The women featured are: Joanna Wells, Fanny Cornforth, Maria Spartali Stilman, Evelyn de Morgan, Christina Rossetti, Georgina Burne-Jones, Effie Millais, Elizabeth Siddal, Maria Sambaco and Fanny Eaton.



Effie Gray by Millais



Cornwall

Aaron Broadhurst - Art at Redwing Gallery, Penzance - November 2019

These paintings are boldly outlined pop-art style images, easily recognisable with flat contrasting colours. They are unusual at the moment, especially in Penzance - not evoking the atmospheric landscape, not gestural or abstract, not lusciously painterly.

There's a portrait of his wife Nicole, very like her despite its simplifications - arresting in its impact. There's a tin of mackerel on a plate, a lifeboat, an upended car and some guns.

On referring to the list of works, priced £900 to £1,400, I find out the mackerel refers humorously to the popular William Scott image in the Tate of mackerel not in a tin. The car refers to the child abuser Jimmy Saville's car, a man said in the provided note to be a spiritual adviser to the Prince of Wales.

The gun refers to one used by a white racist who killed

nine African Americans in South Carolina, and the gun is said to have been his birthday present.

So I learn that the artist is politically engaged, that his pictures have meaningful references - but without the notes I wouldn't have got these references. Without the notes these are paintings that might be glamorising the gun, just picturing a car crash, illustrating a tin of fish and portraying a woman's face.

It's a problem – how to make comments on issues through art. It's difficult. This artist paints confidently and makes an impact, but the actual images do not convey the ideas that motivate him and which he documents to make the viewer aware of them.

Banksy manages to get the whole message over in the image. Maybe Aaron doesn't want to do this, he wants the first impact and then sometimes a second meaning from reading about it.

Mary Fletcher

'Protected by Alarms'. Anima Mundi

Lesley Hale, who is involved with the project to invest in community housing in the building that is being used for this show, had the very bright idea of suggesting it to Joseph Clarke of Anima Mundi. He has taken the opportunity to show 19 of his stable of artists in this alternative place, a dilapidated building.

Lesley has largely been left with the unpaid invigilation, in the hopes of raising interest and funds for the housing project.

There was a black and white film showing by Mark Jenkin called *Bronco's House*. Unfortunately, the duration was not printed on the catalogue list, which was hard to read its pale, grey, tiny font in dim lighting. Other visitors told me the film was made in the same style as Jenkin's recently acclaimed *Bait*. It was rather slow moving and brooding, but conveyed a compelling atmosphere of probable tragedy as a pregnant woman and her partner sought to reclaim a stone-built house somewhere near Newlyn. I left before the end, later finding out that it ran for 44 minutes.

A hole in the shutters revealed a surprising view of Smeaton's Pier. I thought it was a pity this experience was not consciously incorporated into the show, but maybe most people saw it. It made me think how lovely it might be to live in the building once it is renovated and available

as affordable housing.

The 19 artists had not in fact responded to the space or to the housing issue, but the curator had chosen to exhibit works that fitted some possibly political or social agenda, to some extent.

The most starkly current was a large painting by Paul Benney, *Grenfell Tower* (the sleep of reason), which was said to incorporate ash from the tragic fire that destroyed the block of flats (due to it being clad with highly flammable material). This painting was lit from the floor and looked dramatic and moving.

Equally dramatic was Tim Shaw's *Parliament*, which was a room full of ragged, threatening looking rooks, plumage fluttering in the breeze from an open window, with a chattering soundtrack. An obvious satirical swipe.

Carlos Zapata had a sad tall wooden figure holding a tiny piece of inhabited land in his hand. It was made more effective by being shown in a small dimly lit room, all the more poignant.

Then there was a surprising embroidered banner, gorgeously colourful and criss-crossed with political remarks such as, 'It's been ingrained into my very being that the Tories are the embodiment of pure human evil.' The artist was Henry Hussey, whose solo show at Anima Mundi was about to open. St. Ives is used to good taste

and seascapes, so this show was a delight.

Anima Mundi is the sort of expensive gallery that can intimidate people who don't feel part of the art world, but by crossing the road and being alternative I think Joseph Clarke is to be congratulated on creating a way in for those who dare to enter for an art adventure that will

make them think.

Mary Fletcher

Anima Mundi at the buildings opposite their gallery in Street an Pol, October - mid November, Tues to Sat, 11-4 daily, free admission

Two Houses: One Built on Sand

At Penlee House an interesting show explained the founding of the Penwith Society and included documents such as one where Ben Nicholson defends modern art as a new language. Also included were the controversial minutes of the Penwith Society when three categories of art were instituted: traditional, abstract and craft.

Centre stage as visitors entered was Marian Hocken's *The Hollow Men* from 1955, which referred to her personal relationships within the artists' community. Cruel remarks about this painting probably led to the artist becoming a recluse. In the picture are three 'joannie' wooden figures above a view of St Ives, the grave of Alfred Wallis, and some tarot cards. It is telling a tale that is now obscure, but moving towards a simplified use of form.

I gleaned this long-lost scandal from the talk by Robin Lenman, who was inviting his audience to contribute their responses and brought in remarks from Will Gompertz's book, *Think Like An Artist*. Having this knowledgeable person to inform and provoke really added to the experience.

Other works included a gentle, sweet and thoughtful drawing by Barbara Hepworth of two girls with teacups from 1949, the year the Penwith Society formed, breaking from the St Ives Society. The latter still survives and now shows a wider variety of art than the formerly more adventurous Penwith, now dominated by its past allegiance to non-figurative art.

The three Bryan Wynter paintings were outstanding, the 1957 *Mineral World* being a complex layered composition

of structures and colours, while a Braque-influenced Patrick Heron presented a jigsaw puzzle of pink, green, blue and yellow with white outlines - a table in front of a window. Without Heron's writing and American connections, it is doubtful whether the fame of these St Ives artists would have spread so far.

Terry Frost's *A Walk in the Snow*, made during his time teaching in Leeds, needed its title to show us his way of thinking. By contrast, Wilhemina Barns-Graham apparently felt no need to hint at narrative in her powerful *Lilac and Amber* gouache from 1960.

Tony Shiel's *Four Frightened Bathers* (1963) shows a move to the surreal and wild, using human forms (as he was said to oppose the 'tasteful' stuff'), that I feel was a helpful calm sanctuary from the horrors of WW2 and a way of recovering balance and sanity.

Unfortunately, it seems no book about the show and its important documentation of one of the major transformations in art history in the 20th century is to be made, but I hope enough is kept for future use and look forward to seeing the riches of the archive.

Mary Fletcher

Creative Tensions: The Penwith Society of Artists 1949-1960 Penlee House, Penzance, UK, September 14 to November 16, 2019

The Penwith - A Society Like No Other - 1961 onwards Penwith Gallery, St. Ives, UK, October 5 to November 2, 2019

Postscript to Mary Fletcher

I knew Marion Hocken and have many letters from her over several years' of correspondence. Cornish-born, Marion was one of the founder members of the Penwith Society of Artists, but she was pushed aside by the modernist incomers. She told me that she painted *The Hollow Men* in one night to represent how she felt St Ives had sold its soul to tourism and the new wave of artists with their different mores. The painting takes its title from T.S.Eliot's poem of the same name; its meaning is far from obscure. The death of the town is illustrated by numerous gravestones and memorials. A fishing trawler

lies on its side on the harbour beach along with a dead fish. Trailing ivy winds its way through lobster pots, now put on gravestones in place of the Victorian glass bell jars. Alfred Wallis would turn in his grave. Three female Joannie dolls, also called Judas dolls because they were two-faced, take centre stage. These dolls were whittled by fishermen in the winter months. I believe the figure on the right is meant to be Barbara Hepworth. I hope to write a longer article on Marion next year.

Victoria Howard

(We look forward to reading it. Ed.)

India in Venice



Shilpa Gupta: For in your tongue I cannot fit (100 Jailed-Poets) Venice 2019

Are all the senses actively taking part in the fruition of an aesthetic experience so that we can be said to 'benefit' from a work of art?

The almost compulsive institutionalising of art objects into museums has weakened the cultural relationship between the viewer and the work of art: the eyes have become the privileged interlocutor of the brain while it is no longer possible to touch the surface of a canvas or smell the oil paint. Even a constructive debate in front of an artwork is often considered inappropriate because it creates disarray in a place designated for the silent enjoyment of culture.

Contemporary art seems to be slowly rebelling against this apathetic fruition and standardization of art, promoting a multisensory beauty.

The Indian artist Shilpa Gupta in her installation *For, in your tongue, I cannot fit* (2017-2018) seems to have knocked

down these artificial boundaries between her work and the visitor; indeed the latter becomes a part of it. The endless labyrinth of words, which address the violence of censorship, gives a voice to those who no longer have one, accompanying the viewer within an area equipped with printed works from incarcerated poets, played by reverse-wired microphones set to function as speakers. Yet only the almost unintentional slow progress of the viewer inside the room gives life to the work, sacralizing it and making it the means by which the visitor finds himself in a new dimension that can finally be enjoyed through all the five senses: hearing, smell, sight, sound and touch.

Hence, the collection of sensations related to the works of Shilpa Gupta offers insight into how our societies function for a personal reflection on where art leads us and how objects can affect human behaviour. I really hope that

this short journey inside one of her masterpieces has intrigued you, providing a cue for a debate about what art

was, is and will be in the future.

Anita Di Rienzo

Four Into One **TURNER PRIZE**

The four artists had not met before June 2019, but then decided to declare themselves a collective and were allowed to accept the prize for the four of them. Tai Shane wore a pendant at the presentation that said 'Tories Out' just before the December election. The other three comprised Oscar Murillo, Helen Cammoch and Laurence Abu Hamden.

I saw this as a marvellous rejection of the present culture, fostered by capitalism, of a winner and a number of losers. This is perpetuated via countless contests from *The Apprentice* with its ridiculous business tasks tackled by teams of rivals with no time to prepare and no chance of carrying them out well, to cooking competitions, gardening, sewing, house decorating and dancing. All are made into a drama of winners and losers. It is daily reinforcement of a culture with a few winners and many losers where everyone must wear themselves out in useless rivalry.

I can imagine TV where the participants are learning and developing, nurtured and celebrated, where no one is excluded, and people thrive and collaborate. We have all seen this in ordinary life in groups and in classes.

In this year's *Apprentice* one contestant, Thomas, refused to accept the unfair inclusion of a woman – in the three

one of whom would be thrown out - and he took her place. To me this was a great moment and even the boss, Alan Sugar, had to commend Thomas for gallantry, but chose to exclude him the next week, saying at that time that if there was a war and he needed a comrade Thomas would be his choice. Thomas threatened the programme's foundation of ruthless self-interest and overriding profit motive.

The Turner Prize was also subverted to some extent, although the whole concept is riddled with dodgy values as we don't know how the four were chosen. When I was within the age category my husband put my name, not the same as his, forward. I fulfilled the criteria at the time. While not expecting to be chosen, I was surprised he was not even contacted for more information and neither was I. No contact was made. This indicates unfairness as well as rudeness.

What next? Could the Turner Prize become something different? What does difference even mean in our society where we are all becoming one? Could we hear about the submissions, the jury, the discussions? Could it be winners all from now on, treating us all as if in primary school?

Mary Fletcher



White House Painter

REACH is the name of a \$250m expansion to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts that opened in Washington, D.C. in September 2019. Sprawling south from the stately main hall is a new campus focused around a series of minimal concrete pavilions that appear discrete at first but are connected underground. The director calls the project “our collective moonshot” and the music director says “this belongs to you”, but I wonder: REACH for what? From where? Who is doing the reaching? And why the capital letters? Looped videos

suggest many connotations of the name, such as the potential for art to reach our voices past barriers that seem impossible to surmount. But when I descended to the largest gallery at the REACH and discovered the first major exhibition there, appeals to romantic nostalgia and transnational solidarity rang hollow.

‘Portraits of Courage’, sponsored by Boeing, is a group of portraits ostensibly painted by President George W. Bush of post-9/11 combat veterans. Before getting to the politics of this patron/painter/painted situation, I must

acknowledge that the paintings as art objects are bad. They are heavy-handed, uninspired, and childish, but not in the modern genius way. They reveal not true conviction or a real artistic impulse, but instead reflect the corrupt motives of the President-turned-painter and the lazy public who will happily digest propaganda as if it is comfort food. This is a fine example of painting as PR, and art museum as reputation laundry machine. Even more egregious is that the main conceit of the show is disregarded at the outset. The first paintings we see are not painted by Bush and are not paintings of veterans. Instead, they depict Bush himself - smiling, or shown from behind as he paints a puppy dog. Was the dog's name Courage? Only after this vain prologue do we see portraits of actual veterans, interspersed with promotional videos advertising the Bush family non-profit and listing the achievements of their initiatives. To open a major new contemporary arts space with free advertising for a war criminal, funded by the military-industrial-complex titans who build the literal and metaphorical walls of violence that separate us? What gives? Nowhere is there any mention of Bush's bungled role creating the wars that these veterans fought and were injured in, and when I spoke with a docent in disbelief about the paltry exhibition materials, I was directed to an official "PoC" app designed by the same team who made the Richard Nixon: Library Tour & Research app. If we are to read between the lines here, what are we to find? A deadpan ploy to use art and sympathy as a way of improving Bush and his family's reputation.

It makes sense that the newest national arts center in America would be funded like this and feature paintings we will likely see in a Trump Hotel lobby or suite. President Trump's Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin is the son of the powerful art dealer who recently bid \$91m on Jeff Koons' Rabbit, and Trump's criminally ineffective Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos donated \$1m of her family's Amway pyramid scheme fortune to the REACH's capital campaign. With a President in the White House more successful at building fraudulent brands and relying on violence and intimidation to get his way than governing, how can we be surprised that the REACH is a glorified place to host holiday parties for death merchants

They reveal not true conviction or a real artistic impulse, but instead reflect the corrupt motives of the President-turned-painter and the lazy public who will happily digest propaganda as if it is comfort food.

and an efficient tax write-off for the largest beneficiaries of our broken economy.

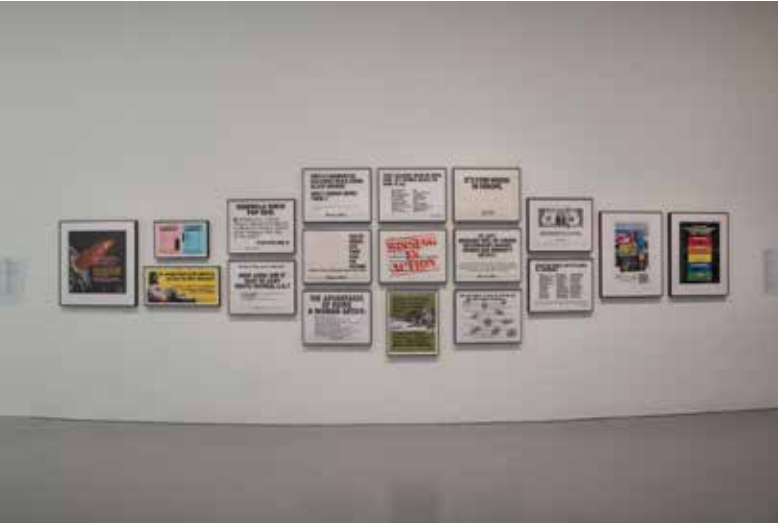
Before the exhibition came to Washington, D.C., 'Portraits of Courage' was shown near Mar-a-Lago in West Palm Beach, Florida, at a private art foundation with Bush-appointed officials on the board. There and here in Washington, this is easy art for elites, and if you fall for the suggestion that these paintings honor veterans or somehow make up for Bush's blunders, then you don't even need to look at the paintings to like them. In this way, art history jargon only obscures the sinister nature of what is really happening here. The failures of this show are the failures of the REACH, and should be a call to action more urgent than that of a bad art exhibition. For now, REACH does not stand for anything. This is not a community art space or egalitarian inspiration chamber. Each room is for sale to the highest bidder, and that includes the outdoor spaces. The Presidential Grove of ginkgo trees near the Boeing River Pavilion are thanks to the People of the United Arab Emirates, and the Reflecting Pool is thanks to the State of Qatar. Diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia were not severed when the Saudi government assassinated a Washington Post journalist, and the official White House response was because the Saudis buy so many weapons from American companies. At the REACH, international networks of arms and arts are on full display. It is a bleached, glaring depot and reminder of what happens when murky funding, jingo-nationalistic propaganda, and the retold romanticism of art as trans-political all marry into an architecture of emptiness, shadow, and exclusion. I hope that future exhibitions and programming in these spaces realize inaugural missteps and attempt to steer the ship in a new direction.

Max Levin



George W Bush

Wear Your Manifesto with Pride



MANIFESTO

Gee whiz. There's one manifesto that I'm a huge admirer of: Roxy Music's album from 1979. An unenthused Greil Marcus found okay "moments" that are better than many records, but still found they "...add up to little" (he always liked Eno better.) I think it's funky, sleek, listenable power pop. It has narrative peaks and valleys. Lovely formal dynamics, sonic invention, emotional bandwidth. It's beautifully crafted. Brian Ferry is tragic and party-addled. But he studied art under Richard Hamilton (who was himself influenced by Wentworth-Thompson's *On Growth and Form*), taught art and pottery while getting his rocknroll legs in the 1960s. He's the son of a farm laborer. Romantic. Yep. Just listen to it. (Vinyl? CD? MP3?) Through your noise cancelling headset. Technology. Just has a mind of its own.

Just look at all the historical shit I tied together in one paragraph.

Look up the title lyrics yourself. I'd echo Marcus on the Hirshhorn's exhibition. *Manifesto: Art x Agency*, talks a certain talk, ("moments"), but is so wanting of critical imagination that it bizarrely fails to identify itself with an American political moment of renewed democratic agency not lacking in political violence; a mainstream discussion of democratic socialism prompted by a long dawning train wreck of classical liberal-cum-progressivism and populist christo-fascist white supremacism; utterly comical villains U.S. Attorney General William Barr, President Trump, tiki torch toting

KKK. Vice President Mike "Call me a cab, but don't call me a queen" Pence, thirsting like Jesus for the clean-up. The United States of America - the actualization of two very concrete and hallowed Enlightenment manifestos - stands upon an historical inflection point, but the exhibit takes little notice of America, the Enlightenment, those other manifestos just up the Mall. Insert ironic thoughtful emoji. Neither make an appearance, though it would be an obvious choice for a general public that wants relevance. At least a nod? Ah, never mind. There's no fucking connection I guess. No particular notice is taken of the intrinsic back to the future nature of the show, the fact that we are living the future imagined by some of the artists. The curation takes no objective notice of

the degree of institutionalization of art today, and how that dramatically shapes our historical relationship with the question of manifestos and artists' agency, our human self-awareness as makers. The film portion makes it fun (in a fun house way), but the show fails to rise above a middle schooler's sense of an obligatory inventory. There is a public interest to which chief curator Stephane Aquin should attend. Is this really the measure of the autonomy of a government-owned art space in 2019?

An exhibit in three parts, the first section dutifully ticks off Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, etc - the usual suspects of modern art. The final third of the exhibit (it is split more or less into thirds) is a selection

Little comparison is made between those manifestos that have explicit political ends and those that focus on formal esthetics. What then do these exhortations have to do with our humanity or with the project of Enlightenment Humanism?

of more recent activist postmoderns ranging from Adrian Piper to Zoe Leonard. While this section is titled "A Renewed Sense of Agency", no manifestos unite these artists. Maybe the Bill of Rights? What are the implications? De minimus the curation might have touched upon the Frankfurt School of critical theory, so



Installation View MANIFESTO 2019

central to post modern social critique in art practice. Again, barely perfunctory.

Julian Rosefeldt's *Manifesto* film installation occupies the second section with sound and opulence that sensually beggars the other galleries. *Manifesto* is here presented roughly in 13 manifestos, 13 channels on 13 screens simultaneously. It reads and sounds quite differently as an installation than the film. It's clearly the center piece. Cinema gloats. Start with a burning fuse and a mashup of Marx, Engels, and Tristan Tzara. Sexy. The sequence proceeds to Futurism juxtaposed with the Situationists of the 1970s; mutually opposed movements (ideologically and scenically). As chapters first and second, there is a mute commentary and the palest suggestion that perhaps one or any of the artist manifestos could be comparable somehow to the Communist Manifesto. For the most part they are yawps. Not formal treatises.

The combined noise of soundtracks unfortunately results in a rather nihilistic jumble, probably not predicted either by the artist or the Hirshhorn's chief curator. Along this line, there is much in the exhibit that supports Marcuse's view that transgression has been fully subsumed by capitalism and that we live today in a thoroughly imagination-killing, capitalist totalitarian prison.

Little comparison is made between those manifestos that have explicit political ends and those that focus on formal esthetics. What then do these exhortations have to do with our humanity or with the project of Enlightenment Humanism? There is simply no contextualization, resulting, if one doesn't know better, in a poignant quaintness that slips into dubious irrelevance.

America, indeed the promise of western democracy, is in a pregnant historical moment, with resurgent nationalist and militarist influences mutilating basic social and cultural institutions. But we are never reminded that we are living in the futures imagined by these artists, and that there are still things that can and must be imagined. You might conclude that as much as an homage to "art and agency," this was also a eulogy.

Todd Parola

Save Now. Choose Lossless or Compression Manifesto: Art x Agency: The Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C., until April 6, 2020

Trouble in a Painter's Paradise

Few 20th-century painters carved a niche for their craft like Paul Gauguin. His portraiture is some of the most recognisable work in modern art. From 7th October 2019 to 26th January 2020, the National Gallery in London has on display a large representation of Gauguin's short career as a painter featuring a collection of portraiture and sculpture. For an artist like Gauguin, it makes sense to focus solely on his portraits; they are his most notable work. However, not to include his work pre-1885 means that information about the artist is left out. This was a period when Gauguin worked with Pissarro, the artist who convinced him to start painting, and Cézanne. Despite the colourful array of portraits gathered by the National Gallery, this is not the only missed opportunity to connect Gauguin to portrait painting.

The exhibition lacks context concerning how Gauguin's painterly style fits into larger art movements. Synthetism, a term associated with symbolic representation characterized by bold outlines and flat areas of colour, is mentioned early on in the exhibition, but that is the only categorisation of Gauguin's artistic style. Neither Impressionism nor Primitivism is mentioned, yet the word 'primitive' is. Post-Impressionism and Cloisonnism are not mentioned either. Gauguin's arguable influence

on Fauvism, a style of painting that favoured strong use of colour or realistic representation, is not discussed, even though Fauvism began shortly after his death, and Gauguin's influence can be seen in works by artists such as Matisse.

It is as if the curator(s) of this exhibition were trying to place Gauguin as a stand-alone genius in art history. A lone-wolf of artistic representation and execution, which of course is not true considering his reliance on other artists throughout his career. No artist is beyond context. We as the audience for these exhibitions need some bearings before we dive into the works and history of the artists. Even if the National Gallery and the curators of this show wanted to focus exclusively on the artist and the portraits, it leaves those without prior exposure to Gauguin's life in the dark.

This close up look at Gauguin's portraits is definitely a passion project for the curators. While walking through the space, looking at the paintings, reading the literature, you are provided with information that takes you right inside the mind of the artist. You learn how Gauguin painted, but also what his creative process was and what aspects of life motivated him to create. Gauguin was a self-obsessed individual, as shown in numerous self-

portraits and even triple self-portraits. His ego was the fuel that drove his artistic career and he believed that his perspective was the manner in which the world should be viewed. Through direct self-portraiture or a persona, Gauguin frequently references his own self-worth and ego as an ambassador to the world he wanted to occupy.

Gauguin relocated multiple times, Tahiti being the most well-known, seeking a realm untouched by the bourgeois lifestyle he stood against. This was an artist who sought out the primitive and pure. But in his attempts to find his pristine muse he left his own mark; Gauguin cannot be separated from the concept of exploitation. European colonialism and misogynistic perceptions about the Polynesian cultures was widespread in Gauguin's day. The irony is



Garden in Vauvirard (*Painter's Family in the Garden in Rue Carcel*), 1881



Paul Gauguin: Winter Landscape 1879

that later in his life while living in the Marquesan island of Hiva Oa, he involved himself in local politics and allegedly was a vocal opponent of colonial rule. As an artist, Gauguin crafted visual narrative mixed with religion, mythology, and the idea of 'self', but in creating these fantasies he exploited the indigenous communities. Many of Gauguin's self-portraits feature objects connected to Tahitian culture. The composition of these works suggests that the artist is placing ownership over the objects, and thus an implied ownership of the culture. Is Gauguin the only artist who should be subjected to this kind of scrutiny? Absolutely not. However, it does seem that the curators of this show said what they deemed necessary about Gauguin's less-than-desirable qualities and pursuits, and quickly moved forward. This results in

missed opportunity to take an in-depth look at how this artist perceived his actions and how they influenced his work.

Unsavory qualities aside, Gauguin did not compromise. Yes, his career perpetuates the stereotype of an artist only becoming famous after death or that artists are misunderstood deviants. His passion and ambition, albeit misguided at times, drove him to create a new method of painting and portraiture. I have never been a fan of Gauguin the artist or Gauguin the individual. But regardless of personal preference, you cannot ignore (as this show does) the role Gauguin had in the larger scope of Western art history.

Alexander Stanfield

QUOTE of the Month:

“Art is not what you see, but what you make others see.”

Edgar Degas

Truman Capote

Truman Capote has long been one of my most revered writers, so when we popped into a book shop in Chapel Street, Penzance and there, face on, in the middle of a display shelf, was Truman Capote's book, *Answered Prayers*, I hesitated but moments.

Answered Prayers is not a novel, it is three random chapters of a novel for which he was paid a handsome advance. Sadly, he died before its completion, just before his 60th birthday. I had read of these chapters, but not seen them. Reading the flyleaf I knew the book would not disappoint. The first chapter is a gossip piece in which the protagonist, P.B. Jones, an amoral bisexual man, shamelessly namedrops his meetings with a variety of famous people, Jean Cocteau, Proust, Camus and, oh the wonder, Colette, an early literary great for me. It thrilled me.

These chapters were originally published in *Esquire* and the third one in the book, *La Cote Basque* set most of his friends against him; some did not speak to him again, accusing him of blatantly spilling the beans of their lives with thinly disguised fictional figures. Capote's response was reported as 'What did they expect? I'm a writer, I use everything. Did all these people think I was just there to entertain them?'

Later he said dismissively that he had lost only three friends through the article, and "anyway it was all a tempest in a teapot."

I first encountered Truman Capote as the name of the writer of the fiction, non fiction novel, (probably the first fiction ever) *In Cold Blood*. This book catapulted him to international fame. Serialized in *The Sunday Times*, I read it avidly. It's an account of a brutal murder by two young men of a whole family, their subsequent incarceration and execution. Research into the true case took Capote, with his friend Harper Lee, the author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, to Kansas, where he befriends one of the murderers, it seems for material for his book, though ultimately he grew fond of the young men, especially Perry Smith, whose childhood was hard and with whom Capote had a certain sympathy. However, he needed their execution so he could finish the book and it was repeatedly delayed, to Capote's exasperation. He couldn't finish the book without knowing the ending...this is someone's life, remember. If you think this makes Capote appear petulant and without empathy, you may well be right, though one of his friends hinted at the inner conflict he experienced later.

NAKED ATTRACTION - A TV PROGRAMME

Crazy tv
6 men, 3 views,
Toes to hips
Then chest
Then face

The cheerful tv lady makes it sound ok

Young woman choosing
Doesn't like one's toes
What sort of scrotum?
Not those balls
Oddly not shown his bottom
Until, dismissed, he goes.

Whittled down, she meets one man for dinner
The one with the smile I like is not her winner

And then they part
He says no spark

With all revealed
Their sad lost souls are not concealed

They look more human clothed
Maybe there is a reason
We traditionally remove clothes
In less public places
And start with faces.

MARY FLETCHER

He was a man with a sharp wit and one of his friends said "when you were with Truman you had his undivided attention, it made you feel special, and he was always hugely entertaining."

His first novel, *Other Voices, Other Rooms* won critical acclaim and is based loosely on his childhood in the Deep South and his search for his father.

Everyone knows the film, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, a later book by Capote. I read it again recently and, though it was written in 1958, it is as fresh as paint. His writing is elegant and has a clarity which he puts down to the fact that he 'writes with his ear'. He was an intent observer of people, their ways and their weaknesses, and said, "All that a writer has is the result of his observations, and you cannot deny him the use of his material."

Lynda Green

Warsaw

Brzeżańska's Stories from Earth

Agnieszka Brzeżańska's World National Park is akin to that first moment after waking from an intense dream. Brzeżańska's collective works—paintings, drawings, collage, some sound and video—suggest a story of earthly, human existence through time. They are stories of mark-making, of record-keeping, of illustrating ideas and dreams and stories, both real and invented.

The first room contains a series of works on paper, double-exposed/collaged photographic images, two videos which create a soft buzz of energy in the space, and a triptych of rather casual, atmospheric paintings that echo the late afternoon December sun I catch on the other side of the windows. Darkening branches and tree trunks against a pink sky before the sun goes down. These paintings force themselves into our physical space, coming away from the wall becoming sculptural yet never losing their quality as paintings. This is one of the key curatorial decisions that triggers that feeling of knowing/unknowing, a theme running like a thread through the exhibition. Simultaneously setting the stage yet keeping the viewer unprepared for the unfolding of the works to come, the diminutive wall pieces here are aesthetically beautiful, graphic, sexy. They feature flag-like color blocking; strong shapes like the totems of Hilma af Klint. I'm not shaken until the next room. Almost fully consumed by this next installation of paintings, hung edge-to-edge, forming an object that leaves just enough space to walk the perimeter of the room without touching the walls or the work, the construction is impossible to view holistically. It's almost indescribable, how these works transcend their materiality while fully, consciously remaining paintings. The power that comes from this is arresting. You can feel it, you can see it playing out in your mind's eye, watching it dissolve in the same moment you attempt to name it. There is no language for what you've just experienced, it hovers above too slippery a ground, occupying everywhere and nowhere simultaneously. As we track the surfaces and observe the details of the canvases which are painted in warm, bright tones with pattern details recalling Indigenous Australian art, they give the impression of a very deep, almost pre-human timescale. The next room is filled with three arrangements like this, floating structures of paintings, as well as two notable textile-based works. The mark-making



shifts to a more fluid, gestural approach where the artist's hand in the act of painting is similarly obvious yet secondary to the echoing of water flow, wood grain, or other patterns found in nature. The textile is similar in scale and weight to a throw blanket or bedcover. *Chła Ziemia/Parkiem Narodowym* ('glorious earth/national park') is woven into the double-warp textile commissioned by Brzeżańska. The weaver, Ludgarda Sieńko, was only given the title of the work and was asked to interpret the phrase as she saw fit.

On the other side of the wall in the third room, text-elements appear and the paintings become slightly more graphic. Fluorescent colors, a pedestal of little blithe, palm-sized sculptures called Oyster Spirits, and another on the opposite side of the room holding a cavernous, brown coral-like vessel with female vocalizations emanating from it. This piece is the artist's vision of a sculpture made by the Vistula river (which bisects the city of Warsaw). An unstretched canvas hangs on the wall echoing Sam Gilliam's drape paintings, again confronting

us with this flexibility of form and meaning-making: this gentle refusal to be confined to a medium/format/mode yet never once hiding/refusing/obscuring the materiality or context of the works. These pieces are haunting, playful, commanding, and beautiful, and communicate a genuine curiosity and deep reverence for the world.

The next and final two rooms become more focused on sculptural works and the tone shifts to one that is slightly more pedagogical. Ceramic urns arranged on pedestals stacked three deep and lined up against the wall call to mind displays at an ethnographic museum. Sprays of dried wildflowers in a few are a cheeky domestic subversion. Along another wall, smaller mythic ceramic figures and objects, some holding iPads or iPhones displaying videos of underwater environments and large format prints of blurry microscopic bio-material and drawings in clay adorn the wall. Elements of mysticism, fantasy, feminism, primitivism, object-making; of the communion between the body and nature, pull us back from the cosmic, theoretical space into the space of the body, the vessel.

The final room is intensified by the architecture of the ornate, two-story rotunda. The centerpiece is a fountain that is slightly larger than human scale; atop the mound sits a female figure spreading her vulva, letting the liquid flow down into the pool below. A few lit candles are set

into arched, organically-shaped candelabras that sit on circular mirrors on the floor, reflecting the architecture of the windowed dome which catch last moments of the early winter sky. Off to the side, a pile of books becomes the pedestal for a tiny figurative sculpture, illuminated by a spotlight casting its shadow across a vignette of wall space. The feeling here is again distinct from the other spaces; Brzeżańska seems almost to answer the rhetorical questions posed throughout the course of the exhibition and for a moment I feel a tiny grain of regret about this. But instead of dwelling there, the stillness of the room activated by the candlelight and running water return me to the spirited tenor of ritualism and authenticity, and the deep reverence for generational time and meaning-making.

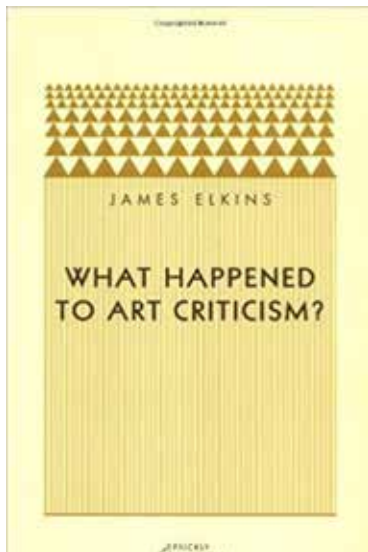
I feel like I've been endowed a sincere and generous wisdom and immediately after leaving the last room I head back into the first room simply to complete the circle.

Katie Zazenski

Agnieszka Brzeżańska, World National Park 26th November 2019 – 1st March 2020. Królikarnia / Xawery Dunikowski Museum of Sculpture, Warsaw.



Elkins on Art Criticism



How do we judge art and what is the role of the art critic?

This article compares James Elkins' (2003) views on art criticism, with those of others and my own. I am an amateur collector and a psychologist.

James Elkins (2003) claims that art criticism is produced and ignored in equal measure. It is not rooted in any

academic discipline as art history is. There is no common ground. Should it even be a single practice? He suggests that most critics have stopped judging art and merely describe. The majority of art criticism is produced for gallery brochures and is both descriptive and promotional in essence. Some is academic, setting the art within a historical, cultural or philosophical context. Some is downright critical, haranguing the art in sarcastic ways revealing the writer's political views or personal agendas and resentments. Some art criticism has intrinsic literary and, at times, poetic value. When asked what they think is important in art criticism, art critics' top three answers were: description, historical context and writing well (Columbia University's survey of art critics in Elkins 2003). Elkins himself makes a plea for ambitious reflective judgment within a well-researched historical context, which is significant enough to count as art history.

My view of art criticism is that it needs a degree of evaluation, and that this cannot be done in a vacuum. How can you assess something if you do not know its purposes or functions? My reflections on the functions of art for the visual experience would include the following. (It is not an exhaustive list.)

... the job of the art critic was to distil and understand how and why an artist accomplished this and why their work resonates ...

- To be engaged or inspired at a spiritual or emotional level

I want to know the context of the work, where and when it was made, some idea of how it fits into contemporary world art and how original or derivative it is. I want enough description to make me want to see it.

- To have one's boundaries expanded or challenged intellectually, politically or socially
- To be stimulated to empathise with others
- To lose oneself, be transported temporarily and diverted from day to day existence
- To have one's senses of beauty, harmony, rhythm, awe and wonder enriched and enhanced
- To see one's identity reflected or understand more about the identity of others
- To feel part of a shared or community narrative
- As a financial investment
- As adornment for one's home(s)
- To acquire status. As Vanessa Thorpe writes in *The Guardian* (22.6.2019), "From the Medici onwards, the rich have adored the gloss of sophistication offered by association with highbrow creative types".

These could all be a take on the fact that human beings always have and continue to worship or revere images.

What might be the functions for the artist? At its root, it is making a mark. This has been true since the caves of Lascaux and earlier. This is how the mark-maker communicates, not through direct dialogue, but through an artistic medium. I hear them say 'This is how I express myself. This is my voice. What I think and feel matters. I am exploring my identity, the boundaries of myself. I do art because I have to. I do art because it enriches me, it feeds me and I lose myself in the flow. I want to communicate the intensity of my experience. My work is a celebration of nature.' Why do you paint it then? Why not just look at it or photograph it? 'Because I have to take it into myself, make it my own version, interpret it in a different way'. Art contributes to the development of society just as science does. It increases our humanity. It comments on the state of society.

How do we determine if the art is good? There are as many definitions of good art as there are art critics.

The art critic Clement Greenberg (1993) thought the

immediate experience of the art work is what counts but that qualitative principles are operating subliminally. These are not purely subjective “because a consensus develops over time amongst those who care about art”. I think this is a spurious argument because the propinquity of art critics, curators, collectors, gallerists etc., whether in real time or the virtual world, will likely ensure convergence of views.

The British art critic David Sylvester, considered to be one of the finest writers on art in the second half of the 20th century (Guardian obituary 20.6.2001), wrote about art as viscerally as he did analytically. According to Elkins, he judged art by his own bodily reactions - not something one can argue with!

Inevitably artists are influenced consciously or unconsciously by other artists. Indeed foundation art students are often actively encouraged to produce work in the style of great artists.

DeWitt Cheng, the artist, critic and curator, based in San Francisco, felt it was the art writer’s job to “explain an artist’s work as readably and informatively as possible” (2019). He maintains that “good visual art looks stunningly right, and in retrospect, obvious or inevitable. Yet” (and this is my favourite) “it is also continually surprising – how can someone possibly have made this? How in the world could it not have been made?”

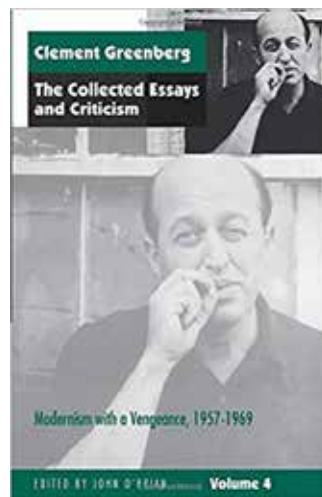
Robert Shimshak, a collector, from California says good art “will connect to the past and feed the future. It has a simple and rigorous beauty that commands your gaze and thoughts whenever you look at it”. Yes, we keep returning in a gallery to the works which compel us. I spent over two hours viewing the Bridget Riley exhibition in Edinburgh this year (now in London), returning again and again to the same paintings which inspired such marvel.

For John Berger, the British art critic who died in 2017, good art “brings reality back into focus and in that sense could be revolutionary”. He said the job of the art critic was to distil and understand how and why an artist accomplished this and why their work resonates. He grounds his thinking in a question. Of Vermeer he asks “What was it that he wanted to say in the stillness of his rooms which the light fills like water in a tank?” This is certainly an example of poetic art criticism which Elkins refers to.

We can continue to deploy the principles of balance, rhythm, harmony and unity which were used to assess art post-realism in the 20th century. Sandy Ray maintains that a piece of art criticism must include description,

analysis, interpretation and then judgment. The judgment stage is often omitted.

We can think of other definitions of good art: you can’t take your eyes off it, you fall in love with it immediately, it strikes a chord in your soul on first impact, and it establishes a positive memory. I think of an exhibition I saw recently of paintings by Bernard Irwin. I walked into the gallery and my heart was lifted. There was such joy in them. I felt as though I had taken a lungful of cool, calming air – rather in the manner of Sylvester’s visceral reactions.



In summary, I would argue that the function of art criticism is to determine how good the art is and how well the art meets the desires of the consumer/viewer and the artist. It may be hard to determine the latter unless you have a chance to interview the artist. One of the members of my writing group wants to know only the reviewer’s human reaction to the art, what the writer sees and feels, and then to wonder at the fact that she sees something completely different. I think this is too one dimensional. What do I want from a piece of art criticism? I want to know the context of the work, where and when it was made, some idea of how it fits into contemporary world art and how original or derivative it is. I want enough description to make me want to see it. I want some interpretation, preferably psychological and sociological and yes, I guess I would like to know what kind of impact it had upon the reviewer, in terms of the ‘functions’ I list above. What do you want from art criticism?

Victoria Howard

DeWitt Cheng, ArtSlant final edition 2019
James Elkins: What Happened to Art Criticism? (Prickly Paradigm Press Chicago 2003)
Clement Greenberg: Complaints of an Art Critic in John O'Brian (Ed) (1993)
Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4, Modernism with a Vengeance 1957-1969

NEWS IN BRIEF**NEW ART EXAMINER NUMBERS**

We are delighted that our unique visitor numbers continue to grow, with over 57,000 for the month of December 2019.

MILAN WRITERS' GROUP

Our hard working Italian editor Liviana Martin has just held the second writers' group meeting in Milan. We now have five regular contributors from Milan.

WOMEN IN ART

Art Newspaper highlights the 2019 shows on women artists, well known or neglected. At least they have the integrity to end their review suggesting one day articles like that will be unnecessary. Here at the *New Art Examiner* they have always been unnecessary; we were founded by a woman, the great Jane Addams Allen. Most of our writers today are women and our new publisher is a woman. Good to see the art world catching up with us.

GOOGLE ONLINE CULTURAL INSTITUTE

This now boasts over 1,000 museums and gallery collections that can be seen digitally. It's a little like Wiki images but Google Images. We don't think you can ever appreciate a work of art unless you see it, which is why exhibitions are vital. That said, some of the images will look cool on your phone.

THANK YOU

Scott Turri for donating your fee for reviews back to the NAE. We appreciate your trust in us.

Basel Banana

The story of Cattelan's banana is about people shouting at each other in a glossy art world bubble. Everyone involved is an insider – I bet neither Mr Errazuriz, nor Mr Saltz, nor even Mr Datuna paid for their tickets – and everyone's a winner. While Mr Datuna appeared to attack the fundamental fabric of contemporary art, he will have made the investments of the mega-wealthy collectors who shelled out for Mr Cattelan's work very much more valuable, while making himself very much more famous. And you'll notice he hasn't been prosecuted for destroying a \$120,000 art work, while the luckless Mr Webber, that other interventionist performance artist, was arrested simply for spray-painting a wall – but then he probably did pay for his ticket, and he can't spell. Far from ringing the changes in art, this affair – like Banksy's self-destructing painting, which immediately leapt in value – is yet another example of an iconoclastic gesture that functioned entirely to the art world's advantage. If you want to rock culture to its foundations, don't try to do it in an art fair.

Mark Hudson, *The Independent*

Arts + All Museums Salary Transparency 2019

Museum staffers from around the US are publicly, but anonymously, posting their annual salaries on a Google spreadsheet that reportedly began circulating this morning (31/05/2019). "Art/Museum Salary Transparency 2019" is a shared document to which users can add details about their employment terms and pay.

The spreadsheet has already drawn data reportedly from current and former employees of some of the largest museums in the country, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Harvard Art Museums, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. So far about 100 people have made entries. The highest current salary listed is \$300,000 for a male employed at the American Council of Learned Societies who listed his role as "digital humanities/collections projects manager/developer." The lowest listed is \$5,000 for a part-time, three-month editorial assistant at an artist's studio.

Two female assistant curators at the Brooklyn Museum listed salaries of \$44,000, and \$50,000, respectively. A senior curator at the Guggenheim listed a current salary of \$100,000, but said his or her starting salary was just \$20,000 (the start date and position were not specified). [Here](#)

An Eye On Washington

THE CRITICAL REVIEWS OF THE ART HISTORIAN AND PUBLISHER OF
THE NEW ART EXAMINER, JANE ADDAMS ALLEN,
FROM THE WASHINGTON TIMES 1982 -1989

FOREWORD BY DANIEL NANAVATI, EUROPEAN EDITOR NEW ART EXAMINER
APPRECIATION BY DEREK GUTHRIE, CO-PUBLISHER OF NEW ART EXAMINER
INTRODUCTION BY PROFESSOR RICHARD SIEGESMUND