NEW ART examiner

ISSN 0886-8115
THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF THE VISUAL ARTS

Volume 35 No.1 Sept/Oct 2020 £4 / $6.00 / €6.50

The New Art Examiner is the product of the thinking and life-long contribution of Jane Addams Allen. We thank you in her name for reading her independent journal of art criticism.
If you have an interest in our venture, please consult Google, also Art Cornwall, for an interview with the publisher, Derek Guthrie, a painter who keeps his art practice private.
The New Art Examiner has a long history of producing quality and independent art criticism. Chicago and Cornwall, as any art scene, needs writers to keep a professional eye on art activity. Otherwise, insider trading will determine success in this troubled art world.
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All editions include the digital issue sent via e-mail.
Subscription rates for 6 issues print and digital:

UK	£39.50	postage incl.
Europe	€45	postage incl.
USA	$42	postage incl.
World	$78	postage incl.

Subscriptions to the New Art Examiner in 2020-21 are £40 ($46) for six issues
Digital subscription $3.50 annually (£2) - more a donation than a subscription
Individual copies are £4.00 ($6) plus postage £2.50 ($1) or $2 each as a download from www.newartexaminer.net

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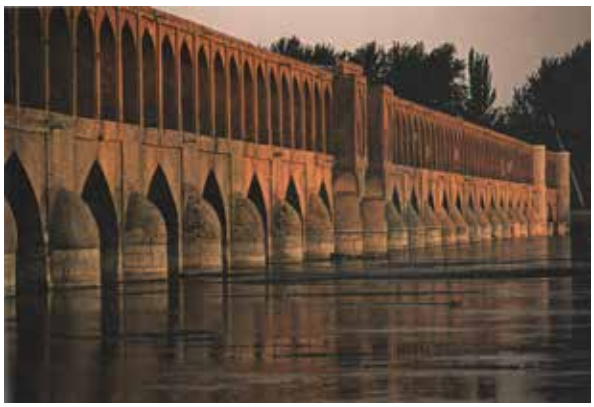
The Attentive Artist



Thirty three Arch Bridge (c1602, Isfahan, Iran)

Thanks to the patronage of Shah Abbas 1, a period began in which richness of details, magnificence of colours and compositional imaginativeness found expression in complex buildings and above all urban development on a huge but serene scale of calm grandeur. In the magnificence of projects, their calibrated emotional impact and the convincing relationship between constructional features and environment, the golden age of Shah Abbas, although not marked by notable technical developments and often mediocre in the quality of materials used, represents the apogee and ultimate expression of Persian Islamic architecture. A perfect example of the decision to make everything that went into the city beautiful are the bridges, conceived as landscape features, dykes to carry water to the gardens, and places of amusement and relaxation for the contemplation of passing time and changing light.

Islamic Art *by Luca Mozzati, published by Prestel, Germany, 2009*

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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MARGARET RICHARDSON is a lecturer in art history at Christopher Newport University, Newport News, Virginia, USA where she teaches modern, contemporary, and Asian art. Her research specialties include cross-cultural exchanges and influences in global modern and contemporary art and connections between the literary and visual arts. She has authored various articles, reviews, and exhibition catalogue essays as well as a book, *Between Reality and Dream: The Aesthetic Vision of K.G. Subramanyan* (2013).

VAUGHAN ALLEN is an artist and art historian who spent most of his life in London where he studied at Chelsea and Central Schools of Art. After graduating he began work at the British Museum before becoming art director at the auctioneers Sotheby's. A longstanding committee memb er of the Turner Society, he has lectured at Tate Britain, catalogued Falmouth Art Gallery's collection of Turner prints and been acknowledged for a contribution to Yale University Press's definitive biography of the artist. He now lives, paints and lectures in Cornwall.

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FRANCES OLIVER has published seven works of fiction and self-published three memoirs. She was born in Vienna, grew up and married in the USA, and has since lived and travelled in a number of countries. After her husband's death she and their daughter settled in Cornwall, where she devotes much time to environmental campaigns.

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COLIN FELL read English literature at the University of St Andrews, pursuing postgraduate research before moving to Cornwall, where he lectures in further education.

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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.
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SCOTT WINFIELD SUBLETT is a screenwriter, playwright, film director, professor at San Jose State University in California, and author of *Screenwriting for Neurotics.*

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LETTERS

The Great Exhibition 2020

Editor,
Great artwork (ed: empty shopping streets)! I liked it very much, it holds psychological reflections and humorous notations. It looks like a reversed world, where the people are in a cage and the animals are free to take back their space (or is it a more natural world?)
I hope that the "greatest show in the world" won't be repeated in the future.

Liviana Martin 04/08/2020

Liviana,
Thank you Liviana for your comment. The exhibition you had in Milan must have been far greater than the one we had here in Penzance. I wonder if you were able to walk around and see it in all its colours.
One positive note is that worldwide we were in this together and even though this massive exhibition united us, enough is enough now and we need new images to bring forth.

Pendery Weekes 05/08/2020

Utah is Every State: Visibility in an unseeing American Art System

Editor,
In 1980 I was an M.F.A. student in Bill Vazan's class at Concordia in Montreal. Bill was a no-nonsense kind of guy who could have been a lumberjack, but instead achieved a top tier reputation for his deconstructive mosaic photography and his land art. We went on a class tour to to look at the Viking rune-stones near Boston mentioned in America B.C. Then we swung up to Lake Placid to view the art made for that year's Olympics.
Imagine you're standing on an empty road near an off ramp, with others from the class. Facing you is a guardrail such as we see lining all off-ramp. Vazan told us this particular guardrail was a work of art. The artist's name forgotten, an Olympic commissioned artist had hired a road crew to build and erect the type of guard rail such crews always do, in a place where there had to be one by state law, except this time it was on orders from an artist instead of a highway supervisor.
I mention this negation of art, this statement that the artist is MIA, to contrast a conceptual stance (owned by the academy, i.e. the art shown in New York), to a science-driven view of art that is way more intuitive. Denis Dutton's youtube video, "A Darwinian Theory of Beauty" tells of an art instinct motivating the Naked Ape to evolve into monkeys with diplomas. Ha ha, no, that's not what he really said, it was too close to the mark to pass up. What Dutton actually said is that art is biologically specific, driving evolution. Fascinating, worth googling.
Psychology says art is therapy, that anti-aesthetic is anti-therapeutic. If art is a biological instinct, then postmodernism would create social unrest, an interesting thought. I think a reformation is called for in art theory, that's a Martin Luther paradigm. Torches and pitchforks.

Miklos Legrady 21/08/2020

Editor,
I always love your articles and your views for emerging artists. I especially find your opinion of the NYC art conglomerate refreshing , and something truthful they need to hear.

Lars Klingstedt 14/08/2020

Isaac Levitan: The Russian Master

Editor,
Had someone told me that I would like Isaac Levitan's images six months ago, I would never have believed them – I find solace in his work, while also finding it quite refreshing. I have really enjoyed finding out more about him online. Taste in art changes, mine perhaps due to everything imposed on us by circumstances surrounding Covid-19. In any case, thank you Colin for your article on Isaac Levitan.

Ali Robinson 13/08/2020

Ali Robinson
Thanks Ali - I find it extraordinary that even today this great artist is so little known beyond the boundaries of his native and adopted lands, and am keen to raise awareness of his output. As you so rightly say, COVID has heightened both our need for restorative art and our sensitivity to it.

Colin Fell 18/08/2020

Editor,
I just discovered that there should be an exhibition opening of Isaac Levitan later this month at the Kaluga Regional Art Museum. Hopefully it won't be online only.

Calla Adley 02/08/2020

Calla Adley
I have never had the opportunity to visit Russia, where Levitan is principally exhibited, but I hope to one day. I shall keep an eye open for the Kaluga exhibition - thanks, Calla

PS Thanks for the tip Calla - I shall keep an eye open for the Kaluga exhibition. It's a long standing desire of mine to visit Russia and attend an exhibition of this wonderful work.

Colin Fell 18/08/2020

letters@newartexaminer.net

QUOTE of the Month:

"The mind loves the unknown. It loves images whose meaning is unknown, since the meaning of the mind itself is unknown." (Suzy Gablik 'Magritte' 1970)

Rene Magritte

NEW ART examiner CiC

September 2020
Volume 35. No.1

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THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF THE VISUAL ARTS

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WEBSITE: www.newartexaminer.net

UK Distributor: Central Books, London

Cover: La Donna Della Finestra (part)
Alternately titled: The Lady of Pity
Dante Gabriel Rossetti 1879
Model: Jane Burden Morris

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The New Art Examiner is indexed in:
Art Bibliographies Modern, Art Full Text & Art Index Retrospective and Zetoc. It is in the British Library, Bodleian Libraries of the University of Oxford, Cambridge University Library, The National Library of Scotland, The Library of Trinity College, Dublin,The National Library of Wales, The Smithsonian, Washington DC.

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The New Art Examiner is published by The New Art Gazette CiC, registered in the UK.

EDITORIAL

When Politics and Sculpture Collide

Margaret Lanterman

Art as political and social comment has a very long and effective history, but the artist's intent and the message of the work has often been abused for political ends. This repurposing can happen well before the art is installed, or long after. Public sculpture monuments are not a simple thing to discuss because they are seldom just about one thing such as heritage, pride of accomplishment, or status. There is no universal value that everyone will hold except for the value of humanity - which should be a constant and universal point of view for all.

Sculptures have become a rallying point in the current miasma of US politics. In the ongoing saga of the American cultural reckoning with its past of slavery and racial inequity, the George Floyd travesty was the latest flint point to remind citizens that the United States is far from done with bigotry and racial prejudice. No one was naive enough to think that electing a Black president would fix racism, but the backlash was far greater than many expected, and has caused the remaining majority of citizens to examine their national history as never before. One way they are doing that is to look to public sculptures which were meant to serve as a reminder of past achievements and a model for future endeavors. In their search they are struck with the awareness that an achievement for one may not represent the endeavors of all, but that those endeavors should at least strive to maintain respect for human dignity.

New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu so aptly pointed out that there is a difference between remembering and glorifying. There is a definite purpose and validity in knowing our history, and there is danger in amnesia concerning the past. But neither is there value in continuing to glorify practices that oppose humanity. The sculptures that represent ideologies inconsistent with basic human justice and sensitivity need to be contended with, and how to do that is an ongoing discussion. Aggressive and destructive acts against sculptures do not soothe or satisfy beyond the moment. For now, many sculptures that honor men or events of cruel or racist intent are being removed. Relegating them to a museum where people are informed with unbiased history and have a choice of viewership seems to be one solution. Leaving them in a place of pride in full public view is not.

One of the questions that remains is what to put on top of all those empty plinths and pedestals. The answer is easy to see. Instate art that embodies accountability, that reminds us that freedom cannot exist without responsibility. There are so very many unsung heroes in US history! Many scientists, artists and humanitarians of color and citizens with other national origins have become invisible, yet contributed immeasurably. Removing symbols of inhumanity and commissioning sculptures that represent people and events that gallantly served their fellow human beings would be a great start towards the correction of historic knowledge, the mending of the national fabric of humanity and the reinstatement of the values that made the United States a glorious and great country.

SPEAKEASY

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.

MARY FLETCHER is a multimedia artist flaneur: www.axisweb.org/p/maryfletcher She has an MA in contemporary visual art and writes the blog: 4maryfletcher.blogspot.com. She is a humanist, feminist and socialist, influenced by psychotherapy. She lives in St Ives, Cornwall, UK.

How Artists Get On in the Art World

Years ago I started to keep a note on the details in artists' biographies recording who their parents were, their wealth, etc. Most were well off and many had a parent or spouse who was already an artist. Others married their success.

Anna Boghiguian, who had a big solo show at Tate St Ives, was described by *The Telegraph (a* national newspaper in the UK) as 'the daughter of an Armenian clock maker, spending most of her career in obscurity.' Elsewhere I saw that she married a man who founded a contemporary art gallery in America.

Barbara Hepworth had a son-in-law who was in charge of the Tate Gallery – Alan Bowness.

Tracey Emin and Damian Hirst are artists from working classish backgrounds who fascinated posh gallery owners. Emin had a relationship with curator Carl Freedman, a friend of Hirst's.

Having a relation who devotes themselves to your promotion posthumously like Van Gogh's sister-in-law is invaluable. How someone whose brother was an art dealer could only sell one painting in his lifetime is a mystery, unless Theo made no effort to sell Vincent's paintings.

At every level of our hierarchical societies there are difficulties for the lower classes. When higher education was free, more working class actors and artists could at least begin their careers, now they are put off even starting college due to the cost.

Competitions and exhibitions are occasionally selected with contestants kept anonymous.

In our local Penwith Society there is a nod to this by not mentioning the names of artists, except those of the hanging committee whose works get chosen, but of course everyone recognises the style and content of the usual suspects.

The Turner prize invited people to submit artists who kept to the age limits and had had solo shows - but as I know personally your proposer might well never hear anything more about their proposal - leaving one to think the ones that get onto the list are already known - either by name or style to the selectors.

Dealers rarely go out looking for talent. Curators even less so.

Artists are advised that unsolicited applications are unlikely to succeed.

Can you or I even imagine a different way of doing things?

In Cuba unheard-of potential dancers with no insider connections are accepted and flourish.

I suppose we get the art our political and social systems facilitate; unless we change to a more egalitarian socialism - more democratic and diverse - then this is how it will be. The patrons and the curators guard the gates as much as the church and aristocracy did in the past.

I made a short video called 'Art Notes' - on Vimeo under my name - in which to a satirical song soundtrack I wrote the words:

'STOP MINDING THAT YOU ARE NOT A GLOBAL SUCCESS'.

The whole caboodle is a pyramid – publicity can only cope with a few stars who then become global artists who jet into new locations, seize on some obvious feature of a place and throw together bodies of work before departing.

Artists describe themselves as 'somewhere based' (for example, St Ives based) - as if at any moment they are about to be summoned elsewhere.

Artists seek residencies instead of living and working somewhere.

Could local curators leave municipal gallery buildings and research for themselves?

Could local newspapers have more informed critics who don't just print press releases?

Could artists' co-operatives flourish beyond the local?

Could an Artists' Union put on shows of unknown artists?

Could TV regularly feature serious living artists not just craftworkers in amateur competitions?

Artists will keep working - but please - contribute ideas for changing the status quo.

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An American Child of the 1960s Revisits England's Victorian Radicals

By James Cassell

Yale Center for British Art

Yale University in New Haven holds the largest collection of British art outside the United Kingdom. The museum's founder and chief benefactor, Paul Mellon, a 1929 Yale alumnus, had gold-certified ties to England. First, his mother was English and many of his childhood summers were spent in the English countryside visiting her family. Mellon studied at Cambridge where he developed a passion for racehorses which led to his becoming a leading breeder. His father, the wealthy banker, Andrew Mellon, was briefly the American ambassador to the Court of St James in the 1930s. So one could credibly argue that Mellon's Anglophilia had a solid foundation. The first British painting Mellon purchased was *Pumpkin with a Stable-lad* by George Stubbs. Eventually, his entire collection of British art went to Yale. He also financed the construction of the building designed by Louis Kahn.

When the pandemic was more abstract than real in early March, and the doors to museums were still open, I walked to the Yale Center for British Art, crossing the long stretch of the historic New Haven green to get there. Designed with great foresight by dissenting English Puritans in the 17th century, this green, at 16 acres, was large enough to accommodate the 144,000 people who they believed would be spared in the Second Coming of Christ.

I was going to see the work of another group of English dissenters, the Pre-Raphaelites, who had their share of members whose religious fervor matched that of the Puritans (see, for example, William Holman Hunt's *The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple* (1854-60), but who were also concerned with more secular matters such as social reform and artistic vision. The exhibit, 'Victorian Radicals: From the Pre-Raphaelites to the Arts & Crafts Movement', draws from extensive holdings in the Birmingham Museums which, with its U.S. partner the American Federation of Arts, organized the exhibit.

My encounter with the Pre-Raphaelite artists (and poets) began a half century earlier in the 1960s, in a class at Georgetown called Conflict, Alienation and Negativity. I remember seeing a reproduction and being quite taken with the rapturous *Beata Beatrix* painting by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Shortly thereafter, I visited the Delaware Art Museum in Wilmington, which houses the largest collection of Pre-Raphaelite art outside Britain.

During the cultural and political upheaval of the 1960s – assassinations, the high-stakes race to put a man on the moon, marches for civil rights, protests against the Vietnam War, a back-to-the-land movement – the fierce romanticism and utopian dreams of the Victorian Pre-Raphaelites touched a chord. No doubt their popularity then can also be explained as a reaction to the rigid hold that late modernism had on art, up to and including Clement Greenberg's orthodoxy. Modernism, especially its late manifestation in abstract expressionism, had stripped art of figuration and narration. A renewed interest in the Pre-Raphaelites signified that there was a place for both.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) was founded in 1848, the same year that Marx and Engels published *The Communist Manifesto*, revolution swept through France and other parts of Europe, and the Chartists rallied – in the presence of the army – on Kennington Common in South London calling for workers' rights. For Rossetti, William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais, the PRB leaders barely out of their teens, a radicalized social consciousness was inseparable from an awareness of the stifling conformity and confining rules of the Royal Academy. They proceeded to challenge what was considered 'correct' in Victorian artistic practice. They disdained the over-emphasis on elements of science applied to art, such as Renaissance perspective, and what they perceived as the lifelessness of much of the art that received Academy approval. The Pre-Raphaelites had front-row seats to the dying out of the old order, a decline that began in the 18th century - power that had been based largely on inherited land and wealth - and the ascent of capitalism in the form of rapacious and brutalizing industrialization and mechanization that went in tandem with worker exploitation and social dislocation.

William De Morgan: Eagles Dinner Plate

The movement constituted a retreat from a rationalist–dominated

Kate Elizabeth Bunce: Musica *(Oil on Canvas 1895-1897)*

William Arthur Smith Benson: Copper Tea Set

status quo, offering instead a look back to the Middle Ages to find a way forward in the Victorian age. Of course, like most critiques of the status quo in relation to the past, theirs suffered from an overly rosy assessment of the conditions of life in earlier times. While agrarian society may have seemed preferable from the distance of a century or more, the reality was that land had always been in the hands of a few, and the peasantry were essentially powerless and at the mercy of the landowners for their survival.

In their opposition to the art establishment, the Pre-Raphaelites advocated an art whose first principle was beauty. Through the use of allegory, they believed art should convey moral lessons through stories from the Bible and mythological legends that were familiar to even the most uneducated, and were often handed down orally.

Their radical social agenda called for labor that was meaningful and humane, with the goal of achieving a more equitable distribution of wealth. Henry Wallis's painting, *The Stone Breaker* (1857), for example, is a commentary on Victorian laws that mandated work, often physically harsh, for those who could not find regular employment, such as an entire day spent breaking up stone to build a road.

In the painting, a young man in sullied work clothes is hunched against a berm and some rocks, his head bowed as though he were asleep. His figure blends into the brown-black and burnt sienna colors of the earth. Near twilight, the landscape of trees in the distance has become dark blue, and the sky a fading sallow yellow with narrow bands of violet. The man, who has fallen through the cracks of the industrial age, perhaps unable or unwilling to work in a factory, has died from overwork and exhaustion.

The modern belief, whose origins stretch back at least to the early 18th century, that scientific and technological advancement was somehow synonymous with a higher level of civilization, was belied by the ravages of the factory system in the 19th century, blatantly visible to all with sensitive eyes. In the factories, the clock ruled, and the goal was to produce as much in the shortest amount of clock-time. From the factory and its emphasis on time, all aspects of cultural life were affected. Musing, immobility, singing, directionless wandering were seen as wasteful and were discouraged.

In their alienation, the Pre-Raphaelites dreamed of a simpler, gentler and more aesthetically infused way of life. William Morris and the formation of 'the Firm,' the artists operating at Red Lion Square, and the Arts and Crafts Movement that it spawned - all of which originated in Pre-Raphaelite ideas and attitudes - found models in the guild system of the Middle Ages. Art and social critic John Ruskin's work, *The Nature of Gothic* (from The Stones of Venice), was a bible to Morris and Edward Burne-Jones.

In London in 1888, architect Charles Robert Ashbee founded the Guild and School of Handicraft in the slums of Whitechapel. The guild was a center for textiles and metalwork made by craftsmen and apprentices living communally, many of them socialists, and many drawn from the ranks of the poor. In creating products by hand, the guild could achieve its two main goals: providing an alternative to dehumanized labor while, at the same time, eliminating poverty, which was often the consequence of unforeseen market fluctuations and worker exploitation. Although the guild ran into financial problems later on, it inspired the creation of other guilds in the early 20th century and had an influence on the rise of Western socialism.

As he championed art that was true to Nature, both in theme and assiduous painterly detail, and believed that beauty was art's ultimate goal, Ruskin was the PRB's greatest celebrity defender. However, fickle and prickly, Ruskin didn't hesitate to both praise and criticize a painting by a PRB artist if, in his mind, the work veered too far from his ideals. Ruskin described James Campbell's *The Wife's Remonstrance*, part of an exhibit by the Society of British Artists in London in 1858, as "by far the best picture … full of pathos, and true painting." However, he criticized the painting's depiction of poverty as an example of a Pre-Raphaelite penchant for "ugly things better than beautiful ones."

Though the Pre-Raphaelites presented a slower, quieter and more romantic (and romanticized) world, their beauty is often tinged with pathos, as in Millais's *The Blind Girl* (1854-56). The vividness of the palette - the earthy sienna tones of the girl's cape and gown, the shimmering pale green of the meadow in the background, the far distant rainbow - is juxtaposed with the knowledge that she is excluded from this visual paradise. The sign around the girl's neck reads, 'Pity the Blind.' A younger girl who sits on her lap, perhaps her sister, stretches her body around to look back at the rainbow.

Often indifferent to academic artistic criteria, PRB painters were not averse to flattening pictorial space, similar to 15th century Florentine frescoes; or working with local color, using it lushly. "The colour of the Pre-Raphaelites was equally as uncompromising as their form," wrote English art historian, William Gaunt in his book, *The Pre-Raphaelite Dream*. "They made the green of grass intensely green, the yellow of a flower as yellow as could be, the purple of a dress an impassioned and vibrant purple …"

In Arthur Hughes's *The Long Engagement* (ca. 1854-59), rich in naturalist precision and symbolism, a betrothed couple stand beside a tree in the woods. A shadow enfolds the brown-clothed man, his face showing frustration, while the sad but hopeful face of the woman, who is in the center of the frame, is a luminous pearl. Her vibrant purple cape and the tactile green ferns and moss enhance the painting's feeling of sensual melancholy. The painting suggests that marriage hinges on financial stability, and for the vast majority

Kelmscott Press. A page from The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer

of couples who must adhere to the custom of pre-marital celibacy, that means a prolonged and difficult delay.

Unlike the French Impressionists rebelling against the strictures of the Paris Salon, and who sought in their canvases a sense of how things looked and felt, the PRB artists sought realism. One can speculate whether they might also have been responding to the advent of the daguerreotype. No doubt, in sensibility, they were influenced by the German Nazarene movement which, arose at the beginning of the 19th century in reaction to the perceived aridity and absence of spirituality in art since the Renaissance. Similarly, the Pre-Raphaelites leaned toward making art that was more devotional, whether drawn from the Bible or devotional in the sense of an eroticized spiritual love between a man and a woman. Or, in the case of the work of Simeon Solomon, between a man and a man. Solomon was in the second wave of PRB artists. Jewish and unapologetically homosexual, he has only recently been given his due, despite his extraordinary accomplishments in treating both Biblical and androgynous themes in his work. Burne-Jones, a close friend, told Solomon that he was "the greatest artist of us all; we are mere schoolboys compared with you."

With its Medievalist bent, the Pre-Raphaelite movement would continue to draw interest at various times during the 20th century. There was a particular potency, however, in the 1960s revival. Just as Victorians witnessed the destructiveness wrought by early industrialization, the post-World War II generation grew up in the aftermath of the devastation caused by advanced weaponry. The world had been brought to the brink of annihilation in the 1950s Cold War, as symbolized by air drills in classrooms where children hid under their desks. Economic success and access to a greater number of goods went side by side with the absurdity of living amidst the threat of extinction.

The growth of a counter-culture and the flowering of communes in the late 1960s, echoed Morris, the guilds and the spirit of agrarian community that the Pre-Raphaelites found so appealing. In the art world the Ruralist Movement begun by Peter Blake and Ann and Graham Arnold took their lead from the Pre-Raphaelites. We, too, longed for a new moral and spiritual order that would value human achievement not through tangibles, but through the immeasurable; the perennial joys, for example, derived from simple earthly activities such as looking up at the stars or witnessing over time the growth of a tree; whittling a piece of wood into an object; when every human being's creative potential would be nurtured; when there would be alternatives to mass-produced goods; and when beauty was woven into the patterns of everyday life.

Intimate Art

by Daniel Nanavati, European Editor

Let's talk sex in the art world. Not the male predilection for the female body, from painting to having sex with models, but as a bona fide trade that defies our society's efforts to create a meritocracy. I thought of this piece when reading Mary Fletcher's Speakeasy, which appears in this issue, realising that she had not even scratched the surface of how sex can determine material success. Let me be clear at the outset I am championing talent, so any person of any sexual orientation in a position of power over another who wants sex to advance that person's career in the art world, is in my sights.

The first draft of this article was discussed by the editors and Al Jirikowic wrote:

"You know sex is a way of life. It is many things to many people. It is a language that is an 'imperative', masked, and urgent. There is a vast unknown to sex which keeps out of a direct reference but always hovers around us all the time. So it beguiles us with powers we almost know not of … but when these powers have a 'traded' or 'shared' dimension, there is a definite next step involved that extracts its meaning in the world of favors and ego. Hence its power and mystery and pleasure and imperative which makes it outside our rational/philosophical management."

I think as far as this goes this is fair comment but it is not strictly what I am discussing. Yes, I am looking at favours given as a trade for advancement in the art world, but this is not a mystery. The mystery is why those who demand favours, once they get the sex, keep their word. And there is no real mystery as to why they ask for sex, they have power and they use it to enjoy an orgasm or two.

Along with shared social standing (often called class), or shared schooling, having had sex with a person inclines those in power to promote that someone in every field of social mobility. Why?

Female Bonobos (called pygmy chimpanzees) often use genital rubbing to defuse tension between two rival groups, avoiding the

kinds of violence seen in chimp wars. Though they can be violent. Is this trade deeply embedded in our psyches? If this were true would not every person in a position of power in the art world be asking for sex from artists all the time? And granted Duchamp knew well our attentiveness to sex as all his works revolve around it in one way or another, but that is another form of trade. Thats the cheap seduction of the public gaze often lodged in marketing. The use of sex to gain favour and not to care whether one is talented or not, should be criminal.

The great Claudette Colbert once said that the only actor she knew who had not slept with someone to get a part in a movie was Bette Davis. And it isn't the sex that matters, it is the fact that talented people are deprived of their place by the sexually extrovert or manipulative. And this game is played by everyone.

Now artists will tell you to be successful you must mix with successful people, plan ahead, be proactive. The sculptor Mathieu Briand advises not be to scared of being commercial and never to stop working. But few start off by saying 'be a brilliant artist'. What they are saying is you don't have to be poor to be an artist and here are some ways to be self-sufficient. But actually, the only thing that should be said is 'be a brilliant artist'. Let your talent show itself. Yet in society we all know that great talent can get nowhere in terms of career but sleeping with the right people can get you everywhere.

"Now I think I am getting a much better sense of your work."

(Pablo Heguera)

Powerful people in the art world need to be finessed. Everyone has their vanity. But come on, I hear you say, we are healthy adults and we all need and want to have sex with someone. Just because you have relations with someone in your career stream doesn't mean you are a second-rate artist, you may have fallen in love. And of course, this is true. It is also true that you don't have to use your social and university contacts in order to rule your country, but it helps. And we should face the sad fact that in European society across say, the last 500 years to take a completely arbitrary number, women were seen solely for their bodies and all the people in positions of power in the art world were men, so sexual exploitation was rife. Today women are far more in control of their own bodies so the exploitation goes both ways. And yet, with that, better talent still loses out.

You have every right to argue that I do not know every artist and who am I to say that the artists who become well known because they sleep with the right people for their career path, are not the best?

My answer to that is 'look at the art we celebrate as the best.' If that is the summit of 10,000 years of human activity – to go back to a pile of stones, a rubbish heap, and anything you pick up off the ground or to paint without skill or imagination – then we are intellectually up a dead-end creek and culturally bankrupt.

And equally I know this because my mother is Shänne Sands. A poet. She wouldn't sleep with anyone to get published, unlike Sylvia Plath who married her success, and she was outraged when men suggested it. Consequently you won't have heard of her or read her. But a poetry professor in North Carolina says she is the 'link between the Romantics and the Moderns' and before she died he cited her as one of the finest poets of her age.

Ultimately it doesn't matter who seduces who, or who uses who, what matters is the cultural debasement and the reduction of imagination to animal desire. It is completely amiss that accolades come after death for so many artists and still will, and one of the reasons is that talent isn't what you need. Jeffery Archer once said if you have talent and energy you can be a king. If you have no talent but lots of energy you can still be a prince.

There is too much bedroom energy still in the arts for us to be wholly convinced we are any more civilised than Bonobos.

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Utah Can Be the Arts Center of the West, But It's Not There Yet

by Alexander Stanfield, West Coast Editor

Utah isn't known for its arts scene – aside from a couple of collectives, a handful of museums, and an occasional festival, Utah lacks much of the appeal held by the art juggernauts in the States. Unlike those heavy hitters, tourist art is a big player in Utah's art market; the prairie/mountain landscapes or the oversaturated prolonged exposures of some natural phenomenon – maybe a cowboy or two on their ranch, and don't forget the fauna and flora. This is part of Utah's identity, for better or worse. Utah has no shortage of breathtaking wilderness to inspire artists of any kind. Lack of inspiration isn't Utah's problem. Lack of infrastructure and opportunities to nurture and maintain many of its creators plagues what could be a vibrant arts community. Utah is victim to a self-destructive mentality, a 'why pay someone when I can get someone else to do it for free' state of mind. Even in Salt Lake City, where there is the highest concentration of venues, the amount of properly paid positions for those in the arts is, frankly, depressing.

Those who choose the academic side of the arts in Utah are presented with a similar, and arguably more difficult decision. With only three four-year universities in Utah, with only the University of Utah offering a PhD in Music, there is a looming low ceiling for those who'd want to pursue their academic possibilities within Utah. Each university has an associated museum or gallery, but many of the opportunities they offer are only available to students, not those entering the professional sphere. A lucky few that obtain the coveted password and gain entrance to one of the few arts institutions are provided with the means to stay in Utah. The rest, each through their own agency and for their own reasons leave for greener pastures.

That isn't to say the training received from these programs isn't noteworthy. In fact, there are highly respected historians, studio artists and professors at each university. I can personally attest to the diverse faculty and depth of knowledge within the University of Utah's art and art history department, as I received my Bachelor's and Master's degrees there. However, it would be an understatement to say that the art history department was low on the funding totem pole; small, and overlooked comparatively to other discourses at the University of Utah. The main building is a cement bunker from the brutalist 1960s, which has a certain charm, but it was clear where the money went when you visited SJ Quinney College of Law or the Warnock Engineering building. The connection between namesake and funding gains a new layer knowing that there is a Marva and John Warnock Artist in Residence program, an opportunity only open to visiting artists, but no namesake to the department's building.

There are certainly opportunities for academics and artists while they are students. But more often than not, those opportunities dry up once you leave the education system they are tied to. As a student, if you didn't plan, or were not sure about going for the next level of degree, there wasn't much direction given. You were told about job opportunities, what field your degree fit in, options you could take but not necessarily how to effectively apply what you had learned. I was taught about the de-Marxification of the American petty bourgeoisie, but not about how to network amongst museum staff to gain the employment I sought.

I had a semester internship at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts during my undergrad with the Campus Outreach department. It was a beneficial learning endeavor where I gained great experience, connected with professionals and even created a version of Salt Lake City's Gallery Stroll on the University's campus. It was great, but nothing came of it aside from the museum staff knowing my name and an extra line on my resume. No door was ever presented to me to continue work with the institution. It was an "Alright…thanks… bye" kind of exit. I do not regret any part of that internship, and you need to put in the proper work to receive the right job, but it stings when you're told internships are how doors to jobs open up, and then there is no door.

As an art history graduate, it was heavily implied, and even said bluntly at times, that I would need to continue my academics if I wanted to enter the professional field. This is something I struggled with and came to terms with in my own time. When I finally decided that it was indeed what I wanted, I applied to grad school at the University of Utah because I developed useful connections within the department. I had a two month internship during the interim between my Bachelor's and Master's program, once again at the UMFA but this time with Development and Services. I gained even more experience with fundraising, event planning, and how to engage with donors and members. I even helped plan an exhibition gala. And yet again, after it had run its course, I was in the same situation. Another great experience, but it was clear that the door was shut behind me once the internship was over.

I would argue that the expectations, course work, and requirements of that art history department could go pound-for-pound with any art history department. Grad students are provided with the opportunity to be a teacher's assistant, student instructor, work on research projects, receive funding for travel and grants, and to choose their desired path of research and the appropriate advisor to guide them. In the interest of pursuing museum work after I graduated, I chose to create an exhibition catalog in the hopes it would show my skills and ability to produce novel and engaging research. I was given high praise for what I produced but to this day it sits on the shelf gathering dust. And that is the most demoralizing part. Like many MA students, I put everything I could into my project, spent countless hours looking over red marks and rereading what I had already reread, stressing over the tiniest details, but I couldn't find a platform to share my work outside of the seminar room. The three colleagues I was closest to during my MA were all subjected to similar pressure, with two of them leaving Utah to pursue their PhD aspirations. There is a massive disconnect between the arts on campus and the arts in the public sector. If Utah wants to keep the product of its education system it needs to do a better job of providing opportunities and reaching out, with reasons that entice us to stay.

My experience isn't singular or unique. Many others have struggled, and will continue to struggle to develop roots here in Utah until change is implemented. Some tough it and even fewer not only add to the arts scene and culture in Utah, but make a living as well. Many like myself have to leave Utah to seek out more opportunities. I initially left Utah for reasons outside of career aspirations, but it ended up being the best thing to happen to me concerning my career. I encountered opportunities that wouldn't have been possible staying in Utah and now my career within the arts has evolved into something I would have never anticipated.

I now consider myself to be part of 'the returned,' the individuals who wanted to contribute to the arts here in Utah but weren't able to until after they had left. For most, the idea of staying in a place where you can't make a living isn't an option, especially if you know that you could elsewhere. It doesn't help that the art curriculums we are constantly enveloped in refer to the very places that so

many individuals relocate to - because we are conditioned to do so. The only references we hear or read about Utah are just to land art, prehistoric images, and the occasional encounter with a local artist. A very different discussion compared to the plethora of references to New York City and Los Angeles. If Utah wants to be a luring force for the arts it needs to act like it wants it. That is the mentality that got Los Angeles and New York City to where they are today, even if it was a fake-it-till-you-make-it persona at times. If Utah wants to contend with, not copy, art scenes like these then it needs people and institutions with the same mentality so that it can capitalize on what it has and what it does well. There is, of course, a daunting hurdle, funding. Utah's Arts Council is one of the longest running collectives of its kind in the States but it hasn't received the financial nourishment it needs. However, there may be hope on the horizon. Gov. Herbert proposed a new budget for Utah in FY20 *(ed: Fiscal Year 2019-2020)* that allocates more money for cultural organizations. In addition to the $1,000,000.00 already promised, the proposed legislation would provide a nearly six-fold increase in funding. We'll have to wait and see if the Utah legislature feels that these nonprofit organizations are indeed worthy in their eyes. I will speak on the behalf of artists, academics, and creators alike here in Utah; give us reasons to stay that allow us to stay.

In Response to Darren Jones, "Is it Time to End the Whitney Biennial"?

by Al Jirikowic, D.C. Editor

I think there are many facets to the question Darren poses – but off hand my response is YES, end the Biennial – but with a great caveat. A caveat which inspires me to think we must question the real purpose of the Whitney, MOMA, the Guggenheim et al, with respect to the powerful role the cathedrals of art actually play in our art world of 'crisis' – for Darren is certainly hinting at crisis. And a crisis it is.

And 'play' is the operative word here. For this is 'playtime' for those financial elites, the .01% of the population who control the Whitney or Met or MOMA etc., as *The New York Times* so explicitly points out. The NYT reveals the makeup or controlling composition of the various boards of directors as 'The Structure' (my word), of these veritable institutions. This is soundly their turf, they paid for it so it is theirs and make no mistake about it. The NYT makes no mistake about it. This may seem like a revelation to some, but we already know this to be hideously true, for not only is there an absence of democracy (art has always been an elite game?) but more importantly this shield of board members guarantees there can never be a more open process in art/cultural/input/society/exhibition. This structure is hardened air tight.

So the average person, i.e. the art loving public, will never have any sense of say in the total operation of these museums, and that is quite obviously intentional. The average person could never pony up to get into this club and why should they? This is rarified air only to be breathed by those who have expressed interests in joining the cadre. Yes, there is a massive quid pro quo in terms of status, write-offs, prestige, influence. This governing structure is the apex of financial elite control expressed in the world of these cultural cathedrals of art. They set the tone, the fashion, the accepted, the current, the included or excluded in what is to be considered art. These institutions are the highbrow pervaders/purveyors of art, the standard of what is in the air of art at the apex of cultural discussion and discourse. These institutions legitimize or organize the viewing of art as they see fit for whatever reason. The reasons may be obscure, hidden, or blatant, but the synthesis of this decision making process is very controlling. This is all power play. Byzantine. Strange, secret determinations. This is how 'they' operate and what the public expects and assumes as settled art in and of our time. Or is it? Darren seems to think not, he sees the Whitney as having worn out its mission. Of course I agree with him, but more because this is endemic to all the cathedrals of art.

Secondly, our question entails a vast soul-searching psychological proposition that will be quite difficult for the art world to entertain. We know the institutions of art are never going to be encumbered by doubt or revision of criteria or purpose and hence will never question their fundamental role in our society. It looks like they exist for them. But that question really then lies with us. Can WE begin to openly question the various filters and strainers, determinations and standards, processes and criteria that these institutions deal with in terms of providing the show of art that we are then 'allowed' to 'see'? And therein lies the rub that Darren only alludes to. This illustrates the crisis of art we really do not contend with. That openly stated is: do we agree with who calls the shots in the cathedrals of art? Do we really want to question this and what it implies? Or is that done anyway but to no avail? I really do not sense that, although the art world is terribly 'busy'.

... we must question the real purpose of the Whitney, MOMA, the Guggenheim et al, with respect to the powerful role the cathedrals of art actually play in our art world of 'crisis'

We are torn. We look to these great institutions to provide us with guidance, instruction, reference for art. But we are in conflict with them because they are structured in such a fashion that they can only serve their own best interest, whatever that might be, whether we are conscious of it or not! As Darren points out. Think about it – how is art determined? Is it merely the decisions of others? How can art emerge beset by such control and agendas set in the maze of corporate yes–men and stultifying bureaucracy? Especially when power-ego-money-image-service-politics-fantasy is so encompassing that these institutions are like black holes where art light will never escape, let alone develop. Art is entirely purposed

Installation view of the 1973 Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Art
(Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, January 10–March 18, 1973). Photograph by Sandak, Inc.

in this setting. These are very high walls with shark-infested moats, so dangerous disagreement with the standard line sees you banished to the rotten lands of irrelevancy. So you end up marching to the tune of the Cathedrals if you wish to enter. Kiss the ring, art pilgrim.

The curating of art answers to a set of rules specifying what can be seen as contextually correct for any given space. That space may launch an artist or keep her/him on a set level, but that artist is usually 'set' on a given path that is well traveled, whether to success or status-on-hold.

And that structure of choosers designated according to financial and elite pressure – through taxes, grants, charity or sales - drips down into the myriad smaller museums and galleries, dealers and art fairs, alternative spaces or community art places. There is some sort of 'expectation of performance' on them. The curating of art answers to a set of rules specifying what can be seen as contextually correct for any given space. That space may launch an artist or keep her/him on a set level, but that artist is usually set on a given path that is well traveled, whether to success or status-on-hold. The sad thing is there is usually little surprise one way or another, and certain places are dead ends where no art statements arise and flourish. Shall we call it the institutionalized art distribution system as the shadow mimicry of so called art life? Is this mimicry spread across the board so that as we descend down the art distribution system all (exceptions lurk) institutions are inherently basking in their own best interest, as innocent or corrupt as that may be? I think Darren Jones would acknowledge this ongoing state of things at the Whitney, as ongoing 'Whitney culture' and in so doing he would certainly characterize it as a 'dysfunction of sorts' – that has persevered despite criticism and other art world influence. This is to say we are stuck with this 'creature' of the Whitney as the Whitney. We are left shaking our heads asking "whose art world is this anyway"? Certainly not the public's… but the patron's, the investors, the board – we can see the true domain of the Whitney. But this **is** where we find ourselves now, sadly. Hence cancel the biennial of the Whitney because it could never be what it pretends to be and why kid ourselves? The cathedrals of art that sanction perception, as a management-permission that allows some to float while others – who knows who – sink. So the real question in respect to the perceptual sanctions that occur on a daily basis no matter where you look, is where are our artists who do not want to play along with the fabricated norm of the art world? Where are our challenges to the walls of art/norm? Where are our lost artists and their voices? Or is the art world no better than a catalogue of choices of whether we like it or not? Will the Whitney Biennial bring us to what we sense we miss? Not now. How?

In the past, serious questions and doubters have critically and courageously confronted the Academy or the norm or the Church or the State or the man/woman on the hill. This could be done when time itself was on a different scale within a less mediated population or group. This was before the post-modern condition of mass culture, when time and people were scaled together, not in conflict, when time was a dimension of humanity – not the other way around. When time was slower, scaled differently, with more spatial head room, a smaller population, a bigger world, without the social pressures of today. Of course we will never go back and that is fine. When some daring artists challenged the norm and upset people they were sometimes burned at the stake, tarred and feathered or banished into the wilderness. Today they are ignored or unseen. The art world consumes winners and losers. Aspiring artists depend on being discovered or hyped. This entire dynamic of artists' plight and the art distribution system is inhuman and needs to be addressed in a very conscious way. Can we?

Brian Belott: Untitled (Fan Puff) *2016, at the 2019 Biennial. He was born in 1973.*

There is no solution for the undiscovered artist, but there can be an awareness of our art distribution network that the viewer can begin to adopt. There is no art place where the public should not question a few of the filtering standards or ideas, ask why that institution exists and what we should expect from it. We should always examine the context of how art comes to the fore. We should be aware of the social process that goes into it. We should doubt the veracity of large art institutions the most, the Cathedrals of Art that claim to provide or pretend to answer our aesthetic wilderness. We should have the courage to claim our hearts when meeting new art, not automatically buy in with what is provided for us. I think I will never think of the Whitney in the same way and that is just one of the first to be called on to the carpet.

Stick around.

Chairs, Tables and Sex

by Frances Oliver

As I begin to read a review* in my favourite magazine, *The New York Review of Books*, I am caught up short by the following: "… Gessen's credentials as an observer of autocracy are impeccable. Aged fifty-three, they (Gessen identifies as binary) spent their childhood …" Who are they? Oh of course – binary – they is/are Gessen the writer. But then there are some quotes the reviewer makes from Gessen's no doubt valuable book (alas, so much about the evils of Trump, like so much about the climate crisis and exhaustion of our planet is more about preaching to the converted). This is Gessen her/his self:

"In a representative democracy, a politician's primary audience is their voters … In an autocracy, the politician's primary audience is the autocrat *himself*, because *he* apportions power and influence." (Italics mine)

So the politician gets a plural (neuter) pronoun but the autocrat a masculine one. Does this imply that autocrats are always male? That this is a male evil? But no, the heroes, the anti-autocrats are male as well. The masculine pronoun is given also to "everyone who still tries to resist … such a person appears to his ever more indifferent neighbours as an eccentric, a fool, a Don Quixote …" So are the few remaining heroes, like the autocrats, invariably masculine?

I haven't read Masha Gessen's book. Perhaps she switches throughout between masculine and feminine pronouns, as a few writers do. I write about Hari Kunzru's review because it has prompted a lot of thought about the absurdities and confusions of our new politically correct English and the deterioration of English in general, especially through the media. Does it all matter? I think it does. When the mania for non-offensiveness reaches a point where J K Rowling gets a barrage of abuse for supporting what is after all biological reality and feels she must tell a personal history to defend a stand which in a free society should never need defending, something is very wrong; and it's just in this climate of fear and confusion that autocrats, of whatever ilk, can thrive.

The Gessen review also leads to much thought about the whole question of genders in language. In the three languages I know well, each has a different approach to gender. In French not only living creatures but objects have genders. In German they do as well but children and young girls have a neuter gender. French has a masculine sun and a feminine moon; German the opposite. In English gender applies only to living beings but animals may be hes, shes, or its. In Turkish – another language I know a little – there are no gender pronouns at all: one pronoun, with its case variations and its singular and plural, serves everything from men and women to tables and chairs. If we continue to be so hung up on pronoun gender, why don't we do the same and invent a new one, an 'it' for everything?

No doubt there is a book or at least a long dissertation about the fascinating question of language and gender. In myself, it has inspired a sequel to Edward Lear's immortal poem 'The Table and the Chair':

Said the table to the chair

Let us go take the air

But I'd rather lead the dance

As a lady like in France

Said the chair to the table

Be a lady if you're able

I myself will gladly be

As in Germany a he

But why let ourselves be vexed

In old England we're not sexed!

So like people let us range

With the liberty to change

And from Stuttgart to Toulouse

We shall be just what we choose

And wherever we may stay

He, she, it but never they

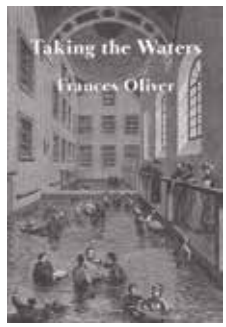
To use plurals we are loath

Unless speaking of – *us both*.

(italics theirs)

**Hari Kunzru: Democracy's Red Line Surviving Autocracy* by Masha Gessen *The New York Review of Books*, July 2, 2020

Frances Oliver's new novel Taking the Waters *is now available online and to order from bookshops.*
ISBN – 9781908867339 £9 / $12



Defund the Police, Refund the Arts

by Viktor Witkowski

I call the United States my home. Poland is my native land and Germany my homeland. In the current political situation in the U.S., where one political party has abdicated responsibility, I find myself looking to Europe for answers and possible solutions. In the USA the pandemic and its volatile virus have been declared Democrats by the administration and anybody who questions statewide openings, wears masks to protect others or demands federal support for the most vulnerable is anti-patriotic, anti-free speech and an enemy of the people.

The other pandemic that has had its grip on this country for decades is police violence and police violence against Black Americans. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that there are no official, annual statistics on police use of excessive force in the U.S. A 1999 report titled *USA: Race, Rights and Police Brutality* by Amnesty International highlights the Police Accountability Act which was passed by Congress in 1994, but which was never implemented. The problem is that this 'legislation does not require local police agencies to keep their own records on the use of force or to submit data to the Justice Department, so any data collection system at present must depend upon the voluntary cooperation of police agencies.' Aside from estimates released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (which hover roughly around 1,000 people killed each year by police), there are few reliable sources and no consistent nation-wide effort.

In Germany, the number of people shot and killed annually by police averages at around 10. Within the context of Europe that number is high, but it also explains why the largest Black Lives Matter demonstrations outside the U.S. happened in Germany: partly out of solidarity and partly due to racism, far-right ideologies and violence among German police forces. Yet the numbers from both countries speak a separate language. While in the U.S. 19 unarmed black men were fatally shot in the first five months of 2015, in Germany 15 citizens of any race were killed by police in two years.

To defund and reimagine law enforcement in the United States is not a utopian or radical idea; it is a response to a problem that needs to be fixed. We should not accept 1,000 dead each year when other countries and many of our allies abroad demonstrate that there are alternative ways of limited, yet effective, policing. And whenever we are faced with immense societal changes and calls to better our system, this must extend to calls to include the arts.

What we need to do at this moment is to defund the police and refund the arts. *The Federal Art Project* (1935-1943), which emerged during the Great Depression to primarily employ artists, can serve as a model. In addition to public commissions, the Federal Art Project funded various projects that documented American life in urban and rural areas. Some artists and particularly photographers like Dorothea Lange, Gordon Parks, Edward and Louis Rosskam, and Marjory Collins helped to make class and race divisions visible. The FAP also established community art centers across the country and made art available to a larger section of the population.

Henry Taylor: THE TIMES THAY AINT A CHANGING, FAST ENOUGH!, 2017

Photo by Cooper Dodds

(Courtesy of the artist and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles/New York/ Tokyo)

Gordon Parks: Doll Test, *Harlem, New York, 1947*

(via metiviergallery.com)

Canada, Scandinavia, and countries like Germany are known for generously funding the arts. In late March of this year, Germany passed a bill that provided the creative sector, including artists and galleries, with aid in the amount of 56 billion US Dollars (in contrast, the $2 trillion economic stimulus bill passed in Congress in-

cluded $25 million for the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, $7.5 million for the Smithsonian and $75 million for both the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities). The most important aspect of public funding for artists is that it increases their independence from day jobs and from the art market. As an art writer and an artist, I regularly encounter people (in the US and Europe) who argue that European artists are not as competitive, professional, or as driven as their American counterparts. This argument sounds like the tired Republican claim that somebody who receives living-wage unemployment benefits will quit working.

The contemporary U.S. art world is broken too, and it needs to be reimagined. One of the main indicators of its failure is that women artists are still underrepresented as are minorities and people of color. Based on data from 30 museums that were surveyed by artnet.com, only 2.3% of all acquisitions and gifts between 2008 and 2018 included work by African American artists. Work by women that was sold on art auctions between 2008 and 2019, made up only 2% of total sales. A new Federal Art Project is a starting point that would allow artists and progressive institutions/galleries to act autonomously and focus on how to advance their mission of inclusivity.

If we question how law enforcement is funded and how we need to cut and reallocate that funding, we also need to question what constitutes the economic value of contemporary visual art. Is it the experience economy of art fairs (i.e.: the art fair experience as a lifestyle for the business and social elite) that does more damage than good to how contemporary art is valued? Do we accept art's commercialization as a given since it benefits some? In his book *Art and the Global Economy*, John Zarobell asks if:

"... commerce exists to nurture culture, or is it rather that the force of culture has been harnessed to feed the evolving dynamics of consumerism, in which the highest-value item is the production of a rich and memorable experience? Perhaps the truth is darker still. An alternative analysis of the fair would consider art as not the point at all but rather the purported reason to assemble High Net Worth Individuals (HNWIs) and to promote social cohesion among an international elite."

Do we dare to reimagine a more sustainable economic support system for the arts? A model like the Federal Art Project will not solve every problem, but it is a starting point to revalue contemporary visual art in the U.S. as a common, public good. Similar to conversations around policing, universal health care, earning a living wage, unemployment and retirement benefits – our desire in the U.S. to fix all of these issues once and for all does not have to remain wishful thinking. As dark as these times are, the recent nation-wide demonstrations are proof that we are headed the right way. We just need to make sure to keep the pressure up and use art and our voices to draw attention to what is at stake.

The Presence of Painting

by Steven Carrelli

A year ago this month my wife Louise and I sat at the kitchen table of our friends Adam and Charlene Fung in Fort Worth, Texas, and we played a game called Pandemic. It is a cooperative game in which each player has a different specialty, and their task is to work together to stop a global pandemic. The players either win collectively, ending the spread of the disease, or lose collectively. As I recall, we defeated the pandemic that evening.

Today, we are confined to our respective homes – the Fungs in Fort Worth, and Louise and I in Chicago – as COVID-19 increases its reach daily, and we consult maps online that look disconcertingly like the game board on that kitchen table. Art institutions, like nearly everywhere else, have closed to the public, and those of us who teach have switched practically overnight to online-only instruction.

As a painter, I wonder how the values of painting can be taught in such a format. Of course, we must do it under these circumstances. But painting is so much more than image, shape and color – much more than those qualities that are reproducible and transmissible via photographs and digital media. In a time of social distancing and virtual exhibitions, how does one cultivate the necessary sensitivity to the immediate, physical aspects of painting that make it

Megan Euker: Untitled, *2008, oil on panel, 7" x 7" (17.5 cm. x 17.5 cm.)*

a vital art form?

Perhaps even more importantly, I am prompted by these circumstances to wonder why I still believe painting to be a vital art form. What does painting have to offer at the present time, and why do I think that the sensitivity it demands of us is still worth cultivating?

In the hallway of my home hangs a seven-inch-square, untitled painting from 2008 by Megan Euker, a Chicago-based artist. Thickly painted in oil on a wooden panel, it depicts three standing bathers, their backs turned to us. The central figure is painted in broad, swift strokes of red and brown, the furrow of his spine a single dark brown swipe of the brush. Arms are indicated by as few as three or four bold contrasting strokes. The water and land in the foreground are composed of wide sweeps of blue, black, and sandy ochre, while thick dabs of yellow-green suggest foliage in the distance. The paint piles up in lumps and pools, creating a textured surface that has a tactile, weighty presence.

Hanging below Euker's painting is *Whirlpool (ominous)*, also from 2008, by Adam Fung. The surface of Fung's tiny (4.5 x 5.75 inches) painting is as texturally complex as Euker's, but completely unlike it. Swirling concentric waves of water are painted with delicate hatches of tightly harmonized colors ranging from pale warm blues tinged with yellow to deep blue-violets. This whole surface is then thickly varnished to a glossy, uniformly smooth finish that both deepens the colors and increases the viewer's distance from the subject. While Euker's painting depicts a deep space, its painted surface projects in relief into our own tactile space. Fung's painting, by contrast, suggests a window onto space that is utterly inaccessible. Its delicate, sensuous surface invites touch, but to touch it would be like pressing one's fingers against a glass pane. It separates our space from the space of the painting, enticing us to move closer while pushing the depicted space ever further out of reach.

I, and many of the people around me, have lost friends to this virus, and we are unable to mourn together in public. At a time when people are concerned about saving lives, I ask myself why anyone should give a rip about painting.

The galleries and museums are closed due to a global pandemic, and I am walking up and down the hall of my apartment looking at paintings. Why should I care about this so much? Why should I ask you to care? I, and many of the people around me, have lost friends to this virus, and we are unable to mourn together in public. At a time when people are concerned about saving lives, I ask myself why anyone should give a rip about painting. So what if we can't visit a gallery or museum to look at paintings in this moment? Isn't this just a luxury? I certainly can't deny the role of privilege – or the lack of it – in both access to art and vulnerability in a crisis. Still, here I am looking at these little paintings, these tiny gems that hang on my wall and keep me company. And I'm reaching through video conference meetings and online teaching platforms to impress upon my students the fine points of line weight, mark-making, touch. Why?

What these paintings have in common is 'presence'. They embody something of the human intelligence that made them. They are the products of care embedded in a surface through touch. They speak to us as physical bodies, and remind us of how that physicality connects us to the people around us and to the larger world.

In a time when it is dangerous to touch our friends, the sensitive touch embodied in a good painting is a genuine grace.

The Origins of Art

by Anthony Viney

Why is visual art produced by people and not normally by animals? (We know that elephants and chimpanzees can and do create interesting art in captivity but not, as far as we know, in the wild.) When did human beings start to create art, and what environmental, physical and neurological changes happened to allow us to do this? Anthropogeny – the study of early humans – has advanced very quickly in the past few decades and is now throwing fresh light into some of the remotest corners of human history.

One of the areas that has opened up the most, giving us a deeper understanding of the place of Homo sapiens, is the discovery of previously unknown members of our human family. Species such as the Denisovans in Eastern Asia and the Homo floresiensis from Indonesia. These recent human family tree discoveries, together with the expansion of insights into more familiar human species such as Homo neanderthalensis (500,000 to 40,000 years ago) and Homo heidelbergensis (700,000 to 300,000 years ago). Due to their full grown adult size of 3' 6", Homo floresiensis have been nicknamed the Hobbits.

Another lively area of investigation - being made on the back of these recent findings - is the evolutionary change in the shape of the brains of Homo sapiens over the last 100,000 years. Our brains, it seems, have taken on a more globular form over time, whereas at one time they were similar in shape to those of Neanderthals – that is, more like a rugby ball than a European football. Interestingly, though, Neanderthals had, on average, slightly bigger brains than Homo sapiens do today.

What this actually means for Homo sapiens's brain–wiring and cognitive ability is hotly debated, as new finds constantly alter contemporary scientific opinion. And this has a direct bearing on questions about the origins of human art, with some anthropolo-

gists seeing this change in brain shape as evidence for new cognitive ability that allowed humans for the first time to create complex art - such as the 15,000-35,000-year-old cave art of France and Spain.

What else are these new findings telling us about the origins of art? Well, Neanderthals were creating art 60,000 years ago in the caves of modern Spain. Their ladder-like shapes, dots and hand prints may not have been as complex or realistic as the art of Homo sapiens, but it is art nonetheless. And recent finds in South African caves and Indonesia (Lubang Jeriji Saléh in Borneo) seem to suggest humans were creating rudimentary art long before Chauvet Cave and Lascaux Cave were painted. So it may be the case that recent changes to human brains don't entirely account for the origins of art, and that what we might call 'creative work' was being produced in some form or other by our very ancient human relatives like Homo erectus and Homo antecessor hundreds of thousands of years ago. That seems unlikely, but it's not impossible.

We will have to wait and see what is discovered next, but the science and the debate it gives rise to, give me as a contemporary artist much to ponder on. I sense the presence of this early art in aspects of contemporary practice. And I feel able, at least partially, to understand and respond to their ancient mark-making, even though as artists we are separated by tens of thousands of years.

Hand prints in Pettakere Cave at Leang-Leang Prehistoric Site, Maros
(Wiki Commons: Image – Cahyo Ramadhani)

VIRGINIA

Mix and Match

by Margaret Richardson

VA Made: 'Mediation Across Media' at the Branch Museum of Architecture and Design in Richmond, Virginia (July 17 - September 13, 2020) offers a unique opportunity to realize relationships between divergent media and expand one's perspective of 'things'.

Co-organized by Howard Risatti and Steven Glass, this ambitious exhibition features works circa 1955-2019, from over 30 artists grouped into 'tableaux,' an apropos principle for dissolving boundaries. Two-dimensional works provide backdrops for three-dimensional objects, staged to 'speak' individually, among groupings, and with contexts past and present. In juxtaposition, commonalities of form and content are realized while various dual themes emerge, providing multivalent 'pictures' to ponder.

Context is key to this exhibition, which debuted in Staunton at the Beverley Street Studio School. Its intimate 'white cube' created a contemplative viewing space, while the Branch Museum's Tudor-revival details add complexity. Here, 13 tableaux define the perimeter of the room and four tableaux occupy its center. Numbered and titled but without linear order, tableaux invite myriad cross-references.

At one end of the gallery, 'Tableaux #9 'Form in Space Biomorphic/Geomorphic' commands attention, providing direction and possibility. Attached to the wall, Sukjin Choi's whimsical *Path*, a vortex of blue and white ceramic shapes, like birds or waves, forms a dramatic pattern around conventional ceramic vessels of varying shapes by David Crane, Jeff Vick, Catherine White, and Steven Glass. Showcasing what ceramics can 'do', they highlight multiple 'paths' of display and meaning.

Black window-panes define the adjacent wall, offering another framing device for four abstractions and accompanying objects. Maurice Bond's slashing brushstrokes highlight related colors, tex-

tures, and 'Directional Intentions' in John Jessiman's wood-fired clay vase, while swirls in Stephen Addiss's Sumi ink painting echo similar 'Consequential Gestures' marking Steven Glass's container, revealing action painting across media and cultures. Similarly, Ray Kass's smoke-made painting is framed by Robert Barnard's bronze-looking wood-fired ceramic and Barbara Dill's weathered wood-turned bowl. As the title suggests, each are 'transformed' by wood/fire/smoke and other associations. These tableaux flank Jaime Pelissier's hand-carved stone and metal sculptures and Susan Iverson's tapestry within the bay window. Like figures, totems or furniture, their geometric shapes reference modern abstraction and 'primitivism'. Together, these tableaux collapse time, space, and distances between fine art and craft.

Nearby and on the adjoining wood-paneled wall are other formal connections. Paolo Arao's colorful grid painting echoes its surroundings, providing a window 'into' Lydia Thompson's abstract collage, *'Dwelling with Pathway'*. Back-to-back on a pedestal, viewers travel between them to notice 'Parallels in Form and Content'. Javier Tapia's abstract watercolor provides a colorful complement to Cindy Neuschwander's vibrant wooden bowl, while 'Line in and out of Space' is found between Andrea Donnelly's framed fiber piece and Jiwan Joo's ceramic *Cubes*. Threading or ancient Korean inlay produce minimalist effects, conflating modern formalism and traditional handicraft.

Other tableaux juxtapose natural and human design, connecting through subject. Various media allude to landscape. Below Jason Hackett's four multidimensional plates capturing stark desert contrasts, Joan Elliott's nuanced oil painting depicts foliage against a momentary red-orange sky. In comparison, one makes the other seem more real or abstract. On a pedestal nearby, Jim Meyer's stone and felt necklace lies boxed in front of Andras Bality's oil painting of waves and rocks at Gull Rock, Monhagen, ME. With this backdrop, a necklace becomes rocks on a beach, challenging jewelry's conventions. Propped behind them, Wayne Fitzgerald's shadowbox, *Construction#1 - A Sacred Tree*, contains a wooden twig placed to appear as a tree in an empty room. Painted and real shadows and objects reveal nature, literal and constructed.

Two other landscape-themed tableaux suggest human and natural decay and regeneration. In 'Evolution/Dissolution Form/Anti-Form', Kiara Pelissier's wavy glass sculpture, *Dark Aqua Crumple*, beside Randy Edmonson's jagged porcelain, *Winter landscape*, evoke glaciers melting, breaking, and combining anew. In contrast, Brooke Hine's porcelain sculpture looks like hollow, bleached bones or branches in the Southwest when paired with Adam Welch's burnt-orange stoneware.

Back on the wall are human constructions. Uniting architectural form and space, Kass's expressionist watercolor of skyscrapers intermixes with neutral-colored constructions - Fitzgerald's disquieting *Ladder Still Life*, Cindy Myron's machine-like tangle of building parts; Dale Quarterman's *Funk-y* clay sculpture of a precariously-perched Cliff House. Their angled shapes, ominous shadowing, and skewed perspectives all suggest something amiss.

Serendipitous 'Color and Textural Coincidences' are also discovered between Chuck Scalin's abstract photograph and Choi's green-glazed ceramic. Despite its flatness, Scalin's up-close street

All images on this page from: Mediation Across Media

scene captures the raised textures and blurry contours of sidewalk tread and spray paint. Behind Choi's fuzzy creature, one reads

something similarly organic in Scalin's found images.

Similar imaginative leaps are made in a chair-themed tableau. Representational paintings by Diego Sanchez and Valerie Hardy, another construction by Fitzgerald, and a mixed-media sculpture by Marty Johnson suggest multiple personalities with chairs. Colorful, solemn, unstable, or fantastic, their simple subject becomes anthropomorphic and beyond functional.

This complex process of signification is encapsulated in two final tableaux over the fireplace. Susan Svendsen's acrylic and collage on pigment print embodies themes implied in other groupings. In *Out West*, big sky, flat plains, and distant mountains are interrupted by a billboard, and collaged elements fragment the ground and blow through like tumbleweed. Instead of advertising, the sign depicts another natural scene, blocked by other scenes and shapes. 'A Tableau Within a Tableau', the deceptive representation references the conundrums raised by Magritte's *Human Condition* and this exhibition.

Below is in memoriam to Ken Winebrenner (1941-2016). Described as "a wonder with tools and materials" and a broad experimenter with an "adventurous" sense of design, Winebrenner "always had something to say…that mattered."[1] Displaying painterly glazes and a range of techniques, his ceramic creations intersect with other tableaux. They include containers that are not completely functional, allusions to natural forms and human-made de/constructions, and playful references to other genres, such as a minimalist-inspired *Brown Cube*. Reveling in the medium while expanding its possibilities, Winebrenner's works provide a poignant summary to this exhibition. Individually and grouped, these 'things' compel us to reconsider our assumptions, look for unity within diversity, and pause and think. Like Winebrenner, they have much to say that matters.

[1] Obituary of Daniel "Ken" Winebrenner, Richmond Times Dispatch, October 23, 2016.

CHICAGO

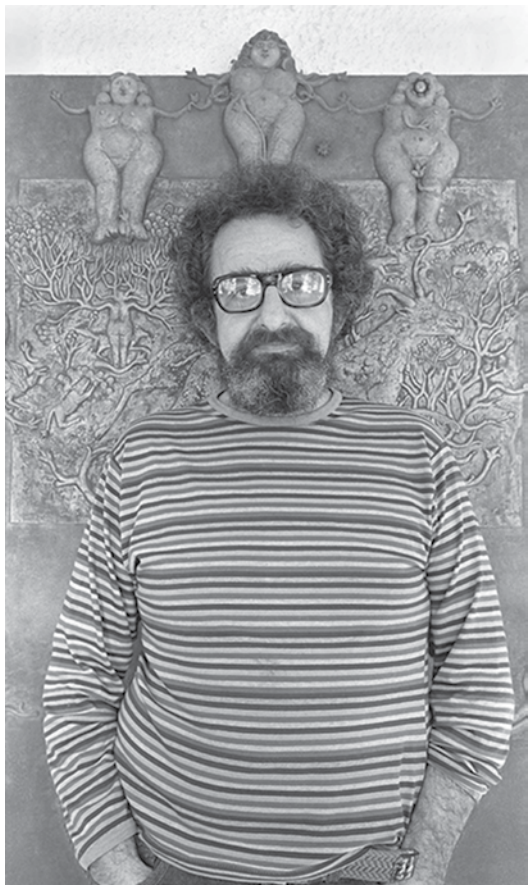
Last of the Monster Roster

by Margaret Lanterman

Theodore (Ted) Halkin (1924-2020) Chicago artist, well-loved husband, father, professor, and friend, died on August 11, 2020 at the age of 96. Ted was associated with the 1950s group of Chicago artists known as the Monster Roster. Like many in this group, he was a WWII veteran and is also considered one of the progenitors of the Hairy Who generation of Chicago Imagists. Ted was a prolific and adventurous artist who worked in many different mediums, moving conceptually and stylistically between abstraction and representation in two– and three–dimensional works over his long career. For Ted, art was a practice of life.

Halkin's works demonstrated an intense, even startling intimacy with materials, which he plumbed to explore perception. This included the creation of his garden and the many paintings and drawings capturing its rhythmic growth, variegated blossoming, and even decay across the seasons. Ted's nurturing spirit and vigor extended to his students and the art community. Well-read and thoughtful, Ted was also a generous visionary, establishing the prestigious Imagist Collection at Elmhurst College that today brings international attention to Chicago artists.

Halkin was awarded a BFA from the School of the Art Institute in 1949 and an MS from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale in 1952. Ted was an exhibit designer at the Field Museum in Chicago from 1961 to 1964. This experience inspired some of his relief paintings and sculptural works, including the dioramas of his Evanston bungalow home. He began his long illustrious teaching career at Purdue University, followed by Northwestern University, Elmhurst College, and then the School of the Art Institute of Chicago where he taught for close to 40 years until the age of 85. Halkin's work was presented in solo and group exhibitions at galleries



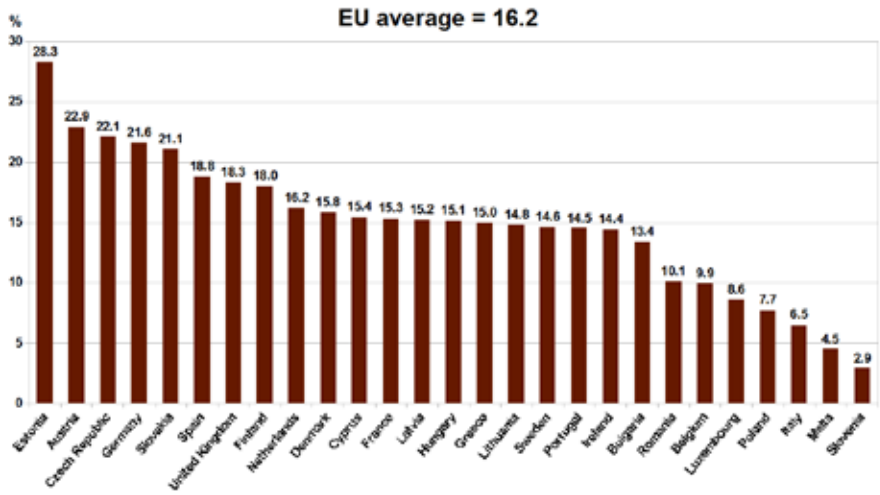
representing his work in Chicago and New York, including Allan Frumkin, Phyllis Kind, Jan Cicero, and Corbett vs Dempsey. His work has been included in exhibitions at the Art Institute of Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Museum of Modern Art, New York; and the Davenport Museum of Art, Iowa, among others. Halkin's work is in the permanent collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Illinois State Museum, Brauer Museum of Art (Valparaiso, Indiana), Smart Gallery at the University of Chicago, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Cleveland Art Institute, and other private and public collections. The Illinois State Museum (ISM) organized a major traveling retrospective in 2000. Interviews with Halkin are included in the ISM of 12 retrospective catalogue, and recordings can be accessed from Smithsonian Institute's Archives of American Art: Chicago Art and Artists: Oral History Project, https://www.aaa.si.edu and the Art Institute's Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, Artists Oral History Archive, https://digital-libraries.artic.edu.

Ted was the beloved husband of the late Edith, devoted father of Sylvia Halkin and Daniel Halkin (Lisa Patterson); son of the late Sylvia and Harry (Herschel) Halkin and caring brother of the late Thelma Suchard and Leslie Halkin; well-loved by his nieces, nephews, and close friends George Liebert, Susan Frankel, and Michele Feder-Nadoff. Funeral services are private. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Greater Chicago Food Depository, www.chicagosfoodbank.org, or Americas Media Initiative, www.americasmediainitiative.org.

TORONTO

Against Racism, Against Sexism, Against Ageism

by Miklos Legrady, Toronto Editor



Gender Pay Gap across Europe 2014
(Wiki Commons)

I saw a local comic strip where a child makes his father feel terribly guilty for not having done anything in the last 30 years to change the name of Toronto's Dundas street. The father had not even searched the name to find out if Dundas was a racist oppressor. As I understand, the point was to guilt and demoralize the reader. Since there's a stupid and irresponsible older person depicted, the cartoon is also ageist and historically illiterate.

A study of human evolution since the dawn of time reveals a continual moral and ethical progression. There was a time when might was right, there was a time when killing was ok if you had the money to pay the fine. Slavery was universal and almost no one questioned it; people answered nature, might is right.

At the turn of the 20th century, feminism was strongly responsible for the creation of human rights. Rights should not depend on strength and power, since we now had machines to do the work, meanwhile the working class had been educated and would no longer tolerate previous oppression.

In the 1960s the civil rights movement created positive change, so that General Colin Powell was promoted to lead the U.S. armed forces, and Obama became president.

Today we are in the middle of as great a change as in the 1960s ... we're becoming more civilized; all over the world people came out into the street and protested against racism. We are speaking out and examining our own lives and politics to change the standards, behavior and financial codes that create poverty and oppression, such as the neglect of Canadian First Nations people.

However there are some who will seize the moment to shame, guilt, and degrade others. Pointing the finger is always an attempt to manipulate and dominate your reader. It's always done from the highest moral principles, but the real desire is to oppress others.

In relationships, in business, in politics, when people try to shame you and blame, it's a power strategy. It hides behind a pretence of doing good, but that's a denial of repressed intent.

The last three years, two or three days a week, I've been looking after a young boy who is now four years old. I've seen the strength

and integrity that a child develops when you treat them with respect. There's the other side, I've experienced psychotic abuse as a child, took me long adult years to repair. Yes, you can heal and fix, been there, done that.

So as far as I'm concerned, when someone tells me I suck, I'll look and see if it's true, but generally it's someone projecting their self-loathing along with a hidden desire to weaken and dominate you. If someone has good intentions, they nurture rather than torture.

The paradox of the tolerant society is that it must reject the people who would destroy it from within, which is also the exception that proves the rule. For the same reason, we need be conscious of people who would harm us while pretending otherwise. They might not see the damage they cause, but it's vital for us to do.

Once Upon an Outgoing Tide

by Miklos Legrady

Bruce Barber: 30 hours of community service*, Friday, November 7, 2002, Toronto, Ontario*

Bruce Barber defined the notion of littoral as "the intermediate and shifting zone between the sea and the land", which "characterizes works that are undertaken predominantly outside of the conventional contexts of the institutionalized art world." One example was his project '*Diddly Squat: Three Works about Money*', performed in Toronto in November 2002.

I've made littoral works myself and so I question littoral art; what happens to the experience and mastery required of conventional contexts? The etymology of the word art is implicit in 'the art of conversation' or 'the art of medicine'. We have expectations of the sublime, of the skill to express your vision. You see the problem: "works that are undertaken predominantly outside of the conventional contexts" include those lacking experience, skill, or vision.

While deconstruction enabled a great freedom for art, our caveat is found in one of the Five Classics of Confucian philosophy, the I Ching, which says that unlimited possibilities are not right for us. Without limitations we dissolve in the boundless. Stravinsky writes, "My freedom will be so much the greater and more meaningful the more narrowly I limit my field of action and the more I surround myself with obstacles… and the arbitrariness of the constraint serves only to obtain precision of execution.

Also an Asian concept is Zen, a philosophy of alignment with higher forces, so that you master the art of motorcycle maintenance, or any subject you put your mind to. Bruce Barber's been there, done that. His CV reveals an intellectual acuity that allows him to get to the heart of the matter, as in his 'diddly squat' Toronto performance. It was socially conscious art before that was a thing, and the artist is also formally conscious, looking after every detail from the color of a worker's overalls to the image of this street performance. Zen means an intuitive understanding where even accidents work in your favor.

The success of Barber's work sets standards that previously would have been awkward, and those are standards of excellence. In the last two decades a lack of skill signals a rejection of tradition, but anything done without skill is shoddy. And so we have the paradox of the tolerant society that must expel from itself those who would destroy it from within. The paradox of the creative society is no different.

In the art of cuisine, a chef with a magic touch is appreciated, in art we need the same standards of sensual good and bad, the littoral territory of aesthetic and social judgment. Barber later takes these questions one step further in a new book available online. *Trans/actions: Art, Film and Death*, which explores the representation of art, artists and art history in film, also questions the politics in the many representations of stereotypical mad artists.

The Bahnhof is an Installation in Itself

by Christian Hain

Katharina Grosse: It Wasn't Us

Quite unexpectedly, a visitor's first thought upon entering Katharina Grosse's single–work show at Hamburger Bahnhof Museum might be: 'Underwhelming'. That's remarkable, because the German artist is known - and very well known, being represented by some of the best multinational powerhouse galleries - for 'in your face' artworks that are as powerful as they are colourful. You'd expect to feel dumbfounded on the spot, and only later brush away some minor doubts about the genuine greatness of what you've seen. This time it's the other way round, with initial coldness turning to enthusiasm, and this is not, or not exclusively, the artist's doing, but because of the architecture of Hamburger Bahnhof. The erstwhile train station's main hall is a huge exhibition space with a magnificent roof construction of black iron, corresponding pillars and windows, that make it a character of its own. Deciding what to show here can never be easy, as long as you don't want to go full d'Orsay and make it a regular space with moveable walls.

To be fair, Katharina Grosse's art fits the surroundings much better than Cevdet Eret's installation (great in itself, but tremendously undersized) that was shown here before, in autumn 2019. Yet on first sight, the architecture still dominates and smothers the art without any discernible link between the two. We already perceive some – even many – colours from afar, from a first, imprecise, idea of things to come, but it feels like regarding a painting with too much 'social distance', and that's a pity. However, as soon as you approach, initial doubts vanish, and the fun begins.

The show forms one work but can be divided in three parts: floor, sculpture, and outside. All have been painted, or more precisely sprayed upon, with a paint gun, and find themselves covered in kaleidoscopic curls, circles, and curves like a painter's palette or studio floor swept away into the outer world. The colours scream 'graffiti', but also 'kindergarten' – childlike, not childish - evoking traces of chalk on the street. A massive thunderstorm hit Berlin the day before the opening (not really an 'opening', only the first day of public access with obligatory online reservation; there was no preview or press reception). The curious visitor bows down, touches the surface ever so softly, then raises a finger to the eye, but no it's not chalk, these colours are firmly attached – even outside, where the rain fell. Nevertheless, with every squeaking of our shoes we check again, whether we've caught a piece of art under the soles (even if you did, framing and auctioning wouldn't be a great idea).

As we worry already about de-installation, a hoarse voice makes us tremble: "Please, don't touch!", but it's not meant for us still crouching on the floor, somebody else got too close to the sculp-

ture. This is annoying because this art wants to be touched as naturally as it is walked upon, and yet that central part is extremely fragile. "Styrofoam", someone mutters, and stepping closer, we're briefly misled into correcting him, "splintered wood, even metal?", then agree: Styrofoam. Styrofoam formed to a three-dimensional abstract painting, continuing the floor as visitors do themselves by walking around, adding the colour of their clothes and skin to the 'painting' like moving flowers or stalagmites. The more we approach, the better it gets, offering new sights from every angle - is this the inside of an ice cave or crevasse, with the sun summoning iridescent images on walls brimming with crystals and esoteric gemstones, the world seen through a prism, or whatever means you prefer to enhance your vision? A descent into the multi-coloured maelstrom?

The installation invites these comparisons and a free play of associations. Do you see half a pipe, splintered spears and hand axes, butterflies in strobe light? Is the highest summit in the back reminiscent of the Rolls Royce *spirit of ecstasy,* or a fighter jet, or paper plane? On second, third, umpteenth look, ever new connotations arise, a bird - an eagle perhaps, flying fish, a dolphin emerging from uneasy waters. Suddenly, you catch more maritime vibes, imagine a waterslide, icebergs, high towering waves... All this is 'true' and 'wrong' at the same time. Katharina Grosse's painting-installation tests, and stimulates, the onlooker's proper creativity on an open field of interpretation like a Rorschach test for everyone.

At some point, we discover Styrofoam steps leading nowhere or to imaginary temples – aren't these colours evocative of Tibetan (RIP) sand mandalas, too? Which reminds us: caution, steps. Not those in the middle of the sculpture that you mustn't touch for their own safety, but others on the floor of Hamburger, perfectly camouflaged by the paint. Contrary to custom, there are no warning signs, and if you only have eyes for the art, they'll take you back to reality with a bang.

Outside, the colour explosion continues, art spreading like an infection into the neighbourhood, a virus, or happiness and laughter that can be quite infectious too; only the trees have been exempted, unlike in earlier Grosse-installations. The world itself serves the artist for a canvas, no museum doors could contain this tsunami fed from Brobdingnagian colour barrels. Better don't try the reverse, getting in for free, as some did: the wardens are watching.

For a moment, we're lost: is this not where the Rickhallen ("Rieck Halls") are supposed to be, an annexe to the museum that will soon be demolished because Hamburger Station has only had it on loan, like the collection shown in there? Has the demolition already taken place? But no, it's just that we've never been here before, in the backyard behind usually closed doors. There's also a large metal framework, a trellis without plants – might be art or not, and even a cafeteria by the canal.

I should mention that we found colourless bits of Styrofoam in the gutter - not exactly environmentally friendly. As for the Rieckhallen, they're still standing, right there on our left, the outer wall painted up to a point some 50 metres away. They now resemble a playground for kids, with graffiti walls to write and tag on legally (doesn't that take all the fun out of it?). Here too, everything is legal, and in perfect order - it's Germany after all. Although the art-

Katharina Grosse

work reaches a long way, in fact the whole wall has not been painted - every 'no parking' sign has been carefully excluded, and there are a lot of them. They're probably needed to keep the new neighbours at bay, some (potentially expensive, for Berlin standards) condos seem already inhabited, while more are under construction.

There could be some protest involved in this show: how better to manifest your claims to these halls that you would love to keep, possibly on a 'permanent loan', i.e. forever, just like the collection they host and which its owner, Mr Flick, has already threatened to take away to Switzerland, than by putting them in focus with a huge installation? Smart move.

Overhearing a group bent over a point where the multi-coloured floods have come to a halt, and stepping to their side, we notice it too: a transparent film covers the wall up to here, and Grosse has only worked on this – there is still hope, the wall won't come down anytime soon!

If you dropped your face-mask in open-air enclosure, don't forget to put it back on when returning inside (as we did more than once). There, reading the exhibition title again, *It Wasn't Us*, we wonder, and not only about the grammar: who is 'us'? The artist and her assistants (royal we)? Higher beings command ... or what was the name of that canonical Polke work again? Having imagined a maritime context before, we now think of 'petrol', and not little streams of rainbow running down the street in heavy rain, but an oil tanker's wreckage in Arctic waters, glistening death on a sunlit surface – we definitely did that, 'we' as in humanity.

Katharina Grosse's art puts a smile on your face, and you hope this is true for everyone, even though you cannot see the other patrons' faces for their masks. Hers is a colourful world, and somehow clownish, in a positive way. Talking influences, we've mentioned street art more than once, also think Pollock, next level, and Grosse won't drip: she pours. As with Abstract Expressionism's founding father, there's little chaos and coincidence involved, and much elaborate planning. She probably couldn't avoid thinking big: 'Grosse' means '(the) great', as in 'Catherine/Katharina, the', although she chooses to pronounce it differently - her parents obviously didn't want her to suffer any inferiority complexes. Now imagine she'd chosen – or been allowed to choose - to use the entire station hall instead of merely a third, not stopping short at walls and even the ceiling!

Katharina Grosse: It Wasn't Us*, Hamburger Bahnhof, 14 June 2020-10 January 2021*

Inge Morath: Photographer

by Graziella Colombo

A hundred and fifty shots by Inge Morath, all in rigorous black and white, are exhibited at the Diocesan Museum in Milan and will remain there until November 1, 2020. It's a vast retrospective, enriched with original documents, dedicated to the first woman photographer admitted to the Magnum Agency. She joined Magnum as an editor, becoming a full photographer in 1955. Magnum was founded in 1947 by Robert Capa, Henry Cartier-Bresson and David Seymour.

Born in Graz, Austria, in 1923, Morath died in New York in 2002 after an intense and extraordinary life. Polyglot, exuberant, inquiring and determined, she was a collaborator on magazines such as *LIFE, Paris-Match, Vogue*, was a tireless traveller, always ready 'with a suitcase in hand' to document reality around the world, capturing every aspect of it in a frank way, with naturalness and sensitivity. She always placed people at the centre of attention, whether they were ordinary or famous, because, as she wrote, "I am more attracted to the human element than the abstract." The exhibition at the Diocesan Museum includes reports of her many travels to Europe, Russia, the Middle East, China and of course the United States, where she lived after her marriage to the playwright Arthur Miller in 1962.

A large space has been given to the portrait, a recurring theme in Morath's career. This section, with the series of portraits of Pablo Picasso, Philip Roth, Allen Ginsberg, Pablo Neruda, Audrey Hepburn, Arthur Miller and others is one of the most beautiful and interesting. The photos, taken in the 1950s and 60s, express an intense and deep relationship with the subjects, immortalised in serious and absorbed poses, or more spontaneously in everyday life. Most famous is the image of a beautiful Marilyn Monroe, who is dancing in the shade of a tree on the set of *The Misfits* in 1960, the year in which Morath met Arthur Miller, who was still married to the actress.

Another section concentrates on 'masked' portraits. Born from the collaboration with the designer Saul Steinberg, the series shows several photos from New York in the 1960s portraying people in masks with clothes complementing the masks. The photos are funny and ironic and I think it is true that, after all, we often wear masks, depending on the places and situations in which we find ourselves, revealing different attitudes and behaviors.

In 1957 she photographed a llama with its head outside the window of a car near Times Square in New York. The picture was part of a project dedicated to animals employed on movie sets and has become iconic.

Italy is also represented in the exhibition with photos dedicated to Venice from 1955. Here Morath has chosen to capture moments of daily life in poorer, less visited environments of the lagoon city. A choice that certainly reflects the reality of the time, though I would have liked to have seen some photos highlighting the wonder of such a unique city as Venice.

Beyond pure photographic technique, I think a photo should convey an emotion and be able to involve the observer, making him or her a part of the immortalized moment. Morath has always studied and deepened the different languages and cultures of the places she visited in her travels in order to better express her emotional closeness and to transmit this through her images. Surely this is one of her merits. She wrote, "I loved the people. They let me photograph them, but also they wanted me to listen to them, to tell me what they knew, so that we told their story together."

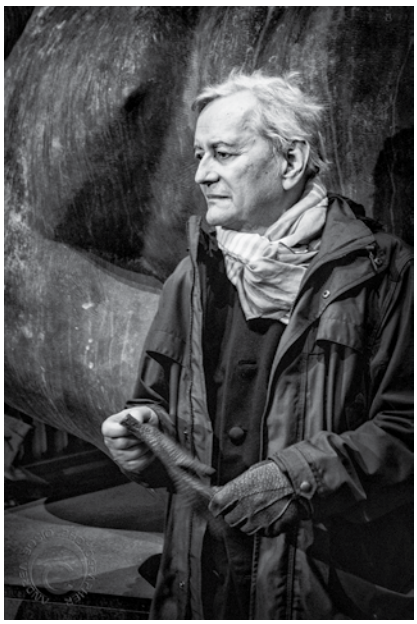
This show at the Diocesan Museum in Milan is certainly an exhibition for photography fans, but above all pays homage to a woman, journalist and photographer, who made her work her passion. The show is a fitting tribute to the role, the value, the intelligence and the many skills of all women.

Eli Wallach and Marilyn Monroe dancing on the set of The Misfits*, with Clark Gable*

Not only the Biennale

by Liviana Martin

Beauty lives here



Igor Mitoraj
(Wiki Commons)

I spent a weekend in Venice after the lockdown to rediscover art galleries and artists' studios that are finally reopening, or are under refurbishment. I visited the historic and prestigious Contini Gallery; founded by Stefano Contini in 1979, it has three offices in Venice and one in Cortina d'Ampezzo.

Over the phone the gallery owner tells me that the gallery represents artists such as Igor Mitoraj, Manolo Valdes, Julio Larraz, Pablo Atchugarry, Robert Indiana, and Fernando Botero. He emphasised that his role is not that of a shopkeeper who buys and sells; he chooses artists on the basis of his own taste, not simple market needs, and works together with them to create a life path. Contini cites the memoirs of the art dealer who sold Matisse's, Chagall's and Picasso's works: "The paintings I sold made me live well, those I didn't sell enriched me."

The gallery also promotes the works of Italian artists such as Enzo Fiore (whose technique mixes resin, earth, leaves, roots and insects in his works) and Carla Tolomeo (who creates armchairs with velvets, silk and gold, and crystals).

The wealthy clientele is well informed about valuations and prices. Collectors, says Contini, are like gamblers: they cannot do without art, so this sector is the one that has been least affected by the economic disaster following the lockdown. The gallery really thrives on relationships, travelling to make the works known, and exhibitions, with several every year, even if today 10% of the sales take place via the Internet.

I enter the largest space in the gallery, which is spread over three floors; spaces of pure beauty. The large sculptures by the Polish artist Igor Mitoraj (1934-2014) in bronze and marble are inspired by classicism, but the bodies and faces are fragmented, blindfolded, mutilated, bearing the signs of the ravages of time.

Manolo Valdes (born 1942 in Valencia, Spain) is an eclectic artist influenced by Velasquez, Rembrandt and Picasso among others. Above all, I am impressed by *La Menina,* a marble sculpture based on the famous work by Velasquez.

Pablo Atchugarry (1954, Montevideo, Uruguay) fascinates me with his sculptures in white marble or bronze painted in bright colors - pure abstract shapes, intertwining lines, and volumes that develop in an unexpected way in his search for perfection.

Art knows how to swim

I leave the centre of Venice and board the vaporetto that takes me to Giudecca, one of the many islands on which the city stands, less affected by tourism and inhabited by Venetians for generations.

In a building from the 1500s I meet Rosalba Giorcelli, who founded the Giudecca 795 Art Gallery in 2007 to promote emerging artists, focusing on new trends in painting, sculpture and photography. Hers is the first (and for the moment the only) gallery in Venice to host and launch street art. During the 2019 Biennale she invited a group of artists who by day produced original pieces for the gallery and by night scattered their works around the city, favouring abandoned places. Each artist expressed a style and a personal message, but what united them was the idea of an art that can be appreciated by everyone.

Blub, a Florentine street artist, used electricity company counters

Blub: David Underwater

for his series 'Art knows how to swim'. With a particular technique he reproduced various protagonists from works of art (the *Mona Lisa, Lady with an Ermine, Girl with a Pearl Earring)* wearing a diving mask, immersed in a watery background. Blub says: "Water is my element ... For this reason I promote characters who have transmitted an example of greatness that still lives on today ... that are timeless".

The artists want to remain unknown (like Banksy), their work speaks for each of them.

Another interesting artist promoted by the gallery is Francesco Sabbatucci, who studied with William Congdon but for a long time devoted himself to other activities. When he returned to painting, he produced works that relate to the space, volumes and colours of Venice.

The gallery also promotes an International Photography Contest, to which amateur and professional photographers from all over the world are invited to participate with images that have Venice as their theme.

Painting with emotions

Close by, attracted by the bright colours of the canvases on display, I enter the studio of Claudia Corò, a young but already successful figurative artist, who became a mother during the lockdown. Her paintings depict the Lagoon and the city of Venice; water and music are the protagonists. Despite the classical references, Claudia constantly experiments: her 'False visions' were born from music and darkness. While a violinist played Bach or a jazz player his saxophone, Claudia painted in the dark, guided by the emotions aroused by the notes. The results are improvisations full of colour, vitality, originality.

Her 'Venetian maps' are another testimony to her originality. Claudia says that living in a magical place like Venice, where anyone can get lost in the labyrinth of alleys and dead-end streets, has amplified her imagination. Thus, on maps of real environments, she superimposes figures of fishermen, nets, gondolas and *squeri* (small shipyards where the lagoon boats are built).

As the critics said about her work, there is something more than what the eye can see, there is the mystery of underlying things.

Claudia Corò: Gondolier

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Looking Out Over the Cornish Riviera

by Pendery Weekes

Once again Monsieur Marcel Grenouille from Nantes has done his good deed for the day and has included an unknown artist in the summer Art Festival 2020 at Port Pierre Canto Marina in Cannes. This year the unknown is Freya Stephan with her painting, *Looking Out Over the Cornish Riviera*. It was picked up by Grenouille while sourcing (smuggling?) artwork from Cornwall and taken on board his yacht back to France. Little do people know about the thriving art business on magnificent yachts in ports across the world with visitors made up mostly of private collectors and rarely art galleries. Following Cannes, other art venues will be in Marina Southampton, Port Hercules Monaco, Port Vell Barcelona, Marina Sentosa Cove Singapore, and Waterfront Annapolis – in that order. Some of the artworks exhibited are by Anselm Kiefer, Yayoi Kusama, Gerhard Richter, Mark Bradford, and Mike Kelley, to name a few. Everything is pretty pricey, so we wonder what the price tag of English Riviera is, though this too is publicly unknown and may remain so.

After meeting Grenouille by chance at wild swimming, like myself an avid year-round sea swimmer, he invited me to visit his treasure trove of Cornish paintings and pottery on board his 'little' boat. It was just a little less than simply amazing. Obviously cheaper and less complicated to fill a boat with artwork than a shipping container, let alone tax issues, there were well known names bought from collectors in the county. However, a few pieces of simplicité were to go on show in the festival at Port Marina, as was the case with Stephan's painting. It also opened a whole new world to me, the world of 'little' boat art transport and art shows in exclusive ports. But, I ask, why art from Cornwall and not from his native Nantes in the region of Pays de la Loire? Surely, there must be artists of this same calibre in his homeland. Grenouille has an eye for unusual work and when defending his choice of Stephan's work, says that after all's said and done, it's time for simplicity to make its debut on stage. In the 64-year old art dealer's opinion, the *mouvement artistique basé sur la simplicité,* unlike minimalism, implies beauty and ease of understanding.

In Freya's painting there is unstudied simplicity with just two figures looking out at the Atlantic ocean, blobs of colour, nothing special – some sea, a few waves, a stretch of sand, a few rocks, clumps of islands, a starfish and a man in a grey t-shirt with shortish black trousers beside a small girl in a print dress. In truth, it's pretty boring, and offers nothing new. What is it and why the fanfare? The painting might better be called Clumps or Colour Clumps but not *Looking Out Over the Cornish Riviera*! How in the world did it even get chosen to cross the Channel?

Grenouille is convinced that this work will be a show stopper (a flop?) visitors will stop to look at it, but not because they are told to think that this is great artwork, for it isn't, instead he says it will stop them because Stephan's work can evoke emotions and memories, those atavic feelings and recollections crushed inside us since childhood. With people still searching for relief from the anxiety and fear of dying they experienced this past spring, this work seems to represent a sort of comfort painting, just like with our comfort foods, which we eat in moments of stress or sadness. *Cornish Riviera* is stupidly powerful, ridiculously incisive and most of all the big, strong man beside the little girl looking out over the sea pulls our heartstrings worse than any tearjerker on Netflix. What adult wouldn't like to go back in time and look out to the sea standing beside their father? Practically unknown in her hometown Penzance, Stephan risks becoming the new star of the yacht art world, though in my opinion she doesn't make the grade.

Looking Out Over the Cornish Riviera

Life is a constant challenge, but as things attempt to go back to normal after the Covid-19 scare, surprises are abounding. A painting that banally reaches out to our return to simplicity is just what many of us are ardently searching for. Where is the easy life, the unfettered, uncomplicated existence? Freya Stephan was a nobody yesterday, however, she lives in Cornwall, that magical stretch of land that produces more artists than anywhere else in the UK outside London. But tomorrow, who will she be?

However, I disagree with Grenouille's choice and think the work is dreadful; it's childish and unformed; the colours are pure, unmixed, dabbed onto the canvas by what looks like an untrained hand. Perhaps I'm missing something. Why on earth would this make it to the citadels of art festivals on impressive yachts that Grenouille himself is promoting? We will see in how many ports this "capolavoro" will be dragged to before it is sold to some beleaguered client.

Again, we must ask ourselves, what is it that makes art art?

Studio Grenouille, 43 Rue de l'Hermitage, Nantes

Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii – Photographer and Explorer

by Colin Fell

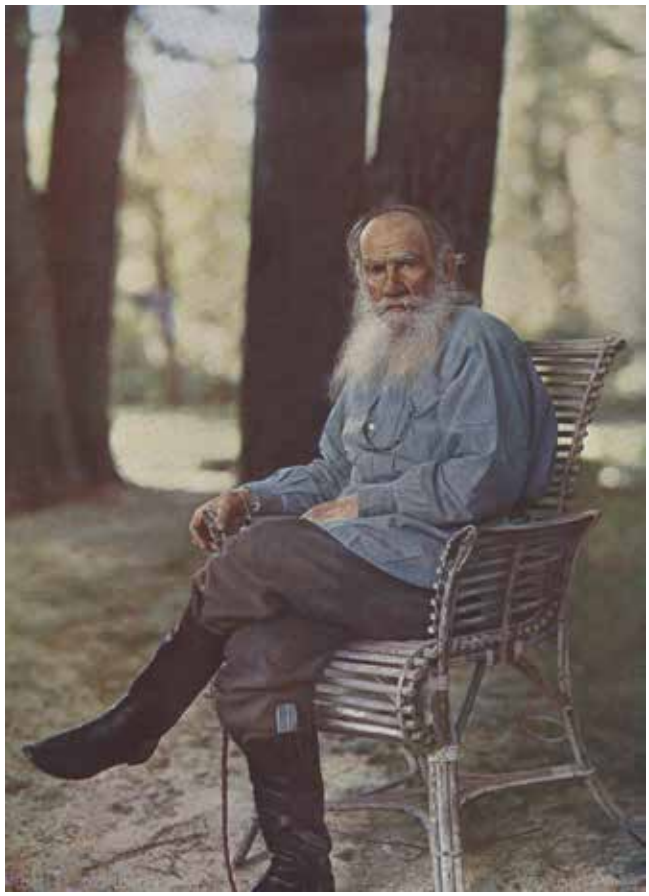
In the chaos of 1918, a few months after the Bolshevik revolution which would transform Russia, a middle aged man boarded a train bound for Norway, unaware that he would never again see his beloved motherland. Although he had left behind him his money and property, he wasn't travelling light – with him he had nearly 2000 heavy photographic plates, some of which were impounded by officials who considered that they revealed strategically sensitive material. The man was Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii, one of the pioneers of colour photography, and in his travelling cases he carried an extensive pictorial record of a country about to vanish forever.

Prokudin-Gorskii had come to photography gradually – initially a student of chemistry in St Petersburg, with ambitions on the violin, he had been introduced to orthochromatism (correct colour) by Dr Wilhelm Vogel in 1890s Berlin. Realising the potential for his work, he secured an audience with Tsar Nicholas II and the Imperial Court at the palace of Tsarskoe Selo in the winter of 1909. His audience was suitably impressed by his carefully chosen and apolitical montage of pictures of birch trees, flowers, and devout peasants, the result being unqualified Royal approval, with a written permit to go anywhere in the Russian Empire and see anything – remarkable at a time when so much was closed even to its own citizens. He was given a specially modified Pullman coach with its own darkroom and accommodation for his son Dmitri. There was also a ship, enabling exploration of the Mariinsky canal system and the Volga.

Prokudin-Gorskii's brief was to record the rich variety of the Empire, its churches, villages, industries, railways and the diversity of its peoples, and for five years, from 1909 until an Archduke was shot in Sarajevo, he travelled, doing just this, poignantly unaware that he was recording a world about to disappear. He had begun, the previous summer, with portraits of Lev Tolstoy, notorious for his furious resistance to being photographed – how Prokudin-Gorskii charmed him is not recorded, or even whether he did. The pictures taken at Yasnaya Polyana capture Tolstoy warts and all; in his peasant blouse and beard he's both a shout of anger from the 19th–century, and also a prophet of the new order; his basilisk stare of scarcely concealed hostility appears impossible not to interpret as a baleful warning to the bourgeois photographer.

Christopher Isherwood famously introduced his novel *Goodbye to Berlin* by claiming "I am a camera…recording not thinking…", and whilst Prokudin-Gorskii might have recognised this humility, many of his pictures have a haunting beauty reflecting his artistry. His portrait of the supervisor of the Chernigov lock gates, one of the few named subjects in the collection, shows an ancient Jewish figure, Pinkhus Karlinsky. In his long overcoat he stands on a small raft, staring out at us with a harrowed, world weary expression. His left hand is concealed beneath the sleeve of his overcoat

Dagestani Sunni Muslim man wearing traditional dress and headgear, 1904



Lithograph print of Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy, May 1908

– has he lost a limb? Yet look at the picture again and it isn't Pinkhus but Charon, standing on the banks of the Acheron or Styx, awaiting his penny, or kopeck, before he carries us across those darkly silvered waters.

Another picture shows a young man in a skiff, or coracle, piloting it carefully through the reeds in a creek; behind him on the shore stands an observer; it's Dimitri, Prokudin-Gorskii's son. The image is simple, yet beautifully composed. The young boat man is captured in a pose which suggests the natural elegance of labour; yet it does not appear to be work as such, rather one of the everyday tasks perennially necessary to human existence; waterways are there, and must be navigated. There is no sense of hurry, or external pressure of time; like an allegorical figure in a Keatsian ode, he appears indifferent to everything except his task, caught in a moment of repose. The site of the picture, the village of Ostrechiny is, like so many of those recorded by Prokudin-Gorskii, changed beyond recognition, the village flooded by the Soviets to create a hydroelectric power station.

Prokudin-Gorskii's official Imperial brief was to remain apolitical. However, part of the fascination to us, with the dubious advantage of hindsight, and perhaps more attuned to an interpretation of the visual, is the tension between an apparently neutral image and its alternative implicit narratives. Prokudin-Gorskii lovingly recorded the life of the Russian villages and their peasants, recently emancipated from serfdom and considered to be both fiercely devout and unquestioningly loyal to the Tsar. Take his picture of Paltoga, which Prokudin-Gorskii visited during his chronicling of the settlements along the Mariinsky canal, constructed to connect St Petersburg to the Volga. We see an elegant neo-classical church rising above tumbledown log cabins; on the horizon sits a stuccoed manor house. A 21st–century viewer can see how this image can be read in at least two contrasting ways – one can imagine it fulfilling the requirement for a patriotic record of an undeniably picturesque and timeless rural scene, marrying poverty and religious devotion. Yet one can also see how it could also be read as Bolshevik metaphor, the church rising above the downtrodden proletariat in their hovels, whilst the home of the oppressive aristocrat impassively surveys the scene from afar. In the 21st–century we're ambivalent about rural simplicity, aware of the harsh poverty it often concealed, whilst often yearning for its calming certainties. An image like this one arguably reveals as much about its viewers as it does about its subject. Do you see poverty or peacefulness?

Prokudin-Gorskii's focus on the work of the countryside is perhaps similarly ambivalent – women spinning wool, cutting flax, washing laundry in the river, are either picturesque or images of drudgery, depending upon one's perspective on progress – is an activity valuable because it has remained unchanged for thousands of years, or to be thrown aside as an unwanted relic? The end of the 19th–century and the beginning of the 20th were characterised by a sense of the imminence of change, the industrial revolution hastening changes in agricultural practice as well as the migration from country to city- English Literature is full of it, from Hardy's loving evocations of haymaking in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* to E.M.Forster's exploration of the tensions between ancient and modern in *Howard's End*. There's no suggestion that Prokudin-Gorskii saw these images of country work as anything but evidence of a rural idyll, strengthening his dearly held view that his photography should educate. This sense of didactic purpose found a strong resonance with the Tsar, who told him "I would be very happy if the children who are the same age as my son would learn about our great motherland from your pictures…", and to us there is perhaps a tragic ingenuousness about the concept of education, which in its Latin root means to draw out, and yet which is so often confused with the less noble practice of instruction or indoctrination. It presumably never occurred to Nicholas II that in using these images for educational purposes, he would be unable to control the lessons drawn by the students. In the end he never had to worry about this – difficulties with mass production of the images and the failure of the Duma to purchase the collection meant that most of the collection remained unseen by Russians.

A young man in a skiff, or coracle, piloting it carefully through the reeds. Behind him stands Dimitri, Prokudin-Gorskii's son.

It's practically impossible to look at any historical photograph without overlaying a sense of what we know happened afterwards, in the process investing the most commonplace image with pathos, irony and, of course, tragedy. Prokudin-Gorskii spent the year of 1910 exploring the Volga region, and his picture of the city of Rzhev dates from that year. A pontoon bridge stretches lazily across the Volga; above its gently sloping banks a dusty street with a few white stuccoed townhouses – beyond them, green fields amidst which sits the occasional manor house. Trying to locate this scene in the present day is almost impossible – the bridge provides a reference point, but Rzhev is only likely to be known now for its battles of 1941-3; occupied by the Nazis, the city came under prolonged siege from the Soviets. It is difficult to reconcile Prokudin-Gorskii's image of a sleepy small town on a forgotten summer's day, with its subsequent destiny. The name now evokes a litany of the horrors of the 20th–century deportation of citizens to Nazi concentration camps, the destruction of most of its buildings, and the inconceivable scale of death in what became known as the Rzhev meat grinder; estimates of Soviet casualties continue to vary between 400000 and a scarcely imaginable 2 million.

Prokudin-Gorskii knew nothing of the future of course, any more

than any of us do – his fate was simply to record a present which turned, more quickly than most, to past. Through the 1920s he was to be found in Nice, displaying his pictures to small crowds of fellow emigres, but by the time the Rzhev he had pictured that undated summer's day was being systematically reduced to rubble-filled killing fields, he was in Paris, where he died in September 1944, a month after the liberation of the city. His sons Dmitri and Mikhail inherited a collection which somehow seemed worthless – who would want it? Certainly not Stalin's Soviet Union, belligerently intent on obliterating as much of Russia's past as it could, and scarcely in the mood for misty-eyed nostalgia. Three years after Roosevelt and Stalin's unlikely meeting at Yalta, it was the USA which recognised the value of the collection. A Princess Marie Putiatin, working on a translation of a nine volume *History of Russian Art*, summoned a vague memory of these remarkable images, and persuaded the American Council of Learned Societies to purchase the entire collection for $5000. Subsequently digitised, the collection is now democratically available in the way that Prokudin-Gorskii originally intended, although to an audience he could never have imagined, and with an effect he could certainly never have imagined. Conceived as a heritage project for an unbroken line of Romanovs stretching on into the future, it has come to represent both an Ozymandian hubris, and nostalgia in photographic form.

I don't suppose that Prokudin-Gorskii knew A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*, published in 1896. But it's easy to imagine the elderly Russian in his Parisian apartment, where surely he felt, like Housman, that "Into my heart an air that kills/From yon far country blows…" He must, too, have been piercingly aware of "those blue remembered hills… spires…farms"; that they were, in fact, "the land of lost content". And quite certainly, as he faced death in exile, he thought of "The happy highways where I went/ And cannot come again."

Vanishing Point
In the Examination Room

Midsummer heat, the air still; heads are bowed
Beneath the clock which watches on, ticks on,
Sifting the minutes measured and allowed
To explore Hamlet and coastal erosion;

For a little while longer it all makes sense.
Half past three; and seventy writing hands
Stop short; and upon the slow, stewed silence
Time breaks, a cool wave on hot sands.

My eye's drawn down rows of desks which unfurl
To their vanishing point, where sits a girl;
Her pen laid down, a weapon new outgrown,
She's turned to stare, as though somewhere
Is revealed to her shadowed gaze, alone,
The future, writ in the slow-clearing air.

Colin Fell

The Prukudin-Gorskii archive is available at:
https://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/prok/

Home is Where the Art is (UK TV BBC1)

by Mary Fletcher

Three artists go round the potential client's house, as they put it, 'snooping'. They meet the buyers and pitch for a commission. One is thrown out. The remaining two make some art. The buyers choose between the results. Most of the art is absolutely dreadful and so is the rest of the encounter. The presenter says things like how amazing it is that the artists are all so different. None of the buyers betrays the slightest dislike of the works presented. The buyers in general are overcome with emotional reactions of admiration and sentimental attachment to personal references in the work - symbols of their dead relations or their recent marriages.

We get glimpses of the artists filing, casting, sticking or painting. They are all mutually appreciative of each other's efforts. They all say the works are good value for money. A selection is made - quite often the buyers buy both works. In general it's a lot of kitsch, twee, well-crafted birthday card sort of banality. The works are presented in the buyers' homes to universally awed friends. There's a certain fascination with guessing who is rejected, with seeing the apparent genuine effort and appreciation involved. I am personally longing for a reaction of horror and rejection, just one, like there used to be on the programme where interior decorators presented people with a room that might appall them.

I was telling a neighbour about the program. Why watch it, he says, if it's so bad? Is it the absolute dearth of any good TV about living artists? Is it liking the idea that people are encouraging folk to buy art? Is it a superiority complex stoked by comparing my work with these? Is it longing just once to be impressed? Am I hoping for outtakes where the presenter reveals what he really thinks?

Aargh! But there I am recording it!

Bette Davis and the Consummately Camp Epidemiology of Jezebel

Scott Winfield Sublett

... the movie will still be well worth streaming, not only to see how an epidemic of the 1850s was viewed in the 1930s, but also how something as close to the bone to us today as an epidemic, viewed through the lens of Camp, is simultaneously dramatically engrossing and distant enough to be not only bearable but pleasurable.

A reliable escape from the current horror show of life in these United States is the streaming of old movies, and a zeitgeisty choice is the 1938 Bette Davis vehicle *Jezebel*, a mesmerizing melodrama that climaxes with an epidemic. No, really - you want to see this epidemic.

Jezebel was Jack Warner's revenge on David O. Selznick, who didn't cast Warner Brothers contract players Bette Davis and Errol Flynn, perfect casting, in what the following year would become the most successful movie of all time: *Gone With the Wind*. *Jezebel* shared with GWTW not only the moonlit, magnolia-scented antebellum milieu, but also the same cinematographer, Ernest Haller, and composer, the stirring Max Steiner, of whom Davis once said, "Damn that Max. He always gets to the top of the stairs before I do." (She also said, "Max knows more about film drama than any of us.") *Jezebel* furthermore had John Huston dialogue and direction by William Wyler *(The Best Years of Our Lives, The Heiress*), peerless when it came to two things: staging scenes and eliciting star performances. *Jezebel* would be Davis's second Oscar.

Completely overshadowed today by GWTW, *Jezebel* was a big hit, and is the more interesting film. Sure, Scarlett O'Hara was a revelation to a generation of submissive Southern females shocked to see a Southern woman unapologetically go for it. Audiences love characters who know what they want and break rules to get it. Scarlett was nothing if not that, but her spoiled willfulness is simply the entitlement of wealth and beauty. On the other hand, Bette Davis's "Miss Julie" (the echo of Strindberg's perverse heroine is unmistakable) was complex, and perhaps even a pathological narcissist—her imperious ruthlessness a cover for self-hatred, insecurity and abandonment issues, and her scope of action magnified by wealth and privilege. She's an interestingly sick woman whose psychology is startlingly reminiscent of Donald Trump.

Some movies are so moment-to-moment suspenseful that foreknowledge of plot developments doesn't spoil the pleasure. That's true of most of Hitchcock and Ozu, and of *Jezebel*, too. Plot secrets will be spilled farther down this column, but the movie will still be well worth streaming, not only to see how an epidemic of the 1850s was viewed in the 1930s, but also how something as close to the bone to us today as an epidemic, viewed through the lens of Camp, is simultaneously dramatically engrossing and distant enough to be not only bearable but pleasurable. *Jezebel* works both as melodrama and Camp. Not laugh-out-loud Camp, but you smile and rejoice at its aesthetic excess. "I've been to Paris France, and Paris Paramount. Paris Paramount is better," the incomparable Ernst Lubitsch once said, unembarrassedly embracing the vulgar artifice of Hollywood's Golden Age. People went to the pictures to escape The Great Depression, and the stylization on the screen made even scary things divertingly unreal. Hence, the over-the-top beauty of *Jezebel*, stuffed with expensive antiques, gorgeous Orry-Kelly dresses and graceful *mise en scènes*. A nice switch from the soup kitchen next door.

Bette Davis as Julie in Jezebel*, 1938*
(Wiki Commons)

Henry Fonda and Bette Davis in Jezebel *trailer 1938 (Wiki Commons)*

Watching Bette Davis, you're fully in the story while at the same time being constantly aware of the actress's performance. It's different from "Brechtian distancing," which (supposedly) makes the audience pay attention to the message by reminding them that it's just a play, an artificial construct, so don't sluttishly lose your hearts to mere narrative: in Brechtian distancing you remain critically engaged (again, theoretically) because when an actor breaks the fourth wall, directly addresses the audience, reminding you it's play, that Brechtian distancing interrupts your pleasure. Camp, conversely, reminds you of artifice by giving you a superfluity of it. "Camp," wrote Susan Sontag, is "seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon…not in terms of beauty, but in terms of the degree of artifice, of stylization..." Davis's fierce, dense, over-the-top acting is, of course, Camp in the classic sense of the word: gorgeously over-aestheticized, too much of a great thing, full of conviction but also of conscious choices, choices, choices, most conspicuously Davis's frequently eccentric inflections of the dialogue.

There's a lot to forgive about the movie, mostly to do with race. The scene where Miss Julie leads the field slaves in song, to distract her dinner guests from one of her more evil ploys, is cringy because the slaves are a little too happy. Julie's domestics are dignified, loyal, solicitous and, in the house style of Warner Brothers (think of the saloon singer Sam in Casablanca four years later), permitted to interact with white characters in a way that is at least somewhat familiar and personal. Warner was the most progressive studio of the day and Wyler was a passionate liberal, so one may assume that the attitudes in *Jezebel* were the best that could be had at the time, and at least the slaves aren't portrayed as quite the clowns and morons they are in *Gone With the Wind.* And despite the necessity of selling the film in the South, Wyler sneaks in a moment where a character from the North reacts with a look of horrified disgust at the servile position of the blacks.

Donald Crisp as the family doctor intones, "Do you have any idea what would happen to New Orleans now if folks got to thinking there was one law for the rich and another for the poor?"

When yellow fever hits - it dominates the second half of the film - Wyler has the superimposed words "Yellow Jack" practically jump off the screen in a way that makes you wish the movie were in 3-D. It's a German Expressionist stylization one wouldn't dare try today. The epidemic gets so bad that the infected are to be sent to hellish Lazaret Island, quarantined with the lepers.

"Why, it ain't civilized to condemn Christian people to Lazaret Island," says Miss Julie's Aunt Belle. "They won't have a chance at all." Wyler doesn't stint on the horror of an infected society in chaos. Hard drinking, riotous frenzy, smoke, fire, and the cannons booming to dispel the "miasma" that causes the fever. Horse carts and gurneys of dead and dying flow, stately, down the filthy, torch-lit street, all so magnificently staged by Wyler that, even watched in the midst of a pandemic, you can't look away. The ugliness is beautiful. Just as Hitchcock's aestheticization of murder tames it, puts it in its place as just another narrative element, making the moment subservient to the overall story (think of *Strangers on a Train*, with the strangling reflected in cat's eye glasses), so does Wyler make nightmarish beauty.

"Camp," wrote Susan Sontag, is "seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon…not in terms of beauty, but in terms of the degree of artifice, of stylization..."

Then, Pres (Henry Fonda), the man Miss Julie loved but, thanks to her own bullheadedness, lost to a "washed out little Yankee," gets the fever. Bette braves the armed sentries and the swamp to break the fever line and reach New Orleans so she can nurse him. He's to be sent to the island like everyone else because, as Donald Crisp as the family doctor intones, "Do you have any idea what would happen to New Orleans now if folks got to thinking there was one law for the rich and another for the poor?"

Julie implores Pres's Yankee wife for the right to accompany Pres to the island to fight for his life - to redeem herself with one, noble act. "Of course, it's your right to go, you're his wife," Miss Julie says. "But are you fit to go? Lovin' him isn't enough. If you gave him all your strength, would it be enough? Amy. Amy, do you know the Creole word for fever powder? For food and water? How to talk to a sullen, overworked black boy and make him fear you and help you? Pres and your life will hang on things just like that and you'll both surely die…I'll make him live. I will. Whatever you might do, I can do more. Cause I know how to fight better than you." In the end, there's Bette, chin up, seated on a cart amid the dying with an erectness that bespeaks her training and determination as the slowly clattering hooves pull them toward horror, maybe death, certainly redemption - or is this just Miss Julie's way of winning in the end? Pan to the street in flames. If it's Camp, why are my cheeks this damp?

Alan Emerson Hicks at the Center on Halstead

by Stephen Luecking

Alan Emerson Hicks salvages plastic parts in bulk quantities and then assembles these into both two-dimensional art and sculptures. These colorful leftovers from the manufacture of various common objects become art of whimsy and fancy, often with a buoyant intelligence and depth.

Hicks has realized those depths at his recent exhibit at the Center on Halstead, a LGBT community center in Chicago. The sculptures here are by far his most accomplished work to date.

Two life-size figures accompanied by two series of collages line the long exhibit hall of the Center. The figures stand like warriors at the front and rear of the exhibit to frame a wall of collages where the themes embodied by these sculptures have been fleshed out.

Hicks has twined tight strands of black plastic to convey hard muscles tensed in action, perhaps in a tribal dance or in a battle. Or more likely both, since dance is often the formalized rehearsal for battle. Plastic flecks out from the heads of the figures to evoke nimbus-like headdresses, images of power that have traditionally symbolized a god characterized by the dancer, or the enhanced state of being generated by the dance.

Hicks' two series of collage drawings parcel off these two themes. In the first he turns to the familiar pop culture meme of comic superheroes as demi-gods. He handles this meme by modeling his images on illuminated psalters of the late Middle Ages. The elaborately-framed collages are modest in scale, about that of a psalter page. They position the 'sacred' figure in the center, which Hicks surrounds with metallic colors in the guise of candy wrappers he has gathered from caches of candy illicitly consumed by his students during class. These give a nod to the gold and silver leafing that adorn the psalters.

The second series features black on white silhouettes of dancing androgynes framed by colorful collaged friezes. These starkly reference the actions of legendary characters as depicted on Attican pottery, while also echoing the exhibit's two figure sculptures. Hicks' sculptures also hearken back to Greek roots of Western culture. One can detect allusions to Myron and Bernini in the frozen action of his two figures.

His materials are lowly cast-offs from industry, but he twines from these a recollection of past nobility.

Alan Emerson Hicks: Marvel III
Candy Wrappers, Stickers and Decorative Paper

Super Series, Plastic Clothes hangers, Found Objects on Steel Rod Armature. Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted Street, Chicago, Illinois 60613

NEWS IN BRIEF

GOOGLE ON THE UP FOR ART AND CULTURE

Online searches for 'Google Arts & Culture' quadrupled in March, according to an analysis of Google Trends.
Google wouldn't confirm the exact number of visitors, but a spokesperson for the company said, 'Since its beginnings in 2011, Google Arts & Culture has grown to over 2,000 cultural institutions from over 80 countries today. We are happy to see that more and more people find the diverse content that we make available on our website and free app worthwhile in this challenging time.'

Google, March 2020

GET WRITING

Highams Tales Creative Writing Workshops are Back. For new and experienced writers to create poems, short fiction or monologues. The workshops will provide stimulus, prompts and feedback to help you towards a finished piece.
Waltham Forest Borough of Culture 2019 workshops were a great success. Join the workshop and make 2020 a writing year. Places are limited.

Sept 5th–19th 2020, 11.00 am to 1.30pm

Cost: Pay What You Can
Waged £15.00
Low or unwaged £10.00
thewritenetwork@gmail.com

Arts Council website

HELPING HAND

Henry Moore Foundation awards £60,000 to artists through Covid support grants.

a-n Artist Bursaries: Time Space Money, plus financial support for artists and arts organisers. (Contact a-n, they are also recruiting 4 new board members.)

AMSTERDAM.- From today, visitors can immerse themselves in the futuristic world of Nxt Museum. The groundbreaking museum – which is the first in the Netherlands dedicated to New Media Art – opens its doors to the public with the inaugural exhibition 'Shifting Proximities'.

Located in the up-and-coming North of Amsterdam, Nxt Museum presents eight large-scale, multi-sensory art installations, four of which have been commissioned by and are premiering at Nxt Museum. Each of the multi-disciplinary installations has been created in collaboration with local and international artists, designers, technologists, scientists and musicians, fusing creative ideas with pioneering academic research and technological innovation.

Merel van Helsdingen, founder and managing director of the museum, said: "We're excited beyond belief to be welcoming our first visitors today after three years in the making and some hurdles along the way. At Nxt Museum we fuse innovative art and state-of-the-art technology to reflect on the present and look towards the future. I hope that our visitors will feel challenged, stimulated and inspired by these incredible artworks and will leave with new understandings of the world and their place within it."

Art Daily, 30th August 2020

Myung-il Song is a South Korean fashion and art collector and the founder of SONG – the legendary concept store for fashion, art and interior design in Vienna. Over the past 21 years, she has built an unrivalled fashion collection, and her shop – which combines edgy design and up-and-coming artists – has quickly become the most popular platform for avant-garde fashion and art in the city. Song combines personality with exclusivity, mixing great variety with a highly individual approach.

With this artfully produced book, *'I'll wear it until I'm dead'* Lannoo Publishers are presenting the incredibly rich SONG fashion archives to the outside world for the very first time. The collection includes unique pieces by Dirk Van Saene, Martin Margiela, Walter Van Beirendonck, Dries Van Noten, Bernhard Willhelm, Stephen Jones, Kei Ninomiya, Paul Harnden Shoemakers, and Balenciaga. Each piece or sub-collection has been captured by the internationally renowned photographers Ronald Stoops, Maria Ziegelböck, and Dan Hawkins and they are published here together in a surprising and innovative design.

Art Daily, 30th August 2020

NEWS IN BRIEF

PHILLIPS UNVEILS INVESTMENT TICKER

Many financial investors are hooked on stock tickers, which give them constantly upgraded prices of securities. And Phillips auction house thinks that investment-minded model can be applied to contemporary art, so it has rolled out Articker, a data platform based on open-source information about artists and their works, from press articles to gallery rosters, museum shows or presence in art fairs.
Articker is updated in real time, giving users a constant stream of information about art: "We have more content on art than Google, which doesn't have the focus that we have," says Tomasz Imielinski, one of the founders.
Art Newspaper, 27th August 2020

NEW YORK WHITNEY STEPS IN DOO-DOO AGAIN

The New York institution has cancelled an upcoming exhibition after anger from artists whose work was being used without their permission.
The Guardian, 29th August 2020

FRANK DUNPHY

Showbiz accountant who became the charismatic, hard-bargaining business manager for Damien Hirst dies.
The Guardian, 27th August 2020

ARTIST FIGHTS GALLERY

In a legal claim filed in London's High Court earlier this month, artist Frank Bowling, whose work has seen a new level of interest, thanks to recent exhibitions at the Haus der Kunst in Munich and Tate Britain in London, alleged that Hales Gallery owes him a significant sum of money. He also accuses the gallery, which no longer represents him, of withholding more than 100 of his paintings. In response, Hales has accused members of Bowling's immediate family of having ruined his relationship with the gallery in an attempt co-opt his legacy.
ArtNews, 26th August 2020

COVID OR NOT, CHINA IS THE FUTURE

It seems that even a pandemic and political tumult cannot dull the appeal of Asia's expanding market, especially as the region appears to have controlled Covid-19's spread comparatively effectively. Ressle is the third Western gallerist to branch into greater China this year, on the heels of France's Villepin and England's Flowers Gallery to Hong Kong, in March and May respectively.
The Art Newspaper, 27th August 2020

NAE's GREAT SUCCESS

This month, as our cover announces, we passed 1 million unique visitors since the website went live in 2017.
According to Google Analytics we are visited by readers from over 70 countries.
A selection of our widely read articles:

Rebellion and Art in Hong Kong, Leung Suk Ching, Volume 34 no 3 January – February 2020, pp 10-11 – 26,400 readers

Museum of Modern Women, Katie Zazenski, volume 34 no 1 September – October 2019, pp 7-9 – 22,400 readers

Dutch Avant-Garde Fashion Designer Brings a Technological Shock to Daxiliu Museum of Art, Li Liting – (online content only) 16,000 readers

Volume 32 no 6 July/August 2018 – 14,900 readers

Matthias Grünewald's Pain and Suffering, Dr. Sheng-Yu (David) Peng, Taiwan – (online content only) 10,800 readers

Living with Hopper, Lynda Green, Volume 34 no 2 November/December 2019, pp 7-9 – 10, 300 readers

If You're a Recent MFA or PhD You're Not an Artist nor a Curator, Miklos Legrady – 10,000 readers

Aliens in Our Own World, Katie Zazenski, Volume 34 no 2 November/December 2019, pp 28-29 – 8,700 readers

The Legacy of Apathy – Derek Guthrie in DC, Volume 34 no 2 November/December 2019, pp 17-18 – 6,400 readers

Art in America, the Critical Dustbowl, volume 33 no 5 May 2019, pp 7-11 – 5,700 readers

www.newartexaminer.net

The New Art Examiner created a web-site in early 2017 to cater for the new way in which readers access their content for news and discussion on the visual arts.

This month (September 2020) we reached and passed the milestone of **1 MILLION UNIQUE VISITORS.**

We wish to thank our writers, several of whom have had over 20,000 readers for particular articles, our volunteer staff who work tirelessly from their international offices, and to all of you who read, comment and subscribe.

New Art Examiner Editors