

**I'm Looking  
For An Artist  
To Tell Me  
Who I Am.**



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by John Stepping

**Royal Academy of Art Curating**  
by Richard Sharland

**The Englishness of English Art**  
by Derek Guthrie

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Derek Guthrie, Publisher and  
Daniel Nanavati UK Editor

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Hannah Rosthchild reviewed  
by Dr Angeline Morrison

The Modern Flâneur  
by Anna Nakova



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

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

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

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

**All editions include the digital issue sent via e-mail.**

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## LETTERS

### Editor,

I read your print magazine in college. They were different from the art magazines at the time. Jed Perl, my teacher I believe wrote for them at the time. The articles were difficult and I had to read them several times to understand. It was art writing on a different level, thought provoking. When I moved I didn't take the issues with me. Sorry otherwise I would have sent them.

**Lisa Petker Mintz,  
New York**

### Editor

Hi - I used to write for the New Art Examiner

in the 1980s. Glad to see it's still alive after all these years!

Stay inspired!

**Tullio DeSantis  
San Fransisco**

### Hi New Art,

Congratulations on creating your new Page, New Art Examiner. Get started with these tips: Build your Page Add important info to your Page so that people can learn about you and what you do. Connect with people. Invite friends, email contacts and customers to like your Page. Engage your audience Post quality content that will encourage people to like, comment or share with their friends.

**Thanks, The Facebook Team**



# Editorial Comment

from Tom Mullaney, US Editor

All of us at the New Art Examiner are pleased to offer this January / February 2016 issue of our revived, independent magazine for your reading enjoyment. The future looks bright for Chicago to, once again, have an arts journal that will cover the art world, locally and abroad, with a spirit of inquiry that is, true to our first editorial, without fear or favor.

As we face a new year with optimism, we want to share an account of the heretofore secret struggle that we endured over the past year that blocked our re-emergence until this past September.

In 2014, Derek Guthrie, the co-founder and current publisher of the New Art Examiner (NAE), joined forces with artist Laura Frazier to produce the anticipated inaugural issue of a newly emergent NAE as co-publishers. This issue debuted at Art Expo in September, 2014.

When the issue was printed and handed out at Navy Pier, however, Laura was identified on the masthead as the sole Publisher and Guthrie was named as Editor. Unknown to readers at the time, a falling out had occurred and an editorial coup was instituted.

Ms. Frazier had switched her allegiance to director of the Zhou B Art Center, Michael Zhou, who provided her with funding to print that September issue. They then proceeded to buy the then-dormant 'newartexaminer.com' domain name, created a new Facebook page (NAENow) and represented themselves as NAE's new owners.

Guthrie faced being shut out of his own publication. Guthrie's supporters have been engaged since that time in seeking some reconciliation with Frazier and Zhou. When numerous offers to meet over a six month period were met with stony silence, we contacted Lawyers for the Creative Arts.

LCA has provided us with valuable counsel but they are still seeking to make contact with Frazier. We have sought for her to take down her NAE Now Facebook page, cease

*we have moved on with the same  
determination and community  
generated spirit shown in 1973  
when Derek Guthrie and Jane  
Addams Allen first published*

representing herself as the new publisher and to return a large cache of historic Examiner issues that she borrowed to their rightful owner.

These legal actions have consumed a great deal of our time during the past year. Ms. Frazier, who remains unreachable through her LinkedIn page to us, has been pursuing other interests. Mr. Zhou has reportedly withdrawn his financial support of her plan. Meanwhile, we have moved on with the same determination and community-generated spirit shown in 1973 when Derek Guthrie and Jane Addams Allen first published.

We have taken concrete steps to assume our rightful ownership of the magazine. We created the journal's true website, [www.newartexaminer.net](http://www.newartexaminer.net), trademarked our exclusive right to the New Art Examiner name and opened a bank account to process business transactions, donations and subscriptions.

The first issue with Derek as the acknowledged publisher appeared at Art Expo last September. As 2016 arrives, we are in exciting discussions to acquire editorial offices for the magazine, recruit artists and journalists to contribute to future issues and work on building our funding infrastructure. For the first time we have a UK office.

The future is much brighter. We have regained our name and our editorial voice is once again loud and clear. We look forward to having you join us on our journey. ■

# Postscript Editorial Comment

from Derek Guthrie, Publisher

To add a note of clarification to Tom Mullaney's elegant and restrained report on the more than unfortunate hidden events of the last year.

The day of crisis became clear when I was left in my hotel in Rockford on the last day of assembling 'The New Art Examiner Now' which was taking place in Zhou B Art Center. Articles of a dubious nature were included of which Laura Frazier knew full well were not suitable given the New Art Examiner's well established and respected rules over conflict of interest.

Previously informal conversation discussion on these issues had taken place with polite disagreement. Also without consultation I was posted on Wikipedia as "Mentor" which made clear a public coup was attempted.

A letter appeared in the 'New Art Examiner Now' from Michael Zhou, director of the Zhou B Art Center, saying he was looking forward to the future of the NAEN "...under the leadership of Laura Frazier.". Michael Zhou would not return phone calls or emails. I was

then requested for money to pay rent for the to be office of the NAEN in the Zhou B Centre. Both Laura and Michael Zhou were fully aware the NAE was not for profit and no budget was in place.. I was told without grace "To put my pocket where my mouth was"

With great sadness I share these simple facts. I retreated to Cornwall UK and found a Colleague Daniel Nanavati who, with generous and creative support with me as Mentor but also publisher, has saved the NAE from oblivion.

This episode proves one important point in our corrupted Art world. That love of art, and love of creativity will survive without the endorsement of parasitic and self-serving patronage. The New Art Examiner sells limited space as Advertising, and sells subscriptions. It has survived on the generosity of present editors and writers.

I ask you dear reader for support as to keep us free as simply we refuse to sell editorial as covert publicity. ■

## 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.

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**Janet Koplos has recently been awarded an Andy Warhol Grant to research the history of the New Art Examiner.**

**She is looking for original material dealing with the Examiner - letters, journal / diary entries, photographs and the like from 1973 to 2002.**

**Contact:**

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**or by snail mail at:**

**987 Como Blvd. E.,**

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**MN 55103.**

Dear Artist make your girlfriend or boyfriend happy, and the New Art Examiner, send a few love words which will cost no more than £10 a box or tell the local art critic / curator what you think of them or write a letter for free to the Editor.

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# Regionalism: an Ideal Gone Sour

Daniel Nanavati

Regionalism evolves from the tribe that has not moved into, or has moved out of, the City. The innate human tendency to concentrate on the immediate surrounds to the expulsion or exclusion of all else. This becomes one's safety net.

When it was founded in the Chicago of '73 the New Art Examiner knew it could not be regional. When the standard front page header was changed in the 90ies to 'The Voice of Mid West Art' thousands stooped subscribing. It had to be both regional and international. Not just to be in some way balanced or fair because this practice gives it authority and makes it more interesting.

One of the problems facing artists around the world is their inability to care or have interest in art production in the next town. To be enclosed in their own safety net, in love with their own sensibility, finessed to such a high degree that one can cease to care what is being created in the in the next town or next valley to the detriment of one's own practice.

The international art market thrive on this narrowness because it long ceased to care about community and when community turns its back in the Art World, there is no measure left by which art world and/or the regional community can talk to each other. It is, in its own tribal way, a tribe now defined by the bank balance, looking for new work from Art Colleges and academia training not to be in the community.

So the community and the Art World have leaned to ignore each other and the avant-garde Art Market ignores the community. The NAE cannot and does not in theory wish to ignore the many forces in the Art World. We attempt to bridge both, we comment upon both we have writers from both broad tribes and little tribes who naturally share their own symbolic order.

This is why the NAE is mythic. ■

# ART OF IDENTITY



*Remedios Varo*

There have been a number of discussions I have come across, recently, about this term 'privilege' (or really, the privilege theory) and also about class, and both, to a degree, in relationship with art. Before getting into these debates, I wanted to quote some extracts from a piece on Art and Class, written by Ben Davis. But even before I do that, I wanted to put this discussion, the discussion of art, culture, and U.S. society, capitalist society, in the proper light.(see [link](#).)

The US is a nation which recently implemented a drastic cut in food stamps. This is a nation where almost fifty million people go to bed hungry and of that number probably over a quarter are children. There has been a drastic spike in people and families that meet the criteria for 'food insecurity'. And yet, there are now laws in several cities, including New York and Los Angeles, making it illegal to distribute food to the hungry. Ponder that a moment.

The reason for this, of course, are property

John Stepling

Playright, author, blogger

<http://john-stepling.com>

values. That is capitalism. This is not the neatest segue to the topic of art, although, in a sense, perhaps its more logical than one thinks.

**1.0** Class is an issue of fundamental importance for art

**1.1** Inasmuch as art is part of and not independent from society, and society is marked by class divisions, these will also affect the functioning and character of the sphere of the visual arts

**1.2** Since different classes have different interests, and "art" is affected by these different interests, art has different values depending on from which class standpoint it is approached

**1.3** Understanding art means understanding class relations outside the sphere of the visual arts and how they affect that sphere, as well as understanding class relations within the sphere of the visual arts itself

**1.4** In general, the idea of the "art world" serves as a way to deflect consideration of both these sets of relations

**1.5** The notion of an "art world" implies a sphere that is separate or set aside from the issues of the non-art world (and so separates it from class issues outside that sphere)

**1.6** The notion of an "art world" also visualizes the sphere of the visual arts not as a set of conflicting interests, but as a harmonious confluence of professionals with a common interest: "art" (and so denies class relations within that sphere)."

I think it is hard to argue with any of this, although I am sure there are people who will. The problem with Davis' piece, and I don't



really find many problems with it overall, but one issue is the idea that, as he says:

*“Middle class” in this context does not indicate income level. It indicates a mode of relating to labor and means of production. “Middle class” here indicates having an individual, self-directed relationship to production, rather than administering and maximizing the profit produced by the labor of others (capitalist class), or selling abstract labor power (working class)*

*3.2 The position of the professional artist is archetypically middle-class in relation to labor: the dream of being an artist is the dream of making a living off the products of one’s own mental or physical labor while fully being able to control and identify with that labor*

*3.3 The specific characteristic of the visual arts sphere, therefore, is that it is a sphere in which ruling-class ideology dominates, and yet it is allowed to have an unusually middle-class*

*Art has no purpose. All its potentials are attached to its autonomy.*

*character (in fact, it is definitionally middle class—the “art world” is defined as the sphere which trades in individual products of creativity rather than mass-produced creativity).”*

My personal experience is that very few artists I know, either in visual arts, or theatre, or even with young filmmakers, ever dream of making a living from what they create. I remember I was shocked the first time someone paid me for one of my plays. Everyone might ‘dream’ about it, sure, but nobody I know expects it. Everyone I know recognizes those dreams as closer to fantasy. You have to live in very special circumstances to make money from the making of art.

Davis is aware of this, though:

*“The second contradiction is internal to the middle-class definition of “art” itself, which is split between notions of art as profession and as vocation, and therefore comes into contradiction with itself at every moment where what an artist wants to express comes into contradiction with the demands of making a living...”*

Davis is focusing on, primarily, the visual

fine arts. But he raises fascinating questions. I think part of the problem with some of his answers is that he doesn’t fully explore the areas of creative self expression, or even collective self expression, that cannot be adequately explained by a Marxist theory of labor value. Let me quote Davis one more time:

*“7.0 Art criticism, to be relevant, should be based on an analysis of the actual situation of art, and the different values at play, which are related to different class forces [this point simply draws the conclusion, for criticism, of 1.9]*

*7.1 Art criticism is itself a middle-class discipline, based on norms of individual intellectual expression; since relevant art criticism involves analysis of the actual class situation of art, it involves transcending purely subjective, individual, professional opinion*

*7.2 However, transcending purely subjective” criticism does not imply the “objectivity” of art criticism that imposes a philosophical or political program on art; this sort of scholastic art criticism equally implies a middle-class perspective (often one based in the academy), insofar as it advances a purely abstract, intellectual program, and fails to address the actual material situation of the visual arts (e.g. simply insisting that art “be political” without concretely analyzing for whom or to what ends “political art” is directed actually reinforces the framework of individualistic, professional*



Reading Woman  
Elinger Pieter Janssens

expression)."

This is both right, and not right. Art has no purpose. Its radical potential, or emancipatory potential, is attached to its autonomy. And why is art criticism a middle class discipline? I suppose Davis means "professional art critic", meaning one who is paid. But very few good criticism or cultural analysis is paid work. I don't get paid, god knows. Assuming I am any good in writing about culture. But the issue here is really about the "meaning" of art. Of all art. The meanings of culture. And the problem with all this (and to his credit Davis suggests he is well aware of this) is that it ends up being impossible to justify this artificial set of categories that places this thing called "art" as separate from drawing breath to keep alive. There are certainly conventional middle class definitions of art, and these are usually the ones taught in schools, and I worry Davis doesn't quite understand this. And there are the countless old debates about (for example) 'is cooking an art'? Probably at some point one does have to at least partially demarcate an area of cultural production that is separate from, say, cooking. Good cooking can be artistic, but it's not art. Why is it not art? The answer is because culture might include food preparation, but eating does not trigger that mimetic process of engagement by which an individual, and perhaps even a group, a collective, a society even, awakens and questions the world around it. Food, I don't think anyway, can be allegorical.

Davis is correct that art never has just one meaning. It is not only, however, because of class differences, but also because of historical perspectives. And more significantly, it is art's very purposelessness that grants it a liberatory capacity. Art's autonomy is in the creation of something without purpose or social function. It is in precisely in the mimesis of the alienated untruth of capitalist society, of a system of social domination, that a dialectical relationship is established. Adorno believed only in the negation of synthesis could artwork step outside the commodity form...even if only partially. The point here is art is not about message. It is also important to note, per Adorno, that artworks have a double character, they are both autonomous and social fact (or

*Effective art criticism implies having a dynamic analysis of how specific aesthetic values are related to the present balance of class forces, and making a judgment with regard to what factors are playing the most crucial role at any given moment with any given work.*

commodity, often). None of this is to say that class is not vitally important in discussions of culture and it is in this way that Davis makes some very important points. Art is always working with the materials of society. In that sense, the double character is inescapable.

Davis writes:

*"To state that every contemporary work of art will by definition be a product of contemporary society, and thus bear the marks of the contradictions of its actual material situation, does not imply that all art can be reduced to the same problem. Effective art criticism implies having a dynamic analysis of how specific aesthetic values are related to the present balance of class forces, and making a judgment with regard to what factors are playing the most crucial role at any given moment with any given work."*

This is quite correct. I wrote last posting that different classes, different histories, will approach artworks from different perspectives. The difficulty for the left, it seems to me, is in remembering the problems of autonomy, and of mimesis. In a sense, the bare minimum required of an artwork is that the audience might find enough there to provide a mimetic process. From that process comes a self examination, a reclamation of the individual's own story, and a social re-narration.

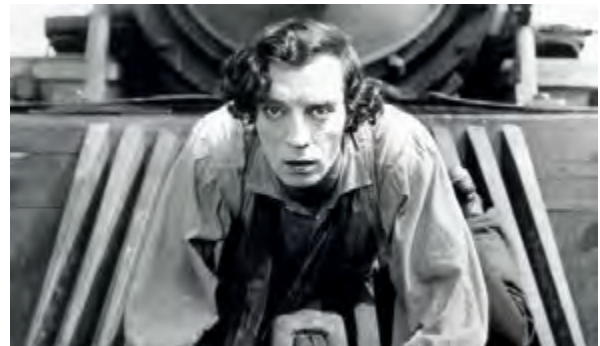
Now, again, Davis writes mostly about the visual arts. In Shakespeare's time people

spoke of going to “hear” a play. Audio, or audience. For TV, you have viewers. The rise of visual privilege (that word again) has informed the reception to art and narrative. The failure to listen. Text becomes ignored. It is simply, often, literally not heard. What is SEEN however is rarely ignored. When I suggested that Hollywood cares little for text, I was only stating the obvious. If one cared about text, about the spoken word, one would never have formula at all. McKee and Blake Snyder wouldn't have carved careers out of jotting down the kitsch formulae of the culture industry.

*In reality most people have come  
to see daily life AS a movie.*

In one obvious way, the inclusion of class is pertinent to the stuff cranked out by big studios and major networks. It goes without saying that the economic realities of film and TV play a considerable role in how these films need to be evaluated. The trap in this is, however, that a monolithic judgment is inadequate to the subject. There is a wide spectrum of circumstances and history behind, say, every five million dollar film. The fact that a film costing five million dollars is considered, officially, ‘low budget’ speaks volumes all by itself. As one goes up the budgetary ladder, the narrower those circumstances become. A eighty million dollar film, or rather every eighty million dollar film, is likely going to more resemble other eighty million dollar films than not. This is a risk averse industry. Conversely, every micro budget film, say of five hundred thousand dollars, probably is the product of comparatively unique factors in its development and making. The movie industry today is predicated on a monopoly of distribution. The big chain cineplex franchises are locked into showing the product that the studios give them to show. This is the equivalent of Pepsi buying up shelf space at the local supermarket. There are plenty of independent soft drink makers, but the big chain stores won't sell them, because Pepsi or Coke has bought up the shelf space. There are a lot of interesting small budget

films made today, and the technology behind film making continues to allow for films to be shot and edited and scored for a fraction of the cost of twenty years ago. But say, in theatre, as a first example, this problem is not so obvious. Theatre doesn't make the same amount of money as film or TV. The audience is a fraction of that which goes to see movies. In New York, the self appointed center of theatre (sigh), there are dozens of small theatres putting up new work, and even, on occasion, older plays, but these spaces are a contested area. By which I mean, small theatres devoted to theatre art, to new work usually, are appealing to a very tiny audience base. A good part of that audience are other people involved in the making of theatre. In terms of media, they are simply ignored. There are several results to this reality. One result is that many small spaces choose to pander (what they perceive as pandering) to this minuscule target audience. They do cabaret, or comedy sketch evenings, or satire of some sort. They do a lot of “one character” (i.e. cost effective) productions, and they promote what they do as ‘fun’ and ‘entertaining’. Another tactic is to “develop” new work with the intention of getting this play picked up by a larger theatre, usually a “mid size” house. The entire psychic structure for small theatre exists largely in the shadow of the ordained big theatre or regional theatre system. The work of contemporary playwrights is mostly middle brow conformist ‘message’ oriented and non threatening material. At least those desiring financial help from the larger theatres and theatre institutions, which means often, University theatre organizations. Grants have all but disappeared, so the economics of an art form like theatre is faced with harsh realities. You cant make money doing theatre unless you are



*Buster Keaton in The General*



locked into the system. And the system today, judging from the work on Broadway, or more relevantly, to mid size theatres, is stunningly forgettable. And it is forgettable in very particular ways. It is the work of writers, often, who sustain themselves writing for TV, and it is work that cannot allow any possibility for offending those financial assets.

Now, the class perception of big studio film as opposed to regional or mid size theatres, differs greatly. I think so pervasive is the influence, across the culture, of film and TV, that the educated twenty percent that self identifies as interested in art, is going to see theatre according to the aesthetic norm of studio film and TV. There has also been a rather profound conditioning over the last thirty years that has had the result of making

... an awful large chunk of the  
leftist writing I read today  
is the work of those in the  
business of NOT wanting change.

the experience of attending a play a very problematic experience for most. The working class perception is based on an aesthetics of populist solidarity. Since art in general is taught as frivolous, and since most educated in public schools have had no arts education at all, the approach to theatre is shaped by a perception of failure. Its failed to be as good as TV. I hasten to add, my experience has often been that the very 'least' educated, the most completely outside the educational apparatus, are the most perceptive and deepest audience for theatre. In the same way the San Quentin audience for Beckett was almost preternaturally attentive and insightful.

The ideological backdrop is both recognized, I think, generally speaking, by all classes, but it is not really understood. Or, rather, I think with few exceptions that audiences in the U.S. tend to automatically distance film reality from daily reality. At least abstractly. In reality most people have

come to see daily life **as** a movie. The deep attachment fans develop for their favorite shows would is perhaps more acute in that layer of the working class that isn't on the verge of catastrophe. Identification requires a degree of leisure security.

Davis writes:

*"8.6 Contemporary art suffers from a narrow audience, and access to art education is largely (and increasingly) determined by income-level and privilege; art education should be defended and made universal (this point itself involves a critique of the notion that art is a luxury)"*

*8.7 There is no reason why the immense quantity of artistic talent that currently exists, unable to find purchase within the cramped confines of the professional "art world," could not be put to work generalizing art education, thereby providing itself with a future audience*

*8.8 This kind of common identity could form the basis for organizing artists as something more than individual agents, each working on a separate project; it therefore would also lay the foundation for a more organically political character for contemporary art*

*8.9 Creative expression needs to be redefined: It should not be thought of as a privilege, but as a basic human need. Because creative expression is a basic human need, it should be treated as a right to which everyone is entitled."*

Now, again, this is basically correct, and its about visual arts per se. The problem is that because arts are no longer taught, or taught badly, there is the difficulty of finding radical arts instructors. The community level programs I know of have almost always retained a linkage and psychological dependence on the very institutions that have marginalized them to begin with. What I often call the "bad community arts center mural" phenomenon. Arts at this level becomes, understandably, an exercise in solidarity. Criticism is seen as elitist, and hostile. The result is bad art. And this is exactly what the ruling class is happy to have happen. Solidarity, shaped by bad teachers who learned from bad institutional teachers, and a distrust of rigor (also a product of conditioning) and a basic default approach that has no awareness of the actual roles culture and the arts can play in shaping all thought, but specifically political thought.



A bad play about the Zapatistas is still a bad play. And a bad play, a regressive conformist structured play negates the radical potential.

A bad mural is still a bad mural, and there is a colonialist dimension to this entire phenomenon. The paternalistic liberal (white) institutional funders, and educators, patronize the underclass by applauding junk work, because, after all, it's all they can be expected to create. So that if a working class woman playwright that resembled, say, a Sarah Kane, came along, her chances of being supported would be next to zero. If a young woman playwright came along writing a kitsch coming of age "naturalistic" play, her chances would be far greater to gain support and backing. The only future for change at this level is to absolutely sever all linkage

*For the underclass, those  
without University education,  
the problems of learning are  
compounded. Community and  
traditional teachers are gone.  
Community itself is gone.*

with the establishment system of patronage. This is, needless to say, risky and difficult. The loss of the avant garde has left a gaping hole at the community level, culturally.

There has also occurred, over the last thirty years, a coinciding impulse toward identity based movements. This runs alongside the balkanizing of aesthetic sub communities that colonize various mediums. So in theatre, in poetry, in prose, in painting and dance, one can find, without much effort, the various mafias that staked out their territories. The white establishment, mostly liberal, have served to reinforce these practices, and again for the same reason, that this is a way to silence genuinely radical voices. If one favors message narratives, or message based realism, the result is that writers and painters are going to instinctively look for the support they need by catering to the messages

most favored at that moment. Liberal condescension. Again, a bad anti racist play or short film is still a bad play or film. And more importantly, the intended message ends up its opposite. This was clear sixty years ago, as Marcuse and others pointed out. And because of this privileging of theme and message, and the idea of art as communication, the majority of young writers look no further than their officially sanctioned form of suffering (I've not noted a lot of Latino playwrights, say, writing plays about Ancient Japanese feudalism, etc.). It is an arts culture of identity victim-hood, narratives of identity suffering. The reality is that a deeper layer of suffering would emerge from that play on Japanese feudalism — or whatever — then occurs with plays of direct confession and biography. And here we can bring the discussion back to the whole 'privilege' debate. One of the problems with the privilege debate is that it contains its own contradiction; a purported anti hierarchical theory for social change goes out and creates new hierarchies of suffering, and sort of forgets who the victimizer is. I often feel the beneficiary of the privilege debate is the Justice and prison system.

Of course some people are drastically more targeted by police (black teenage men for example) but the white working poor are targets, too, and more to the point, they are not the police. The police as the organ of the ruling class property owners are the problem. So privilege is a useful term and important topic even, but it must be examined. And it must be examined from within some sort of deeper class analysis. And it is here that one has to be careful not to confuse the intersectionality hissy fits of white male leftists, with insisting on class. And I am insisting on a rather qualified definition of class. There is a lot of recent sort of white racism surfacing as part of the attack on intersectionality. Now, intersectionality was born of Kimberle Crenshaw's analysis that black women were being written out of certain narratives. It reconfigured discourse about oppression. In a sense, its like those world maps that always had the United States in the center and northern hemisphere given more scope....when in reality the world looks very different if the southern hemisphere is privileged (sic) and if Asia were centered,

or the Mercator projection that distorts and increases size as one moves away from the equator. {<http://www.petersmap.com/>}.

That is what correctives like intersectionality were doing in principle. Today, intersectionality is used as shorthand for multiculturalism in a sense...code for "blacks are so resentful". Today, privilege is being debated in a way, by all sides, that obscures the actual victimizer. The police, the justice system and the courts and legal apparatus. Now, privilege certainly plays a role in the new University educated left. For most of this debate seems to be written in the prose of the University.

I think instinctively I am coming to be suspicious of a prose so tortured and a syntax so unnatural that, really, self parody is too kind a description. Additionally, I am reminded of the trans community, which my son worked with twelve or so years ago. These were people who had to be their own advocates. And they were. It is a tad ironic to see trans sex workers suddenly have such cache within the new left. I hope the point I am making is that an awful large chunk of the leftist writing I read today is the work of those in the business of NOT wanting change. They now have a vested interest in defending their small-ish citadels of influence in various publications (some mainstream even) where they can play the role of honorary leftist voice. Revolution would change that. The white male racial coding, which seems to use "privilege", and "intersectional" as part of the latest version of "PC gone mad" tropes in

media, are simply resorting to old white male rights. However, the petulance and invective of many University educated feminists, the entire check your privilege order, is difficult for anyone to react to positively. Listening rarely happens when someone is ordering you to do so. And this authoritarianism and puritanism is deeply ingrained in the U.S. It is there in the UK as well, and in fact may be one of those borrowed stylistic presentations that travel the other way across the Atlantic. Russell Brand's appearance on the BBC has certainly engendered a lot of commentary. Brad Evans and Julian Reid commented on this class issue in their piece on the Brand attacks..

"So how does one authenticate as being from below? What qualities do you need to possess in order to qualify as a valid member of this inverted vanguard? What does one need to renounce about oneself before being able to speak with an authentic voice? Are there degrees for instance of "belowness" that create levels of subaltern verification? Does this invalidate the voices of all white men, especially those who garner a public profile? Does this preclude ourselves who, although from working-class backgrounds, now find ourselves part of well-established academic institutions? Indeed, does having a presence in the corporate media world necessarily disqualify the quality of the criticism and the political intervention?"

Evans and Reid touch on the contradiction I have pointed out before. The contempt for the underclass runs up against a romanticizing and near fetishizing of the underclass as the repository of "authenticity". There is a curious erotic frisson connected to the perception of this 'other', the usually invisible underclass. It is worth pointing out that again, these contradictions seem to take place in a highly gendered way. The male underclass is usually the object of fetishizing, not the underclass woman. But here the question is very relevant, what does class mean in terms of legitimacy?

The question is, will Brand use his wealth as an activist, or just fuck off to the South Pacific or Cote D'Azur for his next vacation? Malcolm X. said, don't beat up people for their past if they are changing. Remember when you didn't know certain things. Don't forget people



*Paris, France*

can wake up. And this is exactly my problem with the puritanism of the Laurie Penny and Natasha Lennard pieces on Brand.

\*side note: Lennard (left) and Perry (right) are both English, and oddly, seem to be working the same “look”. I draw no conclusions from this. I don't think.

A note on class: this is a big topic and one much argued. At the end of Vol.2 of Capital, Marx asked “What makes wage laborers, capitalists, and landowners the three great social classes?” He left only an unfinished answer for the work was never completed. “At first glance—the identity of revenues and sources of revenues. There are three great social groups whose numbers, the individuals forming them, live on wages, profit, and ground rent, respectively, on the realization of their labor-power, their capital, and their landed property”. The direct operating control of the means of production is what separates, say, lawyers and other professionals from owners of industry. Still, it's good to think in terms of class interests. What this ends up suggesting, for our purposes here, is that there are ideological classes as well as economic, and they on occasion overlap. But as Big Bill Haywood said, there are only two kinds of people in the world, those who work and those who don't. My point here, echoing Marx, is ‘Who is the enemy’? Who is working FOR the man, and who is being oppressed by the man.

Privilege and class. Class is not homogeneous. There are ideological differences and material and psychological differences. So yes, in the U.S. where class consciousness has been erased, it is important to promote class awareness, but not as if there weren't divisions within each class. But again, I cannot but keep returning to the role of academia in all these debates (if that's what they are). There is a subtle confusion here about identity, and it has to do with how life in the Spectacle, in a world of hyper branded hyperrealism, it is difficult to tweeze apart self branding from “identity”. The reflexive mental actions that constitute ‘shopping’ are hard to suppress.

I suspect the embrace of ‘identity’ has

a good deal of progressive or even radical aspects, but clearly it is also fraught with pitfalls, with owning the brand you shopped for. Identity shopping is pretty much the daily pastime of most youth in Western society. It was for me. Even into my twenties I can remember trying on points of view, playing with that voice, that appearance, the drives and movements of unfamiliar roles and appearances... and opinions. For the underclass, those without University education, the problems of learning are compounded. Community and traditional teachers are gone. Community itself is gone. For the underclass, the poor or all races, the struggle to find authentic guidance, to

*the confusion of intellectual roles, or finding one's way politically, is far more complex for the poor. Just as a basic fact.*

verify suspicions, or explain intellectual fraud, must be sorted out on one's own. The exceptional degree of assistance that colleges and University provides, at least the elite schools, cannot be over emphasized. This is directly connected to class. I remember not knowing what a bank account was until I was over eighteen. I didn't come from a place that used banks. Cash baby. I remember the embarrassment of not knowing. And I feel often, reading the prose stylings of graduate poli-sci majors, a subliminal sense of superiority. I have noted this blind spot before among the educated (expensively educated). So, the confusion of intellectual roles, or finding one's way politically, is far more complex for the poor. Just as a basic fact. Hence my distrust of anyone bullying people for past mistakes. Testing out new models of identity isn't bad per se, it seems more like a natural process of maturation. And it is here, again, where I feel an awful lot of leftist critique on all sides has tended toward a pathologizing of everyday life. Again, not for the victimizer, but among the victims.



Divisions need to be examined. Class however doesn't go away because you make a lot of money. One can adopt ruling class values, but the ruling class can smell your background. These are things that need to be clarified. Oprah comes from a very impoverished background. She has managed to absorb ruling class values, largely, but she can never really become one. Russell Brand is a millionaire and dates rich odious women, but the upper class will never tolerate him. And now his spouting of leftist politics ensures he will remain a target for hectoring and moralizing lectures. Attending the right schools, knowing the right code words, knowing the right people, the right family interrelationships, and on and on. The accumulative portrait is what makes up class. One can be broke, and still be a member of the ruling class (they will help you out anyway). One can become rich and still be a pretender to the upper class.

Now, to return this to art; the problem is that the approach to narrative and film from an audience that has lost the capacity to hear or respond mimetically, has meant a reliance on simplistic notions of message. And this is because of not just training, but because of the literal inability to hear the text. Good writing goes largely unrecognized these days. A script as good as *The Hustler*, by Robert Rosen, is experienced as just a movie about pool players and revenge. Or about a quest for individual excellence or some other chestnut. Or is a reflection of Rosen's own guilt for snitching. And that's partly true, but in fact it's a film about love under a repressive system of domination, about identity, and more, about redemption. Failure is success sometimes. Loneliness of *The Long Distance*



*Jigsaw*

Runner is another example. You must lose to win. In both of these cases, the metaphoric meaning is clearly lodged in the secondary level of the script. But when I

screened the Richardson at the film school, I was surprised at the inability of students to hear what was going on. Or in films like *Shout* (Skolomowski), or *Losey's Accident* (screenplay by Pinter), where the sub text of the sub text is operative. Where the surface seems oddly disjointed. Not just disjointed, but surreal. The tendency is to think it is a sub genre of fantasy.

But of course, for narrative, it goes even deeper. It is literally the language speaking itself. I used to tell writing classes, the character comes out of the dialogue, not the dialogue out of the character. This is primary. Words conjure, they speak, and finally a performative body emerges that can recite those words. Ah!! A play!

The recent Greek language film, *Dogtooth* (Kynodontos), by director Yorgos Lanthimos is a singular exercise in dismantling satire. Is it satiric? The text, in translation, is literally unnerving. The violence of the film is visceral, and yet... is it satiric? Ironic?

Is this in any way a naturalistic film? There is no correct answer.

*"Among the dangers faced by new art, the worst is the absence of danger."*

Class awareness is probably what is missing, or the first of many things that are missing, in how the mass audience reads films like *Thor*, or *Dark Knight*, or TV shows featuring cops.

There are poetics to dialogue, if we stick to theatre here to conclude. One can read an opening scene from one of Kane's plays, or the opening page of any Pinter play, or Beckett. What you don't hear is as important as what you hear.

Here is the opening of 448:Psychosis ...

(A very long silence.)

– But you have friends.

(A long silence.)

You have a lot of friends.

What do you offer your friends to make them so supportive?

(A long silence.)

What do you offer your friends to make them so supportive?

(A long silence.)



What do you offer?

(Silence.)

a consolidated consciousness resides in a darkened banquet hall near the ceiling of a mind whose floor shifts as ten thousand cockroaches when a shaft of light enters as all thoughts unite in an instant of accord body no longer expellent as the cockroaches comprise a truth which no one ever utters I had a night in which everything was revealed to me.

How can I speak again?

the broken hermaphrodite who trusted herself alone finds the room in reality teeming and begs never to wake from the nightmare

and they were all there

every last one of them

and they knew my name

as I scuttled like a beetle along the backs of their chairs

Remember the light and believe the light

An instant of clarity before eternal night

don't let me forget.

One is not really sure who is speaking. Productions since Kane's death have let directors decide. So how does that work? The answer is that with Sarah Kane, by the time she wrote this, her last play, the poetics were everything. There are no more "characters", there are no more sets, no more locations. There is only text. Spoken aloud. And from out of that comes something that is theatre, it is a form of thought, a form of knowledge and it is mysterious.

A playwright such as Michel De Ghelderode, whose work has never really found its place on world stages, is a case in point. Neglected, semi forgotten, and yet, there are few writers for theatre who possessed such a clarity of hallucination. A great many of De Ghelderode's plays have yet to be translated into English. He wrote a lot of short pieces, he wrote marionette plays, and he wrote rituals for the theatre. That is what he did. Is he naturalistic? No. But what is he? I don't know, honestly.

The point is that work that actually disrupts the facade of the bourgeois "real", without resorting to innovation, or novelty, or to

fantasy or to the manufacturing of the "weird" affect; these are, at least for theatre, the most forgotten of playwrights. They are forgotten, largely, for they resist the creating of profit. My few suspicions about Kane have to do with her posthumous popularity. Now, all things are

relative, and she is by no means what one would describe as popular, and yet... her work is regularly produced. Is this good or bad? It is neither probably, and perhaps it is just too early to pass final judgment.

DeGhelderode was a major artist of the theatre, who remains too unfriendly, too prickly, and too opaque, finally. We don't yet know what to do with Michel DeGhelderode.

If you can find any of his plays in English, and likely that will mean either Vol. 1 or Vol.2 of "Seven Plays", published around 1960, I would say snatch it up. Most of his work is out of print, and I suspect these old translations (by George Hauger, and very good, really) are the only ones that exist. Fame is a strange ghost that haunts some with affection, and others with malice.

I am not ever really sure which is which, however. ■



*17th Travailleurs - Sergeant Indochinois WW1*

John Stepling is a founding member of the Padua Hills Playwrights Festival, a two-time NEA recipient, Rockefeller Fellow in theatre, and PEN-West winner for playwrighting. Taught screenwriting and curated the cinematheque for five years at the Polish National Film School in Lodz, Poland. A collection of his plays was published in 1999 by Sun & Moon Press as *Sea of Cortez and Other Plays*. He is artistic director of the theatre collective Gunfighter Nation.

# 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 – whatever it may be.*



## Carinthia West

Lately, I have been pondering the meaning of the word “faraway”. Partly because a recent move to Cornwall from London induces horrified expressions in both

friends and acquaintances alike “Cornwall” they shriek, using the same tone as Dame Edith Evans once used to great effect in *The Importance of Being Ernest* when using the word “a handbag”? “Cornwaaall?”, they look aghast, following up with “but it’s so faraway!”

Politeness usually refrains me from replying “but you think nothing of flying to New York for the weekend, or tooling up and down the motorway twice a week to the dreary Cotswolds”. I grew up for part of my life, on the Isle of Wight, where the ferries ruled your ease of travel, and you were only as “faraway” as the next storm, whereas if you lived in Scotland the cold mists and freezing fogs could roll in and then you were really faraway.

So, a move to Cornwall late-ish in my life seems a natural way of combining the loves of my life previously embryoed on the Isle of Wight, by combining the sea and visual arts.

Why my more spoilt London friends should continue to believe they are the centre of the universe is always a puzzle to me. I was brought up in the Kennedy era Washington DC, post war Germany, and the emerging republic of Austria, but glorious “Swinging London” was still the main centre of my personal universe. But the London I knew in the 60’s, 70’s and 80’s has radically changed from a cosy village where you knew the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker, to a global centre of commerce and collapsing basements.

Sure the art galleries, museums, theatres and parks remain some of the best in the

world, but no longer can you stroll down the King’s Road and run in to Jimi Hendrix at the Chelsea Antique Market, bump in to Eduardo Paolozzi buying a paper at a local newsagent, Anita Pallemberg in Snappy Snaps or Bob Geldof drinking cappuccinos at the Picasso ... those people or the places have gone, (moved elsewhere in a manner of speaking)... to be replaced by homogenous high street shops. The last bastion of iconoclastic artists is still the Chelsea Arts Club, but the club itself is now surrounded by the expanding properties of mega rich oligarchs or racing car magnates digging out their basements to the fury of locals . All too often now, in London, “faraway” begins to mean the expressions on people’s faces as they tune out the sound of sirens or scraping of scaffolding by listening to techno on their headphones, or madly muttering in to thin air. We are a faraway nation now, never in the present, always somewhere else...

I recently showed my photographic work in Chicago, a city as vibrant and art oriented as any place I’ve ever lived. In between the architectural skyscrapers the streets seem cleaner too (later I discover that side alleys to accommodate the rubbish trucks were cleverly built in to the street grids). It’s a city running with watery canals and blues clubs in equal measure, both indispensable in my eyes to the enjoyment of living. Perhaps the same combination of water and blues could be said of my area of Cornwall, where my new home is a few minutes from a lovely beach, blue is the predominate colour of Lanyon’s paintings or summer skies and the St Ives Blues club was recently voted as the best in Britain. It’s as far away as you can get from the hustle and bustle of city life. Hooray.

No one in Chicago talks about being faraway from anywhere. Americans take airplanes like we take taxis, and when a dear friend of mine

aged 80 traveled up to Chicago from Santa Fe for my opening night, he thought nothing of taking a train that took over 24 hours, and departing back three days later. As a teenager with my parents and later as a young woman I drove all over America, often sleeping in the car, and taking many of the landscape photographs (Monument Valley, The Painted Desert) that form my collection today. Seeing one of my exhibitions, Dennis Hopper once paid me the highest of compliments..." she's a real on the road chick"... nothing seemed faraway then.

Sure, it takes my five hours to train it or drive from London to Cornwall and vice versa (soon to be four and a half when the A30 finally dual carriageways all the way), or three hours door to door if I fly from Newquay, but so what? During that time I get to think, imagine, review, come up with ideas, plan my next exhibition, write, muse on some stunning scenery, listen to the blues or Radio Four, clear my head or fill it up again. As the nights get shorter and the days longer, the sea bluer and the temperature warmer, those same much loved London friends will no

doubt start to call like nightingales in spring "we hear the Tate Gallery is re-opening so we're thinking of coming down to St Ives for the weekend. We'd love to stay with you". Will I hear myself saying as I laze in bed with my book and trace the pattern of the wild geese formation flying down the estuary, "are you sure you want to do that? It's such a long drive and, really, I'm so faraway...." ■

*Carinthia West is a photographer and journalist. Muse magazine wrote "Carinthia was a free spirit, blissfully unaware that she was candidly recording icons and iconic moments of the times" Ronnie Wood of the Rolling Stones commented "Carinthia took pictures while we were getting on with life". Her most recent exhibition 'Visions of a Magic Time' will move to KM Fine Arts Gallery on La Cienega Boulevard, Los Angeles on February 10th, before returning home to the PZ Gallery in Penzance in May or June of 2016. After which she will write her book.*

"The aim of showing my photographs is to give a glimpse of how we lived then. I think of it as an affectionate archive of a more innocent time. It is intended to inspire the young photographer to look around at their world and capture that fleeting moment before life moves on as it always does."

## News Briefs

### 1 Facebook

On 30th November 2015 we created a new Facebook page. By the end of the first week we were running at 120 Friend requests per day. We gained 2138 Friends in two weeks. A sign of the remarkable changes in the art world when the ostracized become mainstream.

### 2 eBay

The New Art Examiner featuring fiber art Robert Heineken Kenneth Josephson issue 2, 2000 on sale on ebay for \$16.99 also 7 issues of Art in America, New Art Examiner, Artnews Rauschenberg sculpture (rare) for \$20.00.

An archive is being created.

### 3 2016

May we wish all our readers a very happy 2016 and hope you will find the interest and the time to write to us, engage with our writers and tell us what is happening in your art practice by sharing your visual experiences.

### 4 Curatorial App

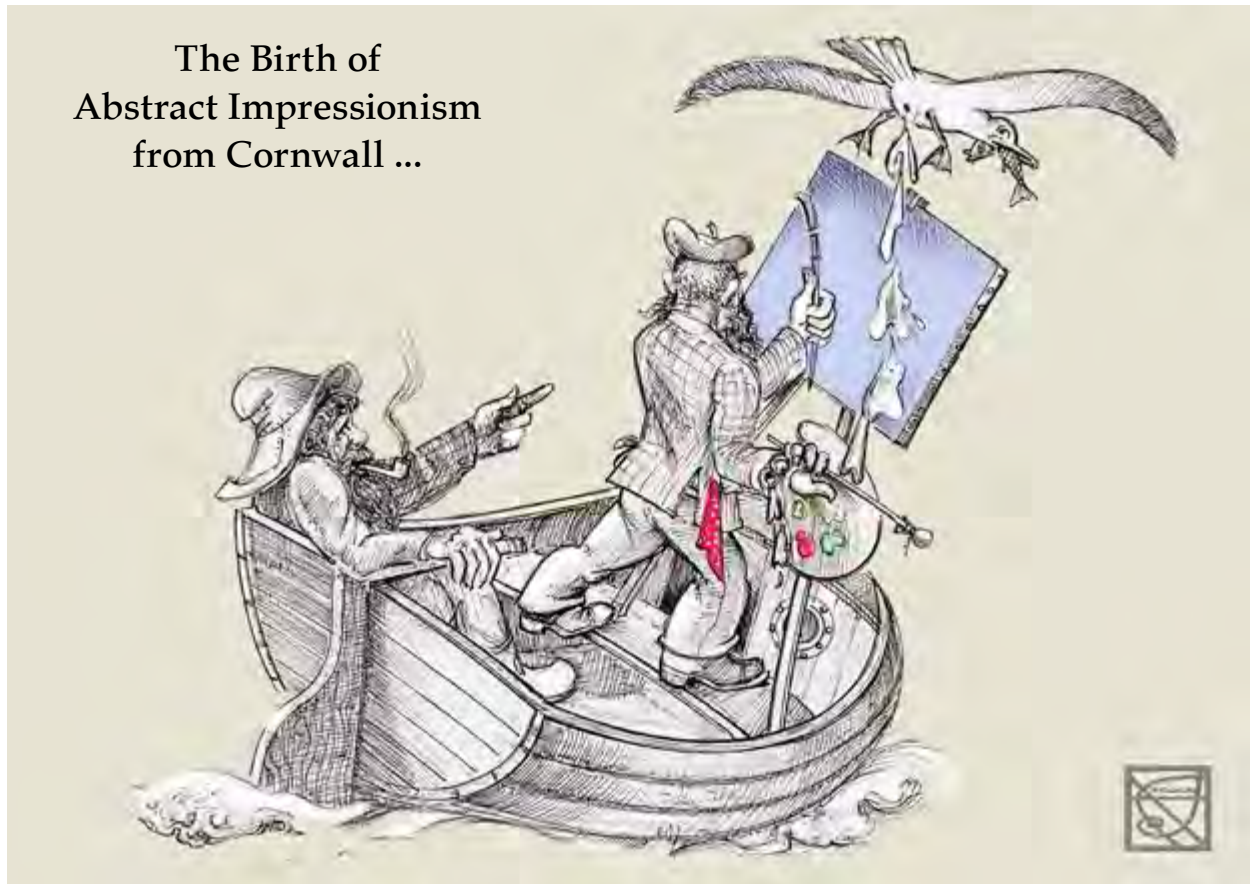
Here's a little something they are chatting about on the web and will probably be tested by all the other Art Magazines, but not us as it is a gimmick.

An App for your phone that personalizes your exhibition space.

<http://muzeu.ms>

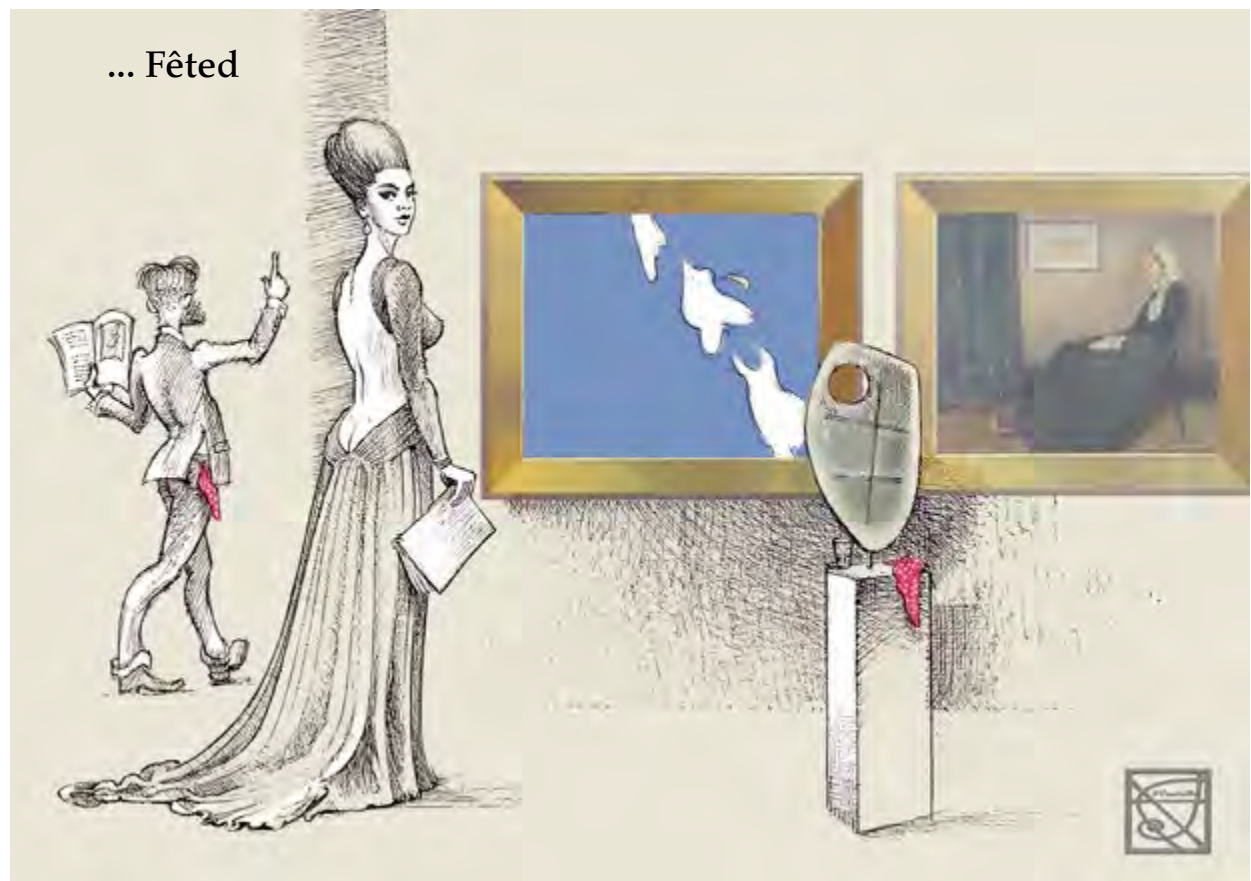


# The Birth of Abstract Impressionism from Cornwall ...



*Jonathon Xavier Coudrille*

## ... Fêted





# The Lost Art of Curating

## *The problem of curating art for block-busters*

Richard Sharland

It struck with magical force, a grove of reconstructed ancient trees bolted into the square, patterning a bare, solid, organic awkwardness against Georgian facades. The unmediated surprise of it invited entry, exploration, touch, curiosity - wonder.

Such was the impact of Ai Weiwei's 'Tree 2009-10, 2015' before I had even stepped inside the Royal Academy to see this autumn's exhibition and before the curators had begun to signal just what it was I should be seeing and admiring; before their attempts to mediate between me and one of the world's most powerful artists; before they edged an excellent exhibition with disappointment.

There had been a similar experience in the same space earlier in the year with Anselm Kiefer's submarines, his piece 'Velimir Khlebnikov: Fates of Nations: The New Theory of War'. They hung in dry glass tanks in the entrance courtyard, rusty threats suspended in time, the image all the more compelling because these metal sharks were somehow armed and potent, while seeming frozen and unexplained. My curiosity was charged, stimulated: only later, off to one side, did I see some information about the piece. The curators had been padding the work with prominently displayed boards of text, pointing out how I should receive, react, respond to what I was looking at. They told me who influenced Anselm, offering definitive insights into what he felt and thought in an unquestioning language of certainty, the voice of authority. My curiosity almost lost its edge: only the scale and raw physicality of the artists' work kept it alive.

Keiffer's art is huge in every sense, some of its effect achieved by dwarfing the viewer, emphasizing the insignificance of our fragile humanity. This exhibition was raw and intimidating - the dark messy scale of it, the



*Ai Weiwei: Tree 2009-10, 2015*

*Photograph © David Parry*

plasticity, the organic wintered colours, the imagery bleached and metallic. When I stood still and absorbed, I felt awe.

For a long while, I sat before 'Black Flakes 2006', a vast winter landscape with stakes in a white land and a book made of lead floating in front of a dark sky. Powered into surrender, I wondered if this was how viewers felt here 170 years ago, confronted by John Martin's sublime canvasses, his tiny figures dwarfed by raging thunder, lightning, inferno and floods. Looking at this mysterious painting, I glimpsed other viewers coming and going, many wearing the instructive headphones that seem to be ever-present in major galleries, watching as they paused briefly, talking, reading the catalogues. A jet plane passed overhead as it came to me how insulated we all are, how temporary the experience of this art, even when it bursts from the wall like an assault. How our visceral reaction to work is deepened when we are not being instructed in its interpretation.

Much of Ai Weiwei's work concerns itself with exposing oppression, corruption and hypocrisy. Works like 'Dropping A Han Dynasty Urn' do not require any interpretation: the three

*I could feel the universality of Ai Weiwei's artistic experience being occluded by the interpretation, by a curatorial focus on the Chinese hero*

images and the title express the action while the artist's posture and the look on his face conjure the complexity of reverence, challenge, gravity and humour that infuses the act with depth and questioning. Constructions like 'Souvenir from Shanghai' convey strength and beauty, their form and materials provocative and emotional: others, like 'Table with Two Legs Up A Wall' are elegant as dancers. Several times I could feel the universality of Ai Weiwei's artistic experience being occluded by the interpretation, by a curatorial focus on the Chinese hero, the work simplistically

'explained', reduced to commodity, art's own inner language dimmed by deliberate explanation.

The curator's words were signposted in large letters on the wall in every room of the exhibition, detailing how much of the work's purpose is to highlight repression in China, failing to hint these issues are universal, that exposing double standards is part of art everywhere, including here in the UK, here in the Academy. Was this curation signposting us away from something the artist was saying? Ai Weiwei's wallpaper of golden CCTV cameras is papered over a whole room was being presented inside a country with one of the highest CCTV camera per head of population ratios in the world. In the same room, the graphic tableau sculpture's of the artist's imprisonment were interpreted within the context of China, without any reference to a wider area of concern, for example, in Guantanamo Bay. I wonder how many more people might make these connections if the repetitive curation was toned down, was less authoritative, more



*Anselm Kiefer: Velimir Khlebnikov: Fates of Nations The New Theory of War*

allusive. How many people, gazing at the information on the walls and perhaps where the voice in their headphones directs them, will notice the last work in the show, a CCTV camera carved in stone looking at them as they descend the stairs after they exit the merchandising area?

I know I am not alone in feeling resistance to the curator's guidance, what David Blazer calls their curationism. He charts and explores the rise of curatorial influence in his 2014 book "Curationism – how curating took over the art world and everything else". Tracing the emergence of curators from performance art in the 1960s and 70s, he examines their evolution from project managers into cultural gatekeepers, not just in art, but in music, fashion, design, travel, information etc. He takes aim at the way the scholarly authority of curators is asserted, identifying a "new feudalism in culture work, in which a select few, dubbed the curatorial class, maintain their illustrious positions," while so many others imitate their ways. In its extreme form, he argues, "the curator is present, the artist is absent".

Art is, of course, an industry and the leading public galleries and museums its major retailers, coerced into surviving on their block-buster exhibitions, a bums-on-seats philosophy that commodifies the work and requires the viewer to become a consumer. The result is a way of being with art that is timorous, cosseted, safe - taking art on a plate rather than going to hunt for it, discovering its complexities first hand. Without stillness. Without curiosity.

Yet, as Blazer explores, this is how the big art institutions expect me to receive my art – presented by 'content farmers' for consumption, repeat business, more revenue. It is packaged for dinner party conversation, bucket lists, corporate hospitality and it fuels quips like Steve Jobs' "creativity is just connecting things".... which is just not so. Creativity is much more skilled, complex and emotive than merely making connections, it is wide and deeply resonant of what it means to be us, to be human. The packaging of curatorial directives suggests art does not challenge, enlighten, evoke or provoke; does not exist to culturally penetrate the armour of the viewer. Ironically, this contradicts the primary object of nearly all Ai Weiwei's work:

#### NOTES TO MYSELF ON BEGINNING A PAINTING BY RICHARD DIEBENKORN

1. ATTEMPT WHAT IS NOT CERTAIN. CERTAINTY MAY OR MAY NOT COME LATER. IT MAY THEN BE A VALUABLE DELUSION.
2. THE PRETTY, INITIAL POSITION WHICH FALLS SHORT OF COMPLETENESS IS NOT TO BE VALUED – EXCEPT AS A STIMULUS FOR FURTHER MOVES.
3. DO SEARCH.
4. USE AND RESPOND TO THE INITIAL FRESH QUALITIES BUT CONSIDER THEM ABSOLUTELY EXPENDABLE.
5. DON'T "DISCOVER" A SUBJECT – OF ANY KIND.
6. SOMEHOW DON'T BE BORED BUT IF YOU MUST, USE IT IN ACTION. USE ITS DESTRUCTIVE POTENTIAL.
7. MISTAKES CAN'T BE ERASED BUT THEY MOVE YOU FROM YOUR PRESENT POSITION.
8. KEEP THINKING ABOUT POLLYANNA.
9. TOLERATE CHAOS.
10. BE CAREFUL ONLY IN A PERVERSE WAY.

attacking dishonesty, deceit, complacency and bureaucracy. Which, of course, we have none of in our UK culture ...

The work of Ai Weiwei and Kieffer is epic, much of it with a forceful energy that defies explanation. Not so with an artist like Richard Diebenkorn, whose emotional energy is colour and form, a quite different subtle personal intelligence. An exhibition of his work at the Royal Academy earlier this year was interpreted much like the Ai Weiwei and Kieffer shows, with the same large print explanations in each room in the same typeface and a catalogue full of the curator's thoughts and analysis. I bristled. Mainly because I had seen Diebenkorn presented quite differently in San Francisco two years earlier. Here the print explanations were small and discreet, my guide a small piece of paper handed to everyone at the ticket barrier - Diebenkorn's '10 rules of painting'. In his own words, he wrote about his approach to his work, each canvas, each piece of paper. This was neither analytical nor patronizing. It wasn't even informative, really - and it didn't tell me how to look or how to see or how to encounter the work. The reverse, in fact: it stripped away preconceptions in the



viewer, creating more likelihood of a face-to-face encounter with colour and form, with movement, observation and emotion. It did not 'arm me with information'. It disarmed me.

"At it's worst" says David Balzer "the power-mongering of curationism creates an intolerable noise, a constant cycle of grasping and display. To escape and conquer this, there must be stillness". These exhibitions do not give us stillness. They give us the large print packaging, room by room, the customers with their headphones on, the curator's noise ever present like a chaperone, making sure none of us get too close to the life and death of it, the sex of it. The endless repetition of themes, theories and messages echo Orwell's doublespeak in 1984, becoming the story, the insulation against the disarming.

Much of Keiffer and Ai Weiwei's work is

so majestic, it lives with this noise, though it might have even greater power amongst stillness. Diebenkorn's work is more affected, dulled by the noise, it seems that the vibrant spontaneity of its creation is more easily infected by too much information. We need that is an education, as the poet W.B. Yeats defined it : "Education is much more a fire lit, than a pail filled". ■

\*The Ai Weiwei, Anselm Keiffer and Richard Diebenkorn exhibitions referred to in this article were staged at London's Royal Academy during 2015.

\*David Blazer's book " Curationism – How curating took over the art world and everything else" is published by Coach House Books (2014) and Pluto Press (2015).

Richard Sharland is an artist and writer who runs a small gallery – Terre Verte – in north Cornwall.

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Reading Corner, Goodreads.



# Can Paedophilia be Art?

Daniel Nanavati

On 13th October 2015 at Hammersmith Magistrates' Court permission was sought by the Metropolitan Police force in London to destroy works by artists in a paedophile investigation which had led to imprisonment. Amongst the artists named were Graham Ovenden, Pierre Louÿs and prints from the photographer Wilhelm von Plüschow.

Following the magistrates permission to destroy these works, a decision now pending an appeal by a barrister representing Graham Ovenden, The Earl of Clancarty tabled a question on 21st October in the House of Lords.

Unlike any others who had commented upon this case I think it would be wise here to describe from the police records some of these images because we can then all argue around what we know and not what we think we know. The seizure list from the Metropolitan Police has entries such as the following:

*PC Tower computer: 2802 indecent images/ pseudo images manipulated within Photoshop browser on this computer. (Exhibit EM/6)*

The comments by the Lord Chief Justice in 2013 trial R v Ovenden describes one image presented in the case as follows:

*Depiction of a girl, naked lying on her back on a bed. Legs apart with an erect adult penis inserted into her vagina. There is semen on her vagina. Legs are held apart by a male adult hand. There is another penis near to and above her head being squeezed by another adult hand. (Image 52)*

Clancarty was seeking to save the works cited by the police from destruction. Rehearsing the usual moral outrage, mention was made in the short debate by Lord Stevenson of Balmacara of D H Lawrence and Lady Chatterley's Lover and Oz Magazine, both of which faced bans in the face of public moral outrage in the last century.

Baroness Bakewell put the liberal position

clearly:

*"My Lords, I endorse what has been said about this matter of principle. The aesthetics of this country and its art cannot be determined by the magistracy. This is an important decision of principle regardless of what is in this collection. The collection does not have to go on display; it simply does not have to be destroyed. Do not forget that the magistracy ordered the seizure of paintings by DH Lawrence which are now collected and are of great value everywhere."*

Finally for the British Government Baroness Shields concluded:

*"I agree that the optics of this are concerning. I think the best route forward is to convene a group and to come up with a creative solution, as the noble Lord suggested, because the Government cannot intervene in the judicial process. We need another route in order to protect and save the art. There are works of art in this collection that relate specifically to individuals and are child sexual abuse images. Noble Lords will agreed that they should definitely be destroyed." (Government record citation: HL Deb, 21 October 2015, c666.)*

This discussion pulls up several points on art, what we consider art, who we consider artists and how Governments work. The last is the easiest to deal with. The House of Lords concluded they had no right to overturn a Magistrates decisions and that a committee would be formed to discuss the general attitude to the destruction of works considered art. The House of Lords was the highest court in the United Kingdom until 2005 and heard appeals from all the lower courts including Magistrate Courts.

The case is going to appeal on the basis that some of the seized works are over 100 years old and were never considered paedophilic by previous generations. Or if they were they have been accepted as part of the canon of photography for the entirety of the past century. We intend following this appeal and writing further. ■

In December 'Assemble' won the Turner Prize. e-Flux ran an article on how this win stuck two fingers up to the post-modern discussion on the uselessness of art.

The New Art Examiner writers and Associates were asked to comment.

*All Images  
pp24-25 with  
grateful thanks to  
Assemble*



*Daniel Nanavati:*

I am tired of people who tell me art is, in the main, useless. You create something for someone else to look at. The more informed amongst us call this sharing an aesthetic, others simple enjoy the 'experience' and on its alter say anything one creates is art. I am also tired of people who say it is worth something and then dance off into some romantic ideal of soul and love of humanity and devotion of self to nature. Or machine.

Art is worth something. When you have an experience or wish to share that experience not only do you share it through what you create, what you create lives as long as the medium does and so your ideas trail through history. The sharing is its point because by sharing each other's ideas we are, as a friend once said to me at Balliol, 'being evolutionary wise'. We learn by and through what others create just as much as we learn about ourselves by what we create.

A poet once said to me you cannot lie in a poem it will show you up immediately. How else can we ever learn but by being honest with each other? This sharing of visual experience develops cultures by evolving our ways of thinking.

That is more than simply useful.



*Jonathon Xavier Coudrille:*

It seems odd that the moment anyone writes about Art a molecular bonding sets in, and clear water becomes an impenetrable mass or, mess. By the time I'd waded through the lovely words I was numb of brain and I had to read the comments below the main thread before I could grasp what it was about.

I think I have it: a group that actually **does** something, and something worthwhile, was awarded the Turner Prize, in contradistinction to the solipsists usually on the shortlists.

That this has happened is down to an inherently evil conservative government (Art folk, however prosperous, are permitted to lean but one way politically) creating a climate in which only things with commercial value have any value. The writer is asking if Art should be inherently useless, and musing or, missing? The fact that useless things like views and flowers and holidays have a profound and beneficial effect upon those engaging with them, something that used to be taken for granted as a function of Art before the present Art Establishment. I do not know if this award will affect the course of Fine Art in these islands; the Turner at it best was more Grande Guignol than Royal Court, and the creeping dullness that has made it a yawn is unlikely to be dispelled at a stroke by something that only a tiny fraction of the populace has noticed. Having seen the miles and miles of obscenely boarded-up housing in a land where people have to sleep on the pavement, I can only applaud 'Assemble' and the fact that they have gained funding via any source at all



*Jonathan Ball:*

Why do we have the Turner Prize? .... to celebrate young contemporary artists and in so doing help breath oxygen into public perception and understanding of Art - the prerequisite of any artistic journey of appreciation leading to the Holy Grail of soul nourishment. ... it matters not that the majority of untutored citizens' engagement with modern art see it as in the name of the great man J M W Turner, but in a minor key.

Just as planting a tree is the most noble of acts so we need high value contemporary creative expression in pursuit of our identity and purpose.... Artists and Architects compete in common cause to unite Aristotle's Four Wisdoms, Science, Art, Philosophy, Religion, harnessing them to the delivery of meaning into our lives ...

In his House for Essex Grayson Perry has shown us a memorable and thought provoking artist as architect pathway to tomorrow

... how interesting that the Turner Prize Judges have followed, in giving this year's prize to architecture ...

What is the relevance of the Turner Prize to you and to me in the here and now? ....

In 1938 Winston Churchill addressed the University of Bristol on the subject of CIVILISATION... 'When civilisation reigns in any country, a wider and less harassed life is afforded to the masses of the people. The traditions of the past are cherished and the inheritance bequeathed to us by former wise and valiant men becomes a rich estate to be enjoyed and used by all ... the central principle of civilisation is the subordination of the ruling authority to the settled customs of the people ...

Moving forward 77 years, hell bent on assault and bringing disunity to the civic condition, the terrorist and the higher reaches of art and architecture have never found pleasure in each other's company.



*Roland Gurney:*

The latest Turner Prize award to Assemble, for a housing project with a dining table & 4 chairs as its centerpiece presumably as an installation, (like the shortlist) was almost predictable, given past form and current trends.

This means that only two painters have won the prize since 1986. During that time the prize has been won by 7 sculptors (all in 1987-94 when the judges were presumably in their 'sculpture' phase) 10 installation builders and 6 video-makers.

Arguably the greatest artist and painter in the post-war period (along with Francis Bacon) and certainly the most commercially successful- I discount Damien Hirst as a painter, whatever his merits as an installationist and maker of diamond-encrusted skulls- Lucien Freud was only shortlisted in 1988 and 1989 and never a winner.

So the Turner Prize clearly has form both for exciting controversy (which goes with the territory) and for almost completely neglecting

painting as an artistic practice in terms of its awards.

This to my mind devalues not only contemporary painting and drawing as visual arts but in so doing devalues the prize itself ironically named after one of the greatest artists and painters this country has ever produced.



*Derek Guthrie:*

"Now we all know the world thinks highly of our rock musicians but we don't necessarily know that the world thinks highly of our painters and this kind of publicity and razzmatazz and bit of Miss World type show business excitement seems to me to be no bad thing." (*Alan Bowness, Director, Tate Gallery, BBC radio interview, November 1984*)

This is the original statement by the then director of the Tate Alan Bowness on the awarding of the 1st Turner prize in 1984.

We know what the business community thinks, as we know Donald Trump has cashed in on the Miss World Pageant. 30 years later the question must be asked is the The Turner prize a "no bad thing" or a bad thing?

Point of interest when the short list of finalists was publicly released a year or two later the bookies took bets, the Turner Prize went viral. The excitement is now fading as public interest is fading. The issue of public and private patronage is becoming a major issue of cultural consideration. The party may be ending so a new party will be invented.

*Tina Varcoe:*

Morgan Quaintance, writing in Frontpage, is worried that the Turner judges' decision to award the prize to Assemble, an architectural collective, will have 'seriously detrimental ramifications to British contemporary art' by depoliticising it.

Assemble, claims Quaintance, are lacking in critical engagement because they did not verbalise a crisp political response to the government-created housing mess they are working with. Art should be political, he argues, and the reason they did not speak out is because they have not been through an arts education system which promotes criticism of state power and the use of ideology to control the masses.

Quaintance seems to have failed to notice that much arts education is as heavily laden with ideology as any government propaganda. Anyone who has written an undergraduate arts essay in recent decades will be familiar with the question, "Which critical perspective are you using?"


Lecturers with their critical theory readers are as prescriptive as priests with their bibles when it comes to the ways we are allowed to critique the world.

I have sympathy with the idea that art should challenge, but I haven't seen any contemporary art lately that really challenged anything. Much of what is seen as 'radical' is a rehash of old ideas, and I often long for something that makes me think new thoughts. I would argue that there is a radical vacuum at the heart of critical theory and it's time we moved on. So until we come up with something that genuinely DOES challenge the current powers-that-be, maybe doing practical and useful things that improve the world we live in – as Assemble are doing – is the only way forward.

If you have any views or thoughts about the Turner Prize or responses to the thoughts published here write to us.

[www.newartexaminer.net](http://www.newartexaminer.net)  
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# THE ENGLISHNESS OF ENGLISH ART

Derek Guthrie

This Exhibition of 82 paintings mostly small is wide selection from the Camberwell

School of Art London 1945 to 1985 originated by Belgrave Galley and shared with The St Society of artists. The exhibition is wide ranging, presenting the contribution of the school, which became through teaching and influence the mainstream of English painting.

Art schools since the era of Impressionists have had a problem as they are expected to professionalize the contemporary artist. Professionalism is a troubled concept simply because the idea is confused with success. The artist founders of modern art, Cezanne, Van Gogh and Gauguin operated outside of the professional academy.

The Academy originally was the codification of the King's Taste and the Visual Forum of the State. The 19th century, the height of Industrialism, in stages ushered in democracy, bringing forth a middle class into social and political prominence. Naturally The Bourgeoisie aspired to a new taste which previously was the activity of the leisured class, who were usually titled landowners. As the art market the binding requirements of the Academy, as the last word in professionalism faded. New criteria became established by the so called 'independents'. In other words the outsiders took over art history.

Class warfare and revolution shaped Western political, social and art history, and still does today. The rhetoric of the art world is not so binary and explicit as it was yesterday but never the less is still operative but now coded. The potency of the attraction of art is there to see, arousing passions of enthusiasm or disgust depending on the aesthetics of the individual.

The shared symbolic order of the 18th and 19th centuries was fundamentally terminated by the horror of the mass

*The shared symbolic order of the 18th and 19th centuries was fundamentally terminated by the horror of the mass slaughter of World War I and chaos of the Russian Revolution.*

slaughter of World War 1 and chaos of the Russian Revolution. The post war recovery watched a new order emerging as technology embedded itself into modern western life. Visual art responded only to be subject again to a repeated version of WW1 this time in the extended theatre of operations of World War 2 and the Atom bomb. Modern Art produced a series of new movements reflecting the increased tempo of the times, and these technology developments.

Cubism before WW1, Dada, Anti-Aesthetic, Futurism, Surrealism, and Constructivism to name the main players. The artist as the poet, writer and musician struggles with the weight of history, the avant-garde was born out of revolutionary thinking glorifying the individual who was seen to be touch with the present.

Continental European painting from Moscow, Vienna, Geneva and Paris before World War1 and afterwards launched the new thinking. Paris produced Cubism. The bourgeoisie were flummoxed. Their confusion brought forth in a new found elitism, for the Outsiders. The tradition of the New settled in and captured Art History. It out paced and replaced the old tradition.

London as a visual art centre was on the sidelines. Though progressive artists keep an eye on artist colleagues in Paris, Vienna and other European cities. This

# 40 Years of Painting Camberwell Students and Teachers 1945 -1985

7-30<sup>th</sup> November 2015

continued...

exhibition 'Camberwell Painting 1945 to 1985', demonstrates how London responded to the innovation of French art approximately half a century later. After the war London, though badly damaged, was not completely flattened and strove to regain the former pre-war decorous stability.

*Ruskin ... essentially regeared  
the course of art history  
and elevated William Turner to  
the status an old master and  
introduced the idea of Modern  
Painters.*

Camberwell and the Slade School, in competition with the Royal Academy School and the Royal College of Art, sought artistic leadership and in so doing formulated and embedded a new painting tradition identified as 'realism', which socially encoded a mild socialism in spirit with the Post War Labour Government that engineered the post War recovery through the welfare state. English visual art culture was either mid wived or fathered with the brilliance of John Ruskin's a genius of the 19th century who coalesced social mores, with other humanities.

He essentially regeared the course of art history and elevated William Turner to the status an old master and introduced the idea of Modern Painters.

Though the small private school of painting founded by Clive Bell, William Coldstream carried forward the concerns of a social consciousness as a required element in the new emerging visual art. With the new and vital difference that Abstract consideration is

an essential element inherited from Cezanne. The obsessive exactitude of illusion and glossy stroked polished surfaces much loved by the Royal Academy was jettisoned along with the urge of decoration. A new form of basic pictorial engineering was introduced and painting acquired a new look.

Camberwell Art School was Incorporated into the University of the Arts in 1968. The politics education of education in particular art education, is a fertile field that cannot be ignored. Certainly a requirement for looking at this exhibition. All art emerges from a context and does not breath in a vacuum.

The founding of Euston Road School, a private initiative in 1939, was the root which became the mainstream of English art during and after the war.

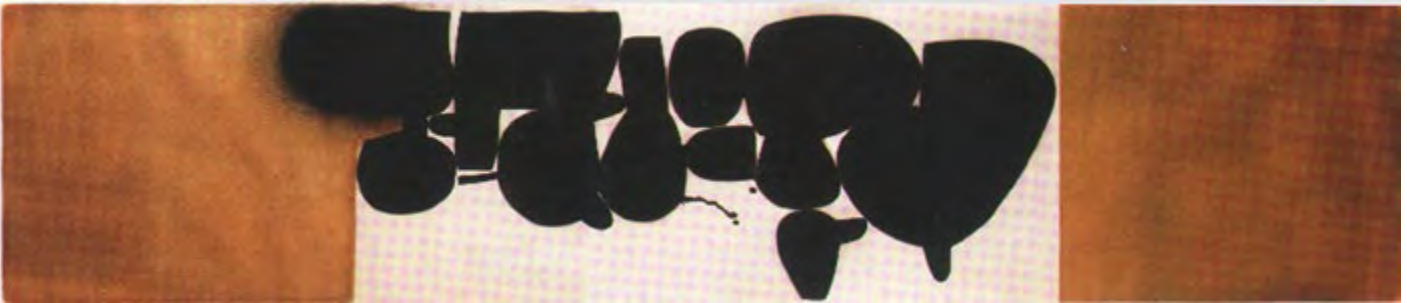
The Bauhaus in Germany trail blazed art education by recognising that industry and architecture shaped and defined modern life. A new aesthetic was born which did not appeal to Hitler's retroactive taste. The Bauhaus, a world leader, was dismantled in 1937. However Bauhaus

fundamentals of Art Education reached UK

when Sir William Coldstream in 1960, commissioned by the Government to reform and update Art education on the College or University Level Bauhaus methodology was imported which severed the Royal Academy as the authority to be followed.

*Howard Griffin  
by Sir William Coldstream  
1968*





*Earth and Sky 1975. Victor Passmore CBE*

The basic methodology embraced the idea of abstract in the sense that the underlining structure of the pictorial image needed a basic design. Impromptu innovation, and exuberance was avoided. Careful engineering was required which became the modern seal of approved professionalism. Almost puritanical certainly refined and pedestrian, when compared with the Bohemian turbo charged art activity of Paris art that came from intellectuals that resided, and played in informal Cafe Society

Regional art schools now decided what curriculum to follow, and develop teaching practice to install the avant-garde and to professionalize avant-garde thinking. The Social Sciences replaced literature and history as the new references of choice.

The Coldstream report was the watershed that signified the end of suburban cultural aspiration Encased in the Illusion that Van Gogh's 'Sunflowers' was in advance of trendy



*Nude Seated in the Studio by Euan Uglow*

taste. The sunflowers became a faded trope. This exhibition raises a pertinent question

of English taste both traditional and modern. It is broad smörgåsbord of possibilities so broad that much can be discounted as over cooked or pedestrian. The majority of the work, excepting landscape and a few abstract paintings are cosy, interiors, studies of still life (nature mort' as the French would say) apples, oranges, flowers, vases, and other artifacts including female nudes lounging in chairs, all exist within a closed space. Homage to Cezanne is a background consideration and never more so explicit in the portrait of Howard Griffin 1968 by Sir William Coldstream whose presence hangs over this exhibition. Most if not all of the landscapes do not achieve delicacy of paint to function air laded or light filled space.

The other significant work is a lovely drawing by Euan Uglow. This drawing is the sole display featured in Belgrave Gallery window in Fore Street, St.Ives, passed by the legions of tourists with hardly a glance allured from the throng, giving evidence of the plight of art education. Euan Uglow with a full working day 6 or 7 days a week in the studio, produces two or three paintings a year. He is the acknowledged very significant survivor and probably the final Master of this form of English painting. Post Modernist critical thinking and theory linked to the Turner Prize has taken over current art school education, proliferating other forms of art performance. Installation art, photography video suggest to the present generation of students that painting is near obsolete and has little or no relevance or place to current life.

The other great Luminary of the Euston Road School, and later Camberwell, Professor Victor Passmore CBE broke away from Camberwell realism in 1947 moving through lyrical stages of departure and pioneering English abstraction. One of the largest





*Angie II 2012 by David Helper*

Paintings in the show *Earth and Sky* is an excellent example of his later Abstract work. A number of dark organic shapes clustering to occupy the upper centre of the picture, overlapping two vertical panels adjacent to the sides of the picture plane. Unfortunately the work is cramped by bad hanging to near to neighbouring fussy work, and not enough space to step back. Victor Passmore developed his abstract aesthetic in part by following his mentor Ben Nicholson attraction to the minimal line of geometry and acetic possibilities of structure. He opened up significant expression of modernism, the beauty of deductive geometry promised a new Jerusalem after the War. Victor Passmore collaborated with the designers planners of the new town Peterlee, the Utopian desire of that progressive era. A central monument, The Apollo Pavilion, designed by Passmore became vandalized expressing the citizens' rejection of a perceived brutal and sanitized town centre. Victor Passmore a strong stalwart individual who had served time as a conscientious objector in 1942, stood his ground once more and faced his accusers.

Near by a small painting of a figure entitled 'Footballer' by Robert Medley an echo of Keith Vaughan and even Francis Bacon catches the eye with a simple underscored rendering of a man either jumping, running or falling certainly moving against a delicious green field of negative space.

For this writer the discovery of David Helper was a treat. This small painting 37 X 45 cm titled *Angie II* depicts a concrete

At first glance it gives the impression of the mundane without sparkle or exuberance. Closer examination will see it is a quiet tour de force in that the painting holds an exquisite hidden tension in which only three colours are stretched to the limits to provide a painterly authority without emotive seduction to attract the casual eye.

motorway ramp diagonally cutting across the picture leaving a back ground view of Post War Block of flats. Graffiti adorns the ramp, green linear triangles with the word *Angie* written in red graffiti on one side. The claustrophobia of modern Urban living is here, or better still the underbelly of town planning. The graffiti of the self made vox populi of the people drives home a poignant visual essay. David Helper captures or hints at a narrative outside the moment of the picture.

Another gem of choice was the a sparse well considered rendering, careful observed work of leaf clusters situated on a solidarity branch with plain non painted natural white



*Branch by Patrick George*

background, Branch by Patrick George. A minimal and very restrained beauty not unlike oriental expression gives a stature to this work.

The cover of this well presented catalogue features a nude lounging on upholstery. This is a prime example of Camberwell Painting. At first glance it gives the impression of the mundane without sparkle or exuberance closer examination will see it is a quiet tour de force in that the painting holds an exquisite hidden tension in which only three colours are stretched to the limits to provide a painterly authority without emotive seduction to attract the casual eye. A mature and well tuned connoisseurship is required to find this well disciplined and introspect artist. Who shuns the normal window dressing of visual seduction.

This Exhibition of 40 years of Painting Camberwell Students and Teachers is trip to the attic, discovering revisiting artifacts of yesterday , and rediscovering old treasures

that still shine today. An insight into English painting in some cases at its best and in many occasions at it is in mannered decline. The issue of painting can be pirated in that Artists no matter their context not only to create but look for authenticating seeking to find inheritance to be gleaned from art history. London had a delayed response to response to Continental 20th century painting. The late delayed response through art education was tempered by English parochial and empirical thinking. The testing of an idea may produce a new idea, or simply cloak and muffle the dynamic.

For this writer the lesson of so called professionalism in Art is revisited. Craft is in simple terms is "how to" technique does not guarantee quality of temperament and original sensibility."Why do" is the more interesting question.

This exhibition is a lesson about the attempt of yesterday to answer this question. The question though, still haunts us today. ■

# USB DRIVES DRIVE ART

Anna Novakov

The attempt to 'find oneself' is a modern development. The 19th century 'flâneur' (a lounge, or stroller,) mapped the changing Paris cityscape as his way of navigating the world. Artists and writers used what remained of urban and nature walks as fodder for their creative practice. In the 1920s, the Surrealists used automatism as a tool for their art, enabling them to trace their conscious moves with their (seeming) subconscious associations. In this way they formed imagery that wove together layers of awareness. From the late 1950s to the early 1970s the Situationist International (SI) picked up the practice and created elaborate evidence of what they termed *dérives* (drifts). This was their way of placing themselves in a changing urban environment. Guy Debord, a founding member of the SI, described the process as "a mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances." This was called psychogeography. Joseph Hart described it as "a whole toy box full of playful, inventive strategies for exploring cities... just about anything that takes



*Dead Drop*

pedestrians off their predictable paths and jolts them into a new awareness of the urban landscape.” The results are a layering-together of the body, mind and changing space. Over the past ten years, contemporary artists have moved between the physical and virtual spaces using new forms of mobility as a path towards increased freedom in public space.

Berlin-based artist Aram Bartholl’s current show at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris is part of a multi-year project entitled Dead Drop ([www.deaddrops.com](http://www.deaddrops.com)). This community based installation began in 2010 and involves the embedding of USB drives into walls, which can be used as access points for file sharing. Bartholl’s instructions for engaging in the work are as follows:

How to get your art in the Palais de Tokyo

BRING YOUR ART ON A LAPTOP TO THE GRAND OPENING.

UPLOAD IT TO ONE OF THE 5 DEAD DROPS IN PALAIS DE TOKYO.

TELL EVERYONE YOU HAVE ART IN THE PALAIS DE TOKYO.

These installations pry open new spaces by providing public entrances to exhibition venues (along with their bragging rights) and so circumvent the exhibition process of the modern art world which has become as enclosed as the Academies so well known to the flâneur. They also invite participation by asking viewers to upload materials and to install additional dead drops around the world. The artist gives detailed instructions on the process to the public participants:

How to install a Dead Drop

- Read the Dead Drops manifesto!
- Get a USB flash drive of any size.
- Dismantle the plastic cover. (It has been proven that the stick stays more stable if you leave it on, feel free to experiment!)
- Wrap it in plumber’s tape to seal it off.
- Download the readme.txt and manifesto here ([eng](#), [french](#), [esp](#), [port](#), [russ](#), [dutch](#), [ger](#), [ita](#), [chin](#), [czech](#)), edit authorship/credits/date) and load it on the drive. [more translations are welcome!]
- Use fast-setting concrete to cement the stick

in a crack or hole.

- Make sure to make the wall look nice afterwards, eventually you’ll need some color for touch up.
- Make sure to place it in a way that it can be accessed directly with a laptop. (Not everybody has an extension cable)
- USB ports locations on laptops are different from model to model. The ‘front side’ (2 holes of the plug) points up! Is the left side port and right side port on a laptop accessible?
- Optional you could use epoxy putty to glue the flash drive to other objects.
- Take 3 good pictures! - Overview of the street/place, how does your city look? - Approximate location of your Dead Drop, medium distance. - Close-up! We want to see your Dead Drop!



*visionr: Shu Lea Cheang*

The Dead Drop database creates a map of the expanding project. As a project, Dead Drop offers public access by opening up architecture to be used by virtual exhibition spaces, your laptop or phone. These small access points which may well be on existing galleries, broadens the ways in which artists engage with each other's works and communicate with the public.

Taiwanese artist Shu Lea Cheang engages in social interference through her individual work and collaborative projects with Paper Tiger Television (PTT). PTT, based in New York, started utilizing public access television in 1981 – creating content for video art at its inception. Media activist Dee Dee Halleck, one of the founders of the organization, recognized “It is one thing to critique the mass media and rail against their abuses. It is quite another to create viable alternatives.”



Cheang's recent CrisisRus ([www.crisisrus.laptopsrus.me](http://www.crisisrus.laptopsrus.me)) project is channeled through LaptopsRus (<http://laptopsrus.me>), which facilitates live meetings/ reunions/ performances. The invitation looks for:

*women, including housewives, workers, bakers, artists, writers, performers, filmmakers and all walks of life, to express their own concerns about CRISIS and crisis - the economical CRISIS that's affecting everyone and the personal crisis that zooms large in the current political and social environ.*

By signing on to make postings, you agree your banner messages and network AV streams could be shared, exhibited, performed and distributed in non-commercial creative commons licensing manner. (Shu Lea Cheang)

The project, which was designed with artists Maite Cajaraville (Madrid) and Lucía Egaña Rojas (Chile/ Barcelona) has had performances in France, Norway, England and Germany. Mapping, just as with SI, is also key component to their projects. "At CrisisRus we use a map to locate all participants and their works. The map has been a strong advert for us; we show it at each performance so that the audience knows the location of the videos, images or sounds. They also see the amplitude of the project." The project maps are heavily promoted through social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

CrisisRus creates spaces for personal and public experiences to be exchanged. According to Cheang "the public participation is built in element/ devices in many of my performance and installation works. Through public engagement the work is triggered into activity mode." Video, image and sound streaming from around the world are played before audiences in which performers and viewers form a circle and act out various forms of engagement. Their physical space is a mirror of the seating arrangement in the United Nation – a circle of engagement. "These cross-circuited / open interfaces make public participation accessible while allowing open hacking." (Shu Lea Cheang) The physical and the virtual spaces mix effortlessly. "We do believe both mediums have to be connected and physical meetings have to be done. Both spaces feed back to each

other . . . Our experience is that the physical meetings strengthen the virtual connection (the map database.)" (Maite Cajaraville)

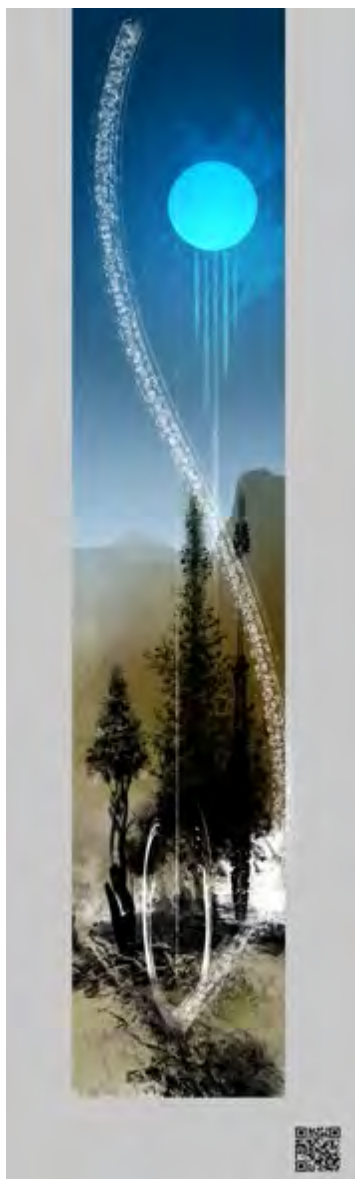
American artist, Ron Hutt's ongoing Axis Mundi/ Open Portals project ([www.ronhutt.info](http://www.ronhutt.info)) flowed from his own nomadic lifestyle. Axis Mundi is the Latin term for "the world center, or the connection between Heaven and Earth. As the celestial pole and geographic pole, it expresses a point of connection between sky and earth where the four compass directions meet." The project is marked with a sign for the four directions consisting of intersecting vertical and horizontal bands.

*"the public participation is built in element/ devices in many of my performance and installation works. Through public engagement the work is triggered into activity mode."*

While travelling Hutt established a system of marking his place when he stopped for brief or extended periods of time. The location's city or landscape is documented virtually and physically through photographs and digital drawings.

The Axis Mundi / Open Portals project utilizes horizontal and vertical panoramic photographs captured while crisscrossing the United States and Europe. I look for places that I can make a stand, find meaning and discover my connection to a unique set of physical and psychological features. Those features function as the provisional center of my personal world -- the Axis Mundi. The art works for this project emerge from the creation of a personal cyber geography and a mythopoetic consciousness derived from the process of digital painting and photography. (Ron Hutt)

The artist then processes that documentation and creates open portals accessible through Quick Response (QR) codes installed at the travel sites. These QR Codes activate work on smart phones. Using a private and highly



Ron\_Hutt\_AM-OP\_Los  
Alamos with QR Code

own enjoyment. These images are offerings/gifts from the artist to the viewers. The downloaded piece also has a QR code that can access another gift. The chain of offerings is endless. (Ron Hutt)

Hutt's offering serves as a memory of the places that were seen and visited in his travels and in the exhibition. Hutt explains "I intend for the image to move from the virtual to the physical world. The process creates a network of viewers who receive the offerings and then pass them on to others. Viewers will also be able to email comments, questions or their own images directly to me. I conceive of this act of giving, receiving and offering as a very participatory and democratic process." They are also ways that the artist gives back to the place and people that inspired the work.

By receiving the gift, which is currently

accessible through Open Portals at the Pink Art Fair in Seoul, Korea and the St. Mary's Museum of Art in California, the viewer accepts the responsibility of choosing to keep it or give it away to another person. This forms a pseudo-chain, which spreads out from Hutt's initial nomadic impulse to the society as a whole. As an artistic gesture this is both Utopian and Arcadian as it simultaneously looks to the future and to the ancient past where gifts were the most basic of human exchanges. Viewers are finding their place on a map and a timeline. The ancient past and the future Utopia are grounded in a belief in the ultimate 'good' in technological which leads eventually to a greater understanding of oneself.

The meta goal of my artistic process is to sort out and confront questions that arise from the clash of human necessity and new technology as well as the role of art and artists in the creation of compassionate new systems of meaning. Physical space in which art objects exist is engulfed by globally connected digital space and they are both equally real and creative spaces for artistic exploration. (Ron Hutt)

This wave of mapping in its differing forms is at once public and private, collective and individual, physical and virtual. These maps act like liquids easily establishing an understanding between contemporary life and art. Here art and life blend into a mapping of the individual's location in time and space. With ancestral roots in *flânerie*, automatism and the *dérive*, new forms of 'cybergeography' enhance our experience of public space and indeed what it manes to be 'public'. They are a contemporary outgrowth of what writer Victor Fournel called a "moving and passionate photograph (undaguerréotype mobile et passionné)" of the urban experience. Importantly these types of installations bypass the gap between artists, audience and institutions. ■

Anna Novakov is a Serbian-American art historian, critic, educator, and curator based at Saint Mary's College of California. As a writer her practice focuses on the *dérive*, gender and technogeography

# The Improbability of Love

A Novel published by Bloomsbury 2015 by Hannah Rothschild,

Reviewed by Dr Angeline Morrison

*'Art follows power. Just as soldiers hang medals from their uniforms, the rich hang paintings on their walls.'* (p271)

As the first woman to Chair the National Gallery, Hannah Rothschild is well-positioned to write a novel centred around the secret machinations of power in the art world. The dark underbelly of the art world is laid bare in impishly satirical fashion in this surprising book, part chick lit, part thriller and part philosophical inquiry. The title speaks of love, but the overarching theme is the raw urge to possess at all costs.

Everyone wants the lost Watteau study *The Improbability of Love*, imagined by Rothschild. Everyone, that is, except its owner, brokenhearted chef Annie. She buys it in a junk shop on a whim, a gift for a deadbeat date who fails to turn up for the lavish birthday dinner she has prepared. This rejection compounds Annie's recent heartbreak, she finds solace in the mysterious depths of the painting's clouded surface.

Consistently erudite and informed, the author makes the lost painting work as a metaphor for the obsessive drive to acquire. The narrative takes many ambitious turns, the most gripping of which is the sub-plot concerning the large-scale theft by Hitler's notorious 'Art Squad' of valuable paintings belonging to Jewish families. Rothschild provides historical and art historical information with erudition, and her prose can be mouthwatering.

Rothschild's background as a documentary film-maker is very evident here. The narrative is languorous as a movie, the observations beady-eyed and highly focussed, and the scope is huge (spanning two centuries and two continents).

Beguilingly given its own voice, the little painting is full of stories from the private

lives of its rich and famous owners. The strange patois in which it speaks is the result of its travels and the company it has kept. Quite the spoiled pet, the painting despairs of its most recent companions in the junk shop.

The cast of characters is impressive and there's humanity in the prose, a sense that the characters' inner lives are lovingly examined to better examine the full range of human emotion. We see a complex relationship between an active alcoholic and her adult daughter, various love affairs, dysfunction within a powerful art world family whose members seem to have scoured themselves from within of all human empathy, all brought together by the coveted painting.

*'We are all complicit in a dance with power', art historian Abufel tells us, chillingly. Rapper M Power Dub-Box doesn't get the art world at all ('...dumb prices. Dumb people'), but he's still determined to be in on the action when the painting goes to auction.*

It's a study of the dark side of the art world, but also a study of human greed, of the vexing question of value, and of the many things that art has been made to mean. The tacit association of an aesthetic sense with innate human goodness is laid bare and revealed as deeply flawed. '... the Medicis, slave traders, marauding rulers and others [...] understood that art had the power to whitewash reputation'. Except this is something art can never do. *The Improbability of Love* unmasks the improbability of the powers ascribed to painting – the power to heal, to save, to cover over wrongdoings. ■

*Dr. Angeline Morrison is a composer, songwriter and vocalist and Art Historian, she currently lectures at the Open University.*



# Rei Naito

## At the Koyanagi Gallery, Tokyo

Janet Koplos

Rei Naito has always had a light touch—both in the sense of employing light and shadow to create an aura and in the sense of using vulnerable or ephemeral materials. Her U.S. debut in the '90s, in a group show at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York City, was a thin, pale tent that viewers could enter one at a time, shoes off. A few years ago she was making tiny gossamer pillows, shown under glass on tall pedestals, bedding for some other-world being.

This recent show continued her fragile assertions. It consisted of white balloons, minuscule carved figures, white paintings, and crumpled magazine pages. The balloons were hung from the ceiling on short strings. Those where one stepped off the elevator to enter the gallery were likely to be overlooked as one's eyes were drawn to the walls. In niches and on small brackets were tiny carved figures, rigid and idol-like, at most 2 inches tall, mostly white and dressed in what seemed to be long-sleeved, mid-calf unarticulated dresses or coats; it was hard to tell if I was seeing legs, trousers or a narrow skirt. These are from her "human" series—her first figurative works—begun following the catastrophic earthquake of 2011 as an act of hope. There were also white paintings, squares of various small sizes. I studied them for some underlying image. The edges seemed whiter than the middles and there might have been a faint network of yellow lines—or was that some biological effect of my eye condition or the hue of the spotlights juxtaposed to the warm white color of the walls?

Most provocative were the magazine pages, a series titled "Face (the joys were greater)." All were black-and-white sheets from high-end women's magazines that were once taped to a wall—tape residue, often yellowed, remained—but had since been crumpled in



frustration, disinterest or rage and some then smoothed out, in regret. Tacked to the wall or hung from a transparent thread, they disclosed only fragments of their subjects: fashionable women, mostly young, objectified. One page had a tiny knit cap attached to a corner, above the model's crumpled face. One page showed a young woman, nude above the waist, wearing a feather crown. A slightly older woman, her dark hair atop her head, had a knit cap near the wrinkled bottom, but here it recalled the curl-texture of a Buddha head. According to gallery information, what links the images is laughter, strangely altered by her treatment of them.

Circling the room, noticing, adding up, I returned to the beginning: two white balloons outside the elevator doors, a crushed-and-smoothed image of a young woman gesturing, a niche framing a balloon lit from above so its whiteness stood out, along with the first carved figure, this one with a knit head or the headcovers which some Japanese place on temple statues of Jizo, protector of children.

Protection, display. Invisibility, purity. Control by garment, by expectation or by artist's actions. And the white paintings? Maybe a blank slate on which to write your own future. The show was an ultimate of subtlety and recessiveness. ■

## A Short Review

### AVIDITY: at Penwith Gallery, St.Ives

The Penwith, which was established after a split with the St Ives Group, is a fitting gallery for 'Avidity', work by St Ives students. They have been taught the philosophy behind the split with the Academy that invented the modern art world. These students are doing what they have seen the previous generation doing with no evolution in ideas.

"The general focus of the work is on the experimental, risk-taking, and openness to contemporary ideas." (Introduction on website)

I have no doubt the same could be said of all the leading artists of the past 700 years across Europe. You could look for something more, for something which says this is human experience and says it in a way that we can all immediately. This is an ensemble of the mantelpiece not the master piece.

Yet there are two artists of the twelve here

that stand out for different reasons.

Jill Holland's ceramics achieve a near impossible resolution. The reconciliation of the possibles of the gesture as experienced in painting from late modernism, integrated on to and with, the traditional forms of pottery. The craft of throwing on the potters wheel collaged with and into the dynamic of thrown paint. The craft verses art debate is a nonsense that has flopped around visual experience discourse for decades, plaguing the dialogue. Jill Holland has faced the issue square on in her practice for her ceramics that at least look as if she understands Leach.

Arran Miles who demonstrates he is trying hard to find his personal sensitivity inside history.

The rest should keep trying. ■

Daniel Nanavati

## Coming in the March issue Volume 30 no.4

**John Berryman** - an Interview with a students of Bernard Leach

**News, reviews and more from Chicago**

**John Stepling** on the 2016 Oscars

**David Houston** surveys the artist community's attitude to contemporary art.

New regular Features:

**TranArtlantic Diary.** **Jonathon Xavier Coudrille**, Helston UK and **David Black**, New York, USA in conversation about the art world.

Book Review '*The Northern School*' by Peter Davies - **Derek Guthrie**

Book review of *Keeping an Eye Open: Essays on Art* by Julian Barnes - **Richard Sharland**

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