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UNIVERSAL COLOURS

THE MAGAZINE FOR PROFESSIONAL MIGRANT ARTISTS

Art & Theory

Sometimes I find
a place to sleep

But I never dream

UNIVERSAL COLOURS

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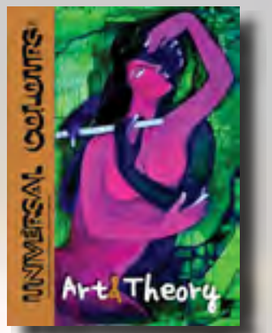

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editorial

ISSUE 2 2015

This may be an angry message I send to whom it may concern. This is might be a letter of ire because we reached some stage that we cannot keep quite. We faced – and keep facing - a lot of trebles because of some people who do not like our work; might be because of the last election or the preparation of what is coming.

This is our second issue of the magazine Universal Colours and I write this message and I am not sure if we can continue publishing this magazine.

This year started with some great misunderstanding from some people who do not want and do not like our work. These people shown their ugly faces at the beginning of this year, and they created trouble we cannot stop. For the simple reason that we have no power as someone said “have your blessing in our hand”

Might be right but we are existing, living and moving like any others, and we will continue to do so, that is our life and that is the choice we accepted.

It seems that the quest now has turn to be life or death to us.

Since 1997 when we started our journey with this little big organisation it has been a constant struggle. The year 1998 we had had a very good project and we got no fund, but we implemented the project, the year 2000 we participated in the festivities of 450 years of Helsinki and ECC, and we did not get fund because they had no money. The year 2007 we celebrate the10th anniversary of our organisation and we forgot to full a form on time, we get no fund and it keeps going on like that.


Photo: Anmar Al-Gaboury

We have done great big things as good heart people mentioned; like Ritva Micheal, Risto Ruohonen, Hannu Saha, Mikko Cortes and a lot more. So why does the will of some people can be so strong, I do not understand. We have promote ourselves and Finland, inside and outside the country.

We have done some 27 exhibitions, continue publishing our magazine the Universal Colours - which is the only magazine for Professional Migrant Artists in the world and unique as such - we have started with it as 4 pages only and improve it to be distributed to many relevant organisations and individuals.

This work should not die, especially after the raise of the True Finns party, because Finland cannot live alone in the world, cannot isolate itself from the rest of the world community, it is a political game and we are not meant to that game. If racism is raising or not, we are a cultural organisation, we do not care we because we are existing and we will stay active asking for our rights.

It is not frolic, it is serious matter and we are very conscious to it

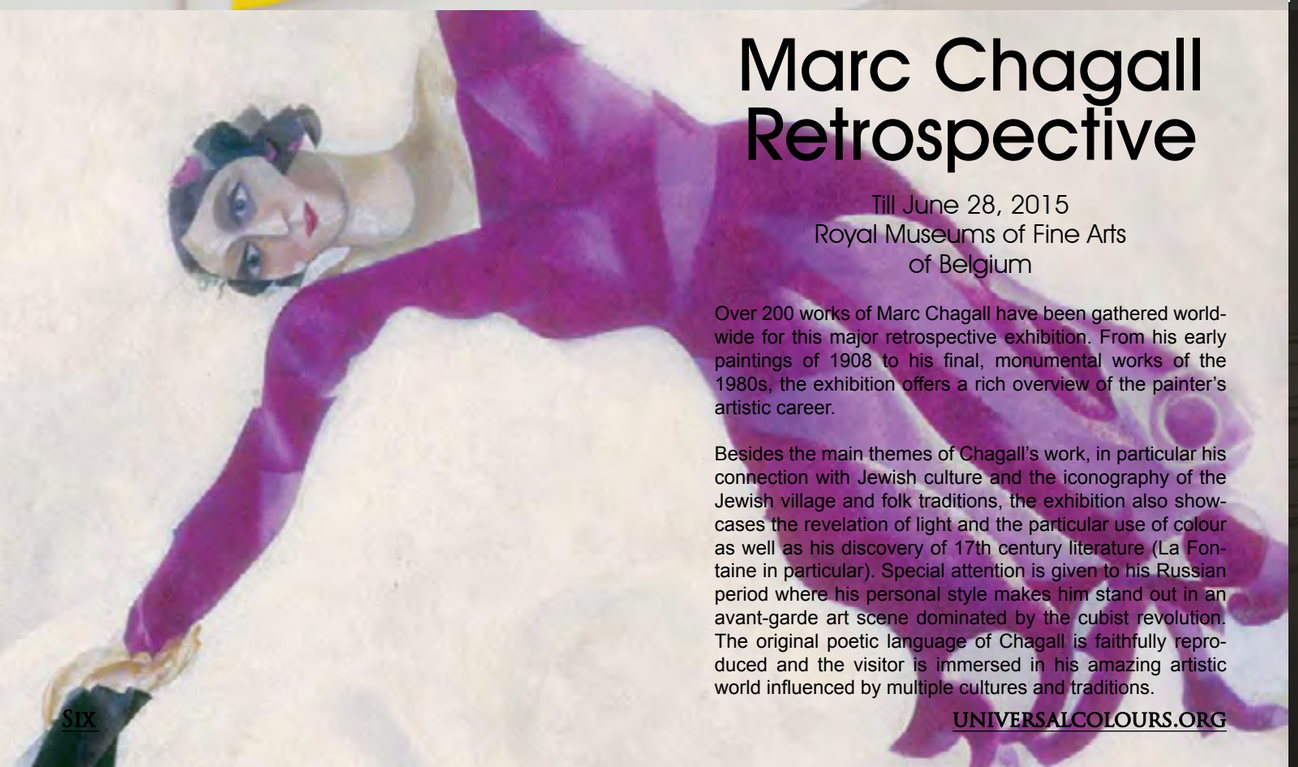
Amir Khatib

If your art gallery or association has some art news or an event it wishes to promote in Universal Colours, then please send the details to info@eu-man.org

Ludwig Goes Pop

Till September 13, 2015
Mumok
Vienna - Austria

From February 2015, mumok is presenting on four levels one of the world's most significant holdings of Pop Art—the collection of the German industrialists Peter and Irene Ludwig. In this extensive overview, around 100 works from six different institutions associated with the Ludwigs will be brought together. Exhibits from the Museum Ludwig Cologne, the Ludwig Forum for International Art, Aachen, the Ludwig Museum in the Deutschherrenhaus Koblenz, the Kunstmuseum Basel, the Ludwig Múzeum in Budapest, and mumok will be on show in Vienna to September 2015.



Marc Chagall Retrospective

Till June 28, 2015
Royal Museums of Fine Arts
of Belgium

Over 200 works of Marc Chagall have been gathered worldwide for this major retrospective exhibition. From his early paintings of 1908 to his final, monumental works of the 1980s, the exhibition offers a rich overview of the painter's artistic career.

Besides the main themes of Chagall's work, in particular his connection with Jewish culture and the iconography of the Jewish village and folk traditions, the exhibition also showcases the revelation of light and the particular use of colour as well as his discovery of 17th century literature (La Fontaine in particular). Special attention is given to his Russian period where his personal style makes him stand out in an avant-garde art scene dominated by the cubist revolution. The original poetic language of Chagall is faithfully reproduced and the visitor is immersed in his amazing artistic world influenced by multiple cultures and traditions.

Elements

Till August 9, 2015
Kiasma
Helsinki - Finland

Throughout the ages the elements have been used as a concept for understanding reality. Ancient Greek philosophers saw the world as constituted of fire, water, earth and air. Today the structure of the universe is studied by physicists and cosmologists – and also by artists. This exhibition explores our relationship with the world and the forces of nature through works of art from the Kiasma Collections.

The motifs in the works range from origins to destruction, change to permanence, lightness to weight. Some of the works are reminiscent of the mixed sense of awe and dread inspired by nature in the romantic period, or the fundamental uncertainty of things. On the other hand, our relationship with nature is also characterised by science and research and concern about the state of the environment.

The word 'element' can also refer to the component parts of an entity. One aspect of the exhibition is the choice of materials in contemporary art and the experiences they engender. The works on show speak to the viewer through their materials, which range from gold leaf through glass, stone and wool to fire and light.

Randi & Katrine

Till November8, 2015
ARKEN
Copenhagen - Denmark

Eleven transformer towers in different shapes and sizes have invaded the biggest and most dramatic room at ARKEN. The towers are connected by electric cables and appear like mysterious figures with humming voices in the twilight.

Transformer towers are usually situated in the landscape and few and far between.

Here they are gathered together indoors. What is going on among the towers? And between the towers and you? Entering a dreamlike scenario you are invited to participate in the performance.

Randi & Katrine play with perspective and scale, sharpen our senses and give us the opportunity to see the world with new eyes.

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Poussin and God

Till June 29, 2015
Louvre
Paris, France

To mark the 350th anniversary of the artist's death in 1665, this exhibition at the Musée du Louvre sets out to review possible Christian readings of Poussin's painting and one of his signature features: his merging of the antique and Christian notions of the sacred.

Nicolas Poussin is the absolute embodiment of the painter-philosopher, but the Christian aspect of his painting has been too often ignored and even called into question. A rethinking of the Poussin oeuvre in religious terms seems all the more necessary today in that recent studies have provided a convincing picture not only of his immediate entourage—markedly less raffish than has been generally recognized—but most of all of the originality of his religious painting as the source of a personal meditation on God.

Ismo Hölttö

Till May 15, 2015
Ateneum - Helsinki

Photographer Ismo Hölttö (born 1940) documented Finns in their own living environments in the 1960s and '70s. A goldsmith, Hölttö photographed in his home town Helsinki whenever he could. He developed into a technically skilled and visionary artist at the Helsinki Camera Club. Hölttö also travelled extensively in Finland, capturing with his camera, the lives of people living in remote areas and the Finnish Roma minority among others. In the early 1970s he opened his own studio, where he worked for the next three decades.

Art in Berlin 1880–1980

December 31, 2015
Berlin Museum of Modern Art

The presentation from our collection to mark the museum's fortieth anniversary will be a multi-facetted tour through the art of Berlin from 1880 to 1980. It will range from paintings of the late 19th century, when the Kaiser reigned and tastes were largely determined by the moneyed classes, via Expressionism and the East European avant-garde to post-war modern architecture and the "wild" works of the Seventies. Reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the collection, there will be lively dialogue between paintings, prints, sculpture, photography and architecture. The show will illustrate a diversity of artistic styles and credos, but also tensions, polarisations and fresh departures, which remain hallmarks of Berlin as an artistic hub. As a city of the modern age that is attracting more young international artists than ever before, Berlin is still a centre of permanent new beginnings.

Sonia Delaunay

Till August 9, 2015
Tate Britain

Sonia Delaunay (1885–1979) was a key figure in the Parisian avant-garde and became the European doyenne of abstract art.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, she celebrated the modern world of movement, technology and urban life, exploring new ideas about colour theory together with her husband Robert Delaunay.

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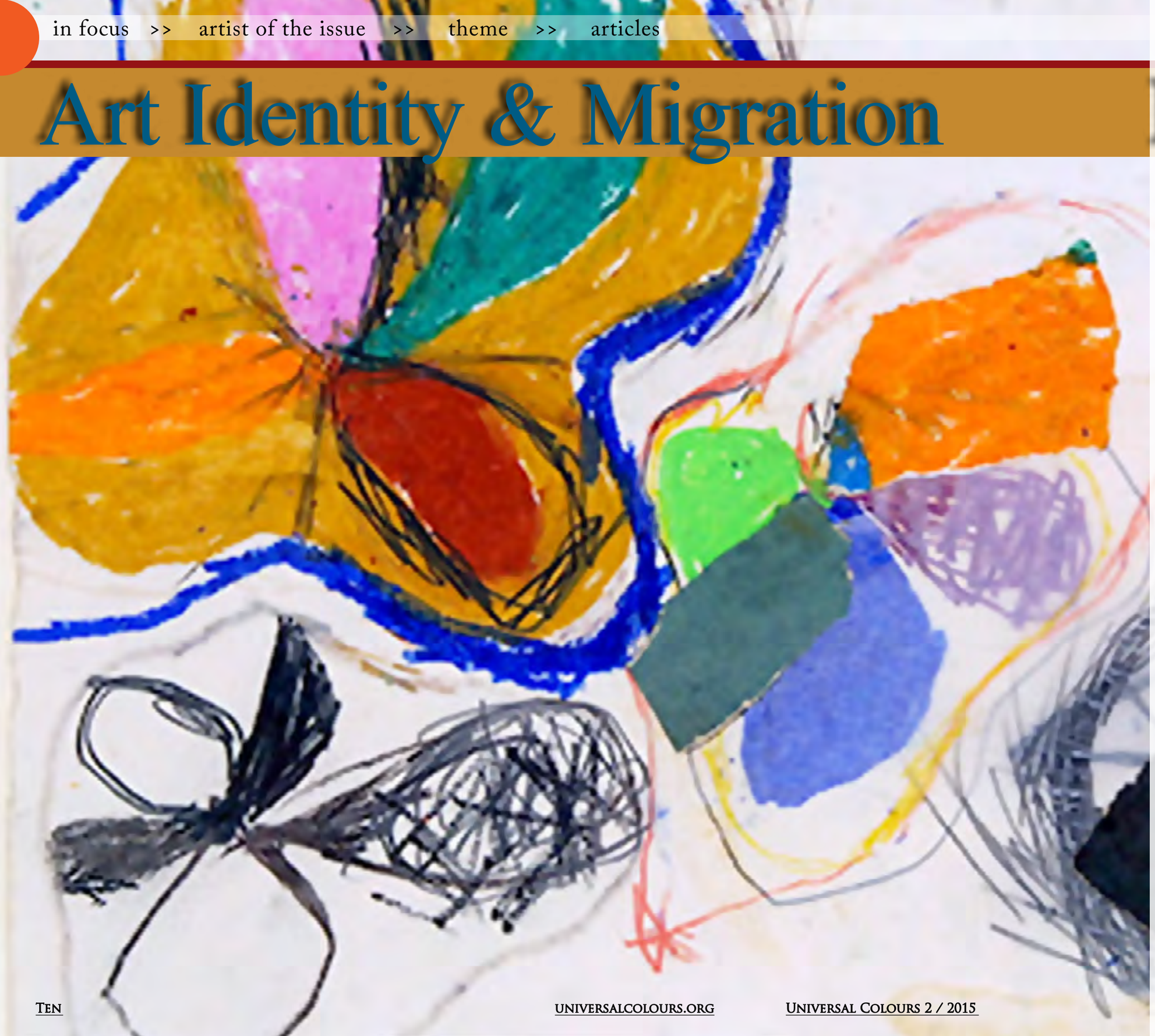
Art Identity & Migration



Ben Uri

WE WANT EVERYONE, from all communities in the UK and abroad, to explore the work, lives and contribution of British and European artists of Jewish descent alongside their national and international peer groups and from within the artistic and social context of our cultural heritage. Ben Uri is an educational art museum, dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of all whom it impacts. We embrace a broad and fully inclusive role in today's society and address contemporary issues through art and social history. Let Ben Uri inspire, educate and entertain you.

We enable broad and straightforward physical and visual access to the Ben Uri Collection through location, publication, Internet and outreach work. We do this by offering:

The Ben Uri Collection through exhibitions, research, and a programme of conservation and acquisition.

Temporary exhibitions, for instance by curating, touring and hosting important internationally-focused exhibitions of the widest artistic appeal that, given the museum's focus on artists of Jewish descent, would not be seen anywhere else in the UK

A range of existing publications about our artists, plus the ongoing commissioning of academic research on our artists and their work.

Our Library and Archive, a resource dating from the turn of the 20th century which documents and traces the artistic and social development of Ben Uri's artists.

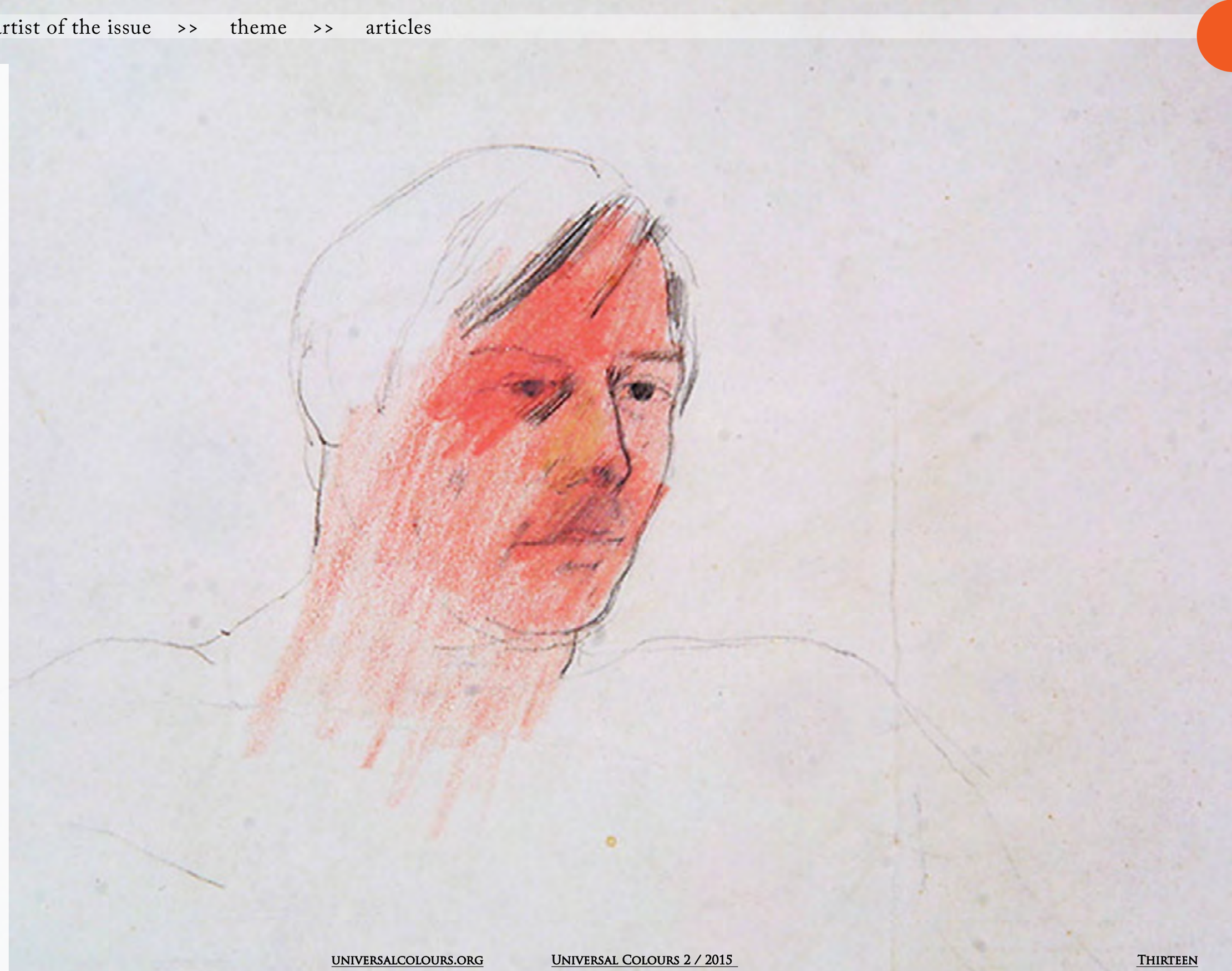
Our gallery education programme for teachers, schools and families including free visits, art workshops and schools exhibitions.

National learning online resources for schools including Holocaust Education Through Visual Art and Art in the Ben Uri Colllection websites and teaching packs, all of which are free of charge to schools Free Learning Resources

Art and Wellbeing programmes including art workshops in the local community Community Projects

Supporting and nurturing artists, for example through our monthly artist peer group programmes and our International Jewish Artists of the Year Awards competition.

This website, which gives access to online learning tools, news on events and exhibitions, plus access to a gallery showing the work of a selection of our artists.



Poonam Chandrika Tyagi

By: **Amir Khatib**

An Indian Artist

FOR THE FIRST TIME I met Poonam was last year when we both participated to some event in Istanbul of Turkey, she was very exceptional person, her looking was deep and she observe all participants, each one of them as an individual, she did not care of those who were ordinary, just was following someone whom she might think that they are the best.

Poonam was painting fast and I was wondering how she can do some 3 artworks within 4 days, they were relatively big in size, but she is very well trended and it seems she is painting all her life.

As an Indian woman artist, she share her homeland's artists of colours and technique, she is very bright, colourful and skilful person, but I do not know why she remind me by the Hindu great artist Nityam Singha Roy who considered as great Indian contemporary artist.

Her artworks are very lovely, they let any viewer think, for the first impression I was astonished by her colours because they were like phosphor colours, but when I came close to her I knew that she brought her colours with her from India and she is much harmonized with that.

One point was surprises me in her way of painting " may be because I was not all the time with her" but she was painting without sketch, she just put some little outlines and she start to build her work, she composes her works first by putting the colours, and then she correct the colours by other colours.

As it seems that she is painting all the time as I said but one thing more to say she is doing very well by her life as an artist, and I think she deserves it, she worth it, because there are little in our world of at least to say in India of woman artists who are successful in building their carrier.

I know India has gave birth to many great artists in the world and they are very effective in the art scenery of our world, and this make a great art movement inside India and abroad as well. ■

Theory & Art

By: **Jody Berland, Will Straw, David Tomas**

http://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/1037/943

FIRST PRESENTED at a conference that took place at the University of Ottawa in 1991, the essays in Theory Rules: Art as Theory/Theory and Art attempt to trace out the connection between cultural production and the theoretical and institutional discourses which inform our understanding of that practice. Within this framework, the volume addresses a series of issues that continue to have relevance within and outside the academy: feminism and the questions of authorship (Berland, Seaton, Wolff, Marchessault), institutional politics (Harlow, Bennett, Straw), pedagogical practice (De Duve, Clark), and the constitution of communities and the formation of alliances across communities (Hassan, Dominguez, Tomas). The relevance of theoretical discourse to both the academic endeavour and the realm of cultural production is a complex and sometimes divisive question that is raised at conferences and across the pages of magazines and newspapers. The connection between "inside and outside," or more crucially, the relevance of Theory (often seen as the exclusive purview of academic enterprise) to cultural producers working outside the university's walls is the central focus of the more interesting contributions to this collection.

In their engagement with the productive relation between art and theory, many of the essays (such as those by Will Straw, Beth Seaton, and Jamelie Hassan) take their departure from the wealth of artworks, films, and videos produced in the 1980s (post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, feminism, and Marxism). Artworks from this period were positioned as "texts" in and of themselves, to be "read" and to have the same analytical weight as the theoretical and critical texts that were written alongside them. In the 1990s, however, as the production of theory increases by leaps and bounds, many artists see themselves on one side of an ever-widening gap between themselves and the theorists with whom they once had much in common. Rather than arguing one side over the other, these essays seek to illuminate this distance between cultural producer and cultural theorist by tracing the points of contact, the circulation of concepts and ideas, and the positioning of art and theory within public discourse.

The perceived encroachment of Theory on academic work has long been a topic of concern to many scholars who feel that the often abstruse language of theoretical discourse functions as a code which is not only elitist in its specialist vocabulary, but which, through its claims to greater analytic and hermeneutic validity, ensures that its practitioners have exclusive control over its usage and its value within the academy. Heather MacIvor, a political science professor at the University of Windsor, echoes this fear in a recent essay published in the Simon Fraser News. For MacIvor, Theory should have a use, serving to provide a better understanding of the object of analysis or the empirical fact. Where she sees a problem is in the current (post-1960s) tendency in some circles for theoretical discourse to be an end unto itself, rendering it useless as an analytic tool for any social or cultural event, and worse, making it incomprehensible to all but the initiated. And while there is a certain "young fogey" tone to MacIvor's dismissal of academic projects that rely too heavily on theoretical precepts, her concern with some writers' fetishization of theory is well taken. If we conceive theory in its broadest sense as a form of argumentation or as a series of propositions that enable us to ask questions appropriate to the object of study to better understand it, then its result -- its interpretive reading -- will have resonance beyond that single interpretative moment. And further, this resonance will be felt beyond the walls of academe to the social field, however broadly that field is defined.

It is this translatability, the ability of concepts to move from inside the academy to the broader and more public sphere of the artworld, that underscored the organization of the Art as Theory/Theory and Art conference and provided the focus for its exploration of the relationship between academic theory and the practices and institutions of (high) art. For the editors, the exchange of theory and art is to be considered both from the point of view of the increasing use of theoretical concepts by contemporary artists in their work, and from the standpoint of the contribution to an understanding of the social that the changing nature of the art work brings with it (e.g., questioning the status of the art object through a critique of traditional notions of authorship, or through the production of time-based installations or performances which have no material value beyond their exhibition). An additional area of interest is the effect of this art /theory interchange on the relationship between the teaching of art in the university and its life outside that frame in galleries and in the market. As the editors note: "Theory (with a capital T) has emerged as a privileged site of mediation between processes of market valorization and discourses of intellectual or political legitimation in the production and circulation of art" (p. 3).

The collection's appraisal of art's contribution to the formation of a climate in which theoretical concepts were introduced and entered into academic debate is long overdue. Much of the artistic production of the late 1970s and the 1980s evidenced an engagement with theoretical paradigms that had yet to be embraced by North American university departments. Tim Clark's essay provides a fascinating account of the transmission of the writings of French philosopher Michel Foucault through the works of artists and art critics in Canada during the 1970s. The role of art in the dissemination of ideas from abroad occurred largely through critical writing on art pieces, but were equally manifest in the works themselves. Emerging with some force on the international art scene of the 1980s, many Canadian artists produced the kind of text-based, referential, culturally and politically aware artworks that characterized postmodernism and which were translated into fundamentals of a critical academic practice.

Beyond the art/academy connection, however, lies the ability of Theory to be translated to a broader public. Kevin Dowler's

discussion of the debate surrounding the National Gallery's purchase of the painting Voice of Fire centres precisely on the rhetoric used by politicians on behalf of "Canadian taxpayers" to question the "public-mindedness" of the Gallery's decision to spend 2.4 million dollars on a piece of art. For Dowler and for others in the collection, the inability of groups to comprehend each other's' discourses is often couched in terms of the politics of knowledge and control of information, with debate centring on the inaccessibility of intellectualism (Theory) and arguments about the elitism of its language (Jargon). As Janet Wolff writes, "The issue turns out to be not so much one of whether theory in itself should be resisted, but whether the critical perspective produced with the benefits of theoretical work can be `translated' -- the issue, that is, of the strategic and situational problems of communication" (p. 179).

And it is precisely the question of communication that surfaces across many of the essays. In his discussion of a residency on virtual reality technology and its cultural applications at the Banff Centre for the Arts in 1991, David Tomas outlines the inability of the technologists and the artists to comprehend each other's position, resulting in the polarization of residency participants into two opposing camps. For Tomas, the artists' inability to understand the technological aspects of VR research is reflected in the scientists' incomprehension of the tools needed to address the social and cultural as well as political implications of this new technology; the problem, he asserts, is "a lack of common language" (p. 21).

What, however, are the implications of this lack of communication? The situation described by Tomas, while interesting, is anomalous in the collected essays in that the inability to communicate between the two groups stems from the different modes of knowledge and expertise of two extremely specialized fields. This confrontation between two theoretical languages whose vocabulary is wholly unfamiliar and whose complexity cannot be overcome in a two-month residency makes for an uneven and in many ways irreconcilable division. The issue of communicability as it occurs in the realm of cultural production is more pressing as there already exists a locus of common interest. It is thus in the best interest of both artists and academics/theoreticians working in the humanities to surmount the obstacles and prejudices that separate them and to forge affiliations that would enable the production of joint projects. These kinds of alliances seem all the more necessary in the present climate of reductions in federal and provincial cultural funding.

The relationship between cultural production and academic work continues to be a timely preoccupation. The reevaluation of what for lack of a better word might be termed "postmodern" art's contribution to theoretical discourse of cultural production is perfectly captured by the first part of the book's subtitle: "Art as Theory." The decision not to complete the subtitle in the same vein, and to go with the much safer "Theory and Art" bears some consideration. For rather than suggesting the ultimately useful exchange between cultural producers and cultural theorists, a phrase such as "Theory as Art" would only lead to speculation that theoretical discourse is not for the mundane or for the mere mortal, but is an enterprise of the greatest complexity, necessitating such skill that only a few need trouble themselves in the attempt. This collection suggests otherwise. ■

SEMANTICS OF AESTHETICS & ART

By: **Thanos Kalamidas**

BEFORE GOING TO ART and Theory is better if we reach the fundamental question, what is art and what aesthetics. Aesthetics identify the theory that researches art. I didn't like cubism and abstract surrealism when I was seventeen but that had more to do with my understanding of the world that surrounded me than the painter or the piece of art.

But having a personal view on something including the theoretical side of that, it means that you might also create dysfunctional theories or theories to serve a certain interests. Take for example fascist and dictatorial regimes that created whole theories about art just to create excuses for their crimes. Everybody in Finland is waiting to see how the xenophobic and in reality crypto-fascist party of the Real Finns will pursued their theories about art. And furthermore how they are going to apply them now they have the power since they have become part of the governing establishment.

So, Aesthetic response or functional theories of art is in many ways the most intuitive theories of art. The term 'aesthetic' refers to a type of phenomenal experience and aesthetic definitions identify artworks with artefacts intended to produce aesthetic experiences. Confusing? Is like dealing with psychology with sociology's terms. Every single artist is an individual which its own influences and its own followers or copiers. Therefor every artist is an art school and an individual art theory. Collectivising art in the name of theory, it really destroys this individuality and creates a gap between the artists.

Picasso is a theory that can stand on its own while Andy Warhol actually established the connection between theory and its work, often prioritizing the theory from his creation even using his paintings as an example to explain his theories. Leonardo da Vinci used his artistic talent to theorize about science and philosophers successfully explained the lucid connection between art and theory.

So there are two levels in the connection between art and theory, the aesthetic level and the pragmatic level. In the first level aesthetics serve art while in the second art serves pragmatism. Both end in perspective and approach.

Perspective on how you approach this connection between art and theory. When theory targets art as a form of explaining technics or explaining motives. So we started from aesthetics and we have reached motive. So what's the motive to create theories on art especially from people who study art and not do art? Convenience to the uninitiated or better to the ones who feel not insiders to something that doesn't have an inside but it is a creation that serves side products. Most of the time theories about art are an effect to explain objectively something as subjective as aesthetics.

Just like this text where what I'm trying to say is how I react to a piece of art is personal and nothing to do with theories or what I have in my mind when I create is part of my creation and I cannot theorize it except for reasons clearly to impress.

However radical might sounds most of the time people that theorize about art are people who try to explain their inability to understand an art creation. That's why most of time they keep good company to critics.

The Relationship between Art Criticism and Theories of Visual Hermeneutics

By: Howard Riley
http://www.nafae.org.uk/discussion/making-sense-of-art/

AS SALMON SAYS, the business of being human is to make sense of things, and the one thing that has perhaps busied humans more than most is art. The occasion of the 4th International Conference on Arts in Society, held in Venice during the 2009 Biennale (at which a version of this paper was presented) gives the ideal opportunity to observe a universal truth: every society in human history has produced visual and tangible artefacts which serve a range of social functions: to record and represent perceptual, emotional or imaginational experiences; to communicate shared social values and educate the young about those values; to celebrate spiritual, social or personal belief systems; to mark the rites of passage that measure our existence, be they natural as the changing of the seasons, or cultural as the ceremonies of kinship relations. The plethora of opinions about the meanings of art works has been the source of much debate across the centuries. However, this paper proposes that all positions from which statements about the possible meanings of particular artworks are made, depend upon an underlying, often implicit theory of visual interpretation. The good news is that theories of art criticism and their related theories of hermeneutics may be classified into one of only three groups, which are outlined below.

It should be noted here – and I am indebted to one of my anonymous referees for suggesting this point be clarified – that not all art criticism is about the meaning of artworks per se. For example, some art criticism is concerned with the artist's intentions, some with the concerns of the social context of artworks. However, for the purposes of this paper, the term art criticism is intended to embrace all the possible relationships between the viewer, the artwork and the social context.

Viewer-as-Responder Theory

Theory that emphasises the response that the artwork produces in a spectator assumed to be passive. This group of theorists, known as behaviourists, argue that since we can never know how other people experience the world, we should only examine their behaviour – how their behavioural responses correlate with variations in the stimulus (i.e. the artwork) presented to their view.

Viewer-as Contributor Theory

Theory that emphasises the internal, mental activity of the viewer, focussing upon what mental contributions the viewer brings to the artwork so as to make sense of it in terms of their previous experiences.

This group of theorists, known as cognitivists, since they are concerned with the cognitive processes, is divided into two sub-divisions:

Nativists, who argue that mental faculties for processing the received data are innate, divinely-given, as it were. Gestalt theory is included in this subdivision.

Empiricists, who argue that the incoming data is mentally processed according to previous knowledge acquired through cultural learning or personal experience of the world.

Direct Theory

Theory which emphasises the formal, material properties of the art work under consideration. Attention is focused upon what the other two groups suppress: the material, formal properties of the artwork itself as the prime source of meaning. Let's look at the three groups in more detail:

Viewer – as – Responder Theory

Since the early 1920's at least, psychologists such as J.B. Watson (1924) who were interested in human behaviour have emphasised the role of the response of the passive spectator in the presence of an artwork, together with the associated behaviours that the response induces. All such viewer-effect theories presuppose that it is through perceiving the artwork that the viewer is caused to respond or behave in certain specific ways. This response is in fact how the viewer is able to arrive at an interpretation of the artwork. However, this position implies that if theorists can ascertain which types of visual stimuli cause what types of behaviour, then they are able to determine whether an artwork has the properties necessary to induce the requisite behaviour; or they can examine behaviour which occurs in the presence of the artwork. Art theorists who subscribe to this theory believe that the nature of art lies in the effect it produces upon the viewer. One of the salient exponents of this position was Suzanne Langer (1953).

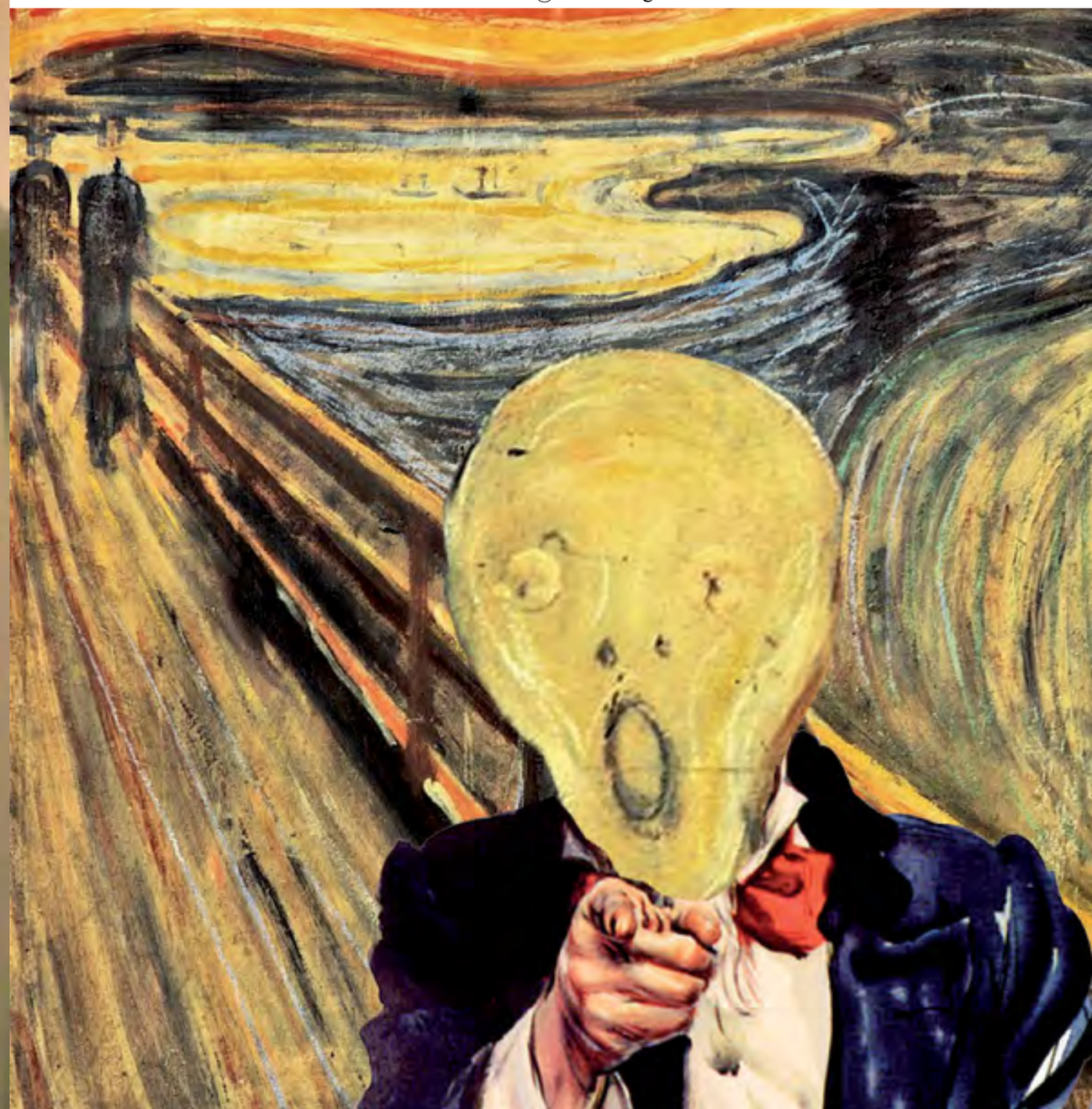
Viewer – as – Contributor Theory

The art theorists and critics linked with this group emphasise the importance of the mental associations that the viewer brings to the perception of the artwork. The assumption implicit in this position is that the significance or meaning of the artwork is determined: 1. In nativist terms by the contribution made by faculties innate in the brain, described in detail by the Gestalt psychologists in their Principles of Perceptual Organisation lucidly summarised by Max Wertheimer (1923). 2. In empiricist terms by what may be termed the 'cultural baggage' a viewer brings to the artwork, comprised from such factors as upbringing, learned knowledge and previous experience.

In this way, empiricist theory (which proposes that all human knowledge is gained through experience exclusively) is able to explain why people respond to the same work of art in different ways: viewers make their individual meanings through their individual experiences. This group of art theorists has therefore also to be concerned with what codes of interpretation are used by different individuals, different cultures, at different times. Ernst Hans Gombrich (1960) was one of the key theorists who elaborated this position. This theoretical base of cognitivist (a term which embraces both empiricism and Gestalt theory) has become the basis of theoretical studies in Schools of Art throughout the Western world almost by default, since there appears to be a positive correlation between the amount of cultural knowledge a person acquires through such learning, and the ability to read artworks on culturally-based levels of meaning. (Arnheim 1974).

Direct Theory

A radical theory of visual perception which has had great potential for the visual arts was proposed by James J. Gibson (1979). He focused attention on the structure of the stimulus, which in the context of this paper relates to the work of art under scrutiny and its complex environment within which the viewer interacts, and his theory asserts that our physiological system which facilitates visual perception has evolved so as to pick up information directly from the structure of the light rays arriving at the eyes to make sense of what we see. According to Gibson, this information consists of the invariant features within the constantly-fluctuating structure of the array of light, having been reflected from the surfaces and edges of our material world. These invariants are noticed over changes in the reflected light brought about by movement within the environment, or by movement of the viewer. Applied in terms of art theory and art criticism, this group, known as formalists, construes the work of art as a culturally-produced artefact



within a material environmental context. The role of the viewer as either responder or contributor is suppressed in this third group. Instead, it is advocated that the main concern should be to analyse what is present in the artwork itself. Most often this concern is focused through discussion about the formal composition of the materials present in the work of art itself. One of the key advocates of this position was Clive Bell, who coined the term significant form (Bell 1914)

Critiques of the Three Groups of Hermeneutical Theories

Critique of the Viewer-as-Responder Theory The notion that the meaning of a work of art is embedded in the effect it produces upon the viewer is one dear to the hearts of all those who want art criticism to be no more than a personal means of expressing subjective feelings about art. But this position cannot reveal anything either about the wider possible meanings of the artwork itself, or indeed anything new about the viewer to themselves. More disturbing is the assumption on the part of theorists that since they are in a position to correlate properties of the art work with behaviour patterns in the viewer, they alone are in a position to judge that work of art's success.

This assumption can lead to judgement of behaviour, and ultimately the way is open for this kind of art criticism to become an instrument of social manipulation. For example, behavioural responses which are deemed appropriate to the maintaining of the status quo may be encouraged: those works of art which produce the approved response being epitomised as 'works of high quality'. The success of imagery used in advertisements relies heavily on its ability to instil the desired response in consumers, and of course it is a prime objective of the advertising agency that all advertisements are specifically designed to induce a behaviour pattern which results in the consumer buying the lifestyle or emotional feeling associated with the product or service depicted. Note also that although the artwork is acknowledged as being the source of behavioural response, the formal composition in itself is not regarded as valuable except as a cause of behaviour. Under the influence of this theory, the work of art's significance and value is determined wholly by the effect it induces in members of a commodity-oriented society.

Critique of Viewer-as-Contributor Theories

Theorists subscribing to this set of theories emphasise neither the formal characteristics of the artwork as artefact, nor the behaviour of the viewer, but the viewer's mental processes of cognition, or understanding. They generally do not emphasise discussion of the limits of interpretation acceptable between viewers, or the criteria by which an interpretation is validated. By neglecting the formal characteristics of the artwork-as-object, they allow for an extremely wide range of latitude in the interpretive processes.

Critique of Direct, or Formalist Theories

This group of theorists asks: 'in what does the significance of the art work as object lie?' They answer by citing formal, material properties of the artwork and its surroundings that make it significant, meaningful. This position acknowledges the real problem of how to assess which properties or sets of properties of an artwork and its context are significant. Works of art are regarded as systems of cultural signs, and the analysis of sign-systems – semiotic analysis – is regarded as a most fruitful means of resolving this problem. (O'Toole 1994) However, there is a degree of vagueness evident with the ecological theory of perception about exactly which invariant features of light structure carry information: similarly, formalist theories of art and art criticism can differ on what basic properties of artworks should be analysed to produce meaning. Yet the effort to clarify these areas can in itself reveal rich layers of meaning. The search to identify the sets of formal elements which yield significant form to the viewer is the valid endeavour of this group.

Conclusion

It will have been noticed by now that it is a fundamental human need to seek meanings from their surroundings, including works of art. This paper has pointed out that the making of sense from works of art has variously been theorised from three hermeneutical positions identified as involving either: the properties of the viewer; or the properties of the environmental and cultural context in which they all interact; or as a dependence on the material and formal properties of the art work itself. Each of the three groups discussed here isolates certain links in that complex system viewer/artwork/context, so as to emphasise its own convictions. An interim conclusion would indicate the complexities of attempting to define the parameters of meaning itself: for example, it is clear that there is a distinction between an aesthetic sense of meaning - one dependent upon the formal qualities of the artwork - and a more causal understanding, one that deals with cultural and psychological parameters which affect the viewer's perception of the material artefact. The reader's task now is to weigh up the pros and cons of each position, but most importantly to test out these ideas by engaging with, and negotiating the meanings of a wide variety of works of art!

Art & Theory

By: Amir Khatib

THERE ARE A LOT of organisations in the world of the name of Art & Theory, but what does the art and theory means, or in other word what is the relationship between art and theory.

Of course as I see that theory means to theorise something, which means top criticise and give an opinion about the work that other made it, but how to read this piece of work, is it obliged to reach exactly to what the artist made or it is free, I mean up to you, to write and put your hand, of what you think about the work?

In the conflict time of west and east, there was a term of "Meaning" and other term of "Concept", the social realism concentrate on the meaning term, for example when some piece of artwork showing a martyr who was killed in a battle field, the bullet came from him in the front in his chest, means that he was brave and defends the homeland truly.

That is why socialist countries could not accept the abstract and other type of new or modern art, because if an artist want to do some artwork she/he should make sense and mean something out what they want to do, because art is for public, not for art, as Max Feasher mentioned

While in the west they create a term of concept, which means if you see a piece of an abstract art, you make a concept out of it, or if you see any kind of art, you interpret it the way you personally want to do. Abstract art, conceptual art and other types of art are all making concepts, yes there are a lot of art types in this form, but still the viewer make or at least participate to make this or that concept.

Now I am theorising this article, and I make some concept to the reader, because I think that it is close to my thinking to do so, and I try to make this sense because the "Meaning" differ from person to other, me myself what I was living in a so called social country, I could not understand that meanings which artists meant, only when I read someone who explain the picture.

Yes, I say explain because they do not theorise or criticise the artwork, no one can do critic, and the word critic is totally forbidden then, so the explanation make me understand the work and then, after that I doubt myself, am I stupid or they want me to understand the way they want me? And lot of questions surround my mind.

The contemporary art depends on this concept, and Marcel do Champ who put the urinal in one museum, wanted to create a concept, that is why the conceptual art since the late 60s and 70s took place and people understand it or let's say took it and accept it.

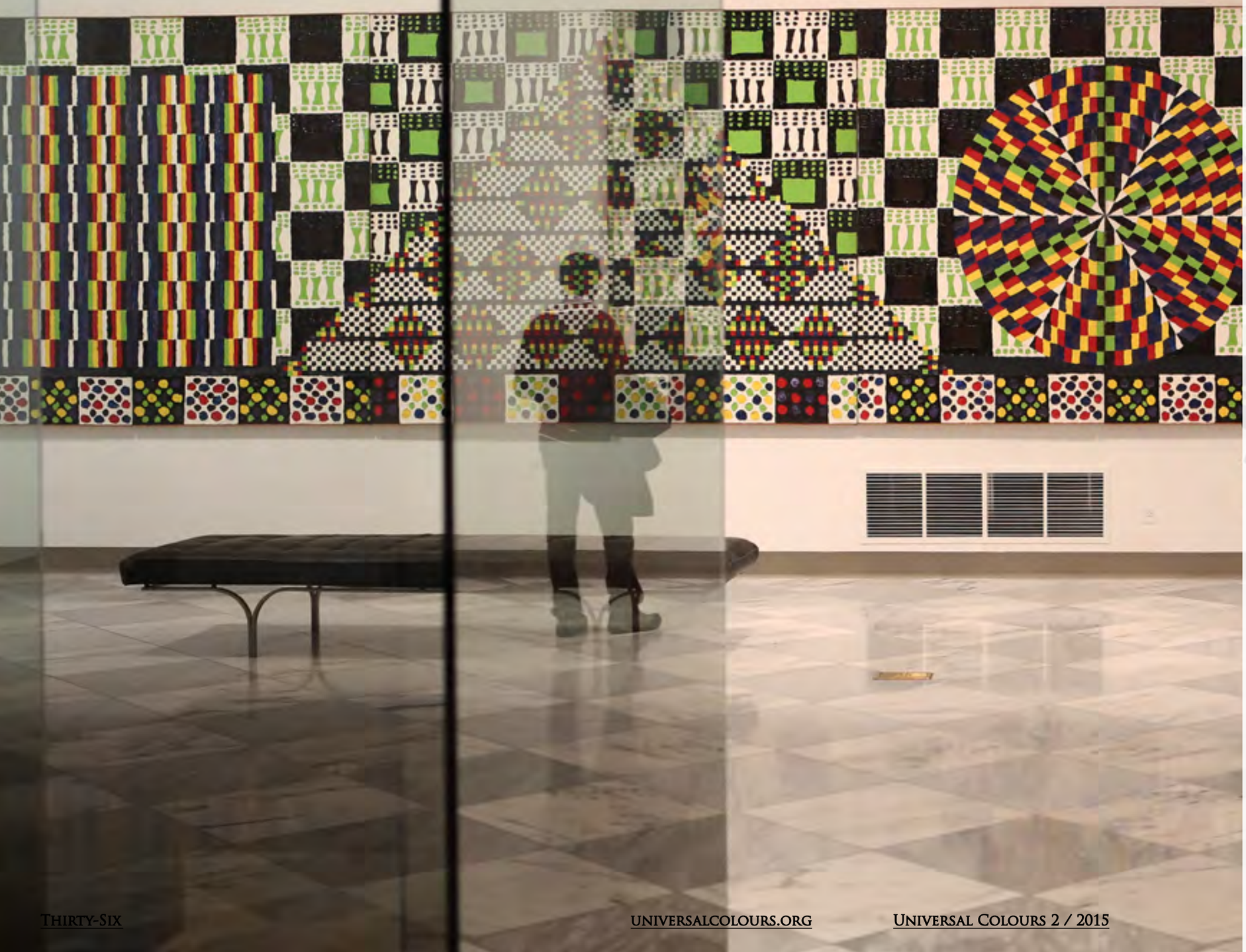
The creation of the theory cannot be taught but, some art history can help make sense out of the artwork which art critics can make their theory and giving some sense to the audience.

The art academies start to teach art theory at the 70s and that is relatively vey new and late to the world, but late better than never.

■

Theory and Art

By **Jody Berland, Will Straw, David Tomas**
http://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/1037/943



FIRST PRESENTED AT A CONFERENCE that took place at the University of Ottawa in 1991, the essays in Theory Rules: Art as Theory/Theory and Art attempt to trace out the connection between cultural production and the theoretical and institutional discourses which inform our understanding of that practice. Within this framework, the volume addresses a series of issues that continue to have relevance within and outside the academy: feminism and the questions of authorship (Berland, Seaton, Wolff, Marchessault), institutional politics (Harlow, Bennett, Straw), pedagogical practice (De Duve, Clark), and the constitution of communities and the formation of alliances across communities (Hassan, Dominguez, Tomas). The relevance of theoretical discourse to both the academic endeavour and the realm of cultural production is a complex and sometimes divisive question that is raised at conferences and across the pages of magazines and newspapers. The connection between "inside and outside," or more crucially, the relevance of Theory (often seen as the exclusive purview of academic enterprise) to cultural producers working outside the university's walls is the central focus of the more interesting contributions to this collection.

In their engagement with the productive relation between art and theory, many of the essays (such as those by Will Straw, Beth Seaton, and Jamelie Hassan) take their departure from the wealth of artworks, films, and videos produced in the 1980s (post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, feminism, and Marxism). Artworks from this period were positioned as "texts" in and of themselves, to be "read" and to have the same analytical weight as the theoretical and critical texts that were written alongside them. In the 1990s, however, as the production of theory increases by leaps and bounds, many artists see themselves on one side of an ever-widening gap between themselves and the theorists with whom they once had much in common. Rather than arguing one side over the other, these essays seek to illuminate this distance between cultural producer and cultural theorist by tracing the points of contact, the circulation of concepts and ideas, and the positioning of art and theory within public discourse.

The perceived encroachment of Theory on academic work has long been a topic of concern to many scholars who feel that the often abstruse language of theoretical discourse functions as a code which is not only elitist in its specialist vocabulary, but which, through its claims to greater analytic and hermeneutic validity, ensures that its practitioners have exclusive control over its usage and its value within the academy. Heather MacIvor, a political science professor at the University of Windsor, echoes this fear in a recent essay published in the Simon Fraser News. For MacIvor, Theory should have a use, serving to provide a better understanding of the object of analysis or the empirical fact. Where she sees a problem is in the current (post-1960s) tendency in some circles for theoretical discourse to be an end unto itself, rendering it useless

as an analytic tool for any social or cultural event, and worse, making it incomprehensible to all but the initiated. And while there is a certain "young fogey" tone to MacIvor's dismissal of academic projects that rely too heavily on theoretical precepts, her concern with some writers' fetishization of theory is well taken. If we conceive theory in its broadest sense as a form of argumentation or as a series of propositions that enable us to ask questions appropriate to the object of study to better understand it, then its result -- its interpretive reading -- will have resonance beyond that single interpretative moment. And further, this resonance will be felt beyond the walls of academe to the social field, however broadly that field is defined.

It is this translatability, the ability of concepts to move from inside the academy to the broader and more public sphere of the artworld, that underscored the organization of the Art as Theory/ Theory and Art conference and provided the focus for its exploration of the relationship between academic theory and the practices and institutions of (high) art. For the editors, the exchange of theory and art is to be considered both from the point of view of the increasing use of theoretical concepts by contemporary artists in their work, and from the standpoint of the contribution to an understanding of the social that the changing nature of the art work brings with it (e.g., questioning the status of the art object through a critique of traditional notions of authorship, or through the production of time-based installations or performances which have no material value beyond their exhibition). An additional area of interest is the effect of this art /theory interchange on the relationship between the teaching of art in the university and its life outside that frame in galleries and in the market. As the editors note: "Theory (with a capital T) has emerged as a privileged site of mediation between processes of market valorization and discourses of intellectual or political legitimation in the production and circulation of art" (p. 3).

The collection's appraisal of art's contribution to the formation of a climate in which theoretical concepts were introduced and entered into academic debate is long overdue. Much of the artistic production of the late 1970s and the 1980s evidenced an engagement with theoretical paradigms that had yet to be embraced by North American university departments. Tim Clark's essay provides a fascinating account of the transmission of the writings of French philosopher Michel Foucault through the works of artists and art critics in Canada during the 1970s. The role of art in the dissemination of ideas from abroad occurred largely through critical writing on art pieces, but were equally manifest in the works themselves. Emerging with some force on the international art scene of the 1980s, many Canadian artists produced the kind of text-based, referential, culturally and politically aware artworks that characterized postmodernism and which were translated into fundamentals of a critical academic practice.

Beyond the art/academy connection, however, lies the ability of Theory to be translated to a broader public. Kevin Dowler's discussion of the debate surrounding the National Gallery's purchase of the painting Voice of Fire centres precisely on the rhetoric used by politicians on behalf of "Canadian taxpayers" to question the "public-mindedness" of the Gallery's decision to spend 2.4 million dollars on a piece of art. For Dowler and for others in the collection, the inability of groups to comprehend each other's' discourses is often couched in terms of the politics of knowledge and control of information, with debate centring on the inaccessibility of intellectualism (Theory) and arguments about the elitism of its language (Jargon). As Janet Wolff writes, "The issue turns out to be not so much one of whether theory in itself should be resisted, but whether the critical perspective produced with the benefits of theoretical work can be `translated' -- the issue, that is, of the strategic and situational problems of communication" (p. 179).

And it is precisely the question of communication that surfaces across many of the essays. In his discussion of a residency on virtual reality technology and its cultural applications at the Banff Centre for the Arts in 1991, David Tomas outlines the inability of the technologists and the artists to comprehend each other's position, resulting in the polarization of residency participants into two opposing camps. For Tomas, the artists' inability to understand the technological aspects of VR research is reflected in the scientists' incomprehension of the tools needed to address the social and cultural as well as political implications of this new technology; the problem, he asserts, is "a lack of common language" (p. 21).

What, however, are the implications of this lack of communication? The situation described by Tomas, while interesting, is anomalous in the collected essays in that the inability to communicate between the two groups stems from the different modes of knowledge and expertise of two extremely specialized fields. This confrontation between two theoretical languages whose vocabulary is wholly unfamiliar and whose complexity cannot be overcome in a two-month residency makes for an uneven and in many ways irreconcilable division. The issue of communicability as it occurs in the realm of cultural production is more pressing as there already exists a locus of common interest. It is thus in the best interest of both artists and academics/theoreticians working in the humanities to surmount the obstacles and prejudices that separate them and to forge affiliations that would enable the production of joint projects. These kinds of alliances seem all the more necessary in the present climate of reductions in federal and provincial cultural funding.

The relationship between cultural production and academic work continues to be a timely preoccupation. The reevaluation of what for lack of a better word might be termed "postmodern" art's contribution to theoretical discourse of cultural production is perfectly captured by the first part of the book's subtitle: "Art as Theory." The decision not to complete the subtitle in the same vein, and to go with the much safer "Theory and Art" bears some consideration. For rather than suggesting the ultimately useful exchange between cultural producers and cultural theorists, a phrase such as "Theory as Art" would only lead to speculation that theoretical discourse is not for the mundane or for the mere mortal, but is an enterprise of the greatest complexity, necessitating such skill that only a few need trouble themselves in the attempt. This collection suggests otherwise. ■

Aesthetic response

AESTHETIC RESPONSE or functional theories of art is in many ways the most intuitive theories of art. At its base, the term 'aesthetic' refers to a type of phenomenal experience and aesthetic definitions identify artworks with artifacts intended to produce aesthetic experiences.

Nature can be beautiful and it can produce aesthetic experiences, but nature does not possess the function of producing those experiences. For such a function, an intention is necessary, and thus agency – the artist.

Monroe Beardsley is commonly associated with aesthetic definitions of art. In Beardsley's words, something is art just in case it is "either an arrangement of conditions intended to be capable of affording an experience with marked aesthetic character or (incidentally) an arrangement belonging to a class or type of arrangements that is typically intended to have this capacity" (1982, 299). Painters arrange "conditions" in the paint/canvas medium, and dancers arrange the "conditions" of their bodily medium, for example.

According to Beardsley's first disjunct, art has an intended aesthetic function, but not all artworks succeed in producing aesthetic experiences whatsoever. The second disjunct allows for artworks that were intended to have this capacity, but failed at it (bad art).

Marcel Duchamp's Fountain is the paradigmatic counterexample to aesthetic definitions of art. Such works are said to be counterexamples because they are artworks that don't possess an intended aesthetic function. Beardsley replies that either such works are not art or they are "comments on art" (1983): "To classify them [Fountain and the like] as artworks just because they make comments on art would be to classify a lot of dull and sometimes unintelligible magazine articles and newspaper reviews as artworks" (p.25).

This response has been widely considered inadequate (REF). It is either question-begging or it relies on an arbitrary distinction between artworks and commentaries on artworks. A great many art theorists today consider aesthetic definitions of art to be extensionally inadequate, primarily because of artworks in the style of Duchamp

Under the Gaze of Theory

By **Boris Groys**
http://www.e-flux.com/journal/under-the-gaze-of-theory/

FROM THE START OF MODERNITY ART began to manifest a certain dependence on theory. At that time—and even much later—art's "need of explanation" (Kommentarbeduerftigkeit), as Arnold Gehlen characterized this hunger for theory was, in its turn, explained by the fact that modern art is "difficult"—inaccessible for the greater public.1 According to this view, theory plays a role of propaganda—or, rather, advertising: the theorist comes after the artwork is produced, and explains this artwork to a surprised and skeptical audience. As we know, many artists have mixed feelings about the theoretical mobilization of their own art. They are grateful to the theorist for promoting and legitimizing their work, but irritated by the fact that their art is presented to the public with a certain theoretical perspective that, as a rule, seems to the artists to be too narrow, dogmatic, even intimidating. Artists are looking for a greater audience, but the number of theoretically-informed spectators is rather small—in fact, even smaller than the audience for contemporary art. Thus, theoretical discourse reveals itself as a counterproductive form of advertisement: it narrows the audience instead of widening it. And this is true now more than ever before. Since the beginning of modernity the general public has made its grudging peace with the art of its time. Today's public accepts contemporary art even when it does not always have a feeling that it "understands" this art. The need for a theoretical explanation of art thus seems definitively passé.

However, theory was never so central for art as it is now. So the question arises: Why is this the case? I would suggest that today artists need a theory to explain what they are doing—not to others, but to themselves. In this respect they are not alone. Every contemporary subject constantly asks these two questions: What has to be done? And even more importantly: How can I explain to myself what I am already doing? The urgency of these questions results from the acute collapse of tradition that we experience today. Let us again take art as an example. In earlier times, to make art meant to practice—in ever-modified form—what previous generations of artists had done. During modernity to make art meant to protest against what these previous generations did. But in both cases it was more or less clear what that tradition looked like—and, accordingly, what form a protest against this tradition could take. Today, we are confronted with thousands of traditions floating around the globe—and with thousands of different forms of protest against them. Thus, if somebody now wants to become an artist and to make art, it is not immediately clear to him or her what art actually is, and what the artist is supposed to do. In order to start making art, one needs a theory that explains what art is. And such a theory gives an artist the possibility to universalize, globalize their art. A recourse to theory liberates artists from their cultural identities—from the danger that their art would be perceived only as a local curiosity. Theory opens a perspective for art to become universal. That is the main reason for the rise of theory in our globalized world. Here the theory—the theoretical, explanatory discourse—precedes art instead of coming after art.

By Pertti Saksa

However, one question remains unresolved. If we live in a time when every activity has to begin with a theoretical explanation of what this activity is, then one can draw the conclusion that we live after the end of art, because art was traditionally opposed to reason, rationality, logic—covering, it was said, the domain of the irrational, emotional, theoretically unpredictable and unexplainable.

Indeed, from its very start, Western philosophy was extremely critical of art and rejected art outright as nothing other than a machine for the production of fictions and illusions. For Plato, to understand the world—to achieve the truth of the world—one has to follow not one's imagination, but one's reason. The sphere of reason was traditionally understood to include logic, mathematics, moral and civil laws, ideas of good and right, systems of state governance—all the methods and techniques that regulate and underlie society. All these ideas could be understood by human reason, but they cannot be represented by any artistic practice because they are invisible. Thus, the philosopher was expected to turn from the external world of phenomena towards the internal reality of his own thinking—to investigate this thinking, to analyze the logic of the thinking process as such. Only in this way would the philosopher reach the condition of reason as the universal mode of thinking that unites all reasonable subjects, including, as Edmund Husserl said, gods, angels, demons, and humans. Therefore, the rejection of art can be understood as the originary gesture that constitutes the philosophical attitude as such. The opposition between philosophy—understood as love of truth—and art (construed as the production of lies and illusions) informs the whole history of Western culture. Additionally, the negative attitude toward art was maintained by the traditional alliance between art and religion. Art functioned as a didactic medium in which the transcendent, ungraspable, irrational authority of religion presented itself to humans: art represented gods and God, made them accessible to the human gaze. Religious art functioned as an object of trust—one believed that temples, statues, icons, religious poems and ritual performance were the spaces of divine presence. When Hegel said in the 1820s that art was a thing of the past, he meant that art had ceased to be a medium of (religious) truth. After the Enlightenment, nobody should or could be deceived by art any longer, for the evidence of reason was finally substituted for seduction through art. Philosophy taught us to distrust religion and art, to trust our own reason instead. The man of the Enlightenment despised art, believing only in himself, in the evidences of his own reason.

However, modern and contemporary critical theory is nothing other than a critique of reason, rationality, and traditional logic. Here I mean not only this or that particular theory, but critical thinking in general as it has developed since the second half of the nineteenth century—following the decline of Hegelian philosophy.

We all know the names of the early and paradigmatic theoreticians. Karl Marx started modern critical discourse by interpreting the autonomy of reason as an illusion produced by the class structure of traditional societies—including bourgeois society. The impersonator of reason was understood by Marx as a member of the dominant class, and was therefore relieved from manual work and the necessity to participate in economic activity. For Marx, philosophers could make themselves immune to worldly seductions only because their basic needs were already satisfied, whereas underprivileged manual laborers were consumed by a struggle for survival that left no chance to practice disinterested philosophical contemplation, to impersonate pure reason.

On the other hand, Nietzsche explained philosophy's love of reason and truth as a symptom of the philosopher's underprivileged position in real life. He viewed the will to truth as an effect of the philosopher overcompensating for a lack of vitality and real power by fantasizing about the universal power of reason. For Nietzsche, philosophers are immune to the seduction of art simply because they are too weak, too "decadent" to seduce and be seduced. Nietzsche denies the peaceful, purely contemplative nature of the philosophical attitude. For him, this attitude is merely a cover used by the weak to achieve success in the struggle for power and domination. Behind the apparent absence of vital interests the theoretician discovers a hidden presence of the "decadent," or "sick" will to power. According to Nietzsche, reason

and its alleged instruments are designed only to subjugate other, non-philosophically inclined—that is, passionate, vital—characters. It is this great theme of Nietzschean philosophy that was later developed by Michel Foucault.

Thus, theory starts to see the figure of the meditating philosopher and its own position in the world from a perspective of, as it were, a normal, profane, external gaze. Theory sees the living body of the philosopher through aspects that are not available to direct vision. This is something that the philosopher, like any other subject, necessarily overlooks: we cannot see our own body, its positions in the world and the material processes that take place inside and outside it (physical and chemical, but also economical, biopolitical, sexual, and so on). This means that we cannot truly practice self-reflection in the spirit of the philosophical dictum, "know yourself." And what is even more important: we cannot have an inner experience of the limitations of our temporal and spatial existence. We are not present at our birth—and we will be not present at our death. That is why all the philosophers who practiced self-reflection came to the conclusion that the spirit, the soul, and reason are immortal. Indeed, in analyzing my own thinking process, I can never find any evidence of its finitude. To discover the limitations of my existence in space and time I need the gaze of the Other. I read my death in the eyes of Others. That is why Lacan says that the eye of the Other is always an evil eye, and Sartre says that "Hell is other people." Only through the profane gaze of Others may I discover that I do not only think and feel—but also was born, live, and will die.

Descartes famously said "I think, therefore I am." But an external and critically-theoretically minded spectator would say about Descartes: he thinks because he lives. Here my self-knowledge is radically undermined. Maybe I do know what I think. But I do not know how I live—I don't even know I'm alive. Because I never experienced myself as dead, I cannot experience myself as being alive. I have to ask others if and how I live—and that means I must also ask what I actually think, because my thinking is now seen as being determined by my life. To live is to be exposed as living (and not as dead) to the gaze of the others. Now it becomes irrelevant what we think, plan, or hope—what becomes relevant is how our bodies are moving in space under the gaze of Others. It is in this way that theory knows me better than I know myself. The proud, enlightened subject of philosophy is dead. I am left with my body—and delivered to the gaze of the Other. Before the Enlightenment, man was subject to the gaze of God. But following that era, we are subject to the gaze of critical theory.

At first glance, the rehabilitation of the profane gaze also entails a rehabilitation of art: in art the human being becomes an image that can be seen and analyzed by the Other. But things are not so simple. Critical theory criticizes not only philosophical contemplation—but any kind of contemplation, including aesthetic contemplation. For critical theory, to think or contemplate is the same as being dead. In the gaze of the Other, if a body does not move it can only be a corpse. Philosophy privileges contemplation. Theory privileges action and practice—and hates passivity. If I cease to move, I fall off theory's radar—and theory does not like it. Every secular, post-idealistic theory is a call for action. Every critical theory creates a state of urgency—even a state of emergency. Theory tells us: we are merely mortal, material organisms—and we have little time at our disposal. Thus, we cannot waste our time with contemplation. Rather, we must act here and now. Time does not wait and we do not have enough time for further delay. And while it is of course true that every theory offers a certain overview and explanation of the world (or explanation of why the world cannot be explained), these theoretical descriptions and scenarios have only an instrumental and transitory role. The true goal of every theory is to define the field of action we are called to undertake.

This is where theory demonstrates its solidarity with the general mood of our times. In earlier times, recreation meant passive contemplation. In their free time, people went to theatres, cinemas, museums, or stayed home to read books or watch TV. Guy Debord described this as the society of spectacle—a society in which freedom took the form of free time associated with passivity and escape. But today's society is unlike that spectacular society. In their free time, people work—they travel, play sports, and exercise. They don't read books, but write for Facebook, Twitter, and other social media. They do not look at art but take photos, make videos, and send them to their relatives and friends. People have become very active indeed. They design their free time by doing many kinds of work. And while this activation of humans correlates with the major forms of media of the era dominated by moving images (whether film or video), one cannot represent the movement of thought or the state of contemplation through these media. One cannot represent this movement even through the traditional arts; Rodin's famous statue of the Thinker actually presents a guy resting after working out at a gym. The movement of thought is invisible. Thus, it cannot be represented by a contemporary culture oriented to visually transmittable information. So one can say that theory's unknowable call to action fits very well within the contemporary media environment.

But, of course, theory does not merely call us to take action towards any specific goal. Rather, theory calls for action that would perform—and extend—the condition of theory itself. Indeed, every critical theory is not merely informative but also transformative. The scene of theoretical discourse is one of conversion that exceeds the terms of communication. Communication itself does not change the subjects

of the communicative exchange: I have transmitted information to somebody, and someone else has transmitted some information to me. Both participants remain self-identical during and after this exchange. But critical theoretical discourse is not simply an informative discourse, for it does not only transmit certain knowledge. Rather, it asks questions concerning the meaning of knowledge. What does it mean that I have a certain new piece of knowledge? How has this new knowledge transformed me, how it has influenced my general attitude towards the world? How has this knowledge changed my personality, modified my way of life? To answer these questions one has to perform theory—to show how certain knowledge transforms one's behavior. In this respect, theoretical discourse is similar to religious and philosophical discourses. Religion describes the world, but it is not satisfied with this descriptive role alone. It also calls us to believe this description and to demonstrate this faith, to act on our faith. Philosophy also calls us not only to believe in the power of reason but also to act reasonably, rationally. Now theory not only wants us to believe that we are primarily finite, living bodies, but also demonstrate this belief. Under the regime of theory it is not enough to live: one must also demonstrate that one lives, one should perform one's being alive. And now I would argue that in our culture it is art that performs this knowledge of being alive.

Indeed, the main goal of art is to show, expose, and exhibit modes of life. Accordingly, art has often played the role of performing knowledge, of showing what it means to live with and through a certain knowledge. It is well known that, as Kandinsky would explain his abstract art by referring to the conversion of mass into energy in Einstein's theory of relativity, he saw his art as the manifestation of this potential at an individual level. The elaboration of life with and through the techniques of modernization were similarly manifested by Constructivism. The economic determination of human existence thematized by Marxism was reflected in the Russian avant-garde. Surrealism articulated the discovery of the subconscious that accompanied this economic determination. Somewhat later, conceptual art attended to the closer control of human thinking and behavior through the control of language.

Of course, one can ask: Who is the subject of such an artistic performance of knowledge? By now, we have heard of the many deaths of the subject, the author, the speaker, and so forth. But all these obituaries concerned the subject of philosophical reflection and self-reflection—but also the voluntary subject of desire and vital energy. In contrast, the performative subject is constituted by the call to act, to demonstrate oneself as alive. I know myself as addressee of this call, and it tells me: change yourself, show your knowledge, manifest your life, take transformative action, transform the world, and so on. This call is directed toward me. That is how I know that I can, and must, answer it.

And, by the way, the call to act is not made by a divine caller. The theorist is also a human being, and I have no reason to completely trust his or her intention. The Enlightenment taught us, as I have already mentioned, to not trust the gaze of the Other—to suspect Others (priests and so forth) of pursuing their own agenda, hidden behind their appellative discourse. And theory taught us not to trust ourselves, and the evidence of our own reason. In this sense, every performance of a theory is at the same time a performance of the distrust of this theory. We perform the image of life to demonstrate ourselves as living to the others—but also to shield ourselves from the evil eye of the theorist, to hide behind our image. And this, in fact, is precisely what theory wants from us. After all, theory also distrusts itself. As Theodor Adorno said, the whole is false and there is no true life in the false.2

Having said this, one should also take into consideration the fact that the artist can adopt another perspective: the critical perspective of theory. Artists can, and indeed do, adopt this in many cases; they see themselves not as performers of theoretical knowledge using human action to ask about the meaning of this knowledge, but as messengers and propagandists of this knowledge. These artists do not perform, but rather join the transformative call. Instead of performing theory they call others to do it; instead of becoming active they want to activate others. And they become critical in the sense that theory is exclusive towards anyone who does not answer its call. Here, art takes on an illustrative, didactic, educational role—comparable

to the didactic role of the artist in the framework of, let say, Christian faith. In other words, the artist makes secular propaganda (comparable to religious propaganda). I am not critical of this propagandistic turn. It has produced many interesting works in the course of the twentieth century and remains productive now. However, artists who practice this type of propaganda often speak about the ineffectiveness of art—as if everybody can and should be persuaded by art even if he or she is not persuaded by theory itself. Propaganda art is not specifically inefficient—it simply shares the successes and failures of the theory that it propagates.

These two artistic attitudes, the performance of theory and theory as propaganda, are not only different but also conflicting, even incompatible interpretations of theory's "call." This incompatibility produced many conflicts, even tragedies, within art on the left—and indeed on the right—during the course of the twentieth century. This incompatibility therefore deserves an attentive discussion for being the main conflict. Critical theory—from its beginnings in the work of Marx and Nietzsche—sees the human being as a finite, material body, devoid of ontological access to the eternal or metaphysical. That means that there is no ontological, metaphysical guarantee of success for any human action—just as there is also no guarantee of failure. Any human action can be at any moment interrupted by death. The event of death is radically heterogeneous in relationship to any teleological construction of history. From the perspective of living theory, death does not have to coincide with fulfillment. The end of the world does not have to necessarily be apocalyptic and reveal the truth of human existence. Rather, we know life as non-teleological, as having no unifying divine or historical plan that we could contemplate and upon which we could rely. Indeed, we know ourselves to be involved in an uncontrollable play of material forces that makes every action contingent. We watch the permanent change of fashions. We watch the irreversible advance of technology that eventually makes any experience obsolete. Thus we are called, continually, to abandon our skills, our knowledge, and our plans for being out of date. Whatever we see, we expect its disappearance sooner rather than later. Whatever we plan to do today, we expect to change tomorrow.

In other words, theory confronts us with the paradox of urgency. The basic image that theory offers to us is the image of our own death—an image of our mortality, of radical finitude and lack of time. By offering us this image, theory produces in us the feeling of urgency—a feeling that impels us to answer its call for action now rather than later. But, at the same time, this feeling of urgency and lack of time prevents us from making long-term projects; from basing our actions on long-term planning; from having great personal and historical expectations concerning the results of our actions.

A good example of this performance of urgency can be seen in Lars von Trier's film Melancholia. Two sisters see their approaching death in form of the planet Melancholia as it draws closer to the earth, about to annihilate it. Planet Melancholia looks on them, and they read their death in the planet's neutral, objectifying gaze. It is a good metaphor for the gaze of theory—and the two sisters are called by this gaze to react to it. Here we find a typical modern, secular case of extreme urgency—inescapable, yet at the same time purely contingent. The slow approach of Melancholia is a call for action. But what kind of action? One sister tries to escape this image—to save herself and her child. It is a reference to the typical Hollywood apocalyptic movie in which an attempt to escape a world catastrophe always succeeds. But the other sister welcomes the death—and becomes seduced by this image of death to the point of orgasm. Rather than spend the rest of her life warding off death, she performs a welcoming ritual—one that activates and excites her within life. Here we find a good model of two opposing ways to react to the feeling of urgency and lack of time.

Indeed, the same urgency, the same lack of time that pushes us to act suggests that our actions will probably not achieve any goals or produce any results. It is an insight that was well described by Walter Benjamin in his famous parable using Klee's Angelus Novus: if we look towards the future we see only promises, while if we look towards the past we can see only the ruins of these promises.3 This image was interpreted by Benjamin's readers as being mostly pessimistic. But it is in fact optimistic—in a certain way, this image reproduces a thematic from a much earlier essay in which Benjamin distinguishes between two types of violence: divine and mythical.4 Mythical violence produces destruction that leads from an old order to new orders. Divine violence only destroys—without establishing any new order. This divine destruction is permanent (similar to Trotsky's idea of permanent revolution). But today, a reader of Benjamin's essay on violence inevitably asks how divine violence can be eternally inflicted if it is only destructive? At some point, everything would be destroyed and divine violence itself will become impossible. Indeed, if God has created the world out of nothingness, he can also destroy it completely—leaving no traces.

But the point is precisely this: Benjamin uses the image of Angelus Novus in the context of his materialist concept of history in which divine violence becomes material violence. Thus, it becomes clear why Benjamin does not believe in the possibility of total destruction. Indeed, if God is dead, the material world becomes indestructible. In the secular, purely material world, destruction can be only material destruction, produced by material forces. But any material destruction remains only partially successful. It always leaves ruins, traces, vestiges behind—precisely as described by Benjamin in his parable. In other words, if we cannot totally destroy the world, the world also cannot totally destroy us. Total success is impossible, but so is total failure. The materialist vision of the world opens a zone beyond success and failure, conservation and annihilation, acquisition and loss. Now, this is precisely the zone in which art operates if it wants to perform its knowledge of the materiality of the world—and of life as a material process. And while the art of the historic avant-gardes has also been accused often of being nihilistic and destructive, the destructiveness of avant-garde art was motivated by its belief in the impossibility of total destruction. One can say that the avant-garde, looking towards the future, saw precisely the same image that Benjamin's Angelus Novus saw when looking towards the past.

From the outset, modern and contemporary art integrates the possibilities of failure, historical irrelevance, and destruction within its own activities. Thus, art cannot be shocked by what it sees in the rear window of progress. The avant-garde's Angelus Novus always sees the same thing, whether it looks into the future or into the past. Here life is understood as a non-teleological, purely material process. To practice life means to be aware of the possibility of its interruption at any moment by death—and thus to avoid pursuing any definite goals and objectives because such pursuits can be interrupted by death at any moment. In this sense, life is radically heterogeneous with regard to any concept of History that can be narrated only as disparate instances of success and failure.

For a very long time, man was ontologically situated between God and animals. At that time, it seemed to be more prestigious to be placed nearer to God, and further from the animal. Within modernity and our present time, we tend to situate man between the animal and the machine. In this new order, it would seem that it is better to be an animal than a machine. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but also today, there was a tendency to present life as a deviation from a certain program—as the difference only between a living body and a machine. Increasingly, however, as the machinic paradigm was assimilated, the contemporary human being can be seen as an animal acting as a machine—an industrial machine or a computer. If we accept this Foucauldian perspective, the living human body—human animality—does indeed manifest itself through deviation from the program, through error, through madness, chaos, and unpredictability. That is why contemporary art often tends to thematize deviation and error—everything that breaks away from the norm and disturbs the established social program.

Here it is important to note that the classical avant-garde placed itself more on the side of the machine than on the side of the human animal. Radical avant-gardists, from Malevich and Mondrian to Sol LeWitt and Donald Judd, practiced their art according to machine-like programs in which deviation and variance were contained by the generative laws of their respective projects. However, these programs were internally different from any "real" program because they were neither utilitarian nor instrumentalizing. Our real social, political, and technical programs are oriented towards achieving a certain goal—and they are judged according to their efficiency or ability to achieve this goal. Art programs and machines, however, are not teleologically oriented. They have no definite goal; they simply go on and on. At the same time, these programs include the possibility of being interrupted at any moment without losing their integrity. Here art reacts to the paradox of urgency produced by materialist theory and its call to action. On the one hand, our finiteness, our ontological lack of time compels us to abandon the state of contemplation and passivity and begin to act. And yet, this same lack of time dictates an action that is not directed towards any particular goal—and can be interrupted at any moment. Such an action is conceived from the beginning as having no specific ending—unlike an action that ends when its goal is achieved. Thus artistic action becomes infinitely continuable and/or repeatable. Here the lack of time is transformed into a surplus of time—in fact, an infinite surplus of time.

It is characteristic that the operation of the so-called aestheticization of reality is effectuated precisely by this shift from

a teleological to a non-teleological interpretation of historical action. For example, it is not accidental that Che Guevara became the aesthetic symbol of revolutionary movement: all revolutionary undertakings by Che Guevara ended in failures. But that is precisely why the attention of the spectator shifts from the goal of revolutionary action to the life of a revolutionary hero failing to achieve his goals. This life then reveals itself as brilliant and fascinating—with no regard for practical results. Such examples can, of course, be multiplied.

In the same sense, one can argue that the performance of theory by art also implies the aestheticization of theory. Surrealism can be interpreted as the aestheticization of psychoanalysis. In his First Manifesto of Surrealism, Andre Breton famously proposed a technique of automatic writing. The idea was to write so fast that neither consciousness nor unconsciousness could catch up with the writing process. Here the psychoanalytical practice of free association is imitated—but detached from its normative goal. Later, after reading Marx, Breton exhorted readers of the Second Manifesto to pull out a revolver and fire randomly into the crowd—again the revolutionary action becomes non-purposeful. Even earlier, Dadaists practiced discourse beyond meaning and coherence—a discourse that could be interrupted at every moment without losing its consistency. The same can be said, in fact, about the speeches of Joseph Beuys: they were excessively long but could be interrupted at any moment because they were not subjected to the goal of making an argument. And the same can be said about many other contemporary artistic practices: they can be interrupted or reactivated at any moment. Failure thus becomes impossible because the criteria of success are absent. Now, many people in the art world deplore the fact that that art is not and cannot be successful in "real life." Here real life is understood as history—and success as historical success. Earlier I showed that the notion of history does not coincide with the notion of life—in particular with the notion of "real life"—for history is an ideological construction based on a concept of progressive movement toward a certain telos. This teleological model of progressive history has roots in Christian theology. It does not correspond to the post-Christian, post-philosophical, materialist view of the world. Art is emancipatory. Art changes the world and liberates us. But it is does so precisely by liberating us from history—by liberating life from history.

Classical philosophy was emancipatory because it protested against the religious and aristocratic, military rule that suppressed reason—and the individual human being as bearer of reason. The Enlightenment wanted to change the world through the liberation of reason. Today, after Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze, and many others, we tend to believe that reason does not liberate, but rather suppresses us. Now we want to change the world to liberate life—which has increasingly become a more fundamental condition of human existence than reason. In fact, life seems to us to be subjected and oppressed by the same institutions that proclaim themselves to be models of rational progress, with the promotion of life as their goal. To liberate ourselves from the power of these institutions means rejecting their universal claims based on older precepts of reason.

Thus, theory calls us to change not merely this or that aspect of the world, but the world as a whole. But here the question arises: Is such a total, revolutionary, and not only gradual, particular, evolutionary change possible? Theory believes that every transformative action can be effectuated because there is no metaphysical, ontological guarantee of the status quo, of a dominating order, of existing realities. But at the same time, there is also no ontological guarantee of a successful total change (no divine providence, power of nature or reason, direction of history, or other determinable outcome). If classical Marxism still proclaimed faith in a guarantee of total change (in the form of productive forces that will explode social structures), or Nietzsche believed in the power of desire that will explode all civilized conventions, today we have difficulty in believing in the collaboration of such infinite powers. Once we rejected the infinity of the spirit, it seems improbable to substitute it with a theology of production or desire. But if we are mortal and finite, how can we successfully change the world? As I have already suggested, the criteria of success and failure are precisely what defines the world in its totality. So if we change—or, even better, abolish—these criteria, we do indeed change the world in its totality. And, as I have tried to show, art can do it—and in fact has already done it.

But, of course, one can further ask: What is the social relevance of such a non-instrumental, non-teleological, artistic performance of life? I would suggest that it is the production of the social as such. Indeed, we should not think that the social is always already there. Society is an area of equality and similarity: originally, society, or politeia emerged in Athens—as a society of the equal and similar. Ancient Greek societies—which are a model for every modern society—were based on commonalities, such as upbringing, aesthetic taste, language. Their members were effectively interchangeable through the physical and cultural realization of established values. Every member of a Greek society could do what the others could also do in the fields of sport, rhetoric, or war. But traditional societies based on given commonalities no longer exist.

Today we are living not in a society of similarity, but rather in a society of difference. And the society of difference is not a politeia but a market economy. If I live in a society in which everyone is specialized, and has his or her specific cultural identity, then I offer to others what I have and can do—and receive from them what they have or can do. These networks of exchange also function as networks of communication, as a rhizome. Freedom of communication is only a special case for the free market. Now, theory and art that performs theory, produce similarity beyond the differences that are induced by the market economy—and, therefore, theory and art compensate for the absence of traditional commonalities. It is not accidental that the call to human solidarity is almost always accompanied in our time not by an appeal to common origins, common sense and reason, or the commonality of human nature, but to the danger of common death through nuclear war or global warming, for example. We are different in our modes of existence—but similar due to our mortality.

In earlier times, philosophers and artists wanted to be (and understood themselves as being) exceptional human beings capable of creating exceptional ideas and things. But today, theorists and artists do not want to be exceptional—rather, they want to be like everybody else. Their preferred topic is everyday life. They want to be typical, non-specific, non-identifiable, non-recognizable in a crowd. And they want to do what everybody else does: prepare food (Rirkrit Tiravanija) or kick an ice block along the road (Francis Alÿs). Kant already contended that art is not a thing of truth, but of taste, and that it can and should be discussed by everyone. The discussion of art is open to everyone because by definition no one can be a specialist in art—only a dilettante. That means that art is from its beginnings social—and becomes democratic if one abolishes the boundaries of high society (still a model of society for Kant). However, from the time of the avant-garde onwards, art became not only an object of a discussion, free from the criteria of truth, but a universal, non-specific, non-productive, generally accessible activity free from any criteria of success. Advanced contemporary art is basically art production without a product. It is an activity in which everyone can participate, that is all-inclusive and truly egalitarian.

In saying all this, I do not have something like relational aesthetics in mind. I also do not believe that art, if understood in this way, can be truly participatory or democratic. And now I will try to explain why. Our understanding of democracy is based on a conception of the national state. We do not have a framework of universal democracy transcending national borders—and we never had such a democracy in the past. So we cannot say what a truly universal, egalitarian democracy would look like. In addition, democracy is traditionally understood as the rule of a majority, and of course we can imagine democracy as not excluding any minority and operating by consensus—but still this consensus will necessarily include only "normal, reasonable" people. It will never include "mad" people, children, and so forth.

It will also not include animals. It will not include birds. But, as we know, St. Francis also gave sermons to animals and birds. It will also not include stones—and we know from Freud that there is a drive in us that compels us to become stones. It will also not include machines—even if many artists and theorists wanted to become machines. In other words, an artist is somebody who is not merely social, but super-social, to use the term coined by Gabriel Tarde in the framework of his theory of imitation.5 The artist imitates and establishes himself or herself as similar and equal to too many organisms, figures, objects, and phenomena that will never become a part of any democratic process. To use a very precise phrase by Orwell, some artists, are, indeed, more equal than others. While contemporary art is often criticized for being too elitist, not social enough, actually the contrary is the case: art and artists are super-social. And, as Gabriel Tarde rightly remarks: to become truly super-social one has to isolate oneself from the society. ■

Hyperreal Flower Blossom

Faramawy has produced a perfume entitled Hyperreal Flower Blossom, which he will launch with an installation in VITRINE's unique window space. The scent, bottle and its packaging are described by the artist as "a translation of a video of vocaliod pop star Hatsune Miku dancing in a garden" translating a 'hyperreal' image into an olfactory experience.

Alongside the product itself, which has been commissioned by Studio_Leigh and developed with The Fiorucci Art Trust and Creative Perfumers, Faramawy has produced an animated advert, which will be presented within the installation. ■

Highlights

Comic Con

MCM London COMIC CON
26 - 28 October

MCM London Comic Con has seen a huge growth in numbers in recent years, and is expected to exceed 70,000 over the three day show at London's ExCeL this October making the event the perfect platform for product launches and promotions.

John Burns, SVP and GM Trion Europe, said: " Defiance is the first of its kind a unique and never before attempted entertainment experience that seamlessly melds together a video game and TV series. We're delighted to be involved with MCM London Comic Con and to begin building the excitement for Defiance among UK and European science fiction fans."

In Defiance, players are introduced to a future where humans and several alien species live together on an Earth ravaged by decades of war. Set in an alien terraformed San Francisco Bay Area, the game blends intense third person shooter action with the persistence, scale and customization of an MMO
An immersive story will evolve alongside the events of the TV series. Created by Trion Worlds, the developers behind critically acclaimed fantasy MMO ■

fARTissimo

By **Thanos Kalamidas**

Theorizing Batman's Goth

Trying to make a theory of something as personal as aesthetics is like trying to redecorate Batman's cave with transparent glass. Batman's cave is dark and darker. Batman is dark as his soul and art has this darkness that reaches beyond theories and theorizing. Batman is alone and he fights his demons in the grotesque face of jokers. The artist deep in his cave fights his jokers in the grotesque morphs of demons. And beyond that there is Gotham. The dark outside that embraces and strangles all the passions. A passion affair without winners and losers. A constant battle for the subjective. There is no theory there, there is only the bat.

Gotham City is a fictional city appearing in comic books, best known as the home of Batman. Batman artist Neal Adams sees the 1940s mobster history of Chicago as the basis for Gotham, while writer/artist Frank Miller has stated that Metropolis is New York in the daytime and Gotham City is New York at night. Different artists have depicted Gotham City in different ways. They often base their interpretations on various real architectural periods and styles with exaggerated characteristics, such as massively multi-tiered flying buttresses on Gothic cathedrals or the huge art deco and art nouveau statuary seen in Tim Burton's movie version.

One aspect of Gotham City that Batman describes frequently is the return to the idea of its constant evil. Art theorising has also its evils under the cape of the critics. With green hair and big smiles, knives in the back and word machine guns exploring ground for their meritocracy. ■

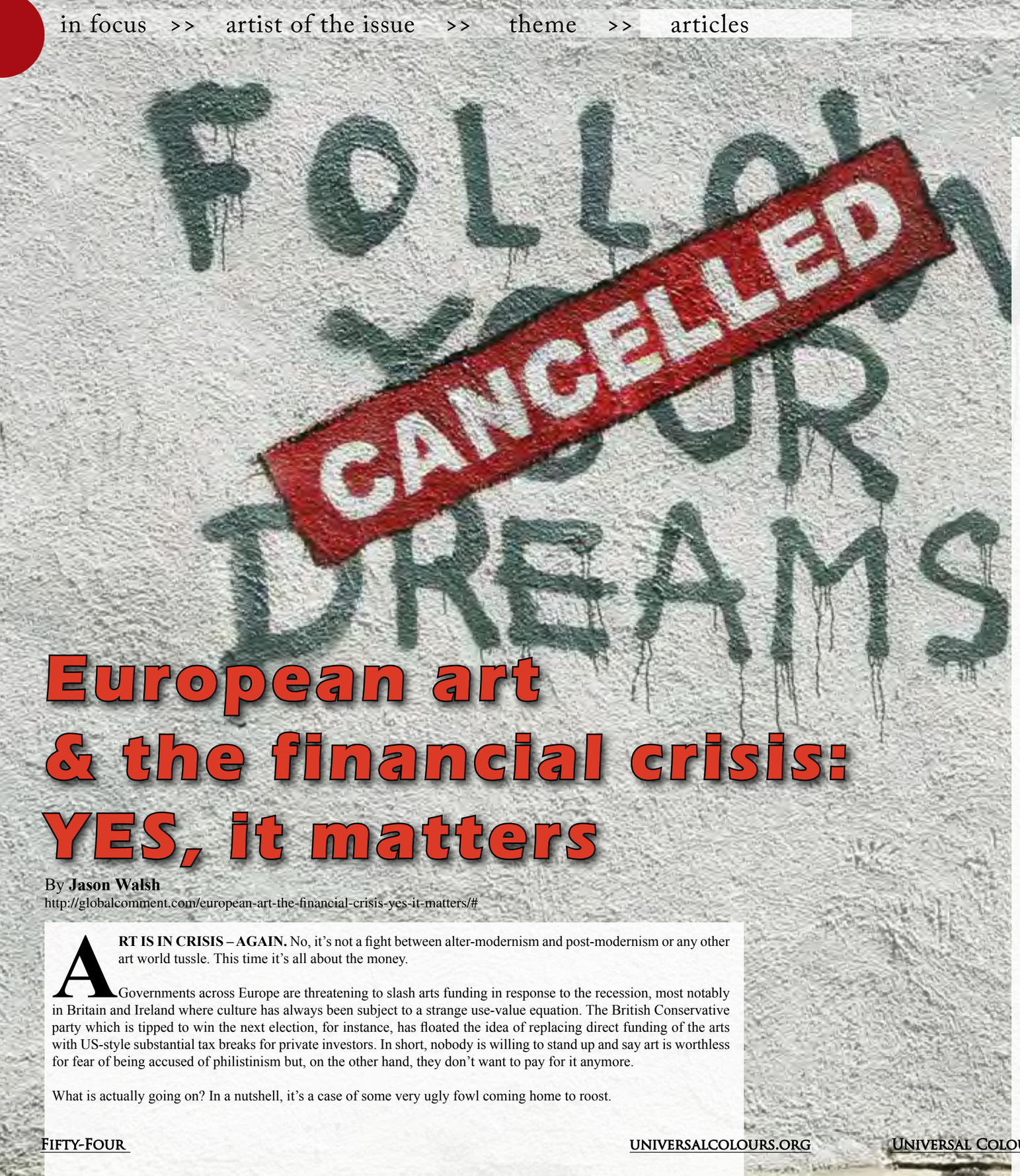
Opinion

DEALING WITH NEGATIVE CRITICISM CONCERNING YOUR WORK

an artist of notoriety and reputation gives you a comment about something they think you did wrong with the painting of a certain scene. This very rarely happens, but it could! As an example, I once entered a watercolor painting titled "Confederate Boys Praying" into a regional exhibition. This painting had already won the Best In Show Award from another show. I also judged my own painting and gave it an assessment as to how successful it was. I liked it! The judge in this show was the President of the National Watercolor Society at that time. She told me when discussing my watercolor that I would have won a higher award in her show if only I painted in the light area on the bottom of one boys pants. She told me, "you should paint that section in because I kept looking down at it." I was polite, but I was thinking to myself, "well, don't look at that area and look at the center of interest that is clearly visible you fool! The judge who gave me first award didn't have a problem with that!" What I did in this case was to ignore this judges opinion and told myself that her negative correction wasn't justified. If you know your painting is a good one, this is what you should do too!

You would have a better chance dealing with negative comments if you asked for an opinion (a critique) because you know that that person didn't set out to hurt you. When someone volunteers a criticism and it's very negative, just consider the source. Ask yourself, "does this artist know enough to give constructive comments". If not, just disregard what was said and think nothing of it. However, if the artist's work appears to be noteworthy, there is a chance that the criticism is justified and it is something you should consider to improve you paintings in the future. Sometimes, negative constructive comments work to your advantage!

To sum up, just remember in the future to not let vindictive hurtful comments about your paintings bother you. Over time, you will build up your confidence as a painter. When this happens, it will be much easier to fend off all the negative assessments of your work. You know for sure that you are going in the right direction as a viable artist with a strong and emotional vision. It doesn't matter what people think! Until then, keep painting with conviction and consider all negative comments that come your way as simply one person's opinion. It may not be correct! It just may be that the person giving the unwanted negative criticism doesn't have a clue what they are talking about and feel they have to impress you with their misguided and overrated knowledge. Trust me, this happens more times than not! ■



European art & the financial crisis: YES, it matters

By **Jason Walsh**
http://globalcomment.com/european-art-the-financial-crisis-yes-it-matters/#

ART IS IN CRISIS – AGAIN. No, it's not a fight between alter-modernism and post-modernism or any other art world tussle. This time it's all about the money.

Governments across Europe are threatening to slash arts funding in response to the recession, most notably in Britain and Ireland where culture has always been subject to a strange use-value equation. The British Conservative party which is tipped to win the next election, for instance, has floated the idea of replacing direct funding of the arts with US-style substantial tax breaks for private investors. In short, nobody is willing to stand up and say art is worthless for fear of being accused of philistinism but, on the other hand, they don't want to pay for it anymore.

What is actually going on? In a nutshell, it's a case of some very ugly fowl coming home to roost.

There is, of course, nothing like any agreement on what art's purpose is. There are a few things that can be tentatively agreed on, though: at its most basic art is entertainment, if a rather rarefied and high-minded form of entertainment most usually centred on some kind of aesthetic experience. In addition, it is often a vehicle for framing wider philosophical questions.

What it is not, however, is useful – and attempts to shoe-horn it into 'use' are the source of the current malaise. This instrumentalisation of art at the hands of the various cultural bureaucracies and government agencies that subsidise cultural production is the locus of the problem faced by the arts today.

The British experience is a particularly instructive one. The traditional model for arts councils was Britain's Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), founded in 1940. The CEMA later became the Arts Council of Great Britain and operated as such until being decentralised into separate arts councils in England, Scotland, Wales and the North of Ireland in 1994. Its purpose was to patronise the arts. Today's arts councils in the UK instead patronise the public – in the pejorative sense.

Under the New Labour administration of Tony Blair the arts were widely misused in an attempt to promote regional regeneration and openly perform social engineering. Gone is the concern for exposing people to great works of art, instead replaced by a desire to utilise art's supposed therapeutic value or even to simply offer it up as a sop to deindustrialised communities left jobless and hopeless in the wake of two and a half decades of neo-liberal economics.

Drafted into service as an alternative to real economic activity, the supposedly decadent arts were co-opted into New Labour's post-socialist agenda. Lurking behind the art was a scorn for the public and belittling of its intelligence: it is assumed that ordinary people do not have the wit to deal with difficult art and would, left to their own devices, spend their time immersed in the most vacuous aspects of popular culture.

Therefore, difficult art is out as funding must be tied to some other 'results-based' metric which can then be used to justify the spending in the first instance. Note how arts organisations are now more likely to speak of 'access' or 'inclusion' than skill, craft or the plain merits of good art.

Arguments against arts funding tend to centre on the issue of tax being used to prop up elitist pursuits – but surely a bit of elitism is no bad thing? Complaints about arts funding obscure a hidden agenda, one that the 'culture sector' is guilty of facilitating. Why, for instance, is the art world so afraid to ask for money in plain and simple terms? Why are funding applications increasingly couched in the language of cod-therapy? Why are bizarre extraneous factors involved in the consumption of art taken more seriously that the art itself?

The market model, meanwhile, has a similarly distorting effect on art and the public perception of it. Investment in art, particularly fine art, is essentially decadent and unproductive. Stocking-up on painting may be a good way of holding on to cash during a recession but it produces neither significant amounts of jobs nor much in the way of material that can be sold.

Neither the state nor the market truly respect art: one sees it as a platform for policy initiative and the other is only interested in cold, hard cash. But art does matter. It matters because human affairs and human creativity matter. Artists and those involved in wider cultural production would be well advised to stand their ground on art's essential values and forget about how it may help the government achieve something or how it may make some collector rich.

Art is the space in which we find the truest expression of the vitality of life. The pain and the pleasure, the joy and the sorrow, the tedium and delirium. It allows us to transcend the mundane, to simultaneously zoom-in on the particular while also stepping-back far enough to understand the universal.

A simple photograph, well taken, is enough to stop us dead in our tracks, to bring up an aching pain of joyful remembrance and loss; a few bars of a piece of music can lift our mood or depress it and even when depressed, there is a joy to be had in the sorrow; the most abstract and self-consciously non-representational painting, seen in the correct light and at the right time, can make us change our minds about things we did not even know we were thinking about.

Art renders visible the ties that bind. Beyond family and friends, beyond politics, beyond community, the best art not only reflects the complexities and contradictions of our daily existence, it transcends it and formalises it, making sense of the senseless.

Who cares how it is funded, so long as we recognise that it must exist?

And for those whose jobs are on the line should the cuts be administered, well it's time to stand up and explain that art matters in and of itself. ■

The King must die

By Avtarjeet Dhanjal

The King must die

I was wondering about the intrinsic worth of 'ART'; my matrix of intrinsic worth is simple.

A loaf of bread has its intrinsic worth in its food value, may not last long, but it works universally, Do the works of art, though sold for millions of pound/dollars, would stand to this scrutiny.

First I need to explain what is my matrix of measurement? A loaf of bread has its food value and its can satisfy hunger of any human being (black, white or brown, rich and poor) or even of an animal, for that matter, anytime and anywhere. Even you take a loaf of bread to Mars, it would slit satisfy your hunger. I call universal intrinsic worth.
If I apply the same to a work of art, would it be worth to carry it all the way, even if you declare yourself as an art lover.

With this question in mind, I decided to search what art is about?

"I like art because it makes me happy and I can draw whatever I want. In a way, it expresses my feelings and if the picture looks strange or ugly, I'm kinda unhappy. But if it's really messy, it means I'm really happy. Don't u think it's strange that art is able to do this?"
https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20090915221727AAiSpZD"

I understand this logic; making is an activity, which involves attention and concentration of the maker. But one doesn't necessarily be making/producing a work of art. It could a piece of craft, a piece of furniture or a pair of shoes. When one completes a piece, one feels satisfied with a sense of achievement of making something new.

Process of making/creating follows the natural process of procreation by mating, and then female nurtures the new life within her body, and build dreams around the new life. Though giving birth is painful experience, but females happily go through it and after giving birth she feels content and happy.
There are examples of artists such Vincent van Gogh where desire to create took precedent over their need for food or other body comforts.

This is the creator's side, which means it's creating anything new gives the creator a satisfaction and sense of achievement.

Most of the products made/created by the humans are useful in normal day to day life. A beautiful bowl created/modelled by potter with his/her hands is a pleasure to the user to hold it and to use. In such cases
the feelings imbued into making an object by the maker do get passed on to the user adding to the pleasure of using such an object, which machine made objects do not.
We were talking about useful objects, such as a piece of pottery, furniture or shoes, does the same applies to a painting or a sculpture, which normally do not serve such functions as a bowl or a pair of shoes.

Let's list the possible functions a painting or a sculpture can serve:
1. It may be a portrait of someone in the family, its function is to extend the presence of the family member;
2. It may illustrate a religious icon for worship;
3. Some rare works of art may provide a spiritual connection even to the atheist, when work was produced in a meditative process. Such meditative state of mind do gets imbued in to the object and can be felt by sensitive viewers.
4. It may an illustration an idea, feeling or a story, which the owner of the work feels associated with;
5. A work of art can serve as decorative piece or add colour to the surrounding, within a house/building or out in the open;
6. I may serve as a landmark if strategically place in public arena;

I classify these works of art have intrinsic worth by serving a function which not served but utilitarian objects.

Unfortunately the works of art from the above categories do not make news in the Western (or West oriented) media, and hardly make headlines, may be for its own good, and preserve the sanctity of such works.

A work of art that makes the news headline and gets sold at prices, rarely achieved by the work of art those fall under above mentioned functions.

When is seen on the screens are the most expensive works of art, bought by the private individuals or an institution for its collection. These works so provide a sense of ownership to the wealthy individual or an institution, even if the work has no intrinsic worth at all, except a given worth under artificially created value system by a limited market created by a small elite class.

This is the kind of contemporary art get the headlines, as well as the flack. Here are the views of Fifty-Eight universalcolours.org Universal Colours 24 / 2010 FiftSye-Fvievne Artist about communicating the blogger from http://isitnormal.com/story/i-hate-art-26331/

last Drop

"I hate art.
It's not the art itself that I hate it's the pretentiousness that goes with it. Art is just a pretty picture, that's fine, but I hate the wannabe intellectualism that goes with it. People that try and get "deep" into it. That think that it is more than it is.
Art is a none-subject. I can't believe that people can STUDY it at school and get a degree in it. I think it's a conspiracy between the complete dimwits of the world with the view of fooling the rest of the world into believing that they are actually clever.
Artists contribute nothing to the world. "They contribute beauty" you may say. No they don't. When was the last time you saw some art on your way to work? Art is also bought by people with way more money than they deserve. If you have a couple million quid are you gonna spend it on healing the world or a pretty picture? Modern art is the definition of mindless individuals conning gullible fools into believing in this nonsense. Tracy Emin, what a retard, and, predictably an expert in her field. "

A comment on the above post:
"I recently came across some modern art on the London underground system while I was with my artist friend. I scoffed at it, proclaiming that it took neither creativity, nor technical skill to produce this piece that was "commissioned by the London Underground". To which he replied "you can't say that, it might have a meaning behind it". Three stripes across a canvas is still three stripes across a canvas no matter how you look it at, no matter how good a lawyer you try and get in here to convince me otherwise."

Well artist such as Emin and Hurst fall into a special category of 'artists' (in a way it denigrates the word 'artists' by using it for such individuals), I wonder if fifty or hundred years from now, people will call it 'art'. As the value of their works is shock value. Any shock how disruptive it may be, its effects are always forgotten soon after.

I very much hope that the same shall happen to the works or rather litter produced by such men and women.

Luckily, there is still a big percentage of artists engaged in making objects of real worth, those enrich our daily life, and shall continue to do so for many generations to come. Every society has produced works of real art of lasting value, which continues to enrich human life today.

Avtarjeet Dhanjal
Ironbridge, 01 December 2014

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