

VOYAGE OF THE CORINNE Wynn Parks

EVERYONE IS TALENTED Gábor Gaál

This is an
ARTIST CERTIFICATE

declaring your
credit card debt
to be

A WORK OF ART

This is an artist's certificate
that declares

The Golden Sound

*an orchestra performance
with all the instruments
severely out of tune,
the performance lasting
3 min and 44 seconds.*

Miklos Legrady Nov. 14, 2011

One Kilogram of Nothing

This is an artist's certificate
declaring one kg of
NOTHING
to be a work of art



This is an

ARTIST CERTIFICATE

declaring some aspects of
YOUR LIFE
to be a

WORK OF ART

This is an
ARTIST CERTIFICATE

declaring your
2024 TAXES
to be a work of art

MAN AS HIS OWN CREATOR Peter Klaus Schuster

ESCAPING WITH REASON Pablo Halguera

TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE ART OF NATIONAL

SOCIALISM David Goldenberg

JEAN TINGUELY Liviana Martin

VANESSA BELL: A WORLD OF FORM AND COLOUR Carrie Lee

CLASS OF '24 Mary Fletcher

DAVID'S LABYRINTH Daniel Benshana

SPEAKEASY - THE PRESS REMEMBERS Frances Oliver

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The New Art Examiner is a not-for-profit organization whose purpose is to examine the definition and transmission of culture in our society; the decision-making processes within museums and schools and the agencies of patronage which determine the manner in which culture shall be transmitted; the value systems which presently influence the making of art as well as its study in exhibitions and books; and, in particular, the interaction of these factors with the visual art milieu.



*Musician, glazed porcelain, 12¾ inches high
Ming Dynasty
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
'The Quest For Eternity' (1987)*

The *New Art Examiner* welcomes reviews on books of visual cultural significance.

Please send your review 500- 800 words per book to:

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Subject headed BOOK REVIEW

Please include the full details of the title, author, publisher, date and ISBN.

The New Art Examiner is an open forum for discussion and will publish unsolicited informed articles and reviews from aspiring and established writers. We welcome ideas for articles and short reviews in all languages for our web pages.

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Deadline for articles/reviews: Pitch at any time:

February 5th, April 5th, June 5th, August 5th, October 5th, December 5th

QUOTE of the MONTH:

Everything that needs to be said has already been said. But since no one was listening, everything must be said again."

André Gide



March 2025
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ARTICLES

- 7 **EVERYONE IS TALENTED** Gábor Gaál
- 10 **MAN AS HIS OWN CREATOR** Peter Klaus Schuster
- 13 **ESCAPING WITH REASON** Pablo Halguera
- 17 **TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE ART OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM**
David Goldenberg
- 25 **VOYAGE OF THE CORINNE** Wynn Parks

REVIEWS

- 22 **JEAN TINGUELY** Liviana Martin
- 31 **VANESSA BELL: A WORLD OF FORM AND COLOUR** Carrie Lee
- 33 **CLASS OF '24** Mary Fletcher
- 35 **DAVID'S LABYRINTH** Daniel Benshana

DEPARTMENTS:

- 5 **SPEAKEASY – THE PRESS REMEMBERS** Frances oliver
- 4 **EDITORIAL**

Some of our writers

Rina Oh Amen (artist)
Elizabeth Ashe (sculptor)
Jack Belas (artist)
Jorge Benitez (academic)
Daniel Benshana (writer)
Mark Bloch (academic)
Michael Bonesteel (academic)
George Care (author)
David Carrier (academic)
Lanita K Brooks Colbert (curator)
Toni Carver (editor)
James Elkins (academic)
Colin Fell (author)
Gill Fickling (film-maker)
Mary Fletcher (artist)
Josephine Gardner (editor)
David Goldenberg
Colin Hain (artist)
Darren Jones (artist)
Susanna Gomez Lain (lawyer)
Margaret Lanterman
Stephen Lee (academic)
Miklos Legrady (academic)
Stephen Luecking
Annie Markovich (academic)
Liviana Martin (author)
Francis Oliver (author)
Bradley Stevens (academic)
Stephen Westfall (academic)
Nancy Nesvet (editor)
Wynn Parks (writer)
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Julia Weekes (writer)
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EDITORIAL

The art arena always seems to be in some crisis, somewhere or everywhere. Reflecting, perhaps, the intellectual artistic and financial crises of so many artists down the ages. No less a crisis faced the world in the 2nd World War where culture was deeply involved in the 'New German Man', the 'New Communist Man' and the proud American. A war that continued into the Cold War and rippled down to our times with the unrelenting control mechanisms on the art arena as a centre of wealth creation and culture be damned.

We have witnessed Jewish people being attacked, vile graffiti being daubed and the rattles of a European war once again instigated by the Russia of Cossack-old. In the middle of this someone wants to paint, to sculpt, to build a beautiful building, write a wonderful new symphony, draw and/or write a novel. And yet others will bend their knee to the crowd and use their talents to promote the violent aims of their states. And no one knows if they will ever be brought to account

It was ever thus. Didn't Archimedes die when a wall fell on him as he was reinforcing it against the invading Roman enemy? Are not all weapons functional and yet aesthetic? There are very few who grapple with the terrible beauty of weaponry which all have to 'work' in the same three dimensional, gravitational world in which we all exist. We do not do well to hide any facts from our children and one such, that Adolf Hitler painted and that two of his acolytes were art connoisseurs, should be dealt with by scholars. Hannah Arendt, when she talked about how ordinary fascists seemed to be, was the first to point out that an artist, a history teacher, a pilot and many others carried out the worst crimes in history. They were not kings, they were not heroes, nor men and women of great learning they were 'us'. Us given more power to pursue our dreams than we have ever been given.

Elon Musk has been given that power, a modern, average neo-nazi, a man whose hobbies include playing video games and tweeting like, it seems, millions of others. JD Vance used to enjoy dressing up as a drag queen, Trump likes golf.

There is a truth here we need to acknowledge. Every vile person who ever existed was human and what they do and did is a part of our shared human history. If we pretend that ordinary people can never become monsters we deceive ourselves.

Daniel Benshana



Each issue, the New Art Examiner invites a well-known, or not so well-known, art world personality to write a speakeasy essay on a topic of interest.

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

The Press Remembers

Frances Oliver

Recently an old (in both senses) friend, whose increasing macular degeneration does not allow for him to do it himself, gave me the task of sorting half a century of newspaper clippings, with a view to then disposing of most.

My friend and I are pretty much on the same political wave length and I too am an assiduous newshound so the articles were largely what I would have expected; warnings about destroying the world and the climate on which we all depend. Warnings that our globalised free-market economic system is trashing the earth, dooming indigenous peoples, hurting the poor and crowning the rich. Some of these articles go back to the 70's and 80's; some are general and many about specific dangers. That of nuclear power, written well before 3-Mile Island or Chernobyl, air pollution, soil pollution and soil exhaustion, over-fishing, pesticides, plastic packaging, cetacean deaths and frog deaths as a barometer, etc.

The loss of the ozone layer – but that one was in fact fixed, as it didn't need any real loss of consumption or loss of money, at least one hopes it was. Also the environmental dangers of supersonic flight, which one commentator thought would become soon the normal method of long-distance travel. That disappeared, being simply too pointless and expensive and noisy to develop, though there were some of the rich or bedazzled who took pride and pleasure in celebrating the New Year on the same flight on different continents. The likes of Elon Musk now go for outer space instead.

One danger on which there are all too few articles is that of over-population; a factor that underpins all others but has become so risky to talk about that even the small NGO – at least it now exists – cam-

paigning on it has changed its name from 'Population Concern' to 'Population Matters', and family planning charities will only designate themselves promoters of 'reproductive health'. Bless David Attenborough for being the one celebrity to have given support to this campaign.

The response to all the warnings, when the powers that be even noted them, has of course been too little, too late, or not at all. It is no joy to see how many predictions have come true and how a globalised system to which the crash of 2008 might have brought at least a wind of change is ever more blind and entrenched.

But let us turn to other files of cuttings – society, culture and art. Here at least we come to a bit of welcome change. In the 70's and 80's it seems there was actually a 'Paedophile Society', a group, not yet declared illegal, dedicated to promoting sex with consenting children as young as four. The open formation of such a group would not be possible today. This story is now back in the news, the society and its prominent members being covered in a program on Radio 4 by one of those excellent BBC investigative journalists. One later clipping, from '97, is headed 'France Faces the Unspeakable, Horror Stories Help to End Law of Silence on Child Sex Abuse' and one wonders what happened in France after that. Britain was certainly not alone.

There are of course cuttings about the two dangerous epidemics that the lengths, breadths and many deaths of Covid seem to have eclipsed from popular memory. There was the spread of 'mad cow disease', or BSE, probably caused by feeding sheep offal to cattle and then able to spread to humans through cattle meat. This epidemic could have been much

worse and did not in the end have many human victims, but there is a sad, disturbing clipping showing names and photos of fifteen young people known to have died from Creutzfeld-Jacob disease, the human form of BSE. Along with this another of a smiling Agriculture Secretary holding up great slabs of meat, declaring 'British Beef is Safe'. Later comes another livestock disease 'Foot and Mouth'. This cannot spread to humans but led to a bitter loss of many farms and damaged much tourist business, through the cruel, wasteful and misguided Blair Government policy of compelling cattle slaughter and disposal not only on affected farms but also of healthy animals in a wide adjacent area. Can anyone who saw them forget those photos of giant pyres of burning dead cows?

Then there are a few clippings that lead to unanswered questions and unresolved mysteries. Whatever happened, one wonders, to the little girl whose mother died trying to save her when she fell into a deep water hole at Mont-Saint-Michel while tourists stood by and some unconcernedly videoed the scene? The child was saved by a local café owner who called the fire department, but it was too late for the mother, who drowned. And has anyone ever followed up a Sunday Times October 1988 'Spotlight' on twelve defence workers, six of them at Marconi, who died, one by one, 'in a mystery echoing a James Bond plot'?

My friend did not collect reviews as such but only reports of bizarre cultural oddities. There are a few striking examples from the visual arts. One wonders, again, what happened to the statues a German artist made by plasticizing human corpses? Apparently there were lots of volunteers to aid him post mortem with his art. Another was a work exhibited some years ago in the Newlyn Gallery, actually performance art of sorts, of a naked woman putting her hands inside a dead pig. The message from this absurdity was something about people's exploitation of animals. Shock-exploitative schlock always purports to carry a message. Not having the benefit of formaldehyde immersion like Damien Hirst's pickled cow, there must have been, if the exhibit travelled, frequent changes of dead pig.

Truly horrific was a painting of Myra Hindley created by thousands of children's handprints. The clipping was an excellent and fierce report by columnist Barbara Ellen. This revolting work was financed by Charles Saatchi and was to be shown at the Royal Academy. We do see a little progress now and then; I doubt even a Saatchi would finance such an exhibit now. Andres Serrano's crucifix in a bottle of urine started a multitude of sins. Barbara Allen in her arti-



Immersion (Piss Christ) (1987)

cle calls not for censorship but self-censorship, agreeing the Jane Guthrie, who with her husband Derek, founded The New Art Examiner. Jane wrote brilliantly about Serrano's so-called art work when it first appeared.

I have mentioned only a few of the choice items, but I am giving up for now; the collection has reached the Millennium. Does anyone remember that Club of Rome report 'The Limits of Growth' which figures prominently in my friend's files? Rachel Reeves obviously does not; Jeremy Corbin might have and got short shrift. Another then MP, Margaret Beckett, is quoted saying: "We have twenty-five years to sort things out." It's now 2025. Need one say more?

Everyone Is Talented:

Published in 1929, *From Material to Architecture* contains the main features of László Moholy-Nagy's teaching program at the Bauhaus

Gábor Gaál

I read a book which radiates living wisdom.

The book was published in German. Its title, translated, *From Material To Architecture*, is quite forbidding. At first glance, one would think that the author is going to discuss details in depth. In the meantime, however, it becomes clear that what the author is speaking of is nothing else but the absolute whole. Professional secrets are the last thing which awaits the reader here, just the contrary: the author's subject is a question which is anti-professionalist, claiming everybody's interest, all-sided with the all-sidedness of a jack-of-all-trades, unbelievably new, the most ancient and simple and, at the same time, the most forgotten question. The problem lies herein: that contemporary man, working and active in thousands of various fields of life, is not whole. His education today, his professional training and a cluster of life now fragmented into thousands of diverse tightly structured forms make the individual man of one single calling, to such an extent that he no longer dares to venture outside the territories he has grown accustomed to. Today, by necessity, every man is a specialist. He is not the man for the whole of life, he is only a man of a peculiar part, a segment of life. He is the 'segmental man', the author says, and he is not the whole man, although in the depths of his healthy instincts there is a constant craving and desire for a completely whole humanity. According to the author this desire is so strong that it's forcible suppression is the very source of that permanent depression and unhappiness which pervades the working man today, no matter what field he is working in. Nobody is satisfied with his work. This is only natural. The constant one-sided activity of the segmental man cannot satisfy the whole man. As a consequence, permanent dissatisfaction sets in. Man lives in the compartmentalised segments of his specialised profession just as he would in a maze of underground prison cells. Going against the grain of the biological and psychological desires of his youth, the chosen calling or profession will weigh down on him like a terrible burden all his life, thus the dissatisfaction he feels about his profession becomes permanent. Man is a prisoner of his work and his life and he



is sick of it. This is the cause of that epidemic of neurasthenia which is neither diagnosed or treated by the doctors, although man clearly feels the innermost values of his life are being destroyed. Albeit... Albeit, the much disparaged ancient primitive man was a totally different human being, he was a whole. Man living in a primitive environment remains whole even today, because, forced by the context of his life he is hunter, craftsman, builder and doctor in one person, in contrast to the frightening one-sidedness of modern man. For the all-sided primitive man everything represents a field of work, therefore the whole area of his activities is free. Every new field of work opens up for him a new field of experience which he explores the biologically invigorating good feeling of inner security. In contrast to this how dif-

ferent is the life of our contemporary man today. He lives in the prison of his profession, so stunted by it, so buried in it that his profession ceases to be a source of experience for him. He has no original experiences of alternate, different fields, he lacks a second orientation. His professional knowledge and specialisation have erased the possible brave approaches of his instincts and functions towards the other fields of application. His specialisation blocks the way to the expansion of all his energies. Man is a *homo faber*, that is an active being, is unable to live up to his potential as would be necessary to achieve a feeling of biological well-being. This is why our man is weak, insecure, and unhappy. He lacks organic security. He will never be able to reach down to the inner core of herself, so he will not be able to put to use those diverse, constantly tensing forces which are inherent in his organism. Throughout his life he sits in front of the same desk or lathe, prisoner of the same work, all the time, although a host of creative powers lie dormant in him. Therefore, he is really like a plant which has been uprooted from the life-giving soil. That vitality which makes a healthy life whole, through which he should have channelled the flow of his activities, has dried out of him.

Naturally, the author very clearly explains the reasons why this is so. But I'm going to skip this part of his reasoning, since this exposition is not the most important and original part of his book, and I will deal rather with the crucially significant deduction on which his ensuing chain of ideas is based. Namely, this is what the author says:

Everyone is talented because every healthy man has a capacity to develop the creative energies founded in his nature. Those otherwise unexpected achievements which occur in everyone's life are the proof of this truth. This is demonstrated by the fact that originally everyone was able to absorb sensory experiences deriving from the objective world and to work an order out of these experiences. To explain a little bit further: this means that everyone could potentially become an active, practising musician, painter, sculptor or architect, just as everyone when speaking becomes an 'orator'. In saying this of course, we do not mean to state that everyone could become an artist, but only that when he has a chance to do work which is in tune with his organic structure and flows from his inner self, then anyone is able to reach unexpectedly high levels of achievement. If the chance of his vitality, instincts and the outside world converging on one point were to offer itself to him.

What should we do about this, the reader asks.

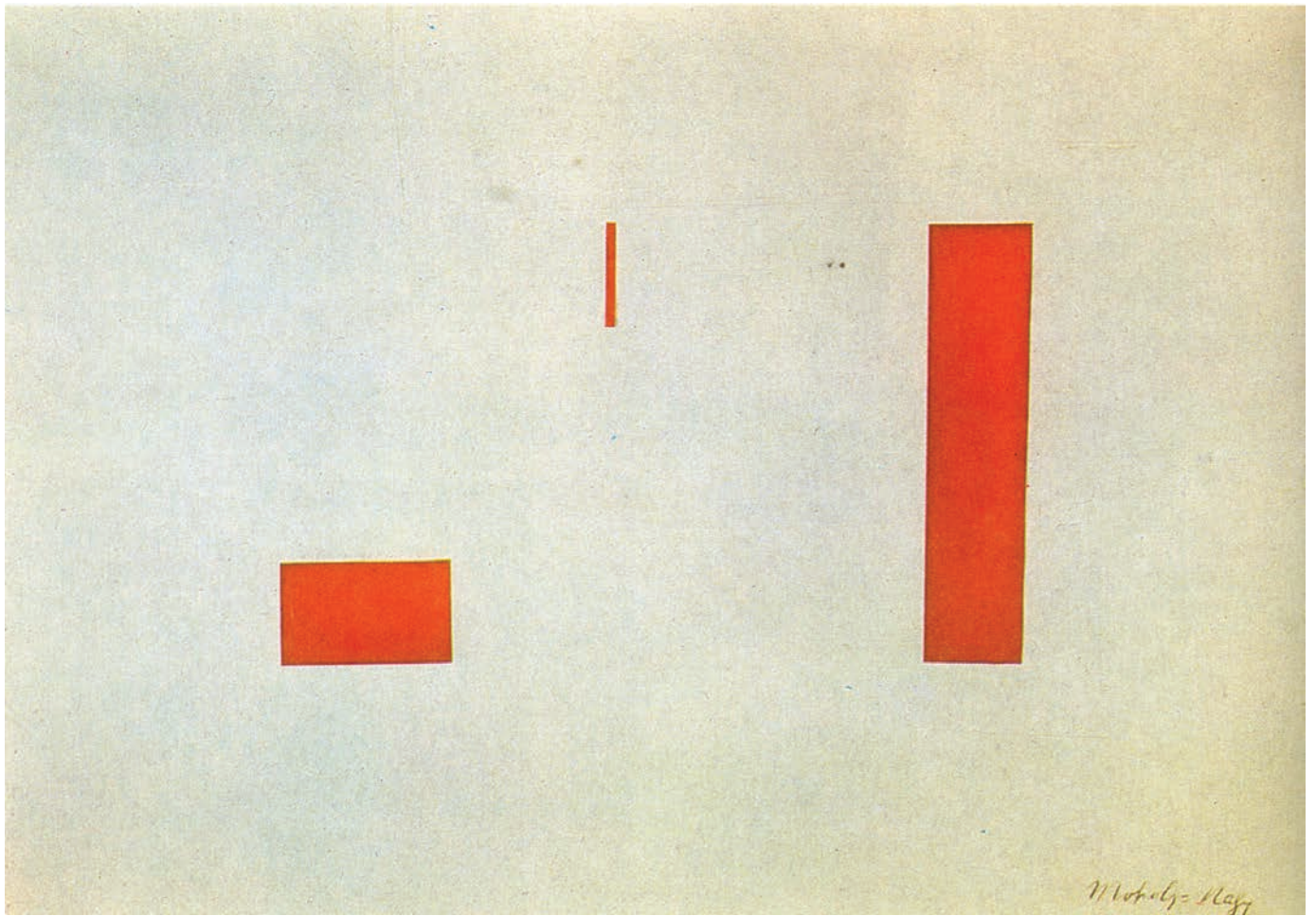
And the answer is: since the specialised 'segmental'

training of today's man is unavoidable, it is important that even after having had this training, the whole man should not wither away. The segmental man should be rooted in the whole man who is, in turn, organically planted into the universality of life, and by this we also mean that man should not seek only those entities (money, power, and other trappings) which provide him with material security but should strive to attain his inner security too. This can only be achieved if not the object but man himself had a way of life based on his inner structures is the goal of the work.

And now, after having discussed the dominant idea of the book in very general terms, let us make some notes on its author. First of all we should tell you that although the book was published in German (by Albert Lange, Munich), its author is Hungarian. Second, he is a whole man truly after his book. He is an all-sided man, with a streak of the jack-of-all trades in him. When young he started out as a poet of some expressive power. But even then he used to draw. Then he disappeared for a while, just in order to re-emerge a few years later as a professor of the German state-supported Bauhaus in Dessau. From then on he appeared in the most various fields of art, working as a painter, architect, photographer, inventor, industrial designer, and in recent years pushed into the forefront of Europe's wide recognition, he is working as a scenic designer. With this book he makes his debut as a philosopher.

His name is László Moholy-Nagy

Gábor Gaál (8 March 1891 – 13 August 1954) was a Hungarian sociologist, literary critic and aesthetician



*László Moholy-Nagy: Red Collage
collage on paper (1921)*

Man As His Own Creator

Peter Klaus Schuster

DÜRER AND BEUYS – OR THE AFFIRMATION OF CREATIVITY

1. An expanded concept of art

The Joseph Beuys – or so it seemed – Albrecht Dürer was not a terribly important object of reflection or source of artistic productivity. The work produced during document five in 1972 is known though. This connects Dürer with felt slippers, thereby ironically making him the respect demanding patron of a museum culture Beuys with his expanded concept of art would very much like to radically open up to life. For Beuys the museum is an interdisciplinary place of learning for developing the foundations for establishment of a more humanly creative existence open to every individual. 'Art must not be viewed as a luxury. Art is only what it should be when it receives expression in everything becomes a part of life.'

Four Beuys, 'Leonardo da Vinci is the artist who characterises how one attains a bourgeois concept of science. That was the very concept of science with which the bourgeoisie made their revolution. It all started with Leonardo, who is the artist best representing that trend as Galilei is the most influential scientist.'

As Beuys saw it though, such self empowerment on the part of the natural sciences at the same time resulted in the decisive impoverishment of the man. Since then only what can be expressed in terms of mathematics, has been taken into account by the sciences. Beuys believed that man lost his sense of the unity of the whole is the positivistic sciences when their triumphant way.

In Beuys view, art must regain that function since he believes that only art can again reactivate all of man senses in the face of the exclusive addict at of rationality. All of Beuys' artistic actions and provocations were thus directed towards regenerating man's creativity, submerged beneath constant use of reason. Beuys hoped that the man whose creativity was thus revitalised would also develop a less reified relationship with nature. He would then no longer comprehend himself as an individual form of existence, disciplined and reduced by learned skills, but rather as a creative element within an all embracing organism or – viewed in terms of Renaissance ideas about nature – as a microcosm of a universal macrocosm



Joseph Beuys. *We Are the Revolution*
(*La Rivoluzione siamo Noi*). 1972.

Diaotype with rubber stamp additions

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Bild-Kunst, Bonn

2. Twilight of the Renaissance

Beuys' critical acknowledgement of the Renaissance is a splendid beginning of the sad end by no means stands alone. That is in fact a fairly familiar view

among both bourgeois liberal and conservative historians

Adorno and Horkheimer's 1947 *Dialectic of Enlightenment* thus contains declarations – which occurred in very similar form with Beuys just a little later – that rational thinking might have liberated man from myths but then, ever since Galilei at the latest, once again subjected him to the myth of rationality, robbing him of his humanity. Literary scholar Walter Rheim also wrote in 1947 of a man in the scientific and technological age having self-assuredly set himself at the centre of the cosmos since the Renaissance. Ever since the French Revolution man has paid for the heinous act such self advancement and for the hubris of his *experimentum medietatis* with corresponding melancholic burnings of his psyche. 'In our state of existential need this science has nothing to say to us.' (Husserl)

Beuys could also be called one of the first dropouts as someone who bailed out before reconstruction really got going. After turning away from the natural sciences, Beuys radically devoted himself from 1958 to saving man throughout instead of self-realisation and thus the threat of self deconstruction through science and technology.

3 everyone is an artist

Beuys there followed directly on from Renaissance self comprehension. Renaissance – as depicted by Dürer in his celebrated Munich self-portrait of 1500 – signifies the re-establishment of man's original divine likeness by virtue of his creative talents. The Renaissance consciousness, presented by Dürer in the strikingly Christ-like figures of this self-portrait with the re-establishment of man in God's image, did not involve any elements of wanton hubris for the humanists. In fact they had not the least doubt that it was everyone's God-given task to use the talents with which they have been endowed in such a way that they once again became God's image.

In Pico della Mirandola's celebrated (and never delivered) 1486 speech 'On Human Dignity', this humanistic credo was unmistakably expressed in God's words to Adam: 'we have not given me any lasting domicile, any face of my own, any special talent, oh Adam, so that now might just be able to choose, in accordance with free will and discretion, the domicile, face, and talent are wishes to have an possess. With dye free will to which I have entrusted the, thou canst thyself determine than own nature as thou willst. Neither heavenly and earthly, neither mortal nor immortal, have we may be. As I known free and honourable creator and shaper thou shalt



Albrecht Dürer: Self-portrait 1500
Oil on panel: Peter Klaus Schuster

fashion thyself howsoever well pleasest. Thou canst descend to the animals or rise to the heights, transforming thyself back into the divine – as thou willst.' The humanistic view is therefore that everyone is his or her own creator. Pico characterised man as being 'plastes et fctor', the shaper and make of himself. A few later humanistic tracks make use of even clearer artistic metaphors referring to every human being as sui optimus artifex. With his christomorphic Munich self-portrait, the start of the new century in the very centre point of the millennium, Dürer dear to such humanistic ideas of creative man founded on free will. In the pictures inscription, Dürer thus expressly stresses that he "created" himself in lasting colours in his 28th year (Ipsum me propriis sic effingebam coloribus).

The alignment with Christ and the striving to attain God's image with us will Dürer two, the outcome of the creative effort involving his entire person art does not merely entail the special talent of the gifted hand, which Dürer deliberately included in the picture. Even Fedora as a humanist, art rather signify that every human being has the possibility of making of himself or herself what he or she will. Everyone can and should grow closer to the divine wisdom in Christ to write use of his or her spirit. For Dürer then – and not just with Beuys – humanistic



Joseph Beuys

conviction viewed every person as an artist since man, as a creative being with freedom of will, can – as Dürer showed – once again become God's image through deployment of his or her own powers.

4. Renaissance and revolution

Dürer's idealised self-portrait in the Alte Pinakothek and Beuys' affecting self depiction "la rivoluzione Noi" are therefore by no means so different. "We are the revolution" refers back to the celebrated 1968 slogan of "power to the imagination", and with Beuys that is an affirmation of individual creativity as a transforming revolutionary power. Without affirmation Beuys confronts us in the stage photograph as a model in the role of artist is demanded of all of us the same is true of Dürer's christmorphic self-portrait. There, too, the artist provides exemplary demonstration by way of himself that creative power over which we all dispose and which we should utilise following him. The creative powers extolled by Beuys as being revolutionary are thus also those which would Dürer, the humanist, make possible the Renaissance, the rebirth of any individual. Beuys' slogan 'everyone is an artist' was thus radicalised as early as Dürer to provide the insight that a person is only a real human being if he or she is an artist. This appealed to human beings as artists, which unite to such dissimilar self-portrait by artists, was for both Beuys and Dürer the only possibility of 'doing something for people'. Following the

humanistic tradition Beuys proclaimed 'make use of the power you have through the right to self-determination... The basic principle is that people should make use of their powers individuals is free creative human beings'. The degree to which such creativity was determined for Dürer by a mathematically orientated use of reason is shown in the Canon of ideal proportions underlying his Christ-like portrait. Dürer's writings on art theory states: 'the ability to create something good. We thereby come closer to the image of God which is capable of all things'. And yet Dürer went considerably further than Leonardo in conceding that not even mathematics is capable of providing ultimate certainties but is only a means in constant need of improvement. Since both God and his creation were infinite for Dürer, they, like the idea of beauty, elude any exact measurement. For Dürer such knowledge was the prerogative of God and a few chosen ones who had participated in divine inspiration to an exceptional extent. The conjunction of rationality and inspiration, which was Beuys' great objective, was first represented in Renaissance art and the person of Dürer.

Dürer also reviewed his artistic activity in terms of Christ's spreading faith on earth. 'I wish to light a small fire so that a great blaze may in time develop giving light to the whole world'. We are the revolution. That is the quintessence of an astonishing theology of art and artists, aiming at the rebirth of every single human being and extending with surprising constancy from Dürer to Beuys.

*Peter Klaus Schuster – In Memoriam Joseph Beuys
Man As His Own Creator
Dürer and Beuys – or the affirmation of creativity. Edited from original*

(The juxtaposition of contemporary artists with great names from the past is a deliberate ploy of apologists and curators to make one think of the contemporary artist as part of art history. That decision will always lie in the decisions of future generations. Ed.)

Escaping With Reason

Pablo Halguera



Takao Kato inventor of the modern escape room

There are two models of antagonistic dialogic knowledge that I find particularly productive and that are best described using architectural analogies. Interestingly, these are models that, once in operation, people participating in them tend to become uncomfortable and combative— which paradoxically is what makes the models work.

First, the escape room (an escape room is a game where people are placed inside a room and required to solve a number of puzzles within a certain amount of time in order to unlock the room).

Wittgenstein famously said once that the aim of philosophy was to show the fly the way out of the bottle. I have often thought about education in a similar way, but rather as a way to find the key out of the escape room. I like the escape room analogy because of my general aversion toward social hierarchies, and because I like the instances where a group of people (regardless of their social, economic or academic status) are placed in a horizontal situation of knowledge — the kind where a group departs from a shared place of unknowing and slowly build toward clarity.

I typically try to make this happen through a workshop process, constructing models of conversation

for people to participate in and generate ideas. A key focus for me in running these workshops is that the discussion has to be structured in a way where the questions being formulated cannot be easily answered using existing art historical or theoretical knowledge, and where other sources of knowledge (personal experience, professional knowledge from other spheres) can be equally useful.

Some of the first times that I used this specific workshop format for exploring questions collectively was during my project *The School of Panamerican Unrest*, where I conducted 25 or so such workshops through Latin America. In these workshops, my aim was to get the group in the corresponding city to articulate the most top of mind political and cultural issues affecting their city or country. Usually the debates would be civil, but those that got more out of hand were perhaps the most revealing and, ultimately, productive.

One of them took place in Mérida, Yucatán, at the School of Arts of Yucatán (ESAY), which was around that time run by the Mexican artist Mónica Castillo. During that workshop, the older artists in Mérida, Yucatán, who were steeped in tradition and crafts, started arguing with the younger ones (art students



Ames Room (tent) Aberystwyth University

from the ESAY, who were very interested in experimental, post-conceptual art) around the topics of tradition vs. innovation, with the older artists talking about experimental arts becoming an imitation of the exterior, while the younger artists critiquing traditional arts as a provincial and isolated practice. I often reflect about that exchange in Mérida. While there were a lot of heated arguments, the tensions that had built over time in that community finally burst into the open that day; and having defined where the fault lines of opinion lied made it much easier to arrive at an understanding about the issues that the local arts community needed to resolve (at the time, the group decided that what was needed was a more art criticism, and they vowed to create a series of public events focused on critique). The positive outcome of that exchange represents, to me, the puzzle that the group figures out collectively which then gets them out of the escape room. The second spatial model, the Ames room, deals more with what I would term 'agency role play'.

In 1946, the American ophthalmologist Adelbert Ames, who researched optical illusions, developed a room of a trapezoidal shape with patterns made in such a way that, when looked through a peephole, it appeared to be a normal, rectangular shaped room. However, when one person stands on one side of the room they can look gigantic or small, depending of their position.

In conversation, the equivalent of an Ames room is a structure where authority (scale) shifts depending of what is being discussed. Traditional academic models (like panel discussions or symposia) have fixed visual and spatial hierarchies where the experts are the only ones allowed to talk, perched on a stage. But in other, more dynamic models, there are systems where hierarchies shift. These include Progressive Moderation (where leadership in guiding the discussion is shared), World Café model (participants rotate in small group discussing different subjects) or Round Robin Discussions (where each speaker is given a set time to speak) that spread the responsi-



bility and agency of each speaker as the conversation progresses. The connection to the Ames room is that the speakers' dominance depend of their position at any given moment.

In art, this shifting of power dynamics is best exemplified in the play *Pedro y el Capitán*, by Mario Benedetti — an intense, psychological drama centered on the interaction between two characters: Pedro, a political prisoner, and the Captain, his torturer. Over the course of four acts, Pedro, the prisoner, manages to find the vulnerabilities and inner conflicts of the Captain, ultimately subduing him through mental games.

Recently, when I ran a discussion group and was confronted and challenged by the participants, I

thought of both the Ames and the Escape rooms in terms of antagonistic dynamics, and strangely perhaps, recognized that my instinctive impulse to suppress hostile engagement was wrong (and thus I allowed the questioning of my authority to go on, allowing them to formulate arguments as to why I was wrong, which led to interesting insights). It has taken me many years as an educator and artist to accept the necessary entanglement, and potential benefits, of antagonist debate. I have now come to understand, and even appreciate, confrontation (even the hostile kind) as an indirect form of caring, for the person doing the confrontation would not be doing so if they were not invested in the subject at hand. The natural impulse of a (I should say, inexperienced) moderator or teacher is to suppress dissent; however, things get more interesting when interlocutors are suddenly given the power and the control of the direction of the conversation.

Going back to Wittgenstein: philosophy enthusiasts know that the eccentric philosopher once tried his hand at architecture, designing a house for his sister Margarethe.

The house, known as the Stonborough House or simply Wittgenstein House, is located at Kundmann-gasse 19 in Vienna's 3rd district (Landstraße). Built in the period of 1926-28, Wittgenstein famously obsessed over every single detail of the house up to the design of the door handles of every door; he forced the architect to change the height of the ceiling by a mere 1.18 inches and insisted on other minuscule and seemingly absurd adjustments driving the architect and almost everyone else involved in the project to the verge of insanity. It is a fascinating moment where a major 20th century philosopher attempted to make literal some of his methodological thinking about language.

So perhaps another way to describe the effectiveness of those dialogic Ames and Escape room models might be in saying that one room helps us consider see the fly in large scale, and the other helps it find its way out to freedom.

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Gino Severini: Dancer + Sea (1913)
Danzatrice (Ballerina + mare)
Mixed media on paper mounted on canvas

Trying to Understand the Art of National Socialism

David Goldenberg

Anyone who wants to look at art under national socialism between 1933 – 1945 is confronted by severe problems. The first is the global ban on exhibiting art of the period because of a sense of guilt by association, and even arrest and imprisonment in some countries. The art of national socialism is also absent in the history of art, yet each day there are references in the news to national socialism and Adolf Hitler. Apart from these familiar references when we look at art of the Third Reich, we further encounter taboo and censorship; Adolf Hitler the artist and his paintings, suppression of Modernism and the 650, 000 art works stolen by the Nazis during the 2nd World war.

However, what we start to do immediately, and without being conscious that we are, is repeat the post war and cold war narrative. We look at and interpret events and art through the lens of Neoliberalism and an art arena structured on a very specific understanding shaped by a specific reading of Modernism, that reduces, limits and erases other readings of art. What is missed is that the history of 1933-1945 is constantly changing, evolving and being inadequately cleaned up because scholarship is hamstrung.

Therefore, when we talk about art in the 3rd Reich we have to take into consideration the fascist wide concept of art. Mussolini for instance considered politics and art to be one-and-the-same, and that official art was the material substance of the nation state. While the fascist artist Evola considered Dada art to be a programme leading to complete emancipation, through disrupting and breaking the logic of capitalism and the victorious nations of the 1st world war. Hitler, the artist who was also a tyrant, made works of art that have been suppressed, although there are still approximately 800 works in existence, stored in the American Museum of War, and his exhibition history erased, although 15 years ago I came across an article in vogue that looked at a tour of his paintings across the USA in the 1930s. The two most famous shows, *Degenerate Art* and the



Adolf: Paul McCarty and Eva Lilith Stangenberg

Great German Art exhibition, that opened in Munich in 1937, addressed what is and what isn't German art as defined by National Socialism, which exhibited the paintings of Emil Nolde. The very terms we use, Nazism, Fascism, Totalitarianism, Art, Politics, Modernism, the Avant Garde; to categorise, register and understand this material, are even today extremely difficult to define. Also certain terms are worn out, and consequently meaningless, interchangeable and unusable. And we should study the role of the media and its propaganda in fixing in place and stabilising these readings.

There are considerable differences in how art and Modernism was used and understood by National Socialism, the Fascism of Mussolini and the Fascism of Franco.

How we understand art of that time is determined by a post war narrative that defined the art of America and Europe, and the reinvention of West Germany and West German art and its institutions. Emil Nolde, who was extracted from the history of national socialism, thus censoring other aspects of his thinking, was used among others to define art and freedom contra-communism, where Expressionism equalled Modernism, especially in the narrative told through the reconstruction of the *Degenerate Art* show exhibitions in San Francisco's Museum of



Julius Evola: *Untitled*.
tempera on cardboard

Contemporary Art, the Gallerie Neu in New York and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Also they established Documenta, now the largest global art exhibition in the world, formally positioned near the former Soviet East German border, to reinvent the art of Germany. And it is this normalised narrative and ideology of art that we continue to use, and that the majority of art museums and galleries in the world reproduce. So, what we have is a simplified and one-sided interpretation of art under national socialism, where the definition of art in post war Germany's Modernism is a code for 'not Nazism' and 'not Communism'.

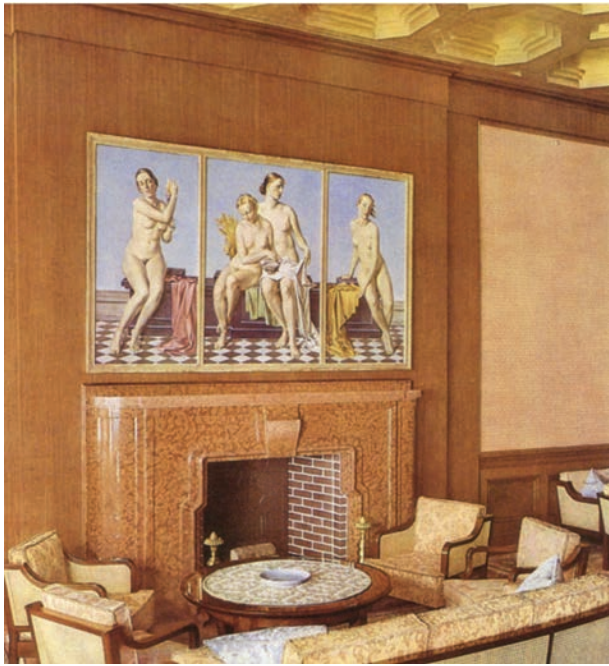
The years 1933 – 1934 can be characterised by an intense and often hostile debate and conflict between Goebbels, a supporter of Modernism, and collector and supporter of the works by Nolde and German Expressionism, and Rosenberg, whose tastes were conservative and nostalgic. Both had control in reshaping German culture along Nazi doctrines, into what would constitute Nazi art. With numerous exhibitions being staged in Germany that reflected these opposing ideological views of Nazism. The other key actor at this time was the Nazi student movement which strongly supported German Expressionism. At the same time the museums public displays were radically changed to reflect the Nazi revolution, resulting in the massive rehanging of

works. Along with exhibition displays to shame artists not sanctioned by the state. Non-party members lost their teaching posts, were forbidden from exhibiting, and in some cases forbidden to make work. So, basically this period can be seen as a power struggle for the right to define the art of Germany, a struggle that Hitler deliberately set in motion. By the end of 1934 Hitler stepped into this power struggle to clarify exactly the function of art under National Socialism. Primarily through removing and negating art as it existed, defined by terms and categories outside Germany and the Nazi revolution. The removal of existing terms, categories and concepts meant they were able to define German art as not being Modernism, Cubism, Surrealism, Dada or Futurism, and not defined by the past, nor pre-existing non-Nazi concepts. What was instead proposed was a space for an art to only come into being out of the national socialist revolution, where art and politics became indistinguishable.

Between 1934-37 we can see the slow manifestation of what this might look like, primarily through Leni Riefenstahl's films; the 1934 film of the Nuremberg Rallies, the Olympic games, and the art works and sculpture shown in the Paris Art fair, both in 1936. Culminating in two shows in Munich in 1937, then in 1938 a festival to define German music in Dusseldorf. This progression was intended to lead to the construction of a new art capital of the 3rd Reich in Linz, which was not realised, to show the greatest art works by western civilization. (On a separate but similar note, in 2010 a new building opened in Munich showing the archive of National Socialism.)

The Triumph of the Will made in 1934, shows the first concerted attempt at devising a filmic aesthetic of National Socialism, the dramatic depiction of new mythologies, through documenting the rise of Adolf Hitler and emergence of the new German State, around the cohesion of the German people in the rallies in Nuremberg, the former capital of the Holy Roman Empire, with 700,000 attendees. Followed by the two-part film *Olympia 1. Festival of Nations* and *Olympia 2. Festival of Beauty* made from the 1936 Berlin Olympics. And the art fair in Paris of 1936. The opening of the new building for German art in 1937, with monumental heroic figurative sculptures by Arno Breker and a monument by Albert Speer, along with the music of Bruckner, announced that a specifically national socialism art was birthing. This aesthetic of vastness or gigantism was shared with the Communist architecture of North Korea and Romania and mass rallies in the Soviet Union and North Korea.

However, the two exhibitions that opened in Munich



Adolf Ziegler: *The 4 elements. (Fire, Water and Earth, Air) hanging in the Kaminzimmer on the first floor of the Führerbau, Munich*

in 1937 were intended to launch the first exhibitions of fine art of Germany as defined by National Socialism; *The Degenerate Art* show, at the Institute of Archaeology, Holgarten, and the *Great German Art* show, in the new building the Palace of Art, designed by the architect Paul Troost, the central venue of National Socialist art policy. After the war the building was renamed Haus der Kunst. A new art magazine of German art was also launched. *The Degenerate Show* after it closed in Munich, toured over the next three years to a further 11 venues throughout Germany and Austria. While the German palace of art held annual shows until 1944. The principal purpose of both shows was to sell art works.

The two shows were coordinated by Goebbels, in collaboration with the curator and artist Adolf Ziegler, and openly displayed the heated and divergent opinions of Goebbel's and Rosenberg, offering the audience an opportunity to take part in that debate. Goebbels' notion of degenerate art was to show the Weimar art as degenerate. But also explored ideas behind Nietzsche notion of nihilism and erosion of Christianity and ideas and myths to continue civilization. Nietzsche understood this to signal the possibility of the last man or the end of man and the options of breaking that continuity, through locating new myths, just as Wagner sought, which the concept of the *overman* expressed. These ideas were later developed further by Heidegger in a more extreme form, in his search for recovering lost culture and thinking through the reinvention of concepts,

and the language of their definition.

The opening of the exhibitions was celebrated by a pageant showing 2,000 years of German history, its renewal and re-emergence, and a speech by Hitler on the role of art in the 3rd Reich.

In the text *The Work Of Art In The Age Of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin discusses breaking the pacification of the spectator in the contemplative artwork; so how to break that role of the spectator and the bourgeois in modernist art work?

In the opening speech, to open the *Great German Art* show, Hitler also discussed the issue of the 'Pacification of the viewer' and 'how is change brought about?' 'by the art or the State?' 'What art can everyone identify and understand?' Which is similar to an idea of pop art, popular art and the art of Walt Disney. In that respect the work of art is intended to galvanise the worker or soldier into action, to make tangible changes, not to sit back and admire and learn from the work of art. He also questioned why modern art is so expensive and why the language to describe the art is inexplicable to the majority of people. Many of these matter of fact questions are questions that have never ceased to be asked.

And how is art understood within an aesthetic State? Is it the parades, the architecture, uniforms, state theatre, flags, symbols, speeches, cinema, the Olympics etc.,?

The Degenerate Art show showed 740 works by leading international artists and German expressionists, Matisse, Picasso, Klee, Nolde, Kandinsky, Beckman, Modigliani, Dix, Mondrian, Chagall, Kirchner. The house of German art exhibited 900 works primarily figurative art works and landscapes. Today these works are stored in Berlin.

It is difficult to retrospectively reconstruct the two shows and their intention, because the information and facts do not add up, while the information in recent exhibitions and information are factually inaccurate. If the idea was to denigrate and remove and censor art that was in opposition to the national socialist agenda, why go to so much effort to tour the work throughout Germany and give it maximum visibility? Picasso, Matisse, Munch were not persecuted during the 2nd world war. Even Oliver Cromwell, who considered the art that Charles 1st acquired, as propaganda of the catholic church, simply removed the work from public buildings and had them thrown into the streets. He banned exhibitions, theatre and festivals. The 3rd Reich thrived on them.

The two shows appear to show two distinct concepts of exhibiting art in a way that is common today, to show the conflict between a white cube and a labo-

ratory and experimental art space, attacking or contesting the concept of the isolated object of art. It is possible to read the degenerate show in two ways: as a way of insulting the art and artists or as a humorous and provocative way of reinventing the work and making new work from the material. While the extreme provocation, replicated Dada actions, the art of Munch, it became very good advertising. The breaking down and obstructing artwork objects is also a familiar strategy used in contemporary art, and seems to work effectively. While the house of German art, architectural spaces showed us spaciousness, beauty, simplicity and grandeur that is also a common feature of contemporary large-scale exhibition. The problem arises from recent descriptions of the show where we are explicitly instructed how to read and understand the works, because this goes against the common expectation that a viewer or anyone educated in art is able to read the material and make up their own mind, so the obvious contradiction here is that they are repeating what they consider to be a problem in the first place, by imposing a dictatorial interpretation. they also dangerously under-estimate the incipient fascism in the contemporary art-arena.

In 1938 Hitler considered the two shows to have failed in providing the answer to what is a work of art?, that embodies a national socialist concept of art, and indeed, artists favoured by the Nazis, agreed that no definition of a Nazi work of art had been defined. While the responses to the shows were mixed and conflicting, local artists and curators considered the shows to be kitsch while a New York critic agreed with the view that Modernism and Expressionist art is degenerate.

The Royal Academy in London in the 1930s also contested Modernism, and the art of Paris, including Cubism, Picasso, Expressionism, Abstraction, Matisse, and retained the style of the arts and crafts movement. Are we to jump to the conclusion that they also showed sympathy with Nazi Germany? Or should we recognise that there were organisations then and today who contest this reading of Modernism, and the direction art took and that there are invisible histories of art. By saying this I am not condoning this reading, but I am suggesting that they had a valid 'art' point of view and it is worth while looking at this hidden and invisible work. And it could also be argued that Post Modernism embodied just this point of view and it could also be viewed as a form of fascist art.

It is difficult to comprehend the significance of the *Degenerate Art* show in contributing to the formation of post war western art. It was the most successful

exhibition in the history of art history, as claimed in the books and texts on the *Degenerate Art* show, in terms of visitor numbers, with an estimated 3,000,000 visitors to the *Degenerate Art* show, while the house of German art attracted 1,500,000 visitors. Nolde, who is one of the most widely known and popular artist in recent years, was used as the model of art to redefine and rebuild Western art after the 2nd world war, that is until 2017, when research revealed that not only was Nolde a member of the Nazi party and that he made a fortune after 1927 in Germany but that he was also a vehement anti-Semite, leading to the significant damage of his reputation and role in German culture. This made a mockery of the mythology that was built around Nolde in order to rebuild western art.

Recent research has also shown that de-nazification didn't work and was just for public consumption, and that former Nazi members were integrated back into society or played a significant role in the global war on Communism that started the day the 2nd World War finished. And that the taboo and censorship of Nazism was intended to divert attention away from the continued presence of Nazism, and also worked to suppress the public gaze, contributing to the increased erosion of civil liberties, leading to the dangerous situation we are in now with a new mass blanket censoring, cancelling of art exhibitions, mass sacking of lecturers and the closing of art schools.

Benjamin Buchloh in his lecture in 2012, reflecting on the history of the Haus der Kunst and the *Great German* art show of 1937 and in his article on Expressionism in the 1980s, countered the view made by recent critics that Expressionism constituted an advanced art form. Instead he recognised expressionism as a regressive mindless art form, that has had a terrible influence on recent art. He also, in the same way that Pasolini did in the mid 1970s, showed that Fascism and Nazism, does not constitute the problem for art today, but instead it is commodification and commodity culture, that creates the standardised homogeneous and regimented lives we lead, and threatens to destroy art as absolutely as the post-war states thought Nazism would do.

Views with which I agree.



Captain America, Marvel Comics



Arno Brecker: Preparedness 1939

JEAN TINGUELY

Liviana Martin



Jean Tinguely: Scopri la mostra - Pirelli HangarBicocca

On 22nd May 2025, the centenary of the birth of Jean Tinguely, born in Fribourg in 1925 and died in Bern in 1991, will be celebrated with exhibitions and conferences throughout Europe.

It is a fitting recognition for the visionary artist, a pioneer of the twentieth century, who revolutionized the very concept of a work of art, was one of the major exponents of kinetic art and a brilliant forerunner of modern creative trends.

Tinguely spent his childhood and adolescence in Basel: from an early age, he enjoyed inventing small machines placed in the woods and moved by water. In 1953, he moved to Paris, where he worked on compositions of structures made of metal wires, colored and light, inspired by Calder's sculptures. At the Galerie Arnaud in Paris, he presented sculptures that were moved by small electric motors located inside, the *Méta-mécaniques*, a name given by his friend and art critic Pontus Hultén, to define some-

thing that goes beyond or transcends the object. Tinguely's sculptures in fact went beyond the utilitarian function of the machine, challenging the tyranny of functionality, to free the intrinsic poetry of the object.

In addition to movement, noise, disharmonious sound becomes the other element that characterizes Tinguely's research.

In 1960, in New York, he created an enormous installation 7 metres long and 8 metres high, composed of bicycles, tricycles, a bathtub, bottles, and a spectacular machine that self-destructed in 27 minutes.

Starting in the 1960s, he worked with various artists, including Niki de Saint Phalle (who would become his wife and with whom he would have a long artistic partnership), Spoerri, Rauschenberg, in a perspective of artistic democracy, far from authorship. Together with the artists of *Nouveau Réalisme*, the movement he joined, to compose his works he used

scraps, waste, what consumer society eliminates and which in his hands takes on new life.

His funeral was attended by thousands of people who, as per his instructions, followed in parade a sound sculpture mounted on an old tractor, which, between puffs and explosions of firecrackers, made its way through the crowd. The last, irreverent farewell of the brilliant artist.

The first retrospective dedicated to Tinguely in Italy after his death is hosted in the vast spaces of the Pirelli HangarBicocca, a building in Milan that was once home to a locomotive factory and is now a non-profit foundation dedicated to the promotion of contemporary art, a venue that is free and accessible to all. With a surface area of 15,000 square meters, it is one of the largest exhibition spaces in Europe. In addition to the area dedicated to temporary exhibitions, it hosts the permanent work by Anselm Kiefer, *The Seven Heavenly Palaces*, reinforced concrete towers that are worth a visit in and of themselves.

“The machine is first and foremost the instrument that allows me to be poetic. If you respect it, if you challenge yourself with the machine, then perhaps you can really give life to a joyful machine – and by joyful I mean free”. These are the words of Tinguely, perfect words to introduce the exhibition. More than 40 works are on display, created in the time span from the 1950s to the 1990s, some set in motion by engines, others static, others still illuminated by rows of brightly colored light bulbs.

Entering the space of the Navate is like crossing the threshold of a cathedral, where sacred statues are replaced by machines. Upon entering, immediately after having pulled aside a heavy curtain, I almost feel a sense of bewilderment: from afar, I notice strange mechanisms moving, producing dodeca- phonic music, colored light bulbs illuminate the semi-darkness, black gears move alternating different shapes. But as I get closer, I distinguish two imposing works at the entrance: a sort of assembly line, composed of wheels, belts, electric motors, entitled **Cercle et carré- éclatés**, a reference to the circle and the square, perfect figures, fundamental elements of abstractionism, here however exploded inside a machine that spins empty, with uncoordinated and disharmonious movements. In the other work, entitled **Méta-Maxi** (a reference to going beyond the object), a colourful creation where plastic and plush characters ironically emerge from among the gears, the sound is caused by the movement of the gears and by the percussions.

“Come and create your painting with wit, fury or elegance, with the Méta- Matics by Tinguely, the sculptures that paint!” The invitation to the exhibi-



Mama, Papa is Wounded! (1972)
oil on canvas

tion in Paris in 1959 wanted to involve the spectators in becoming creators themselves, overcoming the idea of the artist as the only creator. The Méta-Matics were small machines that, when operated by the public, could create abstract drawings on paper. Even at the Milan exhibition, a reproduction of these machines offered to the visitors the opportunity to become an artist for a day.

Tinguely anticipated by several decades the use of artificial intelligence, which we use today to create projects, texts, drawings and much more.

Tinguely's works are also a biting criticism of consumerism and the pop art movement, very popular at the time in America and Europe: the object, for Warhol and his companions, is an icon, a symbol of the well-being of the middle class. Marylin, Mao, Campbell's soups are colorful and joyful reproductions of the characters who themselves become objects of consumption and goods that have become indispensable. Tinguely's works are mostly monochrome, the color is used sparingly, the sculptures are made with waste materials and scraps found on the street, which are given dignity and poetry.

The monumental sculpture *Requiem pour une feuille morte*, steel structure, wooden and metal wheels, leather straps, electric motor, backlit, is a magnificent example of monochrome, the antithesis of pop art works. “Black,” says Tinguely, “is a way to make vanished the object found”.

In the artist, there has always been a death drive (an accident in 1957 crushed his rib cage, in 1971 a pilot friend died in a race) that he tries to exorcise in his works. His works are destroyed: it happens in New York, but also in Milan (archival materials in the exhibition document the event) with the performance entitled *La Vittoria* or the suicide of the machine . A 10-meter-high sculpture is installed in Piazza Duomo: it is a gigantic phallus that burns and sprays firecrackers into the sky, accompanied by the Neapolitan music of *O sole mio*. The event marks the funeral of Nouveau Réalisme . It is 1970 and until now the performances have taken place inside art galleries. Among the first artists, Tinguely takes them outside, thus involving a greater number of spectators. Finally, his love for racing cars, for car races, for the thrill of speed are embodied in works such as *Scheckenskarrette – Viva Ferrari* (the wheelbarrow of fear), *Pit stop*, composed of pieces of Renault Formula 1, **Shuttlecock**, with pieces of a sidecar that had participated in the 1988 World Motorcycle Championship. The exhibition is not only fascinating for adults, but is also frequented by many children who enjoy themselves as if they were in a playground. Tinguely would be ecstatic because he said that, “I would like to create something funny, where children can climb and jump, something flashy, cheerful, crazy”. It is the universe of his creations, joyful and disturbing, dominated by an unbridled imagination and a playful sense of the eternal child that was in him and that we recognize in ourselves.




Scopri la mostra. Pirelli HangarBicocca

Jean Tinguely, Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milano
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**Rape as a
Weapon of
War**

Voyage of the Corinne

Wynn Parks



Fred Reefing (1978)

Two months after Brett has died in a Boston hospital, Gail and I laboriously paddled out onto the Aegean. It's a hot day; a day for sunglasses. The paunchy inflatable in which we kneel, needs bailing. Brett has named the little life-raft after Picasso's grand painting, *Guernica*. In better times, *Guernica* has served as dingy for Brett's sail boat, *Corinne*. One of *Guernica*'s folding oars is broken, and by the time we're out far enough, trying to keep on course in a cross breeze has us both in a sweat. Finally, we ship oars and break open the box containing Brett's ashes. How do you want to do this?" I ask my widow-friend. In answer, she digs her hand into the box; lets the ashes and tiny bone fragments sifts slowly through her fingers into the azure water. My thoughts are hollow, empty of feeling. I look away, pretending not to see her tears.

"Help me." She whispers, after the third handful. I hesitate at the thought of putting my hand in.

"Help me!" She says.

They feel like coarse sand, the ashes. I funnel them through my hand back into the box, and see they are faintly violet in the intense Greek sunlight. They lead my thoughts back.

Brett Taylor and I had begun our acquaintance at sword-point. When I first came to teach at his Aegean School of Fine Arts, in 1974, Brett was thirty-one, a year younger than I. We were a couple of hot-shot, creative types, still pumped up by university courses on the lives of great artists. He thought me precocious. I found his "art-brahman" airs, insufferable. For nearly a year, in school, and out, we challenged each other's every assumption, from personal style, to T.S. Eliot. In the course of a long, insular winter, I'd brought back fencing gear from a trip from Athens. Our Master-at-Arms was a thin, black and yellow book on Fencing, points of which we debated vehemently in the course of self-instruction. Twice a week, we donned masks; took up sabers, and touche'd angry, red welts on each other's arms and

legs through all our jeans and gloves and woolen sweaters.

In truth, the competitiveness never went out of our rapprochement, but in July of 1975, one of those things happen that forge enduring bonds. We're walking down the school steps one afternoon, when Brett announces: "I saw this tight little seventeen-footer for sale when I went to Athens last week-if I can scrounge the money..."

"Are we talking row-boats, or tall women?" I wisecrack back.

Brett tells me he's gonna buy the little sloop-rig, and add sailing to the school's curriculum. "... get a big tax break."

"You need a 'big tax break? How about doubling my stipend? Anyway: 'seventeen feet'?" I say, "What is it, an inflatable with a plastic sail? You gotta have at least thirty feet, if you wanna go anywhere."

Brett frowns when not being taken seriously. "What are you talking about? This is a good little boat. You could sail around the world in this boat. Transports easy too; got its own trailer, even. I roll it on the ferry in Athens, and roll it off here."

"So much for circumnavigation." I snort.

A day later, it's growing dark. Brett catches me in the school courtyard. "Come on." He says, "There's something I want to show you."

He leads me to the small boat harbor, and stops before a ridiculously small sail boat with two sleeping bags dangling from the spreaders, to dry.

"That right there, it's a seventeen footer." Brett says, "A couple of guys told me they sailed her down from the mainland. It's not but about a hundred miles."

We hang around on the quay, studying the little day-sailer until the waterfront lights begin to come on. By that time, the harbor is dark and quiet. The boat seems to stir, lifting and lowering, with the ghostly, nearly imperceptible movement of the water. We tire of waiting for the crew, and when we return the next morning, the boat, too, is gone, and none of the fishermen know what we're talking about.

A week later, in the morning, Brett and I are waiting at the port cafe for the ferry to Piraeus. When it finally rounds the point into Paroikia Bay, Brett turns and throws back what's left of his ouzo. "Before we start out on this: I'm the Captain, and you're the crew, right?"

The next three days, we spend in Piraeus and Athens. First completing the purchase from an American Air Force officer; finally, assembling supplies and gear for the voyage. We hope for smooth sailing, but know, how in July, the Meltemi can reach gale force for days. Sweeping out of the north, it seems a

cooling stroke to the land, but to the Aegean, it is the hand of mischief, stirring the sea into stampedes of whitecaps. Though neither of us had anything but fresh-water sailing experience, we'd both been around charts and compasses; we had plenty of wine, and sailing tales from summer camps.

The fateful morning arrives. The boat's former master gives us a lift, twenty-six miles over the mountain, east, toward the battle ground of Marathon. Trailing behind us, on its trailer is the newly christened Corinne. In honor of her gift to him, Brett has given the boat Gail's middle name, but it's not too long before the little vessel's bulging, plexi-glass ports, in a forward-sloping cuddy, remind us of a lizard. So before she's even wet, Corinne has earned the nick-name of Sea Lizard.

The Corinne's log records July 11th as the day we set sail from a coastal town of Nea Makri. At the beach, sure enough, a stiff, north breeze is intersecting the coast at a fifteen degree angle. Two or three locals come out of a road-side cafénion, to watch the launching. One, a fisherman, tries to persuade us to wait out the wind, which could take days. Then, when he sees that we're determined, he takes a last drag on his cigarette, and smudges it out, on the boat's bow, in the form of a cross.

That day's log continues: "Almost disastrous start--high winds and heavy surf. Corinne led to the end of the quay by (four men pulling on) a line. Outboard mounted too high in stem. Motor revs wildly, as each wave lifts prop out of water. Wynn tends motor while I set jib. Once released from (tow) line, we are blown landward. Begin making headway just in time to miss nasty iron and concrete rubble serving as breakwater for swimmers' beach. This leaves us dry-mouth ... but finally away from shore, the grand silence!"

Our first day's goal is the island of Kea, approximately thirty miles southeast, and the first of three ports in our island-hopping Odyssey to Paros. For almost seven and a half hours, we steer by dead-reckoning, eyes darting to the hazy horizon, then back to the compass. It's a tense first leg; full of adrenaline and serotonin. Because of the wind speed, Brett doesn't want to raise the main-sail, but we're making good time on the jib alone. Somewhere I've read that the old-time sailors chewed tobacco, and for the occasion, so do I. Half-way to Kea, the Corinne lurches. From below, we hear the boat's retractable, three hundred pound, center-board gives a great, crash-bang that vibrates the entire hull!

Though the chart shows nothing but fathoms below us, I can read, rocks!, in Brett's eyes. To my relief and amazement, flippers appear behind, foundering: a



Venus on the Half-shell (1968)

sea turtle the size of a bathtub that had just tangled with the boat. The center-board is built to be cabled into the hull for shallow water. This is done by a wench with a hand-crank. In running over the turtle, the heavy center-board has been lifted leaving a lot of slack in the wench cable; then dropped again, jerking the cable loose from the wench drum. This leaves the heavy, metal center-board swinging below the boat by one large metal pin, no longer retractable. After an hour with my face in the bilge, trying to fix the problem, the chewing tobacco conspires with the waves. Seeing me tum green, Brett prescribes Dramamine, which cuts the nausea, but makes me dazed and silent, until we realize that the thin, white cloud above the haze is no cloud, but the whitewashed village of Kea, which is glued into the top peak of the island. As we cheer, the rest of the island becomes visible!

Kea's harbor is fjord-like, well-protected from the North. Above the peaks surrounding it, we can hear the rush of the Meltemi, while below, a gentle breeze wafts us to the port promenade, where we dock elegantly at the sea-wall with never a crack of the outboard motor. Brett would write below:

"We put the Corinne to bed, ate with aching fingers,

and collapsed in a (dock-side) hotel. Next day, we sat (around the dock) licking our wounds and waiting out the gale."

Later, we decide to climb up to the high village for fresh vegetables, and find a unique, locally made sharp cheese; a small reward for the hike. Returning to the harbor; revived somewhat, and at the same time fed up with the boat, we moved out of the hotel and camped on the beach. We decided to leave Corinne tied to the sea wall next to the hotel, where the water is deep enough for the dangling center-board.

We camp around the small, port bay, under tamarisk trees. After dark, the taverns at the back of the bay cast paths of light across the water. Brett passes me the retsina jug, and gradually the evening progresses. We toss pieces of green wood into the fire to keep off mosquitoes. Somewhere along the line we begin to talk about philosophy, and then painting.

In the beginning, Brett had offered to pay me for my teaching hours in his paintings, rather than the usual living stipend. That had been in the days when I saw my shipmate as either a con man, or oblivious romantic, with delusions of grandeur. By the time of Kea, I have to concede that, even if he does have a

touch of Barnum in him, his painting has an intriguing vision. And that his painting is the category through which he envisions all the experiences of his life. When I ask him about this, he tips up the jug, then:

“Well, why should we stoop to categories? Life hates categories! And yet we can’t exist without myth, you know? Some people think being an artist is all about FREE-DOM, and it is, but the freer you are, the stronger the code you need. Being any kind of artist? What function do you serve? No money; ten to fifteen years before the wannabe’s drop-out. You won’t, without some kind of mythos.”

For me, there is always an enigmatic quality to Brett’s Aegean work; an unresolved tension calculated to slam the viewer’s comfortable perceptions sideways; back into second gear; the visual equivalent of a Zen /wan. Later, I will remember Brett’s voice, talking about Picasso and Braque; about wanting to up the ante in fracturing space; subjectifying perspective; using line and color so that “near” and “far” become interchangeable... He’d tried all the mediums, but acrylic was tough and cheap. It had the color range he sought; and its quick drying lent itself to spontaneity.

. . .One minute, we’re horizontal by the fire, in sleeping bags; passing the retsina and putting the world to rights. The next minute we’re groggy, and thirsty as sponges, waking in a ghostly, gray dawn.

Nine years later, Brett’s quest for a unique vision will have produced a feverish array of lyric paintings--dark, dense colors in the first years--later, fractured images curtained by day-glow spots that hang before one’s eyes like icons of delirium. Curious anthropomorphic figures have evolved: “rain drop“, or “paddle-headed“ men and women; figures capable of provoking both amusement, and the queasy fascination of viewing “stem-cell homunculi“.

. . .After a day and two nights on Kea’s languorous shore, restlessness has begun to afflict us. We wake as the sky is beginning to gain color. We try, unsuccessfully, to make out the marine weather report on the radio, but the port is too enclosed, and both of us are too impatient to take another half a day’s hike to the upper village. Ultimately, Brett scans the craggy, hill-tops surrounding the harbor to see what the few, distant scrub up there are doing.

“Doesn’t seem like much, compared to yesterday.“ He says.

We’ve forgotten how protected the harbor is. Outside, we discover that the wind is still hot from the north. Nevertheless, our plan is to beat up-wind we’re well north of Kea’s tip; then, tum and run

southeast for Syros, the capital of the Cyclades.

Kea is three times longer than wide. The first tack up-wind is exhilarating: takes us northwest almost within spitting distance of a huge ketch on the opposite tack from us. She’s flying French colors. Makes us feel in pretty salty company. After two or three more tacks, it looks as if we have enough lee way. We start across the north cape of the island flying both jib, and reefed main-sail, as the quickly disappearing, larger yacht has done. The wind and spray are both whistling through our hair, and we’re grinning like two dogs with their heads stuck out the car window. Then, about a half-mile off the island’s craggy north tip, and a few hundred yards from the point at which we can tum down-wind, the Meltimi pauses to catch its breath. Needless to say, Corinne is caught in the classic pickle: caught off a

lee shore. The captain is calling for the jib sheet, and the outboard--out of the cuddy--at the same time, when the pulley attaching the main sheet to the boom, snaps loose! This leaves us one sheet to the wind, with the boom swinging out at obtuse angles to the boat, and dipping into the waves with every two yards as we’re washed toward the cape’s gnashing rocks. By the time I’ve wrapped my legs around the boom and shinnied out to wire the sheet back to the boom, we can see flotsam-- planks and plastic, bleach bottle-- bashing around the boulders. Just as we’re beginning to discuss plans for surviving a swim amid the breakers, a whisper arises. With both sails tugging as lightly as feathers, Corinne pulls agonizingly past the dead spot.

Twenty minutes later, we’re in the channel between Kea and Syros, with the Meltimi blowing so hard, that we douse the main-sail for fear of being knocked down, or losing control of the boom again. Brett’s entry, scrawled in the log says:

“Kea sped away to the stem. A gale came up of such force that it flattened the swells and we started to plane. Grab a piece of fruit, and some water, and do it now, because... then a ... hurricane came up and ... for five hours, I sit with a water bottle inches from my hand, and there’s no way I can get to it... “

For an eternity, we clutch tiller and jib-sheet respectively; grim, frozen like department-store dummies; Pompeian mummies. Then, late in the afternoon, a gift of Grace. The wind falls; the haze kicked up by a restless sea dissipates, and, as if by magic, we find ourselves gliding down Syros’ southwest coast. Behind Corinne, the island’s blue shadowed sea-cliffs retreat northward, over-lapping, until distance shrinks them into the sea. Long-winged birds appear, that Brett identifies as Shearwaters. They skim the sea, cutting its surface with the lower halves of

their long bills. The deliverance is so sudden that we are left, punch-drunk, gawking at the idyll. Our bodies wake slowly to the change, holding for a while to their storm positions. Finally, Brett flattens himself, a la Huck Finn, on the cockpit bench, hands behind his head, and works the tiller with his foot.

After a while, we switch, and I'm on the tiller as we ghost up to a little village on the island's south end. Brett is leaning on the handrail, watching the sun go down. At a certain minute on the horizon, spectacular pink rays shoot halfway to the zenith.

"Oh, no," Brett views the display, "not another one of those garish things!"

Then we break out the ouzo, and have a proforma argument about artistic clichés. We argue all the way into a harbor, which is more open than Kea's, and has a breakwater. Here, due, somewhat, to the shallowness of the water, and, somewhat, to the ouzo, the center-board grounds out, and in the course of docking, causes minor scrapes on Corinne's chaffing rail.

We're giddy with fatigue, and step off the boat, lurching and rolling on the implacable solidity of the concrete dock. Visible from our landing place is a small taverna, with smoke of a grill rising from it. We eat lamb and stuffed grape leaves there. We start drinking wine, but finally fly in the face of bar room wisdom because only beer will quench our salt-encrusted thirst. The food and drink gives us a brief lift, and Brett begins to talk about a simple course in sailing.

"Who knows?" He muses, "Enough students; you could incorporate an Aegean School of Sailing..."

Sailing lessons are good, I tell him, adding what I know about a Coast Guard program to put reconditioned nav-sats into small marine businesses. He gives me his pained look:

"No nav-sats, man. Not at The Aegean School of Sailing!" says he, "Compass, polaris; sextant; the basics."

"What about charts?" I protest, "Or are they too hi-tech?"

"Of course charts." My friend makes an upward spiral with his fore finger, "I'm an artist..."

It's the same dispute we've been having for a year. Though the school is equipped with a few conventional painting aids, like stretchers, and easels, Brett



Icarus (1967)

lets it be known that he considers actually using them, soft. Brett favors hand mixing paints from dry pigments; and nails his canvases to the studio walls. "Canvas?" I exclaim, "Why, cavemen didn't have canvas!"

I accuse him of trying to turn out starving artists in garrets. Then, that evening on Syros, he says something he hasn't said before.

"You don't understand. The School... it's not just..."

He stops a moment to think. "When I got to Europe in '66, I knew I wanted to start my own school of painting; with my own ideas, not one of these over-structured, paint-by-the-course number things in the States. I knew I wasn't into keeping up with every fad ... sorry, 'concept'... that came down the interstate. There's plenty of commercial and state art schools for that. As far as equipment goes, it's easy to think you're an artist when you've got a hundred thousand dollars worth of studio equipment to play with. But there's not many places for students where they're forced to get it clear in their heads, the process they're really committed to. And where it comes from!" Brett taps his forehead, "and how basic, and deep down it is ... They get told, but never confronted. You check out the cave drawings in Spain. The guys who did them dug their own pigments out of clay banks with their fingernails; made their own air-brushing kits out of chicken bones, or bamboo. There's not one day when some university instructor in the world doesn't project those 'primitive' drawings on a dark wall ... And there they are, twenty thousand years later, being reproduced on a dark wall again."

In spite of our near disaster off Kea, that island sits in

the wind-shadow of larger, near-by islands to the north of it. The passage from Syros to Paros crosses thirty miles of water, from west to east, where no islands block the north wind. To the north, a thousand mile fetch of water, is exposed to the Meltemi.

Intending to get an early start – when the wind may still be low – we sleep on-board, in Corinne’s claustrophobic little cuddy. Even with the door open, it’s hot. Getting to sleep is difficult, and the next morning, we sleep through the alarm. I wake feeling oppressed by the prospect of setting out again. Brett and I are both developing salt sores on our palms. We go about our preparations silently, but I can tell by how he moves, that he’s feeling as battered as I am.

A curious thing happens: I think I’ve surveyed the dock for other people, before I turn my back to the village to pee. Yet, as I’m about to commence, a blonde foreigner overflowing her bikini, appears a few feet away.

“Where are you going?” She says, taking no notice of me as I struggle to get zipped up. I manage to stammer out the name of Paros.

“Oh,” She shrugs, and turns to leave, “everybody goes to Paros.”

Brett is grinning as she leaves. “Wow, she’s an angel. That’s a good sign!”

Ghosting out of the harbor, we refer to her as the Venus of the Limonaki (Little Harbor). The sea is smooth, as we’d hoped. We sail on a gentle breeze, like in the movies. Yet, ever after, we remember that leg as the ‘Day of the Wave’. At first, we’re skimming along in Syros’ lee, with both sails up. Then, as we round the island’s south cape, we see white-caps. None too soon, we take down the main-sail, and brace ourselves. Compared to the chop of the previous two legs, the sea has been pushed into swells as tall as Corinne’s mast, and soon we’re roller-coastering them, flying across a wind that’s blasting foam from the wave-tops, into the cock-pit. At first, we whoop a lot, telling ourselves it’s a hot dogger’s delight.

Our course cuts across the wilderness of peaks and troughs at forty-five degrees. After an hour, we’re wedged in like never before, eye’s riveted forward trying to steer ahead of the waves’ advancing curls; first rising toward the strip of blue sky; then planing wildly downhill at twice the hull speed: a deadly game of keeping in sync with the waves. Finally, Brett signals for relief. I’ve watched him at the tiller, calculating how close before the curl of the waves, we can ride. Suddenly, I glance behind and wonder if we’ll survive what’s about to overtake us. I hear Brett shout and find myself fighting to hold onto the tiller,

as tons of the Aegean crash over Corinne. Crisis has a way of lasting forever when you’re in it. The sun seems to hover, and every second parses into a thousand distinct units of consciousness, each a second long. Seconds later, we were sputtering, knee-deep in salt water, wondering if we’ll stay afloat. Later, we would count it another bit of grace that the cuddy door held. With both of us bailing like submersible pumps and Corinne’s self-drain system, we’ve finally managed to get back in sync.

“It’s gonna look really stupid if we sink a few miles from Paros.” Brett shouts, after a while, “Shelley already did the Mediterranean-thing!”

For years to come, Brett will sail the Corinne here and there in Paroikia bay, for fishing or picnics, but never again into open water. Nary a group of picnicking art-students will disembark without hearing the ‘Voyage of the Corinne’. When I am present at the telling, I corroborate where I can; smile and shake my head out of loyalty to my ship-mate, as the saga grows ever, more grand. Yet, I live in secret fear of hubris, and there comes a time when I crack wise, in company, about his rendition; protesting that he knows it didn’t happen that way! Brett will think for a moment; then, wave away my scruples with the back of his hand. “That’s the way it should have been.”

By now, Guernica has taken on another liter or two of bilge, and we’re drifting toward distant rocks. I put my hand into the sea, clutching the last handful of ashes.

“So, Brett’s doing the Mediterranean gig after all.” I think; then open up and watch the grains swirl down in a trail that gradually disappears.

As far down that trail as I can see, something catches my eye; at first, it seems no more than the tumbling of bone fragments. Then, it seems like some misshapen, deep-water creature rising, but soon resolves into four white dots, which are growing quickly. I managed to tell Gail:

“There’s something coming up under us!”

Then, whoosh! The water on either side of Guernica erupts, as four white dolphins fly overhead in unison; two one way and two the other, a sensuous arc over the boat. Water from their glistening undersides rains down on us.

Peace, Brett . . . That’s the way it should have been.

Vanessa Bell: A World of Form and Colour

Carrie Lee



Interior (1912)

In the midst of a radically changing world, Vanessa Bell painted her life, used her privilege to foster artists and had lifelong relationships with key artistic and intellectual figures that changed our cultural landscape. She began the Bloomsbury group with her sister Virginia Woolf and with friends and lovers who believed that a group of like minded souls could work together and forge a path to a freer and better way of living. Many significant members such as Maynard Keynes the economist and Roger Fry the art critic and acclaimed pioneer of British modernism were lifelong supporters and often stayed with other key Bloomsbury members in a large country house called Charleston.

There is an English feeling of the comforts of home and a naive cosiness in her paintings which record everyday experience of nature, reflections, flowers, windows, doorways, interiors, people and objects. At the same time there can be a directness and a restrained exuberance of colour and shape. In her early days as an artist her paintings were included in a number of key exhibitions alongside the likes of Cezanne and Matisse both of whom she greatly admired and from whom she drew influence. Her close friend Roger Fry staged the first ever post-impressionist exhibition of 1910 to a dubious London audience. It was the first glimpse of this new style of

painting in England and it created huge consternation and yet had high impact at the same time. This was a period before the post-impressionists were accepted and their work appeared inaccurate, careless and nonsensical to most. Roger Fry and the Bloomsbury group admired and supported the post-impressionists turning away from realism. They wanted this different kind of reality in art, one that expressed feeling and perception through form and colour.

A sketchy post-impressionist style can be seen at times in Bell's work as well as experiments with outlining which she admired in Gauguin and Van Gogh. She used flat blocks of colour in the manner of Cezanne to create vague and sometimes blanched interiors and landscapes. At other times she used vivid impressionistic colour. Her faces were often hidden or simply blanks.

Interior 1912 is a quiet, still scene of two people completely absorbed in painting with a framed doorway and garden beyond. Soft beautiful colours create a peaceful, private scene with the outside glowing vaguely beyond. Not all of her paintings convey this quiet still interiority. Leaning a little towards abstraction, it conveys an expression of that private yet communal creativity and industriousness that was at the centre of her purpose.

Bell lived through two world wars as well as the Spanish Civil War which claimed her son, yet no overt political stance is apparent. Even so, *Abstract Painting 1914*, was radical and at the forefront of modernism. It follows the grid pattern used in interior design preparation.

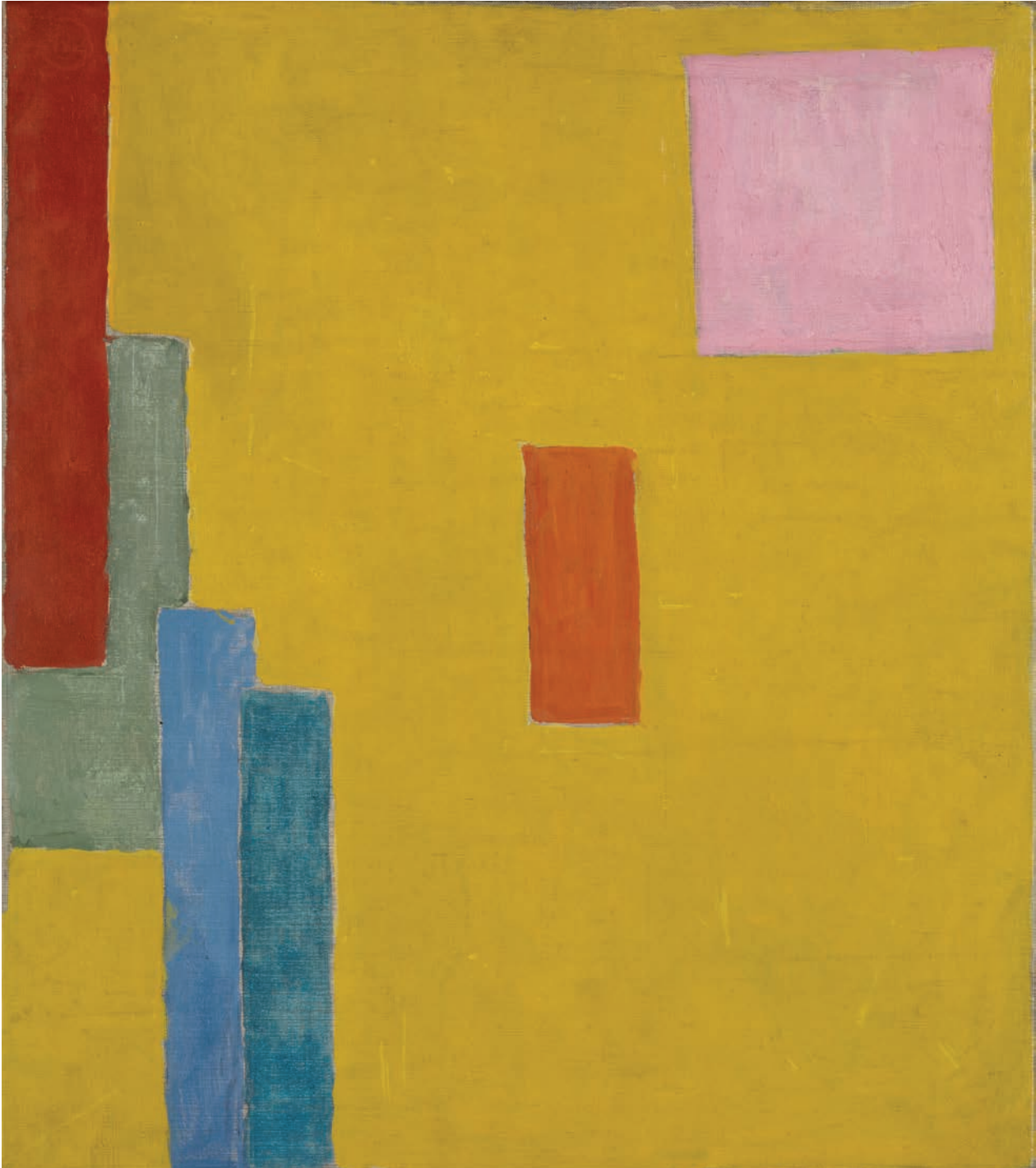
Composed of a cluster of rectangles and two floating islands on a ground of vivid yellow, it is the antithesis of her representational paintings of interiors that reveal layer on layer of space and depth such as a hallway that leads to a framed window with a landscape beyond. Working in the flat abstract perhaps required Bell to use a craft based approach. However, she created a complete abstract image and that was indeed radical. It is not for example a painting of a vase of flowers becoming abstracted but it is utterly and purely abstract, possibly the first ever produced in the UK.

Whether her few abstract works, which were largely for personal experimentation, represented a conscious break from realism or were an experiment in

design or even possibly both we can't be sure. Bell's painting pushed ideas and her creation of a space for innovative thought had a lasting impact. The Bloomsbury group established the Omega workshops to create designs and produce contemporary objects for commissions giving opportunities for artists, designers and makers of craft. This spirit of industry, creativity and collaboration is still seen in some approaches to art education today, as is the

emphasis on feeling, experimentation and in the periodic re-emergence of craft and design.

Milton Keynes Gallery until 23 February 2025 in partnership with Charleston and Jerwood Foundation



Abstract 1914

Class of '24

Mary Fletcher

There are about 100 artists in the show, most of them women. Falmouth Combined University doesn't give this huge exhibition much publicity and in three hours I only see six other visitors. Several buildings are left open without any invigilators. There is no information about what the course content is so we only see each student's final project and we don't know their degree results.

Hardly anyone presents anything for sale but quite a few have business cards to collect and a few have give-away items. There is little invited participation and no performance.

It's mostly introspective installations with lots of fabric used and assembled collected readymade things, videos and lots to read. Only the drawing BA has a printed catalogue – and drawing can mean anything. There's scarcely any use of wood, metal, stone or ceramics.

The students, who I presume are generally under 25, are preoccupied with their personal identity and problems. There are warnings about suicide as a topic and references to violence in war, to distress, illness, disability and sexual orientation. A few refer to the outside world, what it looks like, ownership of land and industry, but there's nothing definitely socialist or traditionally political – there's mention of women, hints of feminism, portrayal of vaginas, protest at Greenham, nature as wonderful and the need to conserve it, Dionysian intoxication, and postwar Germany. It's mostly about individuals but two artists feature meeting a range of friendly people and having conversations.

My prize for the most memorably meaninglessly horrible exhibit is the room containing two sordid toilets that smells heavily of urine. Elliot Millin gives no clues about it.

Most surprising is the piece that mentions god, by Rebekah Mohamed. There are elegantly written words drawn directly on the wall and gentle sounds and recorded spoken words – it's all pale, quiet, contemplative and refers to psalms in the Bible.

I liked the drawings of a woman with birds and their twittering on overhead speakers – all about her loss of hearing, by Violet Hills. I watched the video about a dysfunctional family, my attention captured by the way it was constructed and performed. It's the work of Diana-Maria Ghita, who references the book,

What is love? by feminist Bell Hooks and uses the same title. Lily Tyrrell's installation extolling libraries made a change from the personal, with an unusual large distorted photograph of bookshelves and then an assemblage of bookcases at odd angles from which you could take a book. I took F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night*.

Nowadays you have to be wealthy or willing to incur a hefty debt to attend these courses. I talked to a group who were invigilating who had enjoyed being on the BA although one was glad to stop having to explain everything.

It's not surprising that young students have a lot of personal angst to express but maybe it's become more general? Are there similar trends on other BA courses round the globe? It was a stimulating foray into the minds of Falmouth's class of '24

A relief also to leave this world of self absorbed reconnaissance that feels rather claustrophobic.



Violet Hills



*Unknown Artist: Eastern Front trench fighting
(Looted from Munich House of German art by U.S. troops)*

David's Labyrinth

Daniel Benshana



Visiting London one is often drawn to the galleries and museums making the most noise in the press but sometimes one comes across a smaller, quieter installation which captures the imagination in a way the Tate has failed to do for decades.

St Jude's Church in 1, The Square, Hampstead Garden Suburb, has a long tradition being designed by Edwin Lutyens and planned for by Henrietta Barnett. The new vicar in charge wants to make it a community venue space within which art will find a home. David Waller, whose twin collects toy cars by the hundreds, decided to create a labyrinth of the cars inside the church. The central idea is to reflect the spirituality of the space by giving people the contemplative experience of walking around and into the labyrinth set onto the parquet herringbone flooring, to the centre in which sits a Star of David. I asked the artist why this symbol and he pointed to the roof where, almost hidden by the intervening years amid the black painted circle, one could see the original Star of David reflected in the floor.

The toys are set one behind the other in lines of four

in the primary colours and the guide to walking give it the air of a pilgrimage if a short one.

Waller's work has centred around mandalas and rainbows before and he himself takes hours on padded knees to set the toys in their space, giving him his own sense of penance perhaps. This quiet, thoughtful man has created something that could go into any gallery in London but they will never see it because they never go looking any more. It is a great shame for they are missing something secure within itself, that makes use of the modern manufacturing process and children's toys to make something thoughtful and utterly human.

St Jude's Church, Hampstead Garden Suburb

Artist: David T Waller and John R Waller

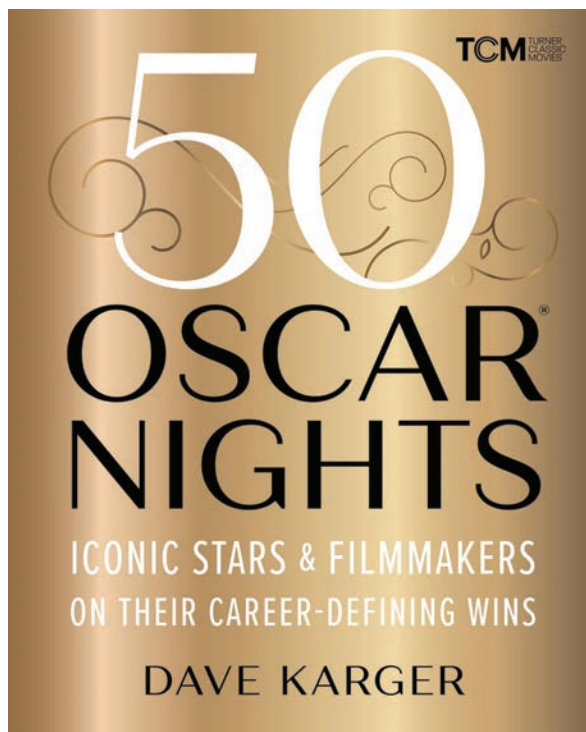
“I’d Like to Thank the Academy”

Book Review of “50 Oscar Nights: Iconic Stars & Filmmakers on Their Career-Defining Wins” by Dave Karger. Running Press Adult, 272 pages.

Scott Sublett

At the top of every MGM picture, a golden motto encircles a roaring lion: “Ars Gratia Artis”. Though a for-profit corporation, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer nobly scorned filthy lucre and transitory glory. “Art for Art’s Sake.” Oddly enough, all the artists I know want everyone, everywhere, to praise and purchase their work. One recalls what George Bernard Shaw said to Samuel Goldwyn in 1921, soon after the sly, old playwright had won his Nobel Prize: ‘The difficulty between us is that you care for nothing but art and I seem to care for nothing but money.’ In 1939, Shaw would win an Oscar for his screen adaptation of Pygmalion, and while he called it an “insult,” he nevertheless displayed it prominently on his mantelpiece. The truth is that artists do want to be seen, to be paid, and to be handed glittering prizes, for example, the glitteriest of all, the Oscar. For decades, millions of people worldwide have eagerly tuned in to see them handed out, which is only natural, given our primate biology: a study of male rhesus macaque monkeys showed that they would forgo food rewards for the opportunity to view high-ranking monkeys. Of course, we humans can view high-ranking primates while gorging on unlimited snacks. Such is evolution. As for the primates who get the prizes, they benefit greatly and not just in obvious ways. Prof. Donald Redelmeier at the University of Toronto found that people who win Oscars have life expectancies four years longer than those who were nominated but did not win. Winners of multiple Oscars? Even longer. For humans and monkeys, too, social status is strongly linked to lifespan.

David Karger, in his book *50 Oscar Nights: Iconic Stars & Filmmakers on Their Career-Defining Wins*, interviews actors, directors and designers about the big night. Apparently, the statuette is very heavy and if you have two on your mantelpiece people are apt to pick up both and do curls. The moment of getting the Oscar is often described as a “blur,” or winners “black out,” or dissociate. You will forget to thank someone. A great majority of the winners, even the ones who went in heavy favorites, claim they didn’t expect to win and in fact ‘never dreamed’ of getting an Oscar. Really? Because I suspect that almost all actors, film people, theatre folk, and maybe even



you, kind reader, at some point in childhood or adolescence practiced delivering an Oscar speech. In fact, I found myself doing it again, while reading Karger’s book. I’m hugging to my bosom the Oscar for Best Original Screenplay, and addressing my husband, in the audience, Benedict Cumberbatch. I point at my Oscar. ‘Sweetie,’ I say to Benedict, ‘I love you—but I’m sleeping with him tonight.’ Benedict laughs and slaps his knee, while thinking, “Turning gay really was the right decision.”

In Karger’s interviews, one’s lover isn’t always as supportive as Benedict. After Marlee Matlin won for *Children of a Lesser God*, later, in the limo, her lover William Hurt said, “So you have that little man there next to you. What makes you think you deserve it?” She broke off with him a few months later. Sally Fields’s boyfriend Burt Reynolds ‘was not happy with what was happening to me...He said, “You don’t think you’re going to win anything, do you?”’ What’s sad is that both Hurt and the criminally underrated Reynolds were superb actors, big stars, rich, yet someone else’s success made them bitterly insecure

Which brings us to the classic narcissism of Joan Crawford. When Rita Moreno arrived at the ceremony at which she would win her Oscar as Best Supporting Actress for *West Side Story*, she noticed Mommie Dearest giving her “the strangest...evil...envious” smile. Then, when Moreno walked off stage with the statuette, a drunken Crawford, whom Moreno described as ‘built like a linebacker,’ ambushed her and pulled Moreno’s face into her bosom—as Crawford’s photographer snapped away. “My voice was muffled against her bosom. And my face is all being squashed against her linebacker chest. Finally, it took a couple of people to wrest me from her grasp.” Later, Joan wrote Rita a lovely note. Lest you think you and I were the only ones to write imaginary Oscar acceptance speeches, three of Karger’s interviewees did cop to it, and all three are Black. The first ever black nominee for Best Production Design, Hannah Beachler, who won for *Black Panther*, recalls, ‘I would stand in the mirror with my brush when I was eight years old and say, “I’d like to thank the Academy.”’ Whoopi Goldberg says she ‘wrote an Oscar speech every year when I was a kid. And my mother and my brother had to sit there while I accepted my Oscar.’ Geoffrey Fletcher, the first Black to win the Award for Best Adapted Screenplay (*Precious*, 2010), told Karger, ‘I remember one day during senior year in college, I was bored, sort of coasting through senior spring, and I had some aluminum foil. I started playing with it and I made an aluminum foil Oscar. I still have it somewhere in the bottom of a box.’ Fletcher didn’t quite mention a speech, but once you’ve made your aluminum foil Oscar, we can assume.

Like all glory, it’s transitory. ‘I got a lot of attention for a moment,’ said Keith Carradine, who won Best Original Song in 1976. ‘I was on the party list there for about six months.’ Or, as Aaron Sorkin said, ‘By the next day you’re thinking, Well, one Oscar is good, but I should really win two. You get to be happy for roughly 24 hours.’

The most sensible observation of all was made by Emma Thompson (Best Adapted Screenplay for *Sense and Sensibility*), who said, ‘I’m British—there’s no way I’m going to say, “I love you, Mum” on a stage. That’s a private matter. Awards ceremonies are professional ceremonies for professional people who’ve done something that other professionals like.’

But...will Benedict be hurt if I leave him out?

