

# Art history final

History



They have manipulated our opinion, reactions, and even likeness of art. They defined who the great artists are and through their judgments they have even cited the value of art. But unfortunately for them, post-modern art has dethroned critics with the use of humor, wit, and scale of impact in their art. Post-modern art rejects the idea of beauty and truth and reveals the value of irony. Artists such as Marcel Duchamp, who created the Fountain, or Mark Tansy, shock, mock, and force the viewers to rethink the meaning of art. The reader/viewer must create a whole new context in which to hold the art, one which may truly challenge his belief structures, one which may force him, to make sense of what he is seeing, to hold a larger perspective than he errantly has in place. " 1 And this applies to the critic as well. His opinion can no longer be valued as before because this kind of art no longer has a meaning and its interpretation no longer matters. Its importance lies on the impact and sensation of its viewers. Art becomes then a participatory experience, one in which the audience receives, and handles as they may, the flows of libidinal energies which the artist set free. " 2 The control the words of critics had over art is gone and viewers are able to let their unconscious decide what art is. Nothing can better explain the place of the critic with this new art as Roland Barthes's essay title does: post-modern art has brought " The Death of the Author. " In his essay Barthes explains how in literature the identity of the author no longer has any importance. Nonperformance" may be admired, but not his " genius" The author. 3 By giving the power to the literature rather than to the writer itself, he is giving the power to the piece of art and not to the critic as it has always been. As explained earlier, the opinion of the critic was impeding us from reaching our own conclusions on art. But by denying beauty in art and introducing

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something as absurd as a urinal, post-modern artists " refused to assign [art] a " secret" that is, an ultimate meaning," 4 that a critic can easily identify or criticize, and instead, " liberates an activity" where each viewer can have their own reflections on the piece.

In my essay I am giving the role of the author in Farther essay, to both the critic and the artist. Nevertheless, I am assigning the part of the modern author to the artist, and its opposite to the critic. Before, the importance was given to the author, he was recognized, in other words, the critic was recognized. But now, " language knows a subject, not a person. 5 And from my point of view I interpret this statement as meaning that the person, in other words the critic, does not matter anymore, the art does, the subject.

Of course the critic will still be a critic and give their opinion, rank a piece of art, and judges it as well. But this time they cannot use an absolute standard of arbitration. By not being able to judge the way they used to, they assert Farther point, that 'the explanation of the work is always sought in the man who has produced and for me this man he speaks about could only be the artist himself. Clement Greenberg, Harold Rosenberg, and Roseland Krause have been incredibly influential in the history of art. Greenberg championed and was the first to appreciate the achievements of abstract art.

Rosenberg was also a supporter of the abstract expressionists and proved the importance of the happenings and performance art. Krause introduced a new approach that focused on aesthetics that apprehend cultural and historical issues. While I have criticized them in my essay shall also embrace their intellectual knowledge on the subject of art and its importance in

society as well as history. Nevertheless, " the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the author. 7 The public should continue to take in and learn from these figures opinions. Nevertheless, we cannot take what they say too literal.

We must understand that they are critics, they are " a person who judges the merits of literary, artistic, or musical work. " 8 They judge but they do not define art. Challenges to the Status Quo Art has deliberately hidden the figure of women and their work in society. There have been great women artists, but have not been recognized as such and valued by posterity. Many paintings by women were initially credited to males, suggesting that there is no objective difference between art made by omen or men, but when it is verified that the author is a woman, the economic and symbolic value of the work decreases immensely.

Even today, there are works by women that are not attributed to the real author because the fact that they are women would reduce the price of the work considerably. As Linda Gnocchi explains in her essay, 'Why Have There Been no Great Women Artists,' the answer to this question " lies not in the nature of individual genius or the lack of it, but in the nature of given social institutions and what they forbid or encourage in various classes or groups of individuals. Women have a long experience in the fields of art and culture, their contributions have always been present, although in many cases the concept of " respect" has not been applied to them in the same way as their male counterparts. They have always been relegated to a second plane. Being a woman and artist has often been seen as an injurious occupation and inconsistent, while it has been traditionally reserved the epithet of

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genius for men. Women have to live in a society which has not ceased to be sexist, in a culture where women are still thought of as an inferior place and lacking retain rights.

And this, as Gnocchi explains, does not apply to art only. In her article she gives us the example of the great artist, Rosa Bonjour. Now a day if women become the CEO of a company, an architect, or a policeman, they would be categorized the same way Bonjour was: a tomboy, a woman with a desire to be more masculine, or selfish. Yet if men " have a need for feminine involvement," 10 as Gnocchi puts it, the jobs such as pediatricians, child psychologists, or chef, are admired rather than frowned upon. In her essay Gnocchi explains the disadvantages women had in art education that led to the lack of great women artists.

Some examples were the restriction put on them to participate in classes with nude models or be a part of several contests. Nevertheless, today those restrictions no longer apply but the lack of 'great women' still persists. Society and history is to blame for this. Now, as John Stuart Mill points out and Gnocchi quotes in her essay, " everything which is usual appears natural. The subjection of women to men being a universal custom, any departure from it quite naturally appears unnatural. " 1 1 We have progressed as a society and we have reached equality in many areas.

However, sexism as well as racism seems it will never cease to exist because they are distinctions we consider natural. In her article Gnocchi writes about how her question can or has been answered incorrectly. Afraid to be included in the category of incorrect answers, I would like to put my life as a

perspective instead and show how the views of today's society regarding the sexes are clearly defined. From a very young age had a nanny, who as many would expect was a woman because caring for children, cooking, and cleaning is a role usually given to a woman if in a household.

A man drove me to school every morning and generally anyone who drove that was not a family member was in fact usually a man. I remember the habitual comment that 'women do not know how to drive.' When I arrived to school there were five male security guards, and my teachers all the way from pre-kinder to about sixth grade were women. Society would see this as correct because security guards are there to protect and men being stronger than women means they can do a better job.

And the reason why all my teachers at a young age were women is because we are still young, I do not receive a grade but simply mille faces, stickers, or a 'good job' in its place, and I need a mother figure at all times. High school was not much different. I started to get grades and was considered a grown-up, so men began being my teachers as well. Physical education, however, was still separated by sex, including the teacher, because "boys are more aggressive and they can hurt girls." Now I arrive at Washington and Lee University.

An Ivy League education in a beautiful campus with amazing professors, but, a place where it is believed that women only come here to get their MRS. degree. A joke that has been around since the university became co-educational back in the 1800s, saying that women only come here to look for a husband. At this point Gnocchi will probably consider me a feminist, but I

am simply showing a perspective from someone that is in her twenties in the 21st century and can still clearly separate the roles of men and women as expected in the realm of our society that we claim has improved and changed.

My life is only one perspective and many might not have had the same experience did, but it does support what Gnocchi repeatedly states in her essay. Quote Incision's words once more: the question of women's equality-? in art as in any other realm-? devolves not upon the relative benevolence or ill-will of individual men, nor the self-confidence or abjectness of individual women, but rather on the very nature of our institutional structures themselves and the view of reality which they impose on the human beings who are part of them. 12 This also includes the educational system today. Gnocchi makes one more important argument in her article. She explains that when it comes to art what needs to change is the way its history is taught. Lucy R. Leopard supports this argument in her article, "Too Political? Forget It," when lists the amount of information on art that has most times not been taught, and how it is "No wonder activist and community art, always a stepchild, is slow to evolve. 13 The statement that 'there have been no great women artists' can be justified, but it does not mean it is correct. Women as well as other minorities have been deprived from being a 'genius', a term that is unreal but largely used for men, due to their social conditions and deprivation of an education. But the only way to transform this lack of recognition is to stop listing excuses, or have minorities keep aerating themselves as such and change the unnatural to natural in society. Artistic expression comes from the spirit, not the body type you have or hormones.

The language of art is, more materially, embodied in paint and line on canvas or paper, in stone or clay or plastic or metal-it is neither a sob story nor a confidential whisper. " 14 The Courage to Break Grounds For many years there have been many instances where artists have held public events to raise social and political issues, yet many of which are not on record. While artists know that when choosing this career path it will not be easy, especially economically, they risk their commodities for their passion. Nevertheless, this does not mean that they do not want recognition. If they are primarily concerned with audiences who will never write, curate, collect or fund art, they run the risk of being forgotten before they are even acknowledged . " 15 A reason why political artists mostly limit their work to galleries, and this is a problem that must be fixed. However, I do not believe that political artists who only care about this acknowledgement truly care about making political art. In galleries the artwork will always first be seen as aesthetics and subject to be rated and criticized by its artistic aspects rather than the subject matter and message it is trying to pass on.

Political art is that which addresses public concern and takes a stand on an issue. It is a way to speak for those who won't and to open the eyes of those who cannot or resist viewing reality. It is also meant to support or represent those that cannot do it on their own. Most importantly it is supposed to change minds. Political art is not meant to be hidden by the walls of galleries and museums and constrained to the eyes of critics and elitists. It is meant for society to see as well as to learn and experience what is being fought for. Or sometimes encouraged.



Nevertheless, politics is a sensitive subject. While I do believe it should be out for everyone to view, certain aspects of the viewer can affect the intended message of the artist, making it difficult to completely object the idea that such an important subject matter should have viewers with certain capacities of understanding. The real answer as to whether or not political art should be presented in public venues, even if it is protected by the first amendment to do so, lies on how it might impact the observers.