

# A Political History of Art

1. Art & power: basic considerations
2. A genealogy of the artist as a free thinker and creator
3. The role of the artist in the early modern period (first half 20<sup>th</sup> century)
4. Concluding remarks about the position of the contemporary artist within Western structures of power

# Why should the State support the arts?

Marketing the State through art = soft power?

Converting money into culture = buying legitimacy?

Long-term investment in sociocultural development?



# 1. BASIC CONSIDERATIONS: Art as the façade of power



*Halil Altindere: Portrait of the Sheikh. Sharjah Biennale 2009*



What do we know of past civilizations? Mostly, the art they produced





From a very early age in human history, rulers employed artists to eternalize their power



*From the façade of the throne room of the Palace of Babylon, 6th Century BC (glazed brick tiles)*



*Lorenzo de Medici by Girolamo Macchietti, 16<sup>th</sup> C*

Acquiring symbolic capital:  
Art invests temporal power  
with transcendent significance





Andrea Pozzo, *Triumph of Sant' Ignazio of Loyola*, 1691-94

Art and Power are in a symbiotic relationship


**Art = Propaganda**





Who are the patrons of our 'free' Western artists?





“The most important American weapon of the Cultural Cold War in Britain, as elsewhere, was the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF). Founded in 1950 at a conference held in Berlin with secret backing from the CIA, and subsequently head- quartered in Paris, the intellectual citadel of European neutralism, the CCF engaged in an extraordinary array of activities, including festivals, seminars and concerts, all designed to demonstrate to intellectuals the cultural advantages of political freedom.”

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The Cultural Cold War in Europe, p. 33



The freedom of the Western artist is itself an ideological construct. Whether his patrons are private or public, they are still patrons. This does not mean that the artist cannot actually be free. The following narrative shows how the artist has acquired more freedom throughout the ages. But he does not operate in an ideological vacuum, as many would like us to believe.



Is this obviously ideological and propagandistic work fundamentally different of other contemporary art?

Is this not 'good art'?

John McNaughton (Mormon Artist), 2009



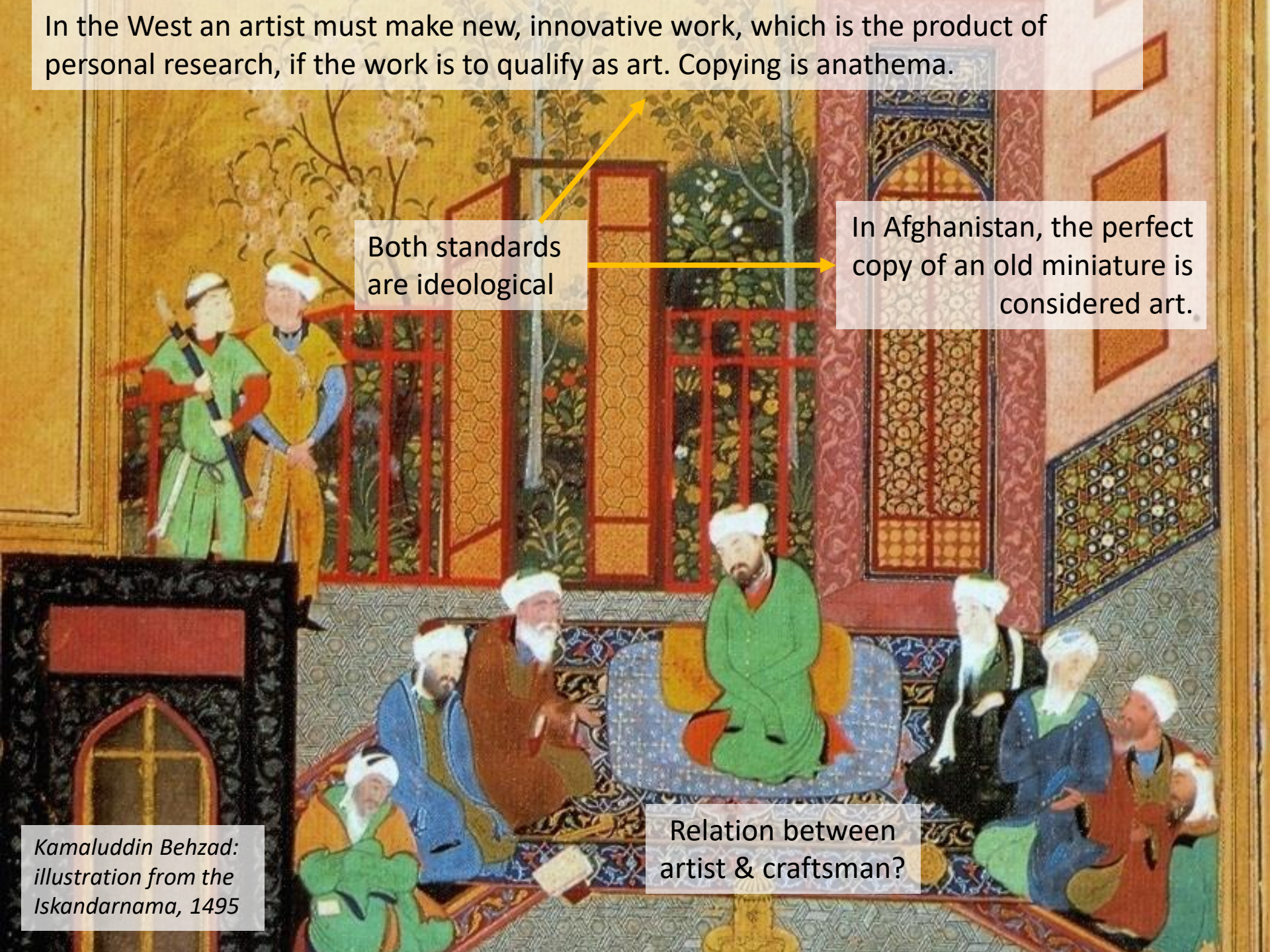
In the West an artist must make new, innovative work, which is the product of personal research, if the work is to qualify as art. Copying is anathema.

Both standards  
are ideological

In Afghanistan, the perfect  
copy of an old miniature is  
considered art.

*Kamaluddin Behzad:  
illustration from the  
Iskandarnama, 1495*

Relation between  
artist & craftsman?





# The Rise of the Artist: 1/Art and Craftsmanship

The professional artist has developed out of the professional craftsman

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## **Craftsmanship**

*reproduction & improvement  
of cultural objects*

*Contribution to culture:*

## **Artistry**

*individual creative expression*



Art pre-dates political power



*Altamira, approx. 15.000 years ago*

# Was Prehistoric Man Brutish?

The 'caveman' artist not only reproduced  
but also knew how to transform reality

Portrait of a woman,  
mammoth ivory,  
27,000 years old



*Beauty*

Man with a lion's  
head, mammoth  
ivory, 40,000 years  
old.

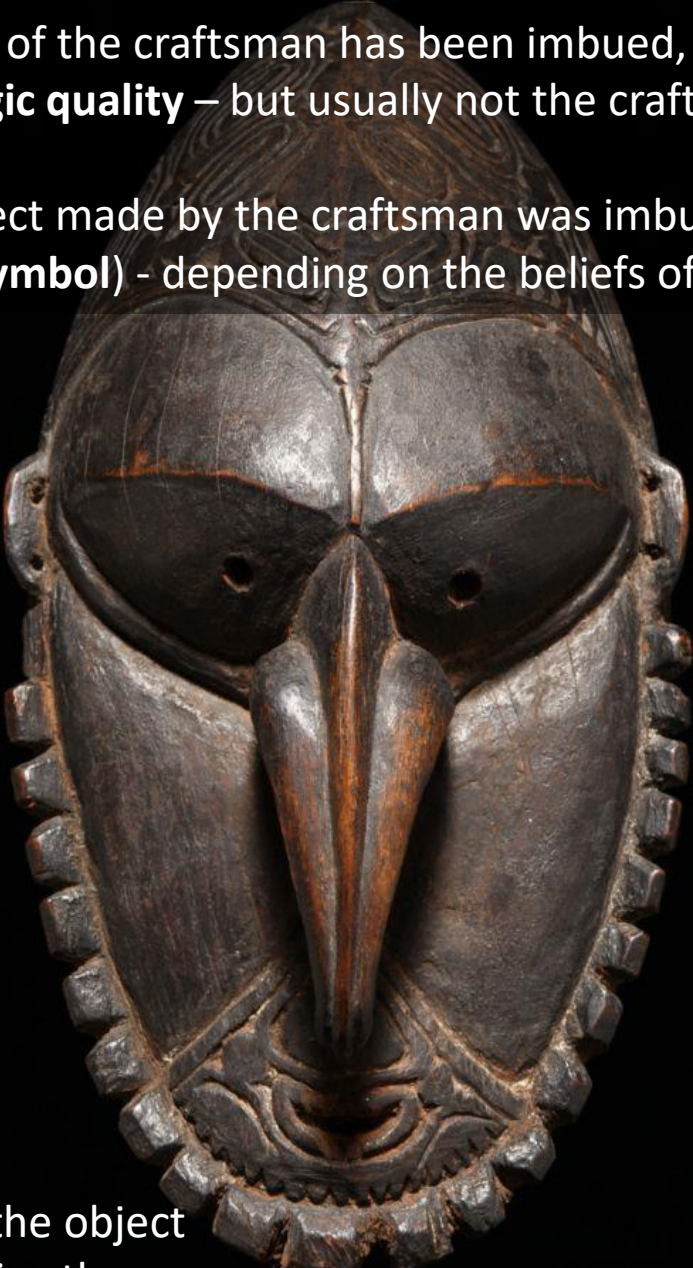


*Fantasy*



The skill of the craftsman has been imbued, in many different cultures, with a **mystical, demiurgic quality** – but usually not the craftsman himself, who remained **anonymous**

The object made by the craftsman was imbued with this spiritual power (the **idol**) or referred to it (the **symbol**) - depending on the beliefs of the community the artisan worked in.



**Idol** (the object contains the power)

*Oceanic Mask  
Date unknown*

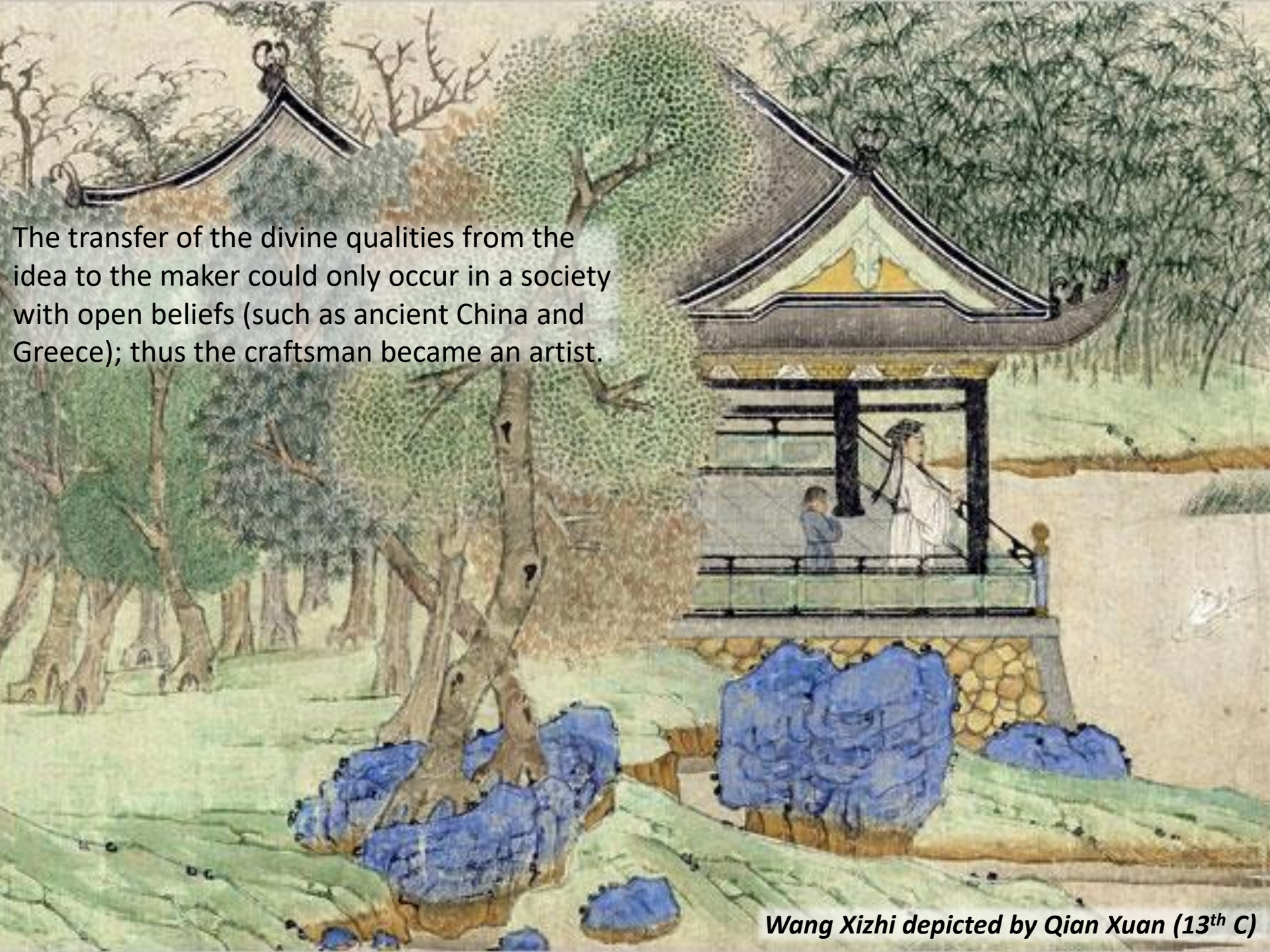


**Symbol** (the object refers to the power)

*Standing Buddha,  
Gandhara,  
Pakistan  
1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> Cs AD*



The transfer of the divine qualities from the idea to the maker could only occur in a society with open beliefs (such as ancient China and Greece); thus the craftsman became an artist.



*Wang Xizhi depicted by Qian Xuan (13<sup>th</sup> C)*



The patron attempted to make the power of the art work for him, and thus be seen as a demiurge himself => the birth of civilizations which, in our representation, are based on art. In this scene the artist captures the power (virtue, strength, wisdom etc.) of the past for the patron. The symbolic power the artist imbues upon his patron must be of an a-temporal nature



*Piero della Francesca: the Visit of the Queen of Sheba, 1466*



# Renaissance: 14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> centuries

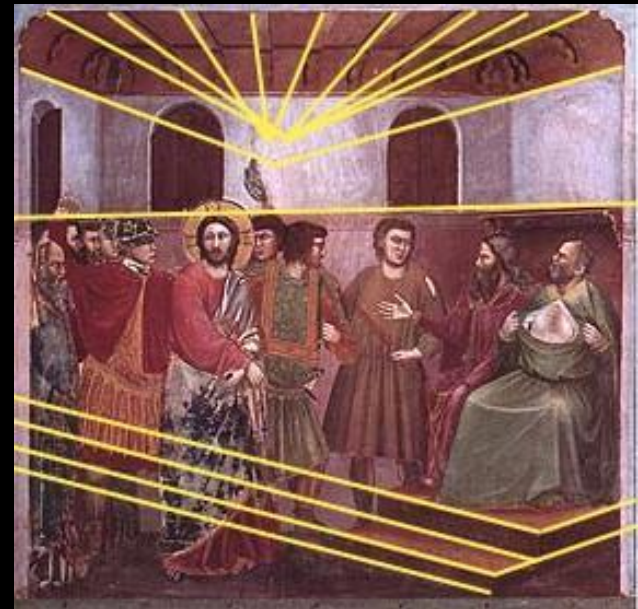
- Cultural Movement starting in Italy and spreading to the rest of Europe, thanks to the printing press (but the term Renaissance was only coined in 1855)
- The Renaissance took place in education, politics and science but it had the most impact in the **arts**
- Factors bringing about the Renaissance:
  - Political economy of the Italian city states: prosperous through trade and post-feudal, proto-capitalist financial systems (Marco Polo to the Medicis), responsive and innovative and anti-monarchical government (Machiavelli)
  - External events: rest of Europe was in turmoil, no threat. Window of opportunity.
  - The fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the flight of its Christian population led to the reintroduction of classical knowledge, improved by the Arabs (and Indians), into Italy. Roman ruins predisposed Italians favorably towards the classical period.



## The Rise of the Artist: 1/Observer of the Natural World

The 'discovery of perspective' by Giotto is in itself fallacious. Perspective may have disappeared from European art in the Middle Ages but it existed in the Arab world and other visual traditions. However the importance given to this discovery is in itself significant: it heralds the return of natural science in European painting.

The art that Western museums are full of documents the shifts in power and the general progress of intellectual development in European history. Gradually the artist becomes not only the chronicler of cultural progress but also its torch-bearer; he gains ascendancy over the subject he paints (including his patron).



*Giotto: Jesus before the Caif, 1302*



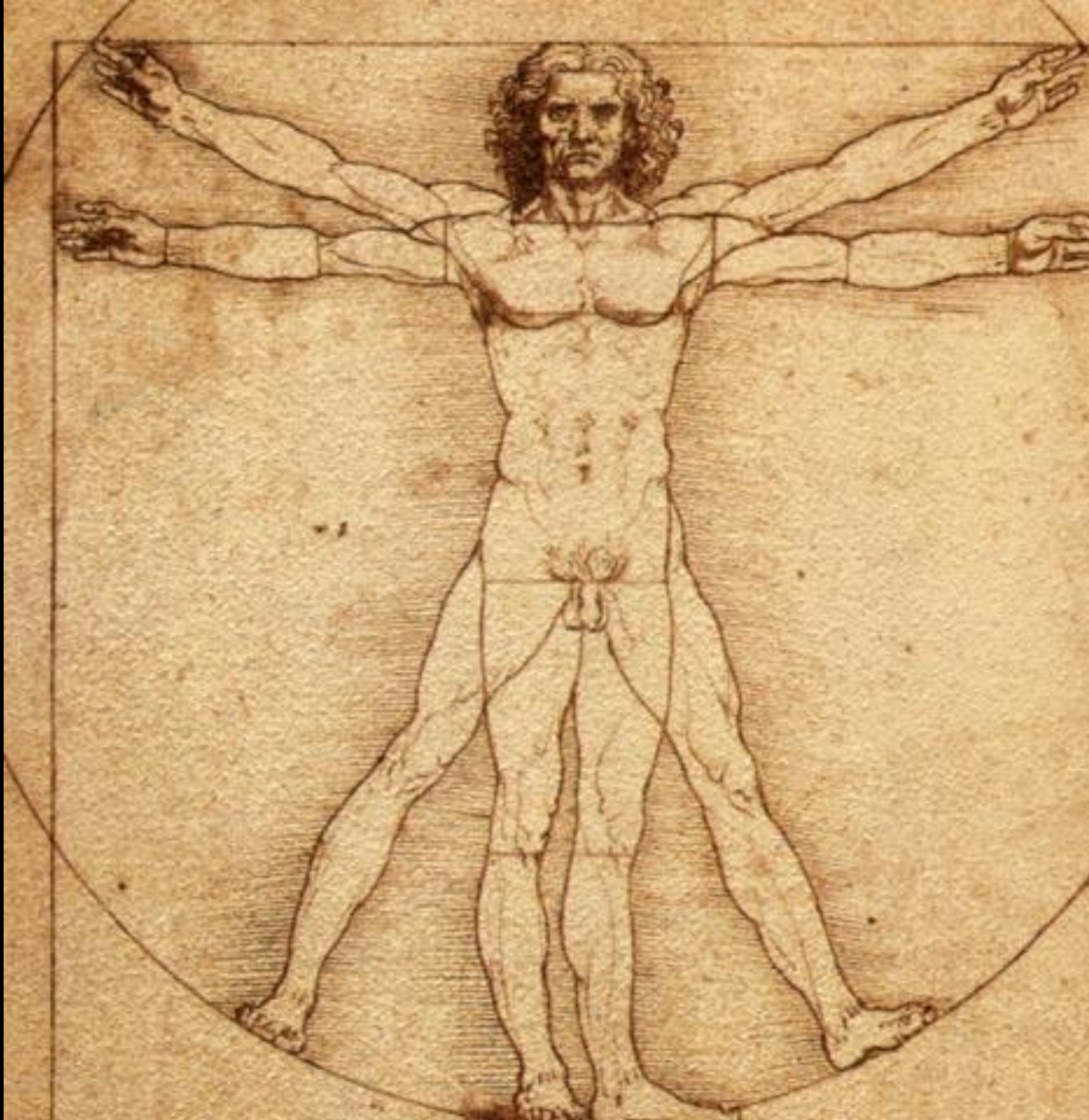
## The Rise of the Artist: 2/The Chronicler of Power



*Andries van Eertveld: Battle of Lepanto*



## The return of science in art



*Leonardo da Vinci: Vitruvian Man, 1490*

The rediscovery of ancient knowledge instills the notion of **natural science and progress** in the general awareness of Europe's ruling classes. The artist is henceforth required to depict progress and understanding of the natural world. Thus his own knowledge and evolving skills become important.

Gradually the artist becomes more important than his art, but this only really becomes the norm during the Romantic period. Leonardo De Vinci is an early exception.





The individual self-expression of the artist remains highly problematic.

He either carefully incorporates it into his work (trying to maintain a balance with his patron's expectations) or develops it as a private side-activity.

*Hieronymus Bosch:  
Christ Carrying the  
Cross (ca 1490)*



# Effects of the Renaissance on the art-power relationship in Europe

1. Natural science and its laws are reintroduced into the arts. Artist = observer
2. History returns: artist as a chronicler of power. Artist = commentator
3. The individual artist (Da Vinci / Michelangelo) becomes important because of the skills and knowledge he develops. His positioning vis-à-vis the patron is strengthened. But there is still no emphasis on the artist's creative self-expression



## The Rise of the Bourgeoisie

New patrons +  
Commercialization of art  
= new opportunities  
for artists

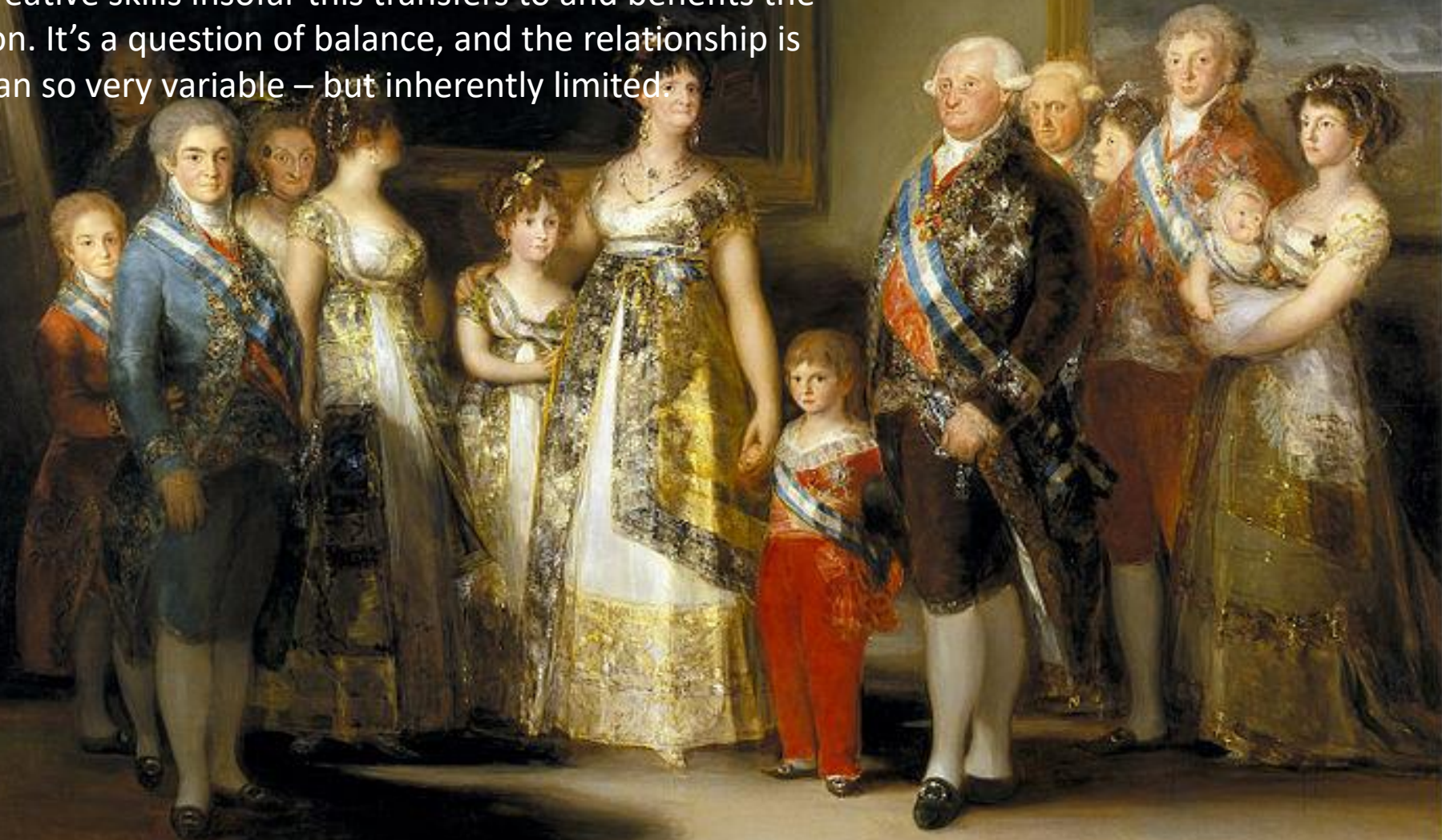
The rise of a wealthy European middle class, interested in artistic experimentation and with less vested interests than the old ruling classes, finally propitiated the rise of modern art.



*Rembrandt: the Anatomy Lesson, 1632*



The eternal problem of the artist is his patron: the patron generally has no benefit in letting the artist develop his individual creative expression as it might turn against the interests of the patron or the status quo he represents. At the same time the patron wants the artist to develop his creative skills insofar this transfers to and benefits the patron. It's a question of balance, and the relationship is human so very variable – but inherently limited.



*Goya painting at court: the Family of Carlos IV, 1800-01*





*Goya painting on the walls of his home: Colossus, 1810*



# Romanticism

- Originates in NW Europe at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Heyday 1800-1840s. Precursor = the German Sturm und Drang movement. Folk art and knowledge, also from the East, put on a par with, or above, elitist culture.
- Reaction against industrial revolution, scientific rationalization of nature & dehumanization of contemporary European societies (notably through war).
- In its day Romanticism is seen as radical and liberal, but over time it becomes associated with nationalism.
- Romanticism **legitimizes the individual imagination**. Primary importance of the **free expression of the feelings of the artist**. This gives the artist more freedom as a creator. Anything that constrains him (like a patron, an academy, lack of resources) then becomes, per definition, bad.
- Nevertheless there is a simultaneous development of more 'academic' art (art as science) which is more successful in popular and critical terms. This art often assimilates romantic themes (think of Ingres).



Romanticism celebrates the  
personal genius of the artist



*Thomas Cole: The Voyage of Life, Childhood; 1842*





The development of a personal signature/style becomes a criterion of good art

*Gustave Moreau: Oedipus and the Sphinx (1864) and The Apparition (1876)*



# Expansion of the European middle class, with new values, as result of the Industrial Revolution



Salons: 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries  
Jury, criticism, academic criteria

Intermediaries appear between the artist and his patron: the gallery or fair, the critic and the civil servant (*commissaire* acquiring for the State).

*Edouard Dantan: Un Coin du Salon, 1880*





The dilemma of the artist is whether to continue making socially acceptable art (for the patrons) or to rush along in a romantic self-discovery and be a misunderstood genius (*artiste maudit*).

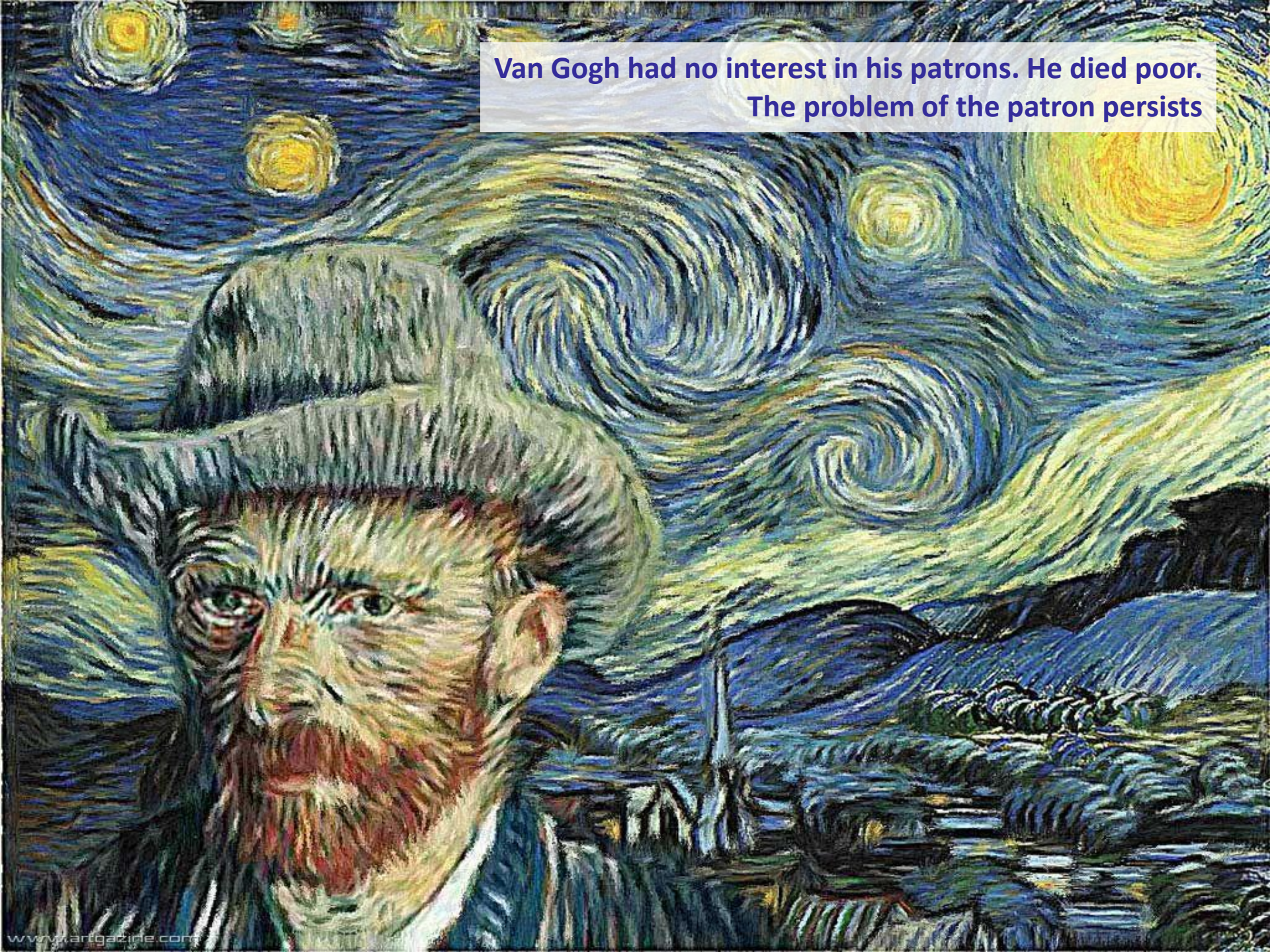
Eugene Delacroix, "Massacre a Chios" (1824) was initially criticized as 'bad art' for its brutality and rough rendering.

But it was acquired by the French State.

Delacroix died wealthy.



Van Gogh had no interest in his patrons. He died poor.  
The problem of the patron persists







“Fin de siècle” revolt against materialism, rationalism, positivism and bourgeois society.

Instead, support of absolute subjectivism and radical theories of social change.

Civilization is considered to be in a crisis that requires a massive and total solution

*Edvard Munch: The Scream, 1893*



# Breaking with the Past: Modern Art



Fin de Siècle Vienna




Egon Schiele



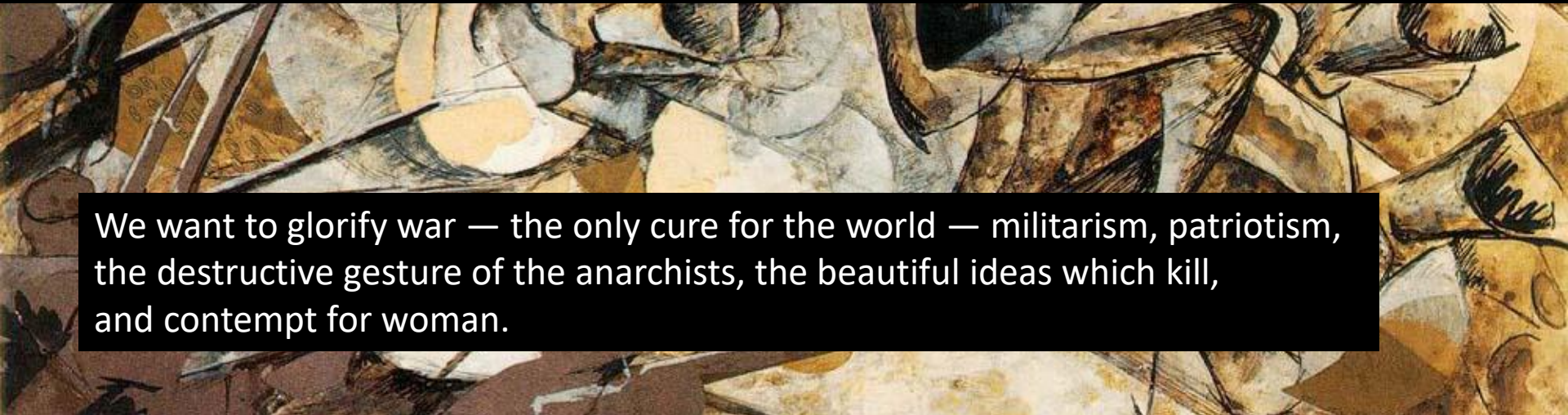
# Excerpts from the Manifest of Futurism (Italy, 1909)

*Umberto Boccioni: Charge of the Lancers, 1915*



We declare that the splendor of the world has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed.

Beauty exists only in struggle. There is no masterpiece that has not an aggressive character. Poetry must be a violent assault on the forces of the unknown, to force them to bow before man.



We want to glorify war — the only cure for the world — militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of the anarchists, the beautiful ideas which kill, and contempt for woman.





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## Dadaism

Reaction to the horrors of WW1: anti-rational, anti-bourgeois absurdist movement.

Starts in Zurich in 1916,

Surrealism and other anti-establishment artistic movements are its inheritors

Marcel Duchamp:  
Fountain, 1917



**Art in the interbellum is highly politicized, also in its rejection of all politics. Artists generally sympathize with the political left and extreme-left**



*Tods of property by George Grosz, 1921*





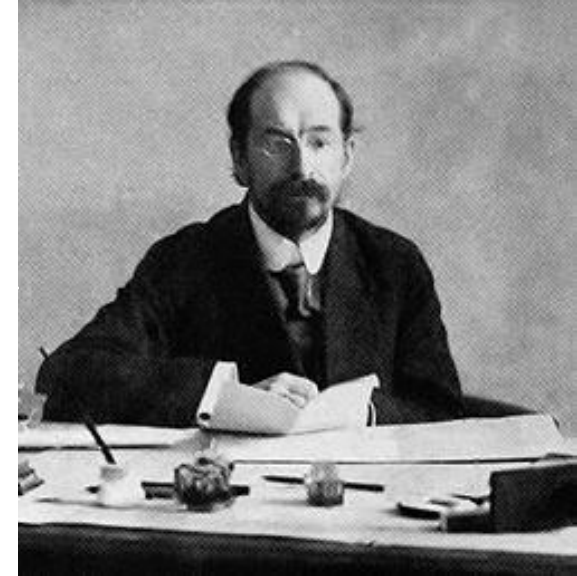
*Alexander Bogdanov  
leading theoretician of  
Proletkult 1917-1920*

## Proletkult

In 1907 a group split from the Bolshevik faction led by Lenin to form the 'Left Bolsheviks' inspired by the philosophy of Ernst Mach and Richard Avenarius

Empirio-criticism: science is based not on reality but on the sensations it produces within human observers, who will never be able to comprehend the full complexity of reality

→ inspired not only Einstein but also artists



*Anatoly Lunacharsky: first  
Soviet People's Commissar  
for enlightenment 1918+*

During the years of European exile Bogdanov, Lunacharsky and Maxim Gorky initiated several cultural and educational resources for Russian workers and published extensively about them

In 1917 Proletkult was formed, independent of the new Soviet state. It advocated a radical break with the artistic past, championed futurism and constructivism as the new proletarian culture and extended the domain of 'art and culture' to hygiene, education and eating habits.

In 1920 Lenin (himself a cultural conservative, who accused Bogdanov c.s. of bourgeois idealism) incorporated Proletkult into the gvt structures. Henceforth figurative art, easy to understand for the masses, would become the Soviet norm



# Constructivism

Rejection of the idea of autonomous art; art must help transform society

## The Realistic Manifesto Naum Gabo, Moscow, 1920

In spite of the demand of the nascent spirit of our time, Art is still nourished by impression, external appearance, and wanders helplessly back and forth from Naturalism to Symbolism, from Romanticism to Mysticism.

The attempts of the Cubists and the Futurists to lift the visual arts from the bogs of the past have led only to new delusions.

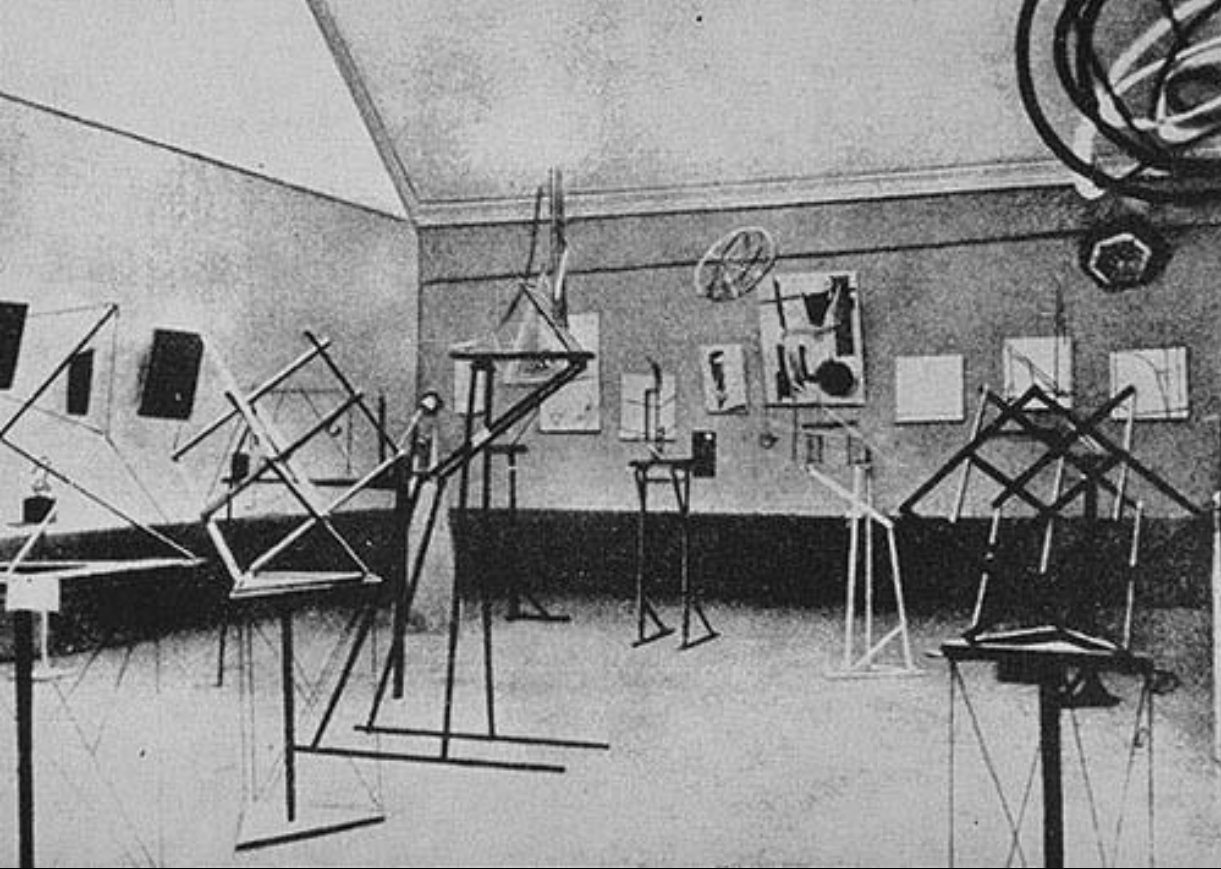
One had to examine Futurism beneath its appearance to realize that one faced a very ordinary chatterer, a very agile and prevaricating guy, clad in the tatters of worn-out words like “patriotism,” “militarism,” “contempt for the female,” and all the rest of such provincial tags.

One could heed with interest the experiments of the Cubists, but one cannot follow them, being convinced that their experiments are being made on the surface of Art and do not touch on the bases of it, seeing plainly that the end result amounts to the same old graphic, to the same old volume, and to the same decorative surface as of old.



*Tatlin's design for a monument for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Internationale, 1919*





## Constructivism inspired other art forms:

- Literature
- Cinema (e.g. [Aelita](#))
- Theatre
- Industrial Design
- Typography
- Architecture

The scope of art is also increased to embrace cinema, design, architecture

**-Legacy:** Bauhaus, Modernist architecture and generally a lot of Western culture

*Constructivist Exhibition, OBMOKhU, 1921*

*The realization of our perceptions of the world in the forms of space and time is the only aim of our pictorial and plastic art.*

*In them we do not measure our works with the yardstick of beauty, we do not weigh them with pounds of tenderness and sentiments.*

*The plumb-line in our hand, eyes as precise as a ruler, in a spirit as taut as a compass . . . we construct our work as the universe constructs its own, as the engineer constructs his bridges, as the mathematician his formula of the orbits.*



# Constructivist Poster Art

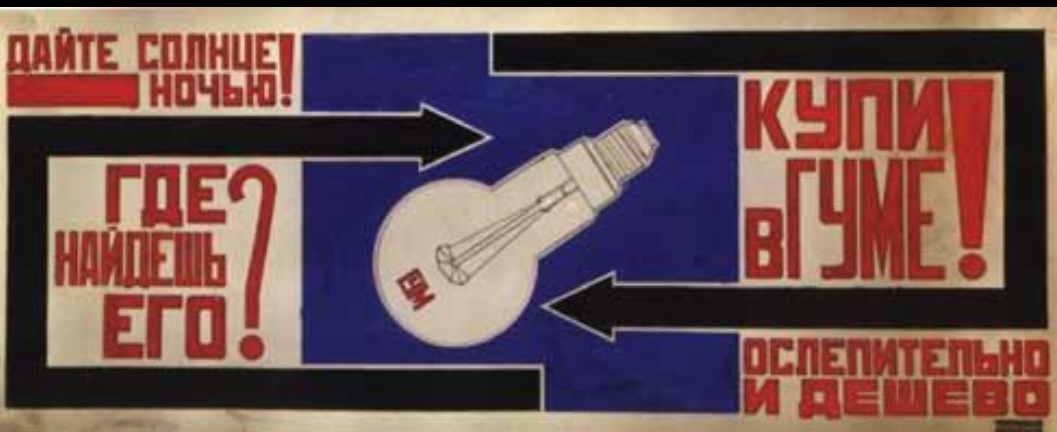
Art must help  
transform society:  
leads to mass  
communication.

Walter Benjamin

Mayakovsky: Plakat  
1918



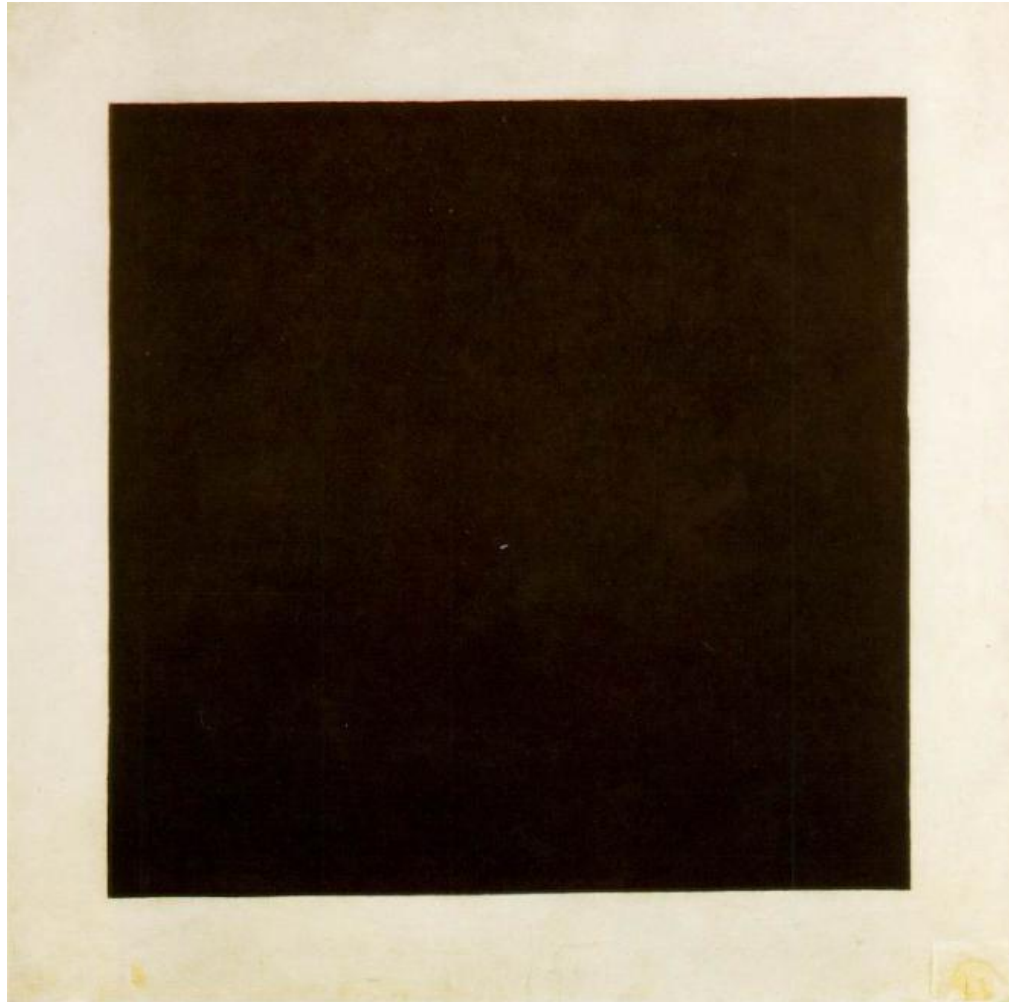
Alexander Rodchenko:  
advertisement for  
light bulbs, 1924



The best rubber nipples are from  
Rezinotrest; example of constructivist  
advertisement (anonymous)



The new Soviet government feared that the old Russian museums and art collections would be destroyed by civil war and the general collapse of state institutions and the economy. The Communist Party responded by trying to save these collections. In his text, Malevich protested against this pro-museum policy by calling on the state to not intervene on behalf of the old art collections, since their destruction could open the path to true, living art.



## Malevich, "On the Museum," 1919

*Life knows what it is doing, and if it is striving to destroy, one must not interfere, since by hindering we are blocking the path to a new conception of life that is born within us. In burning a corpse we obtain one gram of powder: accordingly, thousands of graveyards could be accommodated on a single chemist's shelf. We can make a concession to conservatives by offering to burn all past epochs, since they are dead, and set up one pharmacy.*

*(...) The aim [of this pharmacy] will be the same, even if people will examine the powder from Rubens and all his art—a mass of ideas will arise in people, and these will be more alive than actual representation (and take up less room).*

*Kazimir Malevich:  
Black Square, 1915*



- Socialist realism became state policy in 1932 when Stalin promulgated the decree "On the Reconstruction of Literary and Art Organizations".

⇒ Socialist realism = state-sponsored romantic art, reflecting the ideal rather than the realistic. The work of art should have **one clear and unambiguous meaning**.





# Socialist Realism





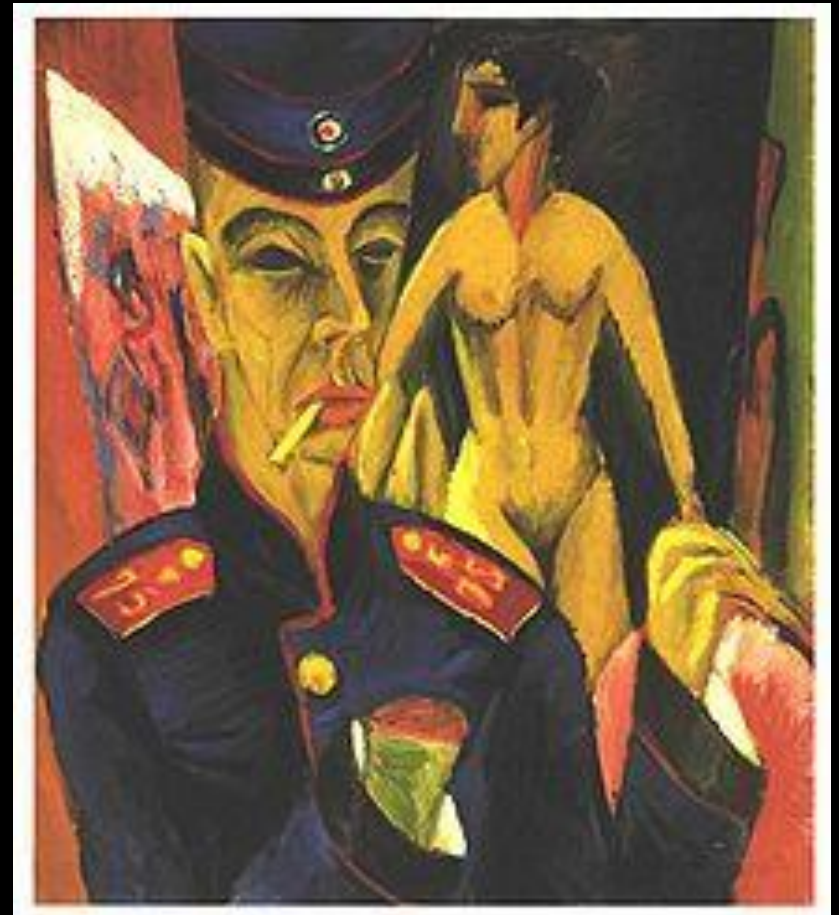
# Nazi Cultural Modernism

Munich, 1937: The first annual 'Great German Art Exhibition' is held with mostly recently made and commissioned work. In terms of audience it is a flop.



Fritz Klimst :Der Kämpfer in Wind und Sonne (1936)

A few days later the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition opens its doors opposite, with works mostly decommissioned from public institutions. It attracts many more visitors



Ernst Kirchner: Selbstbildnis als Soldat (1915)



Hitler's favorite art



Paul Matthias Padua: Leda and the Swan



Franz Stuck: Sensuality

# What the Nazis thought of contemporary modern art

- Importance of Hitler's personal experiences in fin-de-siècle Vienna pre WW1
- Roger Griffin (p307): *To Nazi cultural theorists the proliferation of different movements, aesthetics, and 'isms' in early twentieth-century Europe was a sign not of vitality and progress, but of the morbidity and decay that resulted from modernity's destructive power to sever the living roots and tendrils connecting artists to their people and 'life'.*
- Professor Hans Adolph Buhler felt that in modern Germany, the role of art had shifted from a nurturing role as a healing goddess into a whore who served the art market as well as the art intellectual.
- Kurt Karl Eberlein (1933) states: "art silences the voice of everyman" (i.e. is anti-democratic)
- *"How deeply the perverse Jewish spirit has penetrated German cultural life is shown in the frightening and horrifying forms of the Exhibition Of Degenerate Art in Munich . This has nothing at all to do with the suppression of artistic freedom and modern progress. On the contrary, the botched art works which were exhibited there and their creators are of yesterday and before yesterday. They are the senile representatives, no longer to be taken seriously, of a period that we have intellectually and politically overcome and whose monstrous, degenerate creations still haunt the field of plastic arts in our time."*  
Goebbels, November 26th, 1937



# Nazi Conceptions of Art



- Art must serve the ideal of collective social progress in several ways:
  - by reminding the German people of its 'eternal values' (bucolic, romantic scenes)
  - by expressing the most perfect characteristics of the Aryan race (emulation)





...by contributing to (or reflecting) technological innovation (applied arts)





Politics (in particular mass events) become infused with artistic qualities (staging)





# Concept of Modernism in Art

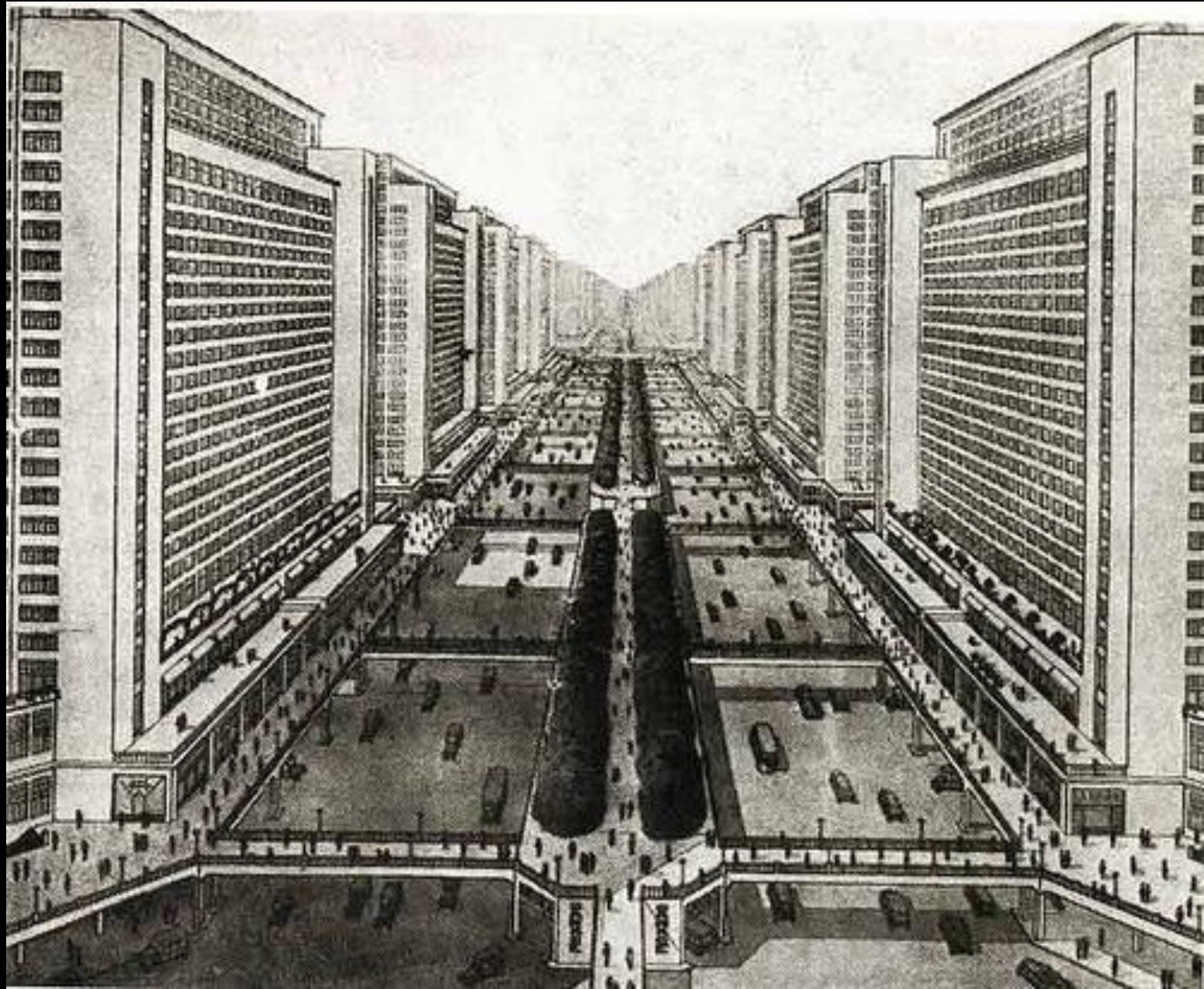
- Similarities between Soviet and Nazi concepts of art have led Western art theorists to surmise that both developments were 'anti-modernist', an aberration in Europe's cultural history; whereas there would be a straight line leading from impressionism to contemporary art.
- My impression is that fascism (and Soviet materialism) were the natural outcomes of the European march to modernity of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- In the view of the totalitarian regimes in Europe (and in the rest of the world) that were trying to create an alternate modernity/a new society, European modernism (in art) was nothing more than proof of 'The Decline of the West', forecast by Oswald Spengler in 1918. Fascism was supposed to 'save the West'.
- Despite wholesale rejection in the West of fascist modernism and nearly complete rejection of 'Soviet modernism', Western architecture implemented many of the positivist tenets of 'totalitarian' modernism, namely in the fields of architecture and other applied arts (industrial design etc.) – although the link with fascism is never acknowledged.

# Architectural Modernism in the West: Le Corbusier

La Ville Radieuse,  
1935.

Le Corbusier advocated using modern industrial techniques and strategies to devise a more efficient environment that would allow the transformation of society, the erasing of class differences and an increase in the standard of living.

He argued that this transformation was necessary to avoid the spectre of revolution that would otherwise shake society. He first presented his plans to Mussolini.







Proletarian vacation housing built in the 1930s at Prora, Rugen Island, Germany



# Le Corbusier: Unite d'Habitation a Marseille, 1947-52







Microrayon near Moscow, 1970s

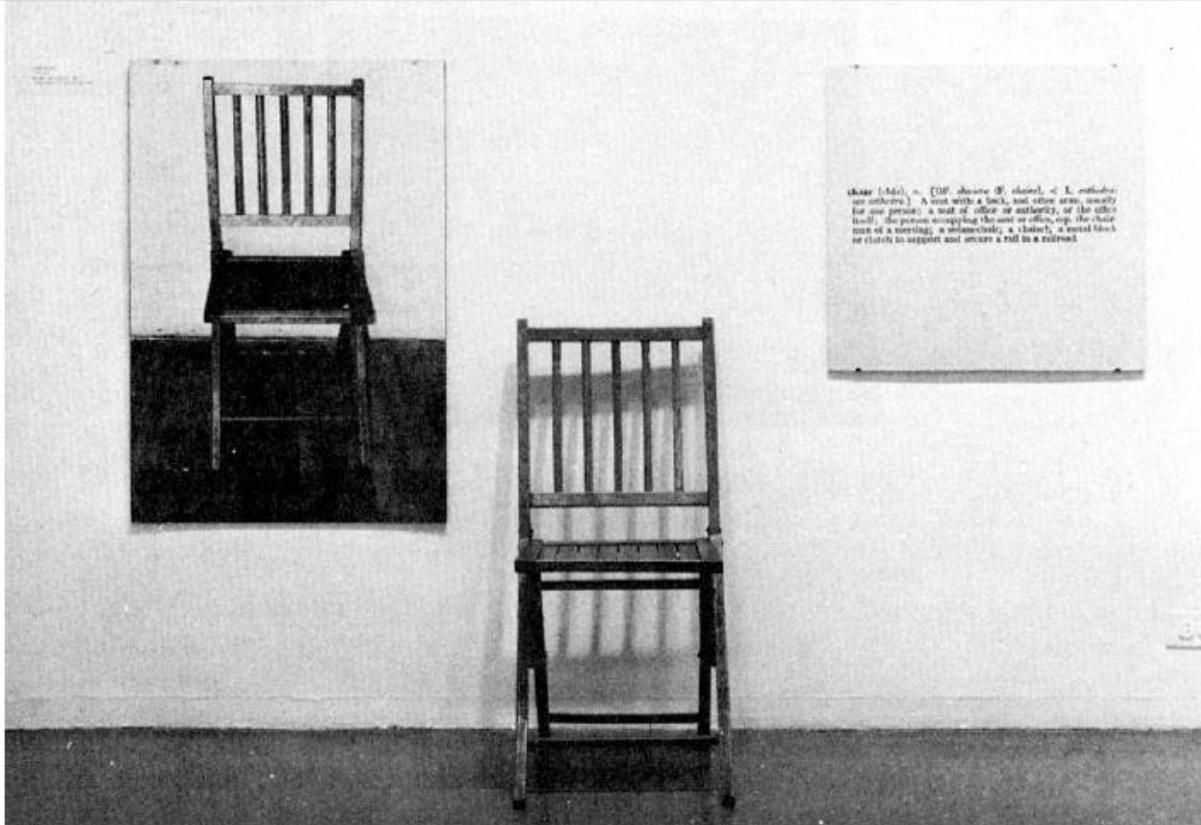




Microrayon in Kabul, 1970s



# After WW2: Modern Art attempts to break free



One and Three Chairs

Joseph Kosuth (1965)

A Mobil advertisement consisting of three panels. The left panel has a dark blue background with white text. The middle panel features a central illustration of a seated African man in traditional attire, with a background image of a crowd of people. The right panel has a dark blue background with white text. The Mobil logo is present at the bottom of each panel.

**M**obil's management in New York believes that its South African subsidiaries' sales to the police and military are but a small part of its total sales . . .

**Mobil**

TREASURES OF ANCIENT NIGERIA

Supported by a grant from **Mobil**

**T**otal denial of supplies to the police and military forces of a host country is hardly consistent with an image of responsible citizenship in that country.

**Mobil**

MetroMobiltan

Hans Haacke (1985)

... from its patrons





# Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk

Andrea Fraser (1989)

*...from the museum that defines it*



10 Inch Line Shaved on the Heads  
of Two Junkies Who Received a  
Shot of Heroin as Payment

Santiago Sierra (2000)

*... from its sacred aura*





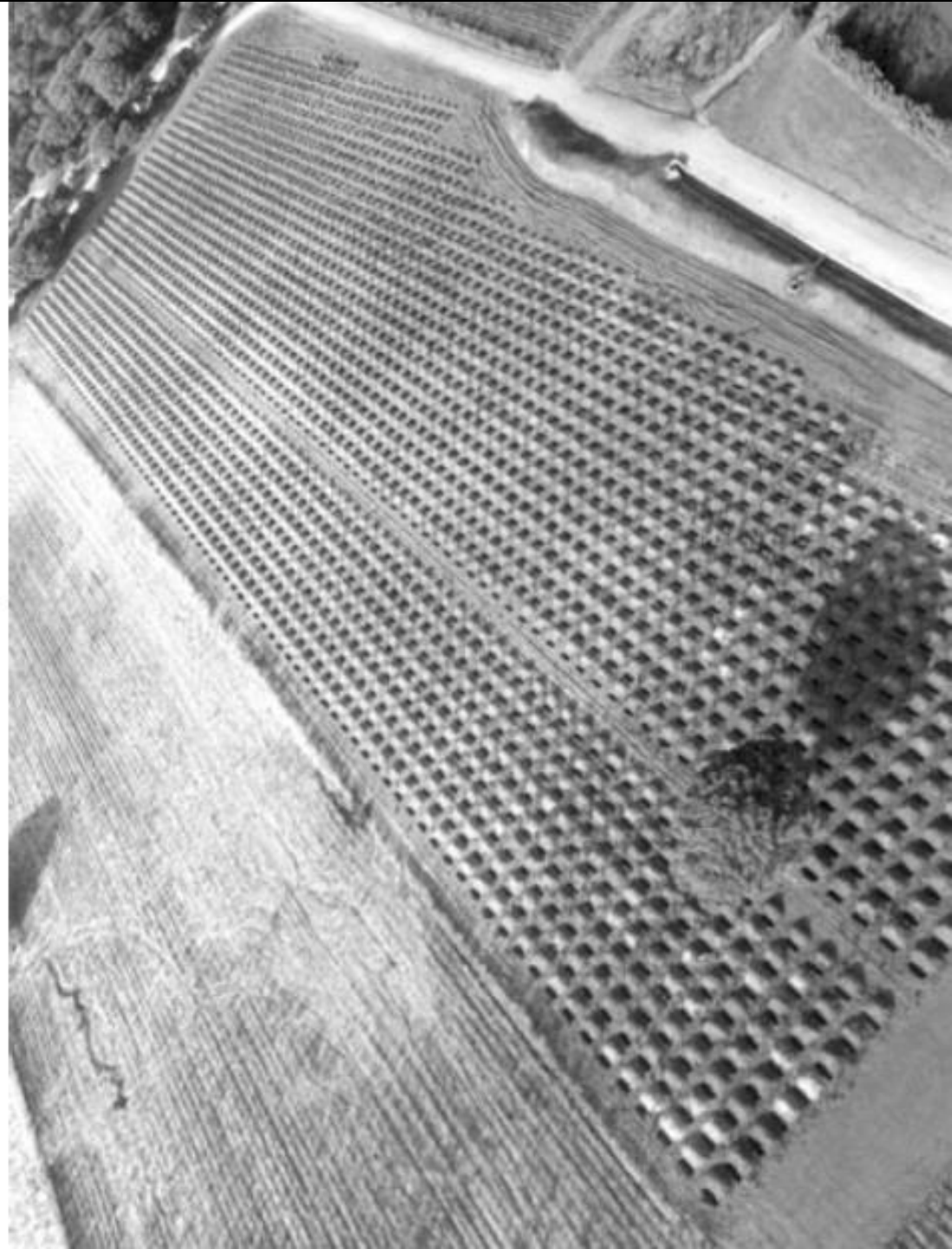
3000 Holes of  
180 x 15 x 15 cm each

Santiago Sierra (2002)

3000 Holes of  
180 x 15 x 15 cm each

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Santiago Sierra (2002)



Artists attempt to deviate the economic  
logic behind art, towards which the  
art world is conveniently blind





## Slave City

Atelier van Lieshout (2005)

Over-identification as a tool to achieve consciousness



*Jonas Staal: Burning child pornography magazines on the market square of Groningen*



What is the role of the artist today?



Enjoy Poverty

Renzo Martens (2010)

# Seminar 2B

Discussion about Art and Politics



# 'Bulldozer Art Exhibition' Moscow 1974

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© 1974 The New York Times Company

— NEW YORK, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16,

## RUSSIANS DISRUPT MODERN ART SHOW WITH BULLDOZERS

Unofficial Outside Exhibition  
Dispersed—Bystanders Hit  
and Paintings Confiscated

By **CHRISTOPHER S. WREN**  
*Special to The New York Times*

MOSCOW, Sept. 15—In a dramatic confrontation over nonconformist art, Soviet authorities used bulldozers, dump trucks and water-spraying trucks today to break up an outdoor exhibition of unofficial art as it was being set up in a vacant lot.

A crowd of several hundred people, among them artists, Western diplomats, correspondents and curious neighborhood residents, scattered when dump trucks and a pair of bulldozers overran what the artists had billed as the first autumn outdoor art show in the Soviet Union.

Two water trucks, normally used for street cleaning, sur-



A water truck pursuing crowd from the scene of an outdoor art show near Moscow after authorities halted exhibit

United Press International

# About the Bulldozer Art Exhibition

- The quality of the works shown was never discussed, only the politics of the show. Is this legitimate? And if the quality of the art was low, could one say: the art was crap, who cares if it was destroyed by water cannons and bulldozers?
- Under pressure of the international press, the Soviet authorities allowed a similar open space art exhibition by mostly the same artists to take place months later. Was this a Cold War instance of manipulation of the domain of art; and if so, is it legitimate?
- Aren't we still locked in a biased view of art, since Soviet Realism art backed by the Soviet State is still dismissed as propaganda, while the modern art (American expressionism etc) backed by the CIA (see article) is considered of the highest artistic standard?



# About the CIA Support of Modern Art

“The most important American weapon of the Cultural Cold War in Britain, as elsewhere, was the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF). Founded in 1950 at a conference held in Berlin with secret backing from the CIA, and subsequently head- quartered in Paris, the intellectual citadel of European neutralism, the CCF engaged in an extraordinary array of activities, including festivals, seminars and concerts, all designed to demonstrate to intellectuals the cultural advantages of political freedom.”

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The Cultural Cold War in Europe, p. 33

- Most reactions in the art world to the revelation of CIA support to modern art have been scandalized. The CIA ought not to interfere with the art world. What do you think?
- Now that the Soviet Empire has disappeared, is there any rationale for secret agencies to continue supporting Western contemporary art?

# What is Art?

- Groys: art must always be new, and it must be of paradoxical nature (and made by an artist). See his text 'On the New'
- This imposes a limitation on art, which is ultimately political because artists are steered in a particular direction in the development of their work
- Art produced for the market = art. Art produced for an ideal = propaganda. Why doesn't the latter type of art qualify as art anymore?

















# The Democratization of Art

*Can you think of arguments why the State should support the arts?*

- Nowadays the masses have found their way to the museums. While national history and the art associated with it are highly appreciated, there is conversely less interest in contemporary art. In some countries the masses even actively dislike contemporary art, as do the politicians they elect. What do you think of this development?
  - Are the masses necessarily right, according to the democratic principle?
  - Can one put the blame on the artists, for producing work that is not likable? On the contemporary art institutions, for not being a better interface between art & public? On the educational system, which does not prepare people for art? Or on the masses themselves, who remain eternally stupid?
  - Why do people who have little interest in art visit a museum?
- There are severe cuts in most Western countries art budgets, at national and local levels. Should the State continue to subsidize art that is not ready for the market, and if so, why?

# The Role of the Museum

- The Museum is an archive, a constant visual reference of what has been achieved in art.
- For the artist, it is an indication of what has already been done, and cannot be repeated “We can’t continue painting the fat ass of Venus” as Malevich said
- For the public and the State it is a temple, maybe the quintessential embodiment of civilization
- The Museum lays the boundaries of art (and what is not art)

Cultures without museums try to keep their cultural identity intact by constantly reproducing the past. They do this because they feel the threat of oblivion, of a complete loss of historical memory. Yet if the past is collected and preserved in museums, the replication of old styles, forms, conventions and traditions becomes unnecessary. In fact, the repetition of the old and traditional becomes socially forbidden, or at least an unrewarding practice



What happened to the craftsman?



# The Artist in Society

- The popular image of the artist today is that of an unskilled youth who makes unintelligible and non-aesthetic work, that is somehow appreciated by art insiders. ‘My child could make that too’ is a typical remark. They read about such infantile works being sold for millions of dollars at auctions and shake their heads.
  - Is art elitist? And if so, by design or of necessity?
  - Are skills and quality of execution important criteria by which to judge art? Or is it passé? And if so, why?
- Many artists, working in the line of institutional critique and relational esthetics, have sought to break the barrier between the art world and public life, by engaging people in the street, neighborhoods and specific target groups (disabled, children, immigrants...) in their art projects. Can the artist play a useful role as social worker, can art produce change at the community level?