

The Artist-Philosopher Manifesto

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We, the artists of the future, refuse to be the plaything of politics.

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Or, An Escape from the Infinite Regress of Art-for-Art's-Sake and the Ego-Artist Ideal in the Age of Internet Art

0.

We, the artists of the future, refuse to be the plaything of politics.

1.

Art hitherto has been mere 'art about', with the 'art' of art-making acting only as the means to the end of making artworks, whether it be traditional or avant-garde. We call for the 'art-of-art', which accepts the function of art as not only the product to be consumed but a creative process in its own right: we aim to bring back the focus of art from the exchange value of products to the experience valued by people. We call for art that is as natural as telling a joke; sometimes as profound as the first words uttered by an infant; art that is not only meaningful but also accessible.

2.

Art is always representation: primarily of the idea behind the work itself (whether it be the artist's own or something the collective channels through the artist in the artmaking process) and only secondarily what is depicted and created, as subjugate to intent. Art is about meaning. We reject the notion that art is

about the transcendence (read: escape) from humanity. We welcome the rational, the irrational, the real or the surreal, the true and the beautiful, all that which make up first-hand human experience. We welcome art for the human beings, not the market.

3.

Dada and kitsch both manifest as meaninglessness in art: the former, anti-art, an outright rejection of art as communicator of rational meaning; the latter, pseudo-art, a counterfeit sentiment clumsily packaged using symbols of the profound. Sugar-free or saccharine: take your pick. Pop art manifests as an attempt to break free from the vanguard of artist-elites through the very weapon of avant-garde itself: the notion of context-as-art is pushed to its technological extremes with the appropriated visage of the capital recontextualized as avant-garde art, exposing even the avant-garde movement itself as a variant form of commoditized art that derives all value from only the valuation itself.

4.

Dadaists rejected the monopoly of art by rationality (namely, the correct artistic experience as tacitly defined by the exchange value of art) and sought to decontextualize art entirely, favouring instead the intuition; the surrealists sought to hand the rein over to expression of the artist. The Situationists sought to synthesize Dada and the surreal through acknowledgement of the fact that both context (the subject matter of Dadaism) and intent (the subject matter of surrealism) are inseparable, ineradicable aspects of art, thus readjusting the focus (which had hitherto been centred on the commodity) to the overall experience of art. It presented the experience of life itself as the primary artistic medium: a shift from second hand experiences, or Spectacles, to first-hand experience.

5.

The failure of Situationism as a movement was its nihilistic nature as inherited from Dadaism. It was primarily a reactionary art movement that focused on the sentiment; ultimately it remained a mere variant of the movements it succeeded, the focus still on the same commodifying forces which always work to alienate reality through second hand representation. The Situationists themselves on the other hand embody the very ideal of the new artist which we aim to promote: the synthesis of that first-hand experience exalted by their theory with interpretation; artistic experience as a union of intuition and intellect; the process of art-making as the union of artistic intent and philosophical analysis.

6.

We the new artists, who are also the new philosophers, seek to reunite the philosophical with the artistic with the full understanding that art is never truly depoliticized or decontextualized. Only re-politicization through recontextualization is possible in art; decontextualization always entails recontextualization, which is necessarily reconceptualization. The collectability of our images is ironic, because their only value is in their very experience, even that of collection and admiration. We refuse to let art be mere currency, some placeholder for value as determined by the agreement of some collective such as critics of art. We reject commodity value as an integral aspect of art: let no work of art bow to its highest bidder. Artistic value cannot be bottled and sold en masse- it is a decentralized and individualistic experience unique to each individual.

7.

Our art does not need a gallery or a museum nor a critic to estimate its value for its viewers. Its essence is its idea, which can be moved, copied, stolen, reused, repurposed, freely; it functions more like language than art of the old, for which a frame or a marketplace, whether figurative or literal, were fixed and essential. We mean it when we call art a language. Art is a vessel for thought and beauty.

8.

We call for the return to art for philosophy's sake, and philosophy expressed through that art- a call to reinstate the link between the arm of intuition and the hand of intellect, severed at the advent of modernity and confused with one another through the development of postmodernism. Let this be clear: art and philosophy are different things, closely entwined. Let us free art from the responsibility of having to pretend it is philosophy and philosophy from the burden of the demand for universal beauty. We call for the ideal of the heroic artist who thinks, and the heroic philosopher who speaks in the tongue of man- the artistic philosopher. Let us make art which frees truth and beauty from the merciless grip of justice, so that they may be honored in their own right.