

A Radical Joke: Attack the Losers!! Up with the Immortal Machines!!

A Classified Ad seen in the New York Times:

SEEKING AN NEW ART-IFICIAL LANDSCAPE WITHOUT CULTURAL PRECEDENT

It used to be possible to talk about the New Art, in a similar manner to the discussion of the new math, the new sciences or the new religion, i.e. something proposed, discussed and critiqued for merit and usefulness. I'm talking about the worthiness of artwork in our daily lives, as an instructive tool, a memory concretized, or a warning of what's to come. The "New" artwork is delivered as a statement, a contribution, with an idea of progress, often logical, but sometimes arriving via the unconscious or even by spiritual means.

"Hey, its new! I think I'll try it! I want that!" Have *you* overheard this said recently at a gallery opening? These days, it's more common to talk about the new cell-phone, the new digital assistant, the new social networking app...we can call it the inundation of New Machine within the collective consciousness. How does artwork compete with the flash and immediacy of communication programmed into facebook? Discussions of the New Art as any sort of 'wave' have quietly excused themselves from contemporary parlance, and in particular, the New Art is a dangerous label, seldom used if used at all...for what does Art as an enterprise really mean, or actually do, in contemporary times? Or maybe Art just got redefined when we weren't looking. I sometimes see more talk about the Art of Design, the Art of Food Preparation, the Art of the Joke...the list goes on...than just Art of the Arts—which is in itself far too all encompassing (here is my personal plea for a return to Fine Art). Anyway, the difficulty for artists to deal with the New Art idea is because the new is a never-lasting condition—remember *tempus fugit*—and as the spirit of Goethe said in *Steppenwolf* by Hermann Hesse:

"We immortals do not like things to be taken seriously. We like joking. Seriousness, my young man, is an accident of time. It consists, I don't mind telling you in confidence, in putting too high a value on time. I, too, once put too high a value on time. For that reason I wished to be a hundred years old. In eternity, however, there is no time, you see. Eternity is a mere moment, just long enough for a joke..."

The audacity to identify progressiveness in the arts! That is the New in a nutshell. Therefore, is it because the New is such a Modernist, progressive ideal and the Arts are still suffering the extended die-out of Post-Modernism, we do not allow for a true re-investigation of progressive principles, asking for visual art to have some immediate relevance to society, and vice versa? Where is the ground-up artistic stimulus package?

No one can deny the importance of relating the presence of contemporary art to the timeline of history—we are all looking for a relative position in the known continuum—and I would just like to say that *being* the New, as in embodying the New as an idea of being 'flashy', never truly adds to contemporary relevance. And what about the future? Does saying anything about the Past touch upon the Now and lay a path to a well-considered Future? In

general, I promote seeking relevance to the contemporary viewer, to relationships between consciousness in life with depictions of feelings and ideas embodied in the artworks themselves. But back to the ghost of Goethe, one could ask: is eternity truly forever? Look at the developed art lineage from Immortal (Greek), to Mortal (Western/Protestant) and now forward onto creating the Perpetual Machine (the great online art Matrix)...

The great legacy of Post-Modernism is that we artists can never forget it or leave it behind us—one might call it a disturbance on the line of history. Artists will always have to work their way out of it, define their individualistic/group practices against it, to find a new audience outside themselves, outside a Post-Modern critique. At the heart of Post-Modernism is the unique combination of referencing the past, the History of Art, simultaneously deconstructing it as well as building the present, in a search for a quality, not a 'great truth', instead an idea that no one History is the history of us all. In post-modernist terms, any one, single narrative, relying on individualistic truth, can never represent the same idea, ideology or any grounded-in-science reference for everybody. The New isn't for everybody.

And, why can't we just rely on poetry to undermine truths and re-present ideas and history to us? That, at least, saves us from the trap of history being always written by the victorious, as poets fight the soft, never won battle (no offense to poets).

Our future is a constructed thing. We are builders of ideas, of images and of objects. We are currently building our own image into the image of the machine (remember, that always pesky New again...) which is actually not physical, like us. Does the machine itself realize this...yet? Will the New Future-Immortal Man-Machine hybrid, have the same knowledge of fleeting time that we have today? For there is no New when the passage of time means nothing. On an individual level, how far back does your own history run? And, how far ahead in the future do you see the relevance of your own artwork?

In relation to the 'absence' of the New Art—the urge to propose, to discuss and critique—there is also the new audience, the attribute of the unknown viewer. So maybe, all of us artists currently making Art, and especially that so-called New Art, are going about it all wrong—maybe we should be making art for the Immortal Machines...

The List for the Future-Now:

1. The New is a Never-Lasting Idiom
2. Living the Idea of the New is a Dangerous Position
3. Complete Acceptance, then Forgiveness of Post-Modernism
5. From the Audience of the Bourgeois to the A.I. Machine—The Future Audience
6. One-Step Beyond Phenomenology: reality not only defined by experiences, but also by distinction of belief in a self-created reality (hence, machines will 'live' in the world that is created for them, as parallel to the world we create for ourselves).

-SB, Oakland, CA - 2009