

# The Art Of the Great Dictators

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*The Art of the Great Dictators*

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*O brood O muse upon my mighty subject  
like a holy hen upon the nest of night.  
O ponder the fascism of the heart”*  
—William H. Gass





## INTRODUCTION

How could the notes for such an ambitious work as *The Art of the Great Dictators* amount to so little? It was to be immense, a complete, multi-volume register of names and deeds, a Deuteronomous compendium of evidentiary casework, a liturgy of accommodation, complicity, and the self-destructive acquiescence to the greater tides of human history.

The cognominal volume before you is a piddling, shallow shadow; one is given precious time for immersion, only a flitting-along-the-surface-of. Surely we can imagine the depths of this ancient lakebed, but the actual benthonic topography—*benthos*, the depths, a companion, perhaps to *logos*, etc.—would no doubt surprise us, with more subtle ridges and hidden sinks of brackish detritus.

A canonical story places S.A. Neary with a colleague at a private viewing of an exhibition of portraits by Egon Schiele at New York's Neue Galerie, arguing over whether or not Schiele himself was the student that displaced the young Hitler at the Vienna School of Arts. The academic style of Neary has always been to extrapolate from a single example a universal principle and argue until all avenues of casuistry had

been exhausted. It has fostered a rich career of dead ends and apologia.

Unconvinced after a time, she salvaged her motif into a further theory, opposing the world-political archetypes of the Artist and the Collector, applying it to game theory with little critical success. A pattern emerges: The foundational essay was never completed, and only parts of it survive. These parts have been subsumed into the following work, interspersed as needed. Expert eyes are required, for the most part, to decipher the references and judge what is true and what is fabricated, but an unappetizing gripping-of-the-gut should arise for the lay reader as well, who will come away with a sense of it.

Although the dialectic of the Artist and Collector, *cum* and *contra*, was never directly applied by Neary to her early hypothesis on the “great dictators”, snug though the fit may have been, it acts as a more mature keystone, to both the work and the failure of its undertaking. In Neary’s own words, “The Collector cannot comprehend the Artist, is easily overwhelmed by that which they do not possess, jealous always of others whose bore no advantage but an earlier birth or more progenitous wealth.” This is the generative corpuscle that sits amid her cloud of judging and ignobling, of absolute knowledge and the most shameful perspicacity.

There is, further, a parable that explains all of this: There existed on the frontier plain of some hormonal nation a homestead, properly a mansion, though a mansion on the plains is itself a contradiction. Built to exacting specification and forsaking all mannerist tendencies in its façade, the final structure rose

to two-and-a-half stories, taller than any building for hundreds of miles. There were more than ten bedrooms labeled on the blueprints, including several suites with kitchenettes; a library that would have to hold multiple editions of the same works to be filled with all of the books that existed upon the plains; and many further rooms designed for every kind of leisure, billiards and knitting, etc., never more than one to a room. There were no distinct architectural features of any of the rooms, merely, again, the labels on the plans. And in the whole of the house, the whole of the estate, there was not a single stick of furniture, not the most humble device-of-amusement. In truth, it was not even clear to those who had built the house to whom it belonged, or, less specifically, whom the intended occupant or occupants were. They were not sure whether to be envious the man or woman who would fill those rooms and halls, who could paper those walls, or pity the man or woman who had mistaken space for wealth, ability for necessity, and who lacked the courage to detect his or her own sphere.

Neary could see the root of the problem in Modigliani, but also in the Ajanta frescoes. It was a problem of ownership. Patronage itself was a petty tool of the petty tyrant, as was acetic denial. Ideology was, is, inescapable; facets were, are, slippery. How, when sketching a tree, was one to know which branch to follow from the trunk, at which bud or needle to terminate? How then to retrace without the obvious defects? She was overwhelmed by the particular, and when the universal appeared to her at last, opaque and smooth, she found it was unable to

be described save for the position and speed of every atom. There are theories that the universe, at scale, possesses similar smooth qualities. It would then be an affront to science if the universe, from the outside, turned out to be featureless and inert. What then would be the point? This has always been a prime motivation. This is the power of Malevich's Square, of Rodchenko's primitive colorfields, the end of pure art. How can a totality be anything but fully realized? (This is the trapfall of the Collector.) That a picture can be rendered at all from the outside is of crucial importance to the enterprise, on the whole; it is often a fantasy to be outside of history, nudging it along. History also—Neary reminds us, in a cynical mood—“proceeds by pentimento, instead of by panel.”

Neary's determination to complete—or really even begin—*The Art of the Great Dictators* withered after a time in the face of competition. Some who knew her better have suggested that she was devastated a reading of Bolaño's *Nazi Literature in the Americas*, feeling he had “danced around my thesis without giving it the dignity of eye contact”. She felt herself surrounded by shoddy reproductions of a platonic object to which only she had access. She was particularly indignant when she encountered Žižek and would parrot him endlessly, as he had, she felt, done her: “The Collector seeks an ultimate aesthetic experience, a higher level of ownership that can only attained by total charity, a total denial of consumption: achieving the aesthetic via the ascetic.” The joy of near-homophony is so apparently out of place, so apparently spiteful. She found him impossibly dense, and her epiphytic responses did not seek at all to clarify. To clarify

would have been to exalt, she might have said; she wanted mere reproduction. She would therefore, by any classification, belong to that class that deals not in the beauty of minor difference, but exists in enervated moral declarations against it. Contrast is seen as a threat. Neary has identified herself as a Collector. She is aware that she herself lacks the difference to be unique, but also attempts to hide in plain view her attempts to coerce the works of others into a whole which only she can claim authorship over.

After a time, she ceased citing sources at all.

There are other threads, all clumsily woven. You will no doubt pick up on some and, at no great harm to yourself, pass carelessly over others.

*The Art of the Great Dictators* is not an unfinished book; it is a book never earnestly begun, utterly amorphous and orphaned, notes and fodder for a thesis that, brought to bear, would not suffer the faintest of blows. It frankly disgusts me because it is not more revolting. The framing suggests a joke in the crudest sense, an initial, ridiculous imbalance and a suspicious tension. But it has neither resolution nor resolve. It leaves one with a certain retching of the diaphragm, an unease felt in the nerve endings of your bicuspid, perfectly natural reactions to the types of contradiction at play. I have tried, in editing, to make a poetry of contained malignancies, metastatic in the raw materials. I have barely touched on the horrors, the morbid counts, and it will remain so. I, like Neary, have never been able to look it in the eye, and that makes me a damn poor Artist, if one at all. But perhaps there is redemption in the following register, like Bolaño's later litany or the microscopic

and morbid accounts of Feneon or Bernhard. I could make a case for the bare, that the essence of anything is neutral. But I could not venture it with such a weak stomach.

Neary's preferred etiological account of *The Art of the Great Dictators* centers on a trip taken to Bucharest in the early 1980s. Out for a walk, she happened across a lone goat in the overgrown yard of a small apartment building—no more than eighteen units—in the local brutalist palette. Stepping from behind a pile of discarded mattresses was a second, and then a third, and, gradually, a thin wire fence came into focus and collapsed the illusion into a single coherent image, that of the abiding failure of Modernism.

I, however, call bullshit on the entire story. I have seen the photo; they are cows.

*Roths, December '17*

# THE ART OF THE GREAT DICTATORS

It begins with a salvo:

Georg Kolbe attended the funeral of Max Liebermann, whose death went unreported by the state media.

Kolbe, who would present a bust of Franco to Hitler for his birthday.

That Franz Marc painted camouflage for the Germans in World War I.

And died right before the government agreed to pardon several notable artists from military duty.

Marc, that, "I cannot think of any better way toward an animalization of art, as I would call it, than the creation of animal image."

(And that the style of Kandinsky, Marc felt, was most effective from greater than 2000 meters. Cite.)

That Schlemmer had also painted camouflage for the Germans in World War I.

And died hiding from the Nazis near the Swiss border.

“This is not our debacle!”

*His* friend, the musician August Kubizek.

That Germany’s empty pavilion at the 1948 Biennale was used to house a collection of Impressionist paintings.

Slevogt, an official painter of the front in World War I.

Slevogt’s final mural, destroyed by bombs during World War II.

Felixmüller’s Berlin studio, the same.

That Orłowski fought in the Kościuszko Uprising.

Oscar Schlemmer, who was apparently told by Karl Hofer that “there are apparently some decent people among the Nazis.” Cite.

Rabinsky, who was really quite mad, proclaimed that artists could command fire and thus could not be burned accordingly.

Bonatz and Tesserow, who maintained that traditionalism was the way forward, as if nothing had happened.

“All liberties are accepted in art except those that are ill-defined.”

That Mies van Der Rohe had been regrettably accommodating.

“Architecture should be considered independent of the political climate.” Cite.

There can be no scope without ambition, no ambition without an ought, no ought without an is, etc.

Kant, who called painting a completely futile argument for a people already subject to civil law.

Westermarck, who in Kant’s Dice referred to any given Totalitarian as “Kant with different metaphysics.”

*Fascism has a short family tree.*

The inevitable crumbling of the mythological edifice.

At least three volumes with good, solid spines.

Had Hobbes been right?

Arendt. In Nietzsche’s words, what must be overcome are the philosophers, those whose life is an experiment of cognition; they must be taught how to cope.

That the Futurists despised the Bolsheviks, ultimately.

The Collector is arguably the greater aesthete of the

two; he can be objective, which is why he believes his judgement to be superior, even as pride of ownership inflicts its petty biases under his nose. This is but one of several contradictions in his character. ‡

Either may hoard the works of others. The one to impose himself on them. The other to hide them, to eliminate competing visions. The latter will drive himself mad comparing himself to others; he will laden [sic] himself with the bricolaged myths of disparate schools. The Artist is a natural polytheist, but he must subvert his gods in order to attract converts; few are the congregants who will perform mass to multi-headed cosmogonies and uncertain priests. Agnosticism inspires not even the agnostic. ‡

Eco, that behind a regime and its ideology there is always a way of thinking and feeling, a group of cultural habits, of obscure instincts and unfathomable drives. Placement of quotations?

Someone in a hundred years will write a book about him, and he'll still be a villain, but we will once again be able to be fascinated by him, and we'll all then be drinking from Hitler's teacups.

What I struggle with is scope and intensity.

That Toulouse-Lautrec may have dawdled at the door of an Action Française meeting.

Matyas Rakosi had, as later evidence suggests, applied to the Hungarian Royal Drawing School in 1910,

following in the footsteps of János Vaszary, whom he greatly admired.

There is no greater theory at play.

Rakosi, that “The current state of art criticism, as a sort of dialectical hermeneutics, grounds us in the canon, and there is no canon without the dust of history to give it the proper patina.” Cite.

The radical nationalism of the *Młoda Polska*.

The sixteen issues of *Sztuka i Naród* published in Poland during the war.

Richter, canonically, that “the Imperial War necessitated Dada; the next one would kill it.” Cite.

The non-ideological Polish Constructivists; the traditionalism of Rytm. Analogs of Suprematism.

Why any less ideological?

Moholy-Nagy, that “Constructivism is neither proletarian nor capitalist. Constructivism is primordial, without class and without ancestor.” Cite.

The short life of Socialist Realism in Poland.

History in the years since has turned empirical; much like the hard sciences, it seeks models and explanations rather than facts. A *working* knowledge is what is important. Can one apply the model and get

results? It is not only fair to say that the atomic bomb and the horrors of the Gulag must be given credit for postmodernism. There is no abstraction without annihilation. Something must be given over. ‡

That Paul de Man's intentions do not matter as much as some purport.

Danta, that "post-revolution Bucharest is burdened with unfinished buildings."

It is enough, even preferable, to see the brushstrokes.

It is canonically accepted that the Estonian landscapist Heffler died in Petrograd during the Russian civil war. He was 65, and as such, it may have no significance.

The Soviet writer Raspútin, born in 1937 [...] suffered difficulties, like all subsequent Kafkas.

A damned list is all. Orwell on his deathbed stuff.

Or, rather, all brushstrokes.

The Hungarian avant-garde burned out from producing so many poster images for the Republic of Councils.

And then, after the overthrow, did their best work in exile.

Ágoston, being a writer rather than a painter, offered the avant-garde no position in his government.

That same Ágoston who translated Engels pseudonymously.

A. Blok's father had been a constitutional scholar in Warsaw. What constitution, precisely?

Blok, who, in verse, put Christ avant-garde the Red Army.

"Who *couldn't* walk on the Neva?"

No jokes.

'Lenin as a critic of Tolstoy'

"We at least acted on what we believed and did our utmost. It's just that in the end we turned out to be ordinary men. Ordinary men with no special gifts of insight. It was simply our misfortune to have been ordinary men during such times." \*

Ende, who had been forbidden by the Reich Chamber of Culture to procure supplies, and who was later conscripted into the Luftwaffe.

Morelli, on, "[P]ainters and writers who [...] attempt a work which may seem alien or antagonistic to the time and history surrounding them, and which nonetheless includes it, explains it, and in the last analysis orients it towards a transcendence within whose limits man is waiting."

"Futurism was the real Russian revolution."

This is not true.

“It is not too hard to drunkenly stumble into a reading of Nietzsche in which the drive of the Übermensch is unexpectedly awakened in your soul, the role of the tyrant of the human spirit yours for the taken if you are willing to accept eternal rebirth and the pains of perpetual loss.”

Such an inconsequential concept, the Übermensch. He wouldn't have wished it on us.

A first-person account.

Nietzsche, on the “tyrant of the spirit”.

Rüdiger Safranski, Nietzsche on the “artist-tyrant.”

The notion that Hitler had been driven by his failure as an artist only reached Soviet Russia under Khrushchev, a man who “had no imagination”. Cite. Shortly thereafter, a document began circulating, alleged to be excerpts from Stalin's own rejection letter(s) from the Imperial Academy [though it is far more likely to have been Kazan].

*... a vivid attack on dimensionality ... poor command of blue ... you do not swim through light; it is not liquid! ... visible pencil outlines ... bilious and hurried ...*

Bold certain interested passages, the rest, footnote in-line in tiny font and lighter text.

“An artist cannot be trusted to have correct political opinions.”

Something must be said, of course, about the stolen art of the Nazis, though not what they might think.

The dictator stands as the embodiment of all social guilt, the worst of our nature become flesh, the reification of our demons ruling over us; they are what we deserve, and what we nonetheless must resist.

“You artists claim to be dedicated to an anti-bourgeois life. Well, the hour has now come to stop merely posing and to take action, to turn your art into a weapon.”

Aesthetics is leisure; design is work. Goes a saying.

There are some animals incapable of biting, even when threatened.

The cover should feature Lenin in a long coat, holding a brush. Is it fair to him? The democrat?

*... begin with a less foreign anatomy ... that gray is not a primary color and should not be treated as such ... good ideas are needed in advertising ... levels and elevations ... away from suffering the redness ...*

A collector believes that a thing can only be fully aesthetized if it is owned, that the object must belong to in order to be given proper freedom. It is imperative, to the collector, that a work be gifted

rather than available as a natural resource, or that, like a natural resource, it must be owned by few to be received by many. ‡

As with most disputes between Russian intellectuals, it began with differing interpretations of Chernyshevsky. Bogdanov and Lenin sat across from one another; Gorky was off somewhere, preening. †

That for a while there was a pro-Expressionist contingent of the National Socialist Party with the ear and sympathies of Goebbels.

That Metzinger had been regrettably accommodating.

That Gleizes had been complicit.

That Wächtler had died of old age.

The Berlin Fire Brigade, who burned paintings, on occasion. Kallman's, et al. Did Bradbury know this? Surely.

Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, p. 706. "The free development of individualities [...] corresponds to the artistic, scientific etc. development of the individuals in the time set free, and with the means created, for all of them."

Why bring him into this? A bone to pick.

Cendrars, admitting proudly that "I'm not an

extraordinary worker, I'm an extraordinary daydreamer."

The search for Utopia.

Orwell, "Nearly all creators of Utopia have resembled the man who has toothache, and therefore thinks happiness consists in not having toothache."

Franco's ultimate leniency. For some. Miró was mostly unencumbered. Tàpies, Sara, Millares, etc. For some.

That Windisch had been regrettably accommodating.

Society of Easel Artists/  
*Obschestvo Stankovistov*

But avoid a red and black motif.

"If you believe anything the man said, he understood very well the difference between public and private selves, and the part of him that felt there was some virtue in what they did was very clearly the private self, the one that he referred to often as being 'impotent.'" \*

Speaking of no one in particular. \*

Strategies for effective revolution took strange forms. Pavelodov, a future member of the Mezhraiontsy, self-published a short polemic, *The Biding Joker*, in 1906, seeking to frame humor as an ambush weapon for radicals. \*\*\*

“...certain miscalculations having occurred and certain funds being surreptitiously misallocated, the prime minister attempted to liquidate some of his country’s cultural assets, and had heeded well the advice of a foreign market expert, though not in the intended spirit, that art sells better once the artist is dead.”

No jokes, but tensions have to be managed. It’s not enough to be a damned optimist.

... *on a white field.*  
Or *a white ground*, as it were.

Franco had once shared a hotel with Modigliani, though the two had no knowledge of or contact with one another. It has been thoroughly concluded that the “brooding young Spaniard” in Modigliani’s diaries must indeed be someone else; the dates were deemed incompatible.

Stelletsy was stranded abroad in 1914 at the outbreak of WWI. He never returned, and subsisted mostly on commissioned icons in private residences. He refused Diaghilev.

O. Brik, who wrote the script to 1928’s *Storm Over Asia*. Where was Lily?

Orwell, who noted Dali’s timely vacation to Italy as the Spanish Civil War broke out.

“During the Spanish Civil War he astutely avoids taking sides, and makes a trip to Italy.”

On Orwell’s deathbed...

Dali eventually settled outside of Monterey; a small museum remains, mostly reproductions and prints.

Hitler’s favorite painter was reportedly the Symbolist, Franz von Stuck.

Jung, who called von Stuck’s work a perfect “mixture of anxiety and lust”. Cite.

Klee and Kandinsky, both having been taught by von Stuck at various times.

Goebbels, having bought paintings by von Stuck, as late as 1938.

Ziegler, jealous, also holds this claim.

The connection between Höger and Mackensen, Mackensen and Rilke.

Mackensen’s role at the Nordische Kunsthochschule.

It is not greed, per se, that drives the Collector; it is an honest, as best as can be told, drive that the cruelty of sole ownership is necessary. It is altogether separate from the Hobbesian monarchism that is said to be efficient through the consolidation of power and interests. It is true, the dictator subscribers to this as

well; he knows well that the goal of democracy is far from rational truth, from reasoned decision making. ‡

Pinochet burned books in 1973. And Parra's theater.

*... a striking resemblance to your mother, which is troubling ...*

Under the worst conditions, barriers between artist and patron broke down in the service of this continuation; viewing became a collaborative experience, requiring active participation by both parties, not to mention shared risk. Viewing a banned work—and these charges were frequently brought, often falsely—could result in prison time, or, if the artist was wanted for crimes against the state, death. Production and ownership becomes a pact, rather than a contract, with the qualities of an oath. ‡

Write about: Artistic discourse a necessary precondition to revolution. Does this hold?

Captured and distraught, the artist Laclau absentmindedly drew self-portraits on the paper targets the enemy had ordered him to illustrate, and was shot in the yard out of habit.

Rakosi greatly admired János Vaszary. Cite.

That de Mazia had traded treasury bonds for three minor Modiglianis and a lesser-known Seurat, banking on their return at auction in case of economic catastrophe. This was discovered some time after his assassination.

“We have freed art from religion, but now it rejects that state; what will become of art without a master?”

That for a while, the easel and the cross were interchangeable.

Lotty Rosenfeld, who painted crosses on the street outside the palace where Allende was killed.

“Art must not be the register of history in Numbers; it must instead be the fire of Revelation.” Remove quotations.

“I’ve seen a horse, now show me something else!”

Art that aspires to the future is dated.

Hitler personally hated Dix. *Personally.*

Dalí’s *Hitler Masturbating.*

“He attracted me only as an object of my mad imaginings and because I saw him as a man uniquely capable of turning things completely upside down.”

There were, beginning in Russia around the turn of the century and lasting in Central Europe until the early 1970s, active political sects of Saint-Simonians working for (frequently) and against (seldom) various fascistic parties. Certainly there was still the sting of the deposed monarch, and the hope for an ultimate union of industry, art, and science in the service of the regent. Giovanni Gentile, a self-styled Hegelian,

belonged to a sort of cult of Saint-Simon, and denied the lineage of thinkers like Sorel in his development of his Actual Idealism. \*\*

Extant today as a techno-phobic cult of sorts. \*\*

“It is impossible to be an artist without simultaneously being a utopian, and there is no room for utopia yet; we bear a burden for the past, and utopian thought denies this by skipping the process of struggle and restitution for an end goal that the artist feels we are somehow deserving of.”

Too much has been said already about degenerate art.

Write about: Contemporary art, the single, atomistic images reflective only of their creators. The mirror to the world turned on a solitary figure.

Adorno, that “we behave aesthetically the moment we—to put it quite bluntly—are not realistic, the moment we do not wisely consider our advantage our progress or whatever goals we may have but, rather, surrender ourselves to something that is-in-itself, or at least presents itself thus, without regard for the context of purposes[.]”

Influence is always more difficult to prove than membership, at least until the 20th century. There are cases to be made that the contrary is now true. \*\*

The authoritarian bent of the Saint-Simonians, their soreness, even still, at the French revolution. \*\*

That Piłsudski reportedly shed tears over the disbanding of the Formists. At least one complementary letter to Czyżewski has been lost to history.

The return letter from Ceașescu to Dalí being reportedly owned for a while by Paul Éluard.

A rumor that the all-but-deposed Ceașescu lived for months in the tunnels below Bucharest, writing pleading letters to Václav Havel.

That surrealism is always contained within realism was largely lost on Ceașescu.

All over Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the trinity of art, science, and industry cropped up, a dream not quite suited to the febrile masses. It would be the artists who imagine the future, the scientists who engineer solutions toward this future, and the industrialist, humble as he was, who would figure out modes of mass production, making a tidy sum as his recompense for the short rope of his glory. \*\*

Indeed, the artists proved unreliable, and so the role was often assumed.

There is, in the Catholic hierarchy, a Saint Simon (or Simeon). Web pages dedicated to him have few to no comments. He is, as best we can tell, the saint of nothing in particular. His feast day is February 18. The Comte was born in October. \*\*

The Saint-Simonians, having achieved purchased several newspapers a taken on a religious timbre, were banned in France in 1832. They sputtered, having manufactured revelations in Africa, and were presumed finished within a decade. \*\*

Pockets flourished in Germany and Eastern Europe, under careful redoubt. \*\*

Associates of Marx and Engels, etc. The vision of art, science, and industry. Who controlled the latter and influenced the former was malleable, and allowed them to flourish in most conditions, shielded from the worst zeal by their temperaments. \*\*

Mussolini so admired his nose. \*\*

Dali's *Six Apparitions of Lenin on a Piano*.

Dali's *Evocation of an Appearance of Lenin*.

Fascination is complicity. Perhaps the worst form.

Or perhaps, *Philosophical Opinions of Gifted Nazis: A Thorough Compendium*. \*

*The Compendium* should not lapse into excuses. \*

Write about: The unwriteable; the unpaintable; the corpses of children. \*

“What is considered by many to be a unique self is, genetics aside, little more than a differing history of stimuli between two individuals, give or take

the quantum-style randomness that may overtake decision making when faced with an identical set of stimuli [...]. What I mean to posit is that the artist is a conduit for these stimuli, but that does in no way imply that a work of theirs will transfer the ideology in question to another individual, with her or his own history of stimuli [...].” \*

Heroes and anti-heroes. *Sublimation*.

That frequently substituting semiotic modes can be useful as a means of subverting power.

“They claim the square, the primary colors. We claim only defense!” Cite.

Benjamin notes that the concepts which are introduced into the theory of art in what follows differs from the more familiar terms in that they are completely useless for the purposes of Fascism. Cite.

That Reich Minister Bernhard Rust, as late as the summer 1936, publicly professed that Emil Nolde was the “greatest living German painter.”

That the Nazi Foreign Ministry considered a tolerant approach to modern art, on the grounds that it would allow for easier foreign relations.

Goebbels reportedly hated “kitsch”.

That no fewer than a handful of Italian diplomats bent the ear of Karl Hanke hoping for a more lenient

German attitude toward modernism.

Gass, that Fascism is attractive in part because there is so much of the tendency to treat the world as a work of art.

*All comparisons are lame.* German Proverb.

Konrad Wörle had been killed in a mercenary action outside of the former George Bernheim Gallery on the Rue Laffitte, lured there by a showing of his early charcoal sketches. Leger had been on the guest list, but had died the previous year.

Too much has been said already about degenerate art.

Pechstein's exile in Pomerania.

That Pechstein had, nevertheless, been regrettably accommodating.

"Serious attacks on three-dimensional space serve opaque ends; it does nothing to reinforce moral character and only confuses the ones it is intended to engage. Better to share a joke, having lost nothing. The joker will have his turn when the laughter is loudest. It is a careful romp until then. He must remain credible while subverting himself to popular understanding. This can be exhausting. It is not enough to be jovial. One can't only pop forth from the avantists, nor play at fire with the atavists. One cannot sit on a merely similar piece of furniture and call it the same. These small progressive acts grant favors." \*\*\*

The literature of the Five Year Plan.

Category:

Taxa:

What they really wanted to do, you know, was paint.

See:

That Nagy, it is said, held his brush somewhat limply.

That Antonescu fancied himself the Gauguin of the Carpathians with his bold brush strokes.

That Anton Mussert hid Vermeers from the Germans, all the while suspicious of his command of light.

Bruner/Postman, "It is conceivable that certain kinds of symbols may lead not to positive but to negative accentuation or no accentuation at all."

He later grew suspicious of the Old Masters.

The further rumors that the young Stalin had traced lines from a camera obscura.

Difference is not the stuff of identify, but rather the substance of lack. They believe an artist sets out to conceive of a totality by which they are inevitably disappointed, and lack the stomach to face this themselves. They see tiny animals along the shore, and would rather have them die in a cage, unattended, than to exist free and unappreciated. Freedom and appreciation are irreconcilable. \*\*\*

That the first director of the Führer-museum saved several paintings by Kokoschka and Dix from certain destruction.

It begins with a sincere joke; the language quickly breaks down from there. \*\*\*

“It is the self-defense of an entire society which is unable to generate a new history and is hence condemned to keep on rehashing past history to prove its own existence, or even to prove its own crimes.” \*

Obradovich, “The Revolution’s fiery wheel / will not stop halfway.”

Bogoroz, as Tan, credited the October revolution as inspiring the revitalization of the Chukchi, a remote Northern tribe, that he had studied before the war. This, in no small part to retain his standing, with no pro-Party roots to stand on.

Tatlin’s *Monument to the Third International*, never built.

Joseph Karakis joined the Red Army in 1919, well before becoming one of the Soviet Union’s most respected and proliferate architects and planners. He was briefly taught by Tatlin in Kiev, some decade later.

Javier Barrena’s, *The Melting Face of Power: Surrealism Versus Fascism in the West*.

Sartre's meaning when he says, Evil is also simply called the imaginative.

ARTIST: I am simultaneously irreplaceable and expendable, for one talent can always be replaced by another; nothing is essential!

WORKER: A pity!

As artists abandoned the object, there were men willing to take their place.

Gustav Klutskis maintained his siding with the people, even as Stalin grew to dominate them visually on his posters.

*At the End of the Five-Year Plan, 1932*

"Between Rembrandt and the dog, I choose the dog."

Camus, relating a story: Stalin commanded Krupskaya to cease all criticisms of else he would appoint Lenin another widow.

Artistic irony is a limp weapon.

Lissitzky, Primitive utilitarianism is far from being our doctrine.

*Lévy front iskústva*, the Left Front of Art.

The November Group. Its disbanding in 1933.

That Pechstein had been regrettably accomodating.

The varnish factory of Dr. Herberts, employing Schlemmer, Baumeister, Krause, and others.

Baumeister's works were not banned until a full eight years after he was stripped of his post at the Städel.

The writer and art critic Eugenio d'Ors was regrettably accommodating.

The portrait of Eugenio d'Ors by Ramon Casas.

Bogdanov reiterated Lenin's own concern, the lack of "proletariat yeast" in Russia's "peasant dough". Or was it the other way around? Lenin was fond of baking metaphors. Bogdanov wondered where the yeast had come from, so suddenly. Lenin pointed out that bacteria multiply on a tighter timeline, making a slight toward Bogdanov. Lenin may have been in Switzerland at the time. This may have taken place via mail. No Zimmerwaldian postmarks have been located. Where was Gorky? Black pawn to knight four. Yes, this is it, isn't it?

*The government should have the tastes of the middle class.*

The artist under the State taken to be the vanishing mediator.

That the world was culpable, that there were strands reaching back to the dawn of sapiens, that the future was bound up in it.

Žižek, In the monster of the Party, the negative force of dissidence must recognize an entity on which hangs its own ontological consistency, an entity that confers meaning upon its activity—in other words, its essence.

One has the feeling they need dissidents.

As obvious as repugnant.

That Céline had been censored by the Nazis. Because his anti-Semitic writings were too vulgar.

The dictator as failed artist.

He needs us as adversaries, but it is not so flattering as you think.

Gaddis, that the artist must approach his work in the same frame of mind in which the criminal commits his deed.

Or not a criminal, but a vigilante.

The artist as failed dictator.

Cendrars, Where he does not reproduce himself in one specificity, but produces his totality?

A subplot.

The dictator could now be seen, in light of the contemporary, as an artist in want of an object.

“Objects were discredited.” Not yet.

Fragmented ideologies were as good as none at all.

The regret that they broke with the Fauvists at all.

Write about: How science ultimately betrayed us / A complicit abstraction.

What if they threw a biennale and no one came?

“What happened was that, for the first time in history, art moved faster than the tastes of its patrons.”

“The people have no taste: only eyes.”

Actual Idealism, Giovanni Gentile felt, in order to be a viable philosophy, must also propose an aesthetic sensibility in order to endure opposition.

Wladyslaw Strzeminski, that, “Adapting old form to new content, a feature characteristic of Expressionism—is fundamentally wrong. This is why the task of art is to go deeper into the notion of form in order to gain a new content. Content is born out of form. This is a sure way, but difficult.”

Udaltsova, who brought Cubism to pre-revolutionary Russia.

To see a problem from all sides.

The ruin of disaccumulation.

Béla Kun had none of the proclivities.

Can I escape Europe? Not in three volumes.

Neither the Collector nor the Artist makes a good analyst. They are baffled by proliferant variables, unable to determine which, if any, or whether all, are important. The Artist retreats into myopia, the Collector stands frozen, builds more rooms, is driven off the edge by it. \*\*\*

The game is rigged; the artist can produce nothing.

Propaganda, wrote Baudrillard, is always a question of proving the real by the imaginary.

Borges, that it is not very important whether an artist has some political opinion or other because a work will come through despite them.

All propaganda is lies, even when one is telling the truth. I don't think this matters so long as one knows what one is doing, and why. Orwell, writing in his diary on 14 March, 1912.

If only the world had been more kind, they had only wished to paint.

Stories from *The Common Juniper Review*.

Severin Stancescu's anger, upon seeing his national gallery filled with replicas of Matisse's cut-outs. He had sent an undercover to France to learn from its

greatest master. He had succeeded, and was shot for it.

Write about: How it is possible to predict with mechanical precision the turns of form over content and content over form, independent of political events.

Distinct actions have distinct motivations. A holistic system of classifications is difficult. ‡

The Artist, capable of great cruelty, arguably greater, nonetheless finds qualities in everything. ‡

The Collector is more prone to engage in bargaining. ‡

Poussin, held up as an ideal, painted mainly in Rome.

And Ingres, spiteful that the Revolution interrupted his education.

Stories from less reputable magazines.

The artist had believed that one must have an audience of the secret police in mind when painting, that one must imagine the look of disgust on their faces, otherwise you will produce nothing of value. He is said to have soiled himself on the day they arrived in person.

This only in the account, though, of those very officers.

Gippius, noted poet and hostess of the Symbolists,

loathed the Revolution as an affront to the human spirit.

There is a market for any atrocity.

*A Compendium of Highly Reasoned Opinions on Gifted Nazis.*

“What the question really poses is whether or not the self can be a conduit for evil, which I would propose is never embodied, but flows between bodies, in any sort of a reliable fashion, like electrons between atoms. As we have learned, the self is hardly a fixed entity, and is seldom if ever determined by the conscious will of the individual (here referring to individual as the physical boundaries of what we consider to be a person).” \*

Hilberseimer, who complained that “Picasso, Braque, Gris, Metzinger, Leger are attempting to reach the absolute in painting; seeking to replace the naturalistic illusion of the perspectival mechanism with an architectonic rhythm of the image.”

The hidden ideology of the French publication, *The Critical Review of Ideas and Books*.

Their praise of Ravel, and their opinion that no matter how assimilated, Offenbach would never produce French music.

The artists of La Ruche.

The Artist is responsible for every stick and chimney, the crook of every levelled staircase and the bend in the back of the feverish peasant, the gill slits of the herring, alive and dead, dead and plated, every slope and sky, and the anapaestic measure of the drunkard's footsteps. These haphazard bits are his finest brush strokes, and he is aware of how chaos resolves itself in his eye, how a confluence of beggar's details finds you, catches you by surprise like a Schoenberg symphony, how far you can go, how many combinations and modes and quarter-tunings and even finer cents before, like fate, a melody emerges. Fate is the levelling force for biased demigods; the Artist knows this better than most. ‡

Among multitudes, jealousy in a virtue.

Art is not real until it is owned. ‡

All it would take: Saint-Simonian strongholds in Vienna, in Bern. \*\*

The masculo-dominant attitude of the Collector is spelled out in the variant, "What we call Art is only spilled semen until it is owned; it is fertilized only by a benefactor." ‡

There are modes of *display* that apply to both figures. Who is showing you? Are you beholden to them? ‡

There is always a question of distance from the Body. ‡

That French art is a living sensibility incapable of abstraction.

Pierre Lassere, "It will be far better to bring back to it the contact and sentiment of the works that it created in happier times when it enjoyed the plenitude and lively vigor of its strength."

Nothiger's novel, *Several Aspects of a Triangle*.

Write about: What could replace the object. What has been called upon in the past.

Write about: Kandisky's conception of absolute art. His revelation of white.

"There is certainly no truth to the idea of a final statement, not even if the last brushstroke precedes the last breath by a hair's breadth; there is no latent hint of the noumenal being. What exists in every work of art, without exception, is a wrestling with, a struggle to make sense of, to arrive at meaning, a striving, in need of no likewise final refutation; it should therefore remain a spectacle which is worth preserving, studying, engaging, always." \*

*Half-Hearted Justifications for the Goodness in Art* \*

Each by his own logic, the dictator wishes to define absolutely what the artist wishes to remain amorphous and therefore pure in its obscurity, rendering art powerless, according to their own logic.

"No vague liberties."

King Alexander of Serbia, who paid for private lessons from Hölzel.

Althusser, "What art makes us see, and therefore gives us in the form of 'seeing', 'perceiving' and 'feeling' (which is not the form of knowing), is the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it alludes."

Or, more simply, "I do not rank real art among the ideologies."

"When an individual is infected with a germ then, to the wary mind, everything they touch or have touched since the germ appeared in their system becomes suspect and should be avoided. If one is patently unsure of when the germ first made its way into their system — especially one that could be contagious long before the symptoms manifest — then the individual must be quarantined, and their possessions considered tainted. In such real life cases of serious contamination, a burning of assets is the proper way to dispose of suspect objects, particularly when the germ may lie dormant for any number of years before once again infecting a host whose constitution is weak. A paroxysm could be devastating, and if nothing else, distasteful." \*

Fascination being equivalent to complicity. Too passive?

He is defensive, he knows he has granted himself a power that is not rightfully his. This is the chink in

his sentimentality, the one intimation of an inner life aware of itself, of an inner narrative that may now and again diverge from the inescapable drive of the heart, of the voice that says “I am necessary; I must exist.”

This holds as true for the dictator as well.

That the subject of the work of art (not even needing to make Althusser’s discrimination of “real art”) is a truth, and the subject of propaganda a lie should go without saying. It is irrelevant if the proposition of the leaflet or poster can be verified; it is the intent with which it is created and delivered, the encoding of symbols aimed at mass manipulation, that gives propaganda the clangour of falsity.

Groys, “When a person is deprived of the opportunity to vent his aggression in society, he turns it against himself and his own body.”

Groys, that Marc’s blue horse was a “strategy of revolution”.

The Führer was told to try his hand at architecture.

Kassák who named his art *Pictorial Architecture*, along with Bortnyik.

And Moholy-Nagy, his *glass architecture*.

The danger is always in seeing in yourself the potential to be an agent of change; the natural end of this is totalitarianism, or else madness.

The dictator as failed artist: how then to gauge his ambition? It cannot then be a question of talent, can it?

How then to account for Arendt? For Heidegger?

Every treatise on Modernism is an account of its failure in the form of fascism.

*The fascist impulse.*

“There is in every man a primordial being of which he is ashamed, but it is the face of that man which he intends to belong to posterity that we must judge him by.” \*

*Artists of the Third Greek Civilization.*

Archipenko was so dreary!

Noting complicities and accommodations, mostly.

Bloch, “Whether such a totality in fact constitutes reality is open to question.”

Spontaneous painterly abstraction became a primary method of communicating ideas of freedom in a climate of repressive political polarization.

Arpad Szepal, “The true artist never accepts any party platform or worldview. He creates, for himself and for the whole world... It is precisely this permanent state of revolution that justifies art.”

Branko Ve Poljanski, "Die in delirium. Let your brain explode and burn, drunk on mystery!"

Vaclav Nebesky, "The outcome of politics interfering with art is as bad as the outcome of art interfering with politics."

But I should arrive at a point, even if I do not reach a conclusion, or so much as proffer a thesis.

In a Danish paper, "the spiritless nonsense that proliferates under the label 'abstract art'."

The remaining staff at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf.

Lukacs's tenets of realism.

Leger's.

The aesthetics at play in the ideas of Martinez Campos.  
The divisions.

The return of figuralism being much heralded. Too much territory, it was thought, had been ceded.

To whom?

The resistance of Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky.

The Oskar-Kokoschka-Bund, in which its namesake declined to participate.

“The ideal—cretin and whore”

Intent on driving outrage, the Nazis posted, next to many of the pieces included in the Degenerate Art show of 1937, the inflationary prices paid by museums to acquire them.

I have seen faces in the water of the Vistula.

That Gropius had been regrettably accommodating.

That Lenin kept several photos of Chernyshevsky during his lifetime.

That Lenin had it out for Mayakovsky.

“And Akhmatova”, Mayakovsky was heard joking, “will be left polishing the silver!”

Chagall, painting *The Revolution* in 1937, with Lenin in a handstand.

Chagall, his work once lauded in Germany, who became nonetheless degenerate under Goebbels, critically ransacked for his Jewishness.

“Unimaginable,” wrote a friend of Chagall, Claire Loll, “that the whole world talks day and night about a man with whom no intelligent person would talk more than five minutes because he is so average.” Cite.

Chagall’s *White Crucifixion*.

Benoit, that “it corresponds entirely to the villainy of the epoch in which we live.”

“They wanted everyone to be a Fascist, in retrospect; they hunted tendencies in long latent works. Rabelais was on a short list.”

“By burying him, we are not allowing him to be ill of the same sickness which he worked indefatigably, perhaps even nobly, to cure, albeit unsuccessfully. The work is not to be destroyed, but to be built upon, raised up from the heap of primordial, mortal men into something eternal. I am, of course, speaking of no one in particular.” \*

Simply, *The Compendium*.

Again, a perceived semantic threat.

A title permanently checked out.

Nonetheless, Ustryalov may have predicted Duchamp’s readymades several years out by hypothesizing later in that same letter that artists may well “take the chair right out from under me and call it art.”

Chervenkov, meanwhile, quoted Lévi-Strauss. Find quotation.

“[It] is already culture, exercising and imposing its rule on phenomena which initially are not subject to it.”

“The fact that he has been so accused and that efforts are being made to prove his innocence is really of no consequence: both parties to the quarrel have fallen into the same petty-minded intellectual trap, the trap of an enervated form of thinking which no longer even takes pride in its own basic tenets, nor has the energy to go beyond them, and which is squandering what energy it still possesses in historical trials, accusations, justifications, and verifications.” \*

Cioran, the self-proclaimed “Hitlerist”.

That Károly conceded to Kun having lost the support of the avant-garde.

Schoenberg, fleeing.

Klee, writing in his notebooks, “Chaos as an antithesis is not complete and utter chaos, but a locally determined concept relating to the concept of the cosmos. Utter chaos can never be put on a scale... It can be Nothing or a dormant Something, death or birth, according to the dominance of will or lack of will, of willing or not-willing.”

Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*.

Klee, elsewhere, “The situation is ludicrous. I will therefore apply Reason.”

‘That bold application of reason.’

“It is a myth that the dictator is an impossible figure

in light of ironism. If his sincerity is a hammer, and laughter the only resistance, then he, too, will laugh.”

The inevitable horrors, when professional duty runs parallel to paranoia.

Write about: The certainty of the paranoiac. Klein would provide a mouthful.

How far astray are you allowed to go? Are the digressions most interesting? Does it turn into a manner of prescribing a future for media in an anarchist turn?

I would consider a novel, a series of vignettes: Rákosi practicing criticism, Lenin scorned by Tatlin, Ceau escu painting feverishly in the tunnels.

Or a long story. Stalin as a young artist, under the spell of imported Cubism, but confined by a distrust of perspective and the flitty love of a young woman with certain biographical overlaps with Udaltsova.

Kandinsky, however: “The more abstract is form, the more clear and direct is its appeal.”

Its appeal being that which it was uncomfortable to confront.

One senior party member, who wrote honestly that he was uncomfortable with abstract art because “it proves that we do not necessarily react to geometric forms which we recognize, that which we’ll call

rational, but to just about any primitive notion like color or texture, leaving us little more advanced than laboratory rats responding to stimuli. Can this be culture?"

Generally speaking.

"Academics are like vultures, picking the carrion clean while knowingly avoiding the minor organs which would make them ill." \*

If one can be said to *aspire* to such a bourgeois document.

The return to realism as a second ethical act, another intermediary step.

Eco, as a ten-year-old, winning an essay contest by answering, "Should we die for the glory of Mussolini and the immortal destiny of Italy?"

Hulmes's classicism.

Maurras's.

Harmon, "Quality is the right sense of elitism."

Tito's republic, for instance, relied almost solely on principles of bricoleurship.

The Collector re-arranges; the Artist would sooner take a hatchet. \*\*\*

There is always a question of distance from the Body.

The Collector, more so than the artist, believes in ad-hoc principals unknown even to the collagist. Something of the original intent must always be present. The parts and their original functions must be plainly visible, otherwise he risks pastiche. This is true even under tarp and drape. \*\*\*

The dictator is not a poor critic; he would miss the danger by reducing a work to its qualities; he is an idealist, always.

“It has been my life’s work to reduce qualities to rubble, which are secondary to the image.”

Rothko’s insistence on destroying the figure.

Greenberg, that “The essence of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself.”

*The Aesthetic Break and Its Consequences.*

There is no such thing as Modernism.

“We are speaking here of originality. Charges of plagiarism are entirely irrelevant to the conversation.”

Never was.

“...the great work of art is a complete banality,” being either Koons or Jorn.

Jorn, maybe even by name, being hated by Hitler. Debord's certain jealousy.

Juxtaposition is the root of all artwork. One might also say contrast. Again, the Collector knows this better than the Artist, who insists on a vacuum at worst, a continuum at best, and never simple contrast. \*\*\*

To get through an entire book, ostensibly about art, without once using the word *chiaroscuro*.

"I oppose free creativity to a return to the belief in a single imposed myth or system of myths."

Benjamin Buchloh, the primary colors for the second time.

The form of this immediate manifestation changes as society changes.

Leger, who wanted to destroy the subject rather than the figure.

And yet, we are too close to a state of purism to intervene directly in social action.

It was the only natural conclusion to the war and all that followed that, for a while, the artist would paint the cave instead.

That artists had, perhaps, benefited from the juxtaposition.

“No, my boy, it’s hard to say where art begins, but it’s never that stuff.”

Translated, Pavelec’s definition of aesthetic was that which brought eyes to the surface of the skull, rendering them impaired. He refused to look, refused also to eat bread for only somewhat unrelated reasons. He believed some paintings, which he had not seen but knew to be the work of bears, hurtling their misery towards us in view, could enchant while most would bring on, at the least, deficiencies in certain letter vitamins as well as riboflavin, strongly recommended to him by both his priest and physician, neither of whom were to be found at the time to stop the fit in question.

This was untrue. Cite.

I do not feel the obligation to grant them the truth.

*...an abbreviated, unappealing eschatology ... an iniquorate Supper ...*

Marcuse, “However, this anti-authoritarian tendency is only the complement of an order which is directly tied to the functioning of as yet opaque relationships of authority.”

Malraux, “A work of art implies the possibility of a reincarnation. And the world of history can only lose its meaning in the contemporary will of man.”

Hesse, "He confessed that he preferred injustice to disorder, but the order which he sought was of the personal rather than of the political kind."

And they moved right along.

Stories also presented themselves as a natural accompaniment.

Freedom *within limits*.

Dictator as stereotype, the stereotype as the real basis for mimesis.

Stereotype as abstraction, in a different, though semantically correct, sense.

What we are talking about are *categories*.

Stalin considered banning pallet knives for less-than-practical reasons.

Freud, that "every individual is virtually an enemy of civilization."

The systematic re-titling of works by Old Masters.

*Green Field Fuckery*.

*A Whore Winnows at Dawn*.

Stalin once called the fingers of an Egon Schiele self-portrait “grotesque.”

“Grotesque” also being the word used by Terboven in response to the animation of Hans Richter’s *Vormittagsspuk*.

That Schoenburg considered Gronostay fortunate for having died “well before the worst of it.”

That *Olympia* was hailed nonetheless.

“Worry is a problem for the leisure classes, the result of overabundant freedom. Direct knowledge of one’s freedom invariably translates to an anxiety over whether one is using one’s freedoms wisely or foolishly, if they might be taken away, and if they even exist at all one begins devising little tests to determine the extent of one’s freedoms, a path that more often than not leads to suicide as the latest statistics bear out.”

Passivity, along with accommodation and complicity.

“Judge me not as the repentless sinner, but as congregant to a heretic.”

Distinct actions have distinct motivations. A holistic system of classifications is difficult. †

The dissolution of the non-aggression pact largely comes down to this dichotomy. †

To the Artist, the Collector is an anodyne, leucistic

counterpart; both view their others as subservient. ‡

It should come as no surprise that both believe they have the power to create the other. ‡

But neither recognizes their codependent, coterminous nature. ‡

Or their own penchant for self-annihilation. ‡

Eigen was once referred to as “a competent figuralist” following a university art show.

That during a preliminary visit to the School for Visual Arts, Lesnukhin could be heard asking of an older group of students, “*What* representational problem?”

The tendency to treat the world as a work of art.

If Mayakovsky had not been accepted into the Moscow School of Art.

Marx, definitively, the bourgeois dissolves into a humanistic sense of wealth derived from “the absolute working-out of creative potentialities, with no presupposition other than the previous historical development.”

The latter half of the line giving Lenin his necessary leeway.

G.V. Plekhanov, *Art and Society*, 1912. “...political authority always prefers the utilitarian view of art, to the extent, of course, that it pays any attention to art

at all. And this is understandable: it is to its interest to harness all ideologies to the service of the cause which it serves itself. And since political authority, although sometimes revolutionary, is most often conservative and even reactionary, it would clearly be wrong to think that the utilitarian view of art is shared principally by revolutionaries, or by people of advanced mind generally."

Combing issues of *Krokodil* for stories by Berezin.

Comrades, just this past week, I witnessed the artist Novotny buying heaps of untreated rubber from Shalimov. In fact, I helped to carry it to his workshop. When the rubber had been set down in a vacant corner, I couldn't help but ask him what it was to be used for. 'To not stretch, of course', he answered. What about those canvases in the other room, I asked. 'To remain unsoiled, or to sieve cooking water.' He could see I was on the verge of another question, and so he cut me off: 'I am interested only in things unused for their original intention.' I then asked what he intended to use the eggs on his counter for. 'For breakfast, what else?' he responded.

That Tatlin was partially vilified by communist Poles.

Vrubel's stage design for *Tsar Saltan*.

He denied the printed words which survived the war, but was unable to make eye contact, at first without squinting, later at all.

“[I]t is not made according to the socialist plan. Here is a great talent, but at the same time he is following a different ideological line.” Arkadii Mordvinov, rejecting a pastoral landscape by Petr Konchalovskii from consideration for the Stalin Prize.

*... crude and hyperbolic ... perverted montage ... exiguous portraits of wafish prostitutes and the limpid pools of flatulent waste ... the obvious and soft problem of reflection ...*

Kassák, counter to Bogdanov’s conception of the Proletkult (and certainly Mordinov and Fadeev), “Art is art. It cannot be made this way or that way, in the interest of this or that, not even in the interest of the proletariat.”

Gyula Gömbös, “If an avant-garde poses the question of the meaning of life and seeks to realize its claims in this arena, it sees itself alienated from all social possibilities.”

The crisis of realism: That some unseen aspect of “self” could defeat the rational will, and that it should be celebrated.

Von Drachenfels, that it is the primary duty of the state now to extinguish the artistic ego, which conflates contemplation with action, thought with labour. A productive society must trade in *concrete* ideas.

“It is important to remember that necessary measures and precautions can be mistaken from paranoia by those who do not truly support them.”

Gass, “The more you tend to make your opinions artistically interesting, the less rhetorical effectiveness they tend to have. They tend to get distanced and to become objects of contemplation, not belief.”

That art is fifty years behind physics at all time.

Kandinsky, “The collapse of the atom was equates, in my soul, with the collapse of the whole world.”

Hard-boiled economics.

“The value in a work of art is in its ability to be reproduced.”

“Useless if it can’t be copied a thousand times.”

“Any image sufficiently reproduced is propaganda.”

“An irresistible image.”

What will save the artist is to free herself from the burden of the original.

Brecht, via Benjamin, “If the concept of ‘work of art’ can no longer be applied to the thing that emerges once the work is transformed into a commodity, we have to eliminate this concept with cautious care but without fear, lest we liquidate the function of the very thing as well.”

(Whatever one defines as the *original*, the chances are high that the consumer has never encountered it.)

“What we must destroy is the memory of the work of art, so that it may always be present.”

Later, “And yet I realize that only fascists speak of destroying memory.”

“It is the natural postmodern response to the intractable sincerity of the dictator to retreat into equally intractable irony, ineffectual though it often is. The more horrible the crime, the more trivial we imagine the root cause to be; we amuse ourselves in order to avoid confrontation head on (a confrontation many will say is unwinnable, and well shouldn’t be attempted).”

Under the sort of all-encompassing anomie that precipitates such a crisis, a single rallying point can simply be more effective than awaiting the return of any degree of collective spirit, even by those who know better.

“You will find that the rationalists took over Plato’s state qua state, which of course left no room for the artist, as a creative figure he is always a disturbing element which threatens the status quo.” Gaddis, again.

Le Corbusier paid an entry fee to the Nazis, and was still denied a commission.

Atanas Georgiev, *Official Writings*, “What good is reproducing a world that is, despite moments of beauty, is less than ideal? We must focus on being in

the world, changing the world prior to representing it.”

Why add these useless details, especially if they are untrue?

Only—and this is important—only the artist can move from is to ought. All other definitions include or exclude too much. Artists are, above all, conscious. The greater the artist, the greater the inventory, perhaps; the ambition of the greatest artists cannot help but take the medium of their fellow men into account, but not just as passive clay, but as spermatozoa; it is a process of reproduction, though when the artist is unhappy with his work, cannot allow messy time the distance between the mental image and the external world, the canvas will be, must be, slashed or else painted over; history is better thought of as a pentimento, rather than as a series of panels spanning a ridiculous, empty hall.

Georgii Malenkov, in a report to the Nineteenth Party Congress. “The typical is the vital sphere in which is manifested the party spirit of realistic art. The question of the typical is always a political question.”

Adorno, roughly, that abstract art has exempted itself from utility, abstracting the concept of value as much as the figurative subjects.

Foucault: “There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth with operate through and on the basis of this association.

We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth."

You cannot pick up a paint brush without picking up its history, the totality of its struggle for power, and therefore it is to be seen as a weapon, a threat.

Stalin, attributed. "What is most important to the dialectical method is not that which is stable at present but is already beginning to die, but rather that which is emerging and developing, even if at present it does not appear stable, since for the dialectical method only that which is emerging and developing cannot be overcome."

This is true. Cite.

"We demand full representation as a proper guild without being made to compromise our ideals and our principles; we are more than a beautiful façade, we are not makeup, we are the soul of this body that is otherwise mechanical in nature."

Is it fair to include Lenin? Was he not a democrat?

The fashion in art changes frequently, but there is no progress.

Perhaps quoted. Perhaps Robespierre.

Władysław Gomułka was a landscapist who held John Frederick Kensett in the highest regard.

Metaxas only favored Eilshemius among the Americans.

Some hand-written papers of Stalin's that have been sold at auction contain drawings.

Such precise hallucinations.

A Stalenva, found only briefly in the registry at Kazan.

Dolfuss hated Kandinsky.

Are they defensible?

Write about: The unwitting accomplices.

*The Black Notebooks.*

That Emil Nolde had been complicit. And still shunned.

It should be the sole duty of the state to preserve every bit of culture for posterity, so that history can be re-written as necessary.

Groys, that "this authority—the communist party—was transformed into a kind of artist whose material was the entire world and whose goal was to 'overcome the resistance' of the material and make it pliant, malleable, capable of assuming any desired form."

It is almost as if, if they are commemorated, studied, the artist has lost their struggle.

Art is how we slow progress down enough to think about its consequences.

*Heil —, Heidegger.*

I have travelled to Predappio, but was only plied with wine and stories, and not the charcoals I had come for, been promised. They would send slides.

*...careers in advertising...*

Interpreted in a Freudian manner, the adolescent paintings of Hitler predict many of his later transgressions.

Lacan dismissed this reading as containing “no significant trauma”.

It is true then, comrades, that under NEP the arts had come under state control while industry was allowed much freedom to recover further from the years of Revolution. But the art dealer Barantsev found for himself loopholes by which to continue his practice. I saw him, comrades, just yesterday. He was hurrying along the other side of the street, no doubt late for the tram, when he was stopped by an officer. The officer asked to see a letter of approval for the painting Barantsev was carrying under his arm. ‘This, officer, may be a painting, but it is not art. I wouldn’t be caught dead with unsanctioned art. Not at a time like this.’ Without the officer asking him to explain himself further, Barantsev continued. ‘You see, the scaffolding of this painting, not to mention

the frame, is made of wood. And the canvas itself is a cotton textile. The paint falls under chemicals and industrial agents. So what art then to do you see before you? This is a decorative made from materials that fall squarely under the protection of the NEP, and I can cite paragraphs if you wish. What? Speak up or quit bothering me. And outside of your jurisdiction no less. I should have you reported!

Malevich, that “If art has comprehended harmony, rhythm and beauty, it has comprehended nothing.”

“The work of art, in its ludic, pointless, gratuitous, self-grounding, autotelic, self-determining way, offers us a foretaste of how men and women might themselves exist under transformed political conditions. Where art was, there shall humanity be,” Terry Eagleton points out.

Ceașescu’s aquatints.

Picasso’s.

The mythology of Picasso often becoming entangled with a certain other.

It was well known, although totally unfounded, that his first word as a child was the diminutive of “pencil”, when in fact this was what was said of Picasso, also unfounded.

Geró’s destruction of Molholy-Nagy’s birth certificate.

That no fewer than three politburo members were

assassinated by artists commissioned to portrait them. Neary's suspicions that all of this is true; the same, that there are so many coincidences.

Only the closest confidants of the minister were ever told what had inspired his distaste for expressionism, a secret unfortunately lost to history.

An aphorism of some kind.

The artist leaves the city only by great failure or great success, being perhaps the lesson.

Not overt.

There are no fascist aphorisms.

Undermine yourself at every turn.

Eliot, of Joyce, of history: "It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history"

It is considered out of the ordinary, comrades, even bold, for the artist Koledov to have invited members of the local authorities, of whom he was well acquainted for less than desirable reasons, to his home for a holiday party, at which we would exhibit his newest works, all of them in violation. By all accounts, though, everyone enjoyed the party, and the head inspector was reported to have even played folk songs on the badly tuned piano. It was unfortunate, then,

that owing to a complete accident, the artist Koledov's house was burned to the ground that very night by a candle that had been knocked afoot by Kraskov the drunk. It was unfortunate, as well, that the artist Koledov was arrested the very next day for several forms of indecency, though it has been suggested that this was really not so unfortunate, indeed, may have been a purposeful act of charity, to provide him with some measure of a roof after his house was reduced to cinders. In any case, he died from pneumonia in a drafty cell while awaiting his trial.

"Between Rembrandt and the dog, I choose the dog."

Evgeny Bartovič, Marcel Zsok, Csanad Marin in, Fodor Záborský: Only a handful of the names under which Andrei Stasenko submitted work seeking pseudonymous approval into the artist's union. He was rejected twelve times.

... *disarmingly hirsute Venus* ...

"Is it not the very freedom of the police to beat us for our paintings that allows us to create them in the first place?"

Readymades allowed artists to hide in plain sight.

Marc, who painted the animals as "a response to crisis".

Time had made a spectacle of Bashkin, comrades, and so revered was he that, in times of great distress, it

was Bashkin who was called by his fellow artists to come and represent them in front of the government tribunals. This carried on so long that, by the time a new generation of judge emerged, it was assumed by many in the courtroom that Bashkin was, by trade, an attorney, and he was unnerved to learn that he was referred to as “Bashkin the Attorney” even among some of the younger artists. Bashkin, having considered that he had seldom had a moment to paint in more than a decade due to his frequent duties at the courthouse, conceded this on his tax form the following year.

“I had been away from art for only ten years, but when I came back to see what had been done, I did not recognize anything. This is not revolution, I thought, but serial self-annihilation.”

The people become the state becomes the man becomes death.

And really how could he even allow an audience, a serious audience?

*... left terribly alone ... utter contempt for hair ... as if you had come to blows with it ...*

“They can’t confiscate walls, at least not efficiently.”

For a while, monochrome painting having been the most effective means for artists to communicate sensitive ideas.

“And sculptures can be hidden in plain sight, in gardens if you must.”

Writers somehow garnered at the same time more affection and more hatred.

“A dog’s death for a dog,” being what Czar Nicolas I remarked upon learning that Lemontov had been killed in a duel.

“Assassination is the extreme form of censorship.”  
George Bernard Shaw.

“Assassination is the highest form of compliment.”  
Cite.

“It is terrible practice to consider the opinion of the Censors before you begin a work. If your work is honest and good, then you will hear from them soon enough.”

The artist known as Modest, who had in recent years become something of an infamous caricaturist, and had made an enemy of no less a figure than the mayor himself, was shot in what might be called broad daylight by a common police officer who later pleaded self-defense. The officer had been observed beating a bum for some offense or another and, upon discovering the caricaturist looking on, had decided to shoot him, citing a real danger to the image of the department. Modest, it should be noted, was also the name of Tchaikovsky’s brother. Though they were not the same person.

Hallward, that will command the initiation of action, not representation.

“The perversion of the truth, familiar to the artist though it was, always unnerved him afresh and proved too much for him,” wrote Kafka.

Benjamin, later, “The experience which corresponds to that of Kafka, the private individual, will probably not become accessible to the masses until such time as they are being done away with.”

Valéry, give or take a few years, “It is a universal and ageless opinion that there exists an ‘interior life’ from which actual things are excluded and to which they are harmful.”

Pilsudski could not bring himself to use horsehair. Shades of the mad Nietzsche.

The Pigment Riots.

The autocrat’s war is one against and over the ‘interior life’, the state apparatus the ‘actual thing’ which would destroy interior life as if it had come into contact with antimatter.

Gan’s “tectonics”.

There is no such thing as private life, and most assuredly no such thing as private language.

History follows a course such that the Danse Macabre becomes fashionable once every half-century or thereabouts.

Nietzsche, “[P]hilosophy is this tyrannical impulse itself.”

Dollfuss could not stand to look at the work of many of Austria’s notable modernists, going to far as to have several Jagerspachers destroyed.

Wittgenstein, “The concept of seeing makes a tangled impression.”

“Better he was a Hun,” Dollfuss, regarding Wittgenstein.

Eigner’s *The Sickle and the Hammer Price: A History of Samizdat Auctioneering*.

The smuggled catalogs from the West that were as good as currency.

Art must be done in public. This is not original?

Baudrillard called modernity a time “experimentally open to all the aspects of perception, of sensibility, of the structure of the object and the dismemberment of forms.”

Does this make it an enemy or ally?

In one distant republic, flags remain at half-mast for

three days during mid-July, mourning the death of modernism, though the symptom of its demise is still greatly disputed. Cite.

Is this a story of art and economics?

*Abstracting Value: Modern Art and the Socialist Pricing Problem.*

A cleverly disguised treatise on the inherent power and value of art.

Bashkirov, writing "Abstract Concepts in Concrete Art".

It is too late for that.

Bruner, that "[t]hrough perception we *construct* a world in which survival and adjustment are possible; through perception we also *defend* against that which is threatening, distracting, or disruptive."

*Journal of Soviet Sciences and Culture.*

Art critics responsible to the state.

It could be a novel, or a poem.

"The basic storyline is about art leaving the realm of the artist, when the artist loses control of the work."

Yemelin fled to Paris, having been in power only a month, and settled in Montparnasse, in the guest room of Geer van Velde.

“I am staying with a sort of washed-out fellow, mama, whose brother speaks in melancholy aphorisms.”

There is nowhere a defense so simple as: They wanted to continue their work and remain in their homes.” \*

Though it is never as simple as that. \*

“Let them give me any form and I shall make a surface such as no one else can,” said Malevich, by way of Strzeminski.

Strzeminski on Tatlin, “[L]et us subtract engineering and technical qualities—what is left?”

Freedom for all!

The artist Andreyev, it is rumored, had died of exposure while trying to capture the brutality of winter on canvas, but this was not so: it was his sentence.

Freedom for the warmongers!

When Bogdanov would best Lenin, if only for a turn, Gorky would beam.

Freedom for the Ruhr cartels!

We have gone afield.

Freedom for Hitler’s generals!

That is not what we meant! [Too late!]

Brecht wrote considerably on Stalin.

“To achieve anything at all,” said Bram van Velde,  
“you have to be nothing.”

“[T]he tendency to treat the world as a work of art.”

“Art is what you can get away with.”

And if you lined them up, the murdering gospel  
heathens, and put it to them, not a goddamn one of  
them could do hands.









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