
INTRODUCTION

The seemingly disparate essays in this volume, their subjects ranging from Ferdinand Hodler to Rupert Garcia and Bedri Baykam, are linked by their deviation from the aesthetic and critical concerns of mainstream art. I am writing this introduction at a time when many of my colleagues in the field of art history are uncomfortable with an agenda of genuine ethnic diversity that places this dominant mainstream itself in question. But in my work as a historian, teacher, critic, and curator, I have always questioned both the concept of universal values in art and related theories concerning a timeless visual language of significant form.

Long before the theories of deconstruction became current, I had dissented from hegemonic claims of a simple and verifiable mainstream in aesthetic affairs. I strongly believe that standards and values in art, as in mores, are culturally determined. Artists do not live or work in isolation and are hardly impervious to the social environment, contrary to what Formalist critics have maintained. The historian or critic must do more than analyze pure pictorial and aesthetic values. Form has meaning, but we must also investigate the meaning of form and be constantly aware of its historical, sociopolitical context.

Mainstream art has always held less interest for me than what might be called art's peripheral manifestations. In late eighteenth-century England, Sir Joshua Reynolds painted fine portraits of privilege – but how much more fascinating are Henry Fuseli's *Nightmares*, or William Blake's images based on biblical and classical texts. In late nineteenth-century France, the academic *pompier*s were still very much in the public eye and official purse. But the very canon that was established for modern art to legitimize Impressionism quickly entrenched it as the dominant and soon-to-be-popular mode. This left little room to account for simultaneous developments of Symbolism, which remained marginalized for some time. Yet its sense of subtlety and mystery and its search for expression and evocation of interior sensations seemed to me to be of equal importance. When I was asked, in 1962, during my tenure at the Museum of Modern Art, to organize an exhibition of nineteenth-century French art, my interest in the re-evaluation of Symbolism made me decide to show the work of Rodolphe Bresdin, Gustave

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Moreau, and Odilon Redon, masters of this alternative tradition marginalized in its own time.¹

A few years later, I felt that the Rodin retrospective, which I directed in 1963, needed to be succeeded by a show of Medardo Rosso's little known sculptures, works that are sensitive fusions of the palpable and the evanescent. Umberto Boccioni, speaking for the Futurists in 1912, had discerned that Rosso "is the only great modern sculptor who has attempted to widen the scope of sculpture by rendering plastically the effect of the environment upon the subject, as well as the ties that bind it to the surrounding atmosphere."² But soon after the Futurists took a brief interest in Rosso, the work of this precursor of modernist sculpture was passed over – no doubt because very few of his bronzes and waxes ever came on the market. Thus the Rosso exhibition, also of 1963, came as a minor revelation.³

Rosso's Swiss contemporary, Ferdinand Hodler, though highly esteemed in his lifetime and in his own country, was almost unknown in the United States until 1973, when I was able to present his work at Berkeley, Harvard, and the Guggenheim Museum. We exhibited his spirited renditions of Alpine landscapes, his large Symbolist canvases that affirm a cosmic harmony, and his incisive portraits of the living as well as his clinically ruthless images of the dying. It seems appropriate to begin this collection with excerpts from the catalogue published for the Hodler retrospective.⁴

In general I have preferred to study and advocate an art that evinces the conflicts of our era and affords insights into the tragic aspects of the human condition in a century characterized by societal turbulence and personal anguish. These components of modern life were by no means to be found in the mainstream of modernist painting and sculpture.

Personal history has great bearing on my bias which, in its questioning of entrenched authority, made me search for art that was marginalized. I arrived in the United States at age seventeen, a refugee from Germany, where my family had been engaged for several generations as art dealers of Renaissance and Baroque paintings, sculpture, and *objets d'art*. I grew up in a secular family in Munich; we were barely aware of being Jewish until the Nazis threatened to destroy our very existence.

Soon after arriving in New York in 1936, I discovered that I was distantly related to Alfred Stieglitz. I subsequently spent a good deal of time at An American Place, listening to the grand old man in the black cape, who combined the active and the contemplative in his thoughts and actions, both contentious and wise. He meditated aloud on the meaning of art and life. I was fortunate that he took an interest in me; from him I would learn a great deal about how to look at art. During that time I translated poems by Rainer Maria Rilke, a poet then relatively unknown in this country. I was overjoyed that Stieglitz encouraged me to publish some of them in *Twice a Year* (VIII–IX: 1942), a magazine subtitled, "Book of Literature, the Arts, and Civil Liberties" and edited by Dorothy Norman under the inspiration of Stieglitz. I was delighted to see my first published work along with that by writers such as Thomas Mann, André Malraux, and André Gide.

Stieglitz, in his own photography, in the work he exhibited, and in his verbal elucidation, conveyed his ideas of what it means to be an artist, especially an

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artist in America, a country in which business, rather than arts and letters, is of central concern. The artists Stieglitz extolled and exhibited – Dove, Marin, O’Keeffe – were hardly in the mainstream in the 1930s, when Regionalism and perhaps Social Realism were the dominant trends. As Arthur G. Dove wrote: “there was an esthetic revolution going on and they didn’t know it and Stieglitz knew it all the time.”⁵ And indeed, a painter such as Dove rather than Grant Wood knew better how to interpret the American landscape.

Many years later, in 1958, I was able to advance a new interest in the artists of the Stieglitz Circle by curating an exhibition of this name to inaugurate a new museum that I helped establish at Pomona College in California, where I had been teaching.

In the pre–World War II years in New York, I also met J. B. Neumann, who became another mentor. A remarkable and lovable individual, J. B. showed me contemporary art of my native country. He was convinced that Beckmann and Klee and Kirchner were truly great artists, and he loved talking about their work with personal knowledge and enthusiasm. In his gallery, J. B. also had paintings by El Greco, drawings by Blake, and woodcuts from the German Renaissance and *ukiyo-e* woodblocks from Japan, as well as African sculpture and contemporary American painting by Max Weber and Mark Rothko.

In the early 1940s I was drafted into the American army as an “enemy alien,” becoming an American citizen while in the service. I served in the O.S.S. and subsequently studied at the University of Chicago on the GI Bill. When the time came to decide on a dissertation topic, I had little doubt that I should write about German Expressionist painting. In America little attention had been paid to German modernist art. The Armory Show had made Americans equate modern art with the School of Paris. In fact, both the Italian and Russian avant-garde were totally absent from the Armory, and modern German representation was limited to one painting each by Kandinsky and Kirchner, and one sculpture by Wilhelm Lehmbruck.

This situation was reflected and perpetuated in the art market. The Museum of Modern Art, to be sure, had a few fine pieces acquired by Alfred Barr under the tutelage of J. B. Neumann. The only other museum with a respectable collection of modern German art was the Detroit Institute of Arts: Dr. W. R. Valentiner, an earlier director, had come to Detroit from Berlin in the 1920s. A substantial collection of paintings by Kandinsky and Rudolf Bauer, acquired by the Baroness Hilla Rebay and displayed in sacrosanct halls to the music of Bach, was on view in Solomon R. Guggenheim’s Museum of Non-objective Art. In California, Galka Scheyer still retained her own collection of paintings by Feininger, Kandinsky, Klee, and Jawlensky.

In Germany during the Nazi period, the Expressionists had been denounced as “degenerate,” and their art was condemned by Hitler as “abortions of the brain.” It may seem surprising, however, that during the early post–World War II years, little attention was given to the Expressionist heritage. But in the museums and galleries of the Federal Republic, the new abstraction was favored. Tachism from France and Abstract Expressionism from America seemed to embody the newly found artistic freedom. This free, gestural painting seemed more in keeping with Western models than the figurative painting and sculpture as-

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sociated with the failed Wilhelmian empire and the ineffectual Weimar Republic. In East Germany, by contrast, Social Realism was the only accepted style during the early days of the German Democratic Republic; the leading Marxist theorist, György Lukács, argued that Expressionism, with its emphasis on the subjective and the irrational, was one of the tendencies that led to Fascism.

But it was precisely Expressionism's inner vision that fascinated me. I valued the passion for the personal, the affirmation of individuality in the face of both standardization and fragmentation of modern society. I admired the Expressionists' resistance to bourgeois conventionality, their Nietzschean "transvaluation of values." I was (and remain) engrossed by the paradox of profound pessimism and chiliastic optimism of the Expressionists and their art's demand for active participation by the engaged viewer. Locating in some depth one aspect of the culture of my native land also helped me in the establishment of my own cultural identity. In my work I related Expressionist art to its intellectual milieu, to simultaneous trends in philosophy, psychology, and the sciences, as well as the general ambiance of the period.

My dissertation of 1954 turned into my first book; it became the basic source for the study of German Expressionist art for several decades of scholars and also for some of my own later work. Most of the essays in Part I of this anthology are the result of my continued interest in Expressionism and modern German art. I remain preoccupied with the work of Max Beckmann, who is finally being recognized as one of the giants of twentieth-century art. Too precise in his rendering of the human figure to be called an Expressionist, too visionary in his paintings of dreams and premonitions to be considered a realist, he defies classification. Behind the veil of an arresting painterly beauty and the vigorous sexuality of some of Beckmann's images lies a deep anxiety and despair that responds to his own inner turmoil and the turbulence of his time. But they also reflect a firm belief in the "final release and absolution of all things, whether they please or torment"⁶ and, like the novels by his contemporary Thomas Mann, his work is proof that "a work of art, even if it is one of despair, can ultimately only be interpreted as a belief in life."⁷

I have also included an unpublished paper, "Schoenberg and the Visual Arts." First delivered in 1974, it addresses Arnold Schoenberg's part in the intellectual and artistic life of Vienna and I also examined the simultaneous achievements of the composer and the painter Wassily Kandinsky. During the time that Schoenberg explored atonal music, Kandinsky discovered non-objective painting. A zeitgeist, it seems, caused the most radical innovations in music and art just prior to World War I.

"German Realism of the Twenties: The Artist as Social Critic," deals with the New Objectivity, the successor of Expressionism in Weimar Germany. After World War I, the inner-directed art of the Expressionists and their belief that art had the ability to transform both individuals and the community could no longer withstand the daily chaos of life. Artists such as George Grosz and Otto Dix made disturbing and at times grotesque pictures to assail the hypocrisy of the bourgeois establishment. This was a noteworthy episode in the history of modern art when, for a brief time, a close interweave between art and politics existed, and the socio-

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economic situation acted as catalyst for the production of compelling works of political art.

This section also includes a report on the reconstruction of the Degenerate Art exhibition with which the Nazis defamed modern art in 1937– an exhibition that was recreated at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1991. I am also presenting my Introduction to the catalogue of the exhibition of art from the German Democratic Republic. Mounted at the Busch-Reisinger Museum of Harvard University in 1989, the show, which we expected to be the initial survey of the art from East Germany, turned out also to be the last one from a country that ceased to exist that same year with the razing of the Berlin Wall. The work in the exhibition was related to the renewed interest in the human body, typical of the international Neo-Expressionist trends of the 1970s and 1980s, but was largely characterized by its emphasis on the communicative aspects which painting can provide and by an emphasis on public life as well as personal identity.

In 1949, while still a graduate student at the University of Chicago, I had begun to teach at the Institute of Design (ID), Moholy-Nagy's New Bauhaus. I was extremely fortunate in starting my teaching career at this seminal school, the nexus of new concepts and utopian visions in art and design. ID's program truly revolutionized old standards of art education. It emphasized experimentation, exploration of materials, and above all, a belief that the education of the artist and designer must not be a matter of narrow specialization, but should address the emotional and intellectual needs of the individual with the purpose of creating a better social order. The school also produced some of the finest photographers in America and brought about radical changes in graphic and industrial design. Although several books have been written about ID's sister school, Black Mountain College in North Carolina,⁸ this essay is actually the first attempt at a brief history of an institution that has never been given the importance which is its due.

This essay on the new Bauhaus, "Modernism Comes to Chicago," is in Part II, "Atlantic Crossing." Again, perhaps because of my background, I have been very much aware of the currents that move between America and Europe. In 1993 I was invited to write "Americans Abroad" for the voluminous catalogue, *American Art of the 20th Century*, which accompanied the exhibition at the Royal Academy in London and at the Martin-Gropius Bau in Berlin. Here I comment on important contributions by artists from Marsden Hartley to Edward Kienholz, who worked mainly outside the United States.⁹ Conversely, "The Impact from Abroad: Foreign Guests and Visitors" deals with artists from Europe and Mexico who had a significant effect on the art of the San Francisco Bay Area in the early years of an evolving modernism in California.

In 1958, when I was appointed Curator of the Department of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, I placed European and American artists together in the first exhibition I directed, *New Images of Man*. It comprised twenty-three painters and sculptors from the United States and Europe, and ranged from established artists such as Giacometti and Pollock to younger artists of scant renown, such as Leon Golub and Nathan Oliveira. At

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that time I was aware of the Existential attitude toward the human predicament which had made itself felt across the oceans and generations in response to the anxiety and dread that pervaded the post-war period. I suggested that “the imagery of man which evolved from this [outlook] reveals sometimes a new dignity, sometimes despair, but always the uniqueness of man as he confronts his fate.”¹⁰ I asked the theologian and philosopher Paul Tillich to write a preface to the catalogue in which he stated: “These artists . . . fight desperately over the image of man and by producing shock and fascination in the observer, they communicate their own concern for threatened and struggling humanity.”¹¹

The exhibition included Pollock’s late black and white figurations, which Frank O’Hara called the *Chants de Maldoror* of American art. The show compared de Kooning’s fierce, shamelessly erotic women with Dubuffet’s contemporaneous, brutish, graffiti-like *Corps de Dames*. Other rooms held Francis Bacon’s unhinged popes and screaming figures and Giacometti’s isolated, inviolate, and inaccessible men and women. Also present were Rico Lebrun’s compelling tragic paintings of fragmentation and disfigurement depicting victims of the Holocaust as seen by an empathetic artist who fused the Baroque tradition of tragedy into a modernist idiom. Theodore Roszak’s convulsive welded steel figures, the wild faces by Karel Appel, and H. C. Westermann’s humanoid boxes, those perplexing and sardonic comments on human irrationality, beautifully crafted in wood, were also included.

New Images of Man produced much controversy. The fact that almost half of the artists were sculptors was highly unusual at the time. Clement Greenberg’s advocacy of an art which was purely self-referential was then ascendant; an exhibition of art that was not purely abstract but emphasized human content was dubbed passé and deprecated as “humanist.” Several critics pronounced the core of the heresy to be that just at the time of the triumph of American art, when “New York had stolen the idea of modern art, hastening the eclipse of Paris as the center of excitement,”¹² I had dared exhibit artists from France, England, Holland, and Austria as well as from the American hinterland (three from Chicago, three from California) on a par with the very principals of the New York school. Not surprisingly, many attacks were leveled against the exhibition. An especially vituperative review appeared in *Art News*, the magazine that championed Abstract Expressionism and the leading critical journal of the time. Manny Farber, a painter and film critic, called the exhibition a “monster show” and then took aim at various artists, referring to Dubuffet’s figures as “baked funny paper people.” He disliked Diebenkorn’s “gloomy figures” and asserted that Francis Bacon’s paintings were “like housepainting in rayon.” Leon Golub was labeled as “a trickster,” and Karel Appel seemed “oafish” to Mr. Farber, who also christened Nathan Oliveira a “fast shuffle artist” and de Kooning’s *Marilyn Monroe* a “Sadie Thompson-ish tootsie.”¹³

Not everyone concurred with Mr. Farber’s assessment. Emily Genauer, the critic for the *New York Herald Tribune*, voiced the opinion of quite a few other critics when she judged the show as “one of the most arresting, dynamic, exhilarating, yet deeply troubling exhibitions of [MoMA’s] long career.”¹⁴

The exhibition seemed “beyond the mainstream” at a time when it appeared

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that figurative art had been laid to rest by the New York art establishment.¹⁵ Yet, despite all the controversy, I was supported by MoMA's director, René d'Harnoncourt, a man of urbane sophistication, and by my esteemed elder colleague Alfred H. Barr who, after all, had been preaching revolutionary gospel of modern art ever since he founded the Museum in 1929.

Soon after the closing of *New Images*, I took responsibility for the performance of Jean Tinguely's *Homage to New York*, against the advice of most of my colleagues, who pointed out that a museum was in the business of preservation and not the destruction – or self-destruction – of works of art. But as Bill Klüver recalled: "When on March 17, 1960 [Tinguely's machine] was put into action, the spectacle was one of beautiful humor, poetry, and confusion."¹⁶

Six years later, in 1966, Jean Tinguely was one of fourteen artists from Europe and the United States in the first exhibition I curated at the University of California, Berkeley. At the time when mainstream sculpture in America had reached the apogee of stasis in Minimalism, I organized a major exhibition, "Directions in Kinetic Sculpture," in which movement was an essential part of the work.

But, to return to my years at the Museum of Modern Art: in 1960 I addressed the sources and interconnections of modern art, architecture, and design, a relationship which had helped define the Museum's identity since its beginning. The large *Art Nouveau* exhibition, which I directed in 1960, comprised a scholarly reappraisal of a significant movement at the beginning of the modernist era. It was seen by many as *retardataire* and an attempt to rehabilitate a decorative style in the arts and crafts, one which had been thoroughly disparaged by the International Style and which had no place in the austere white cubes of the Museum of Modern Art.

There was certainly no controversy regarding the Mark Rothko retrospective, which I curated in 1960, but I followed it with an exhibition of Jean Dubuffet, turning over a whole museum floor to the art of a post-war Frenchman, thus questioning again the cultural hegemony of New York. I also went beyond the political bounds of the West, moving to the periphery and exhibiting painting from Communist Poland in 1961. To the consternation of the disinformed public, this art from behind the Iron Curtain was not mere Communist propaganda but rather, as *Newsweek* found: "Out of the agony of fifteen years of Nazi occupation and Stalinist oppression, there has emerged a renaissance of painting in Poland that has few parallels in the rest of Europe."¹⁷

All along I saw myself as the outsider on the inside, and I think I was perceived similarly by the art world. In 1963, when Pop Art seemed to take a dominant position on the New York art scene, it was suggested that MoMA jump on the bandwagon with an exhibition of the "neo-Dadas," as they were erroneously called. I did not advocate such an exhibition. In fact I reproached the Pop artists in an article, "The Flaccid Art," that appeared in *Partisan Review* in 1963, for its apparent lack of commitment to anything but the prevailing consumer culture. I charged it with being "as easy to consume as it is to produce and, better yet, easy to market because it is loud, it is clean, and you can be fashionable and at the same time know what you are looking at."¹⁸

But, having moved to northern California in 1965, I became engrossed by a

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regional movement that prevailed in the Bay Area and which I helped identify. “Funk Art,” as we called it – unlike Pop – paid absolutely no attention to the market. It was a totally irreverent art, indebted to the Beat movement and possible only in a place where there was no art market – its lack actually became a liberating force for artists to do exactly as they pleased. Typically, Funk artists worked from a position of irony and paradox. They disparaged the establishment, and deprecated themselves. I wrote: “Funk [unlike Pop] is hot rather than cool; it is committed rather than disengaged; it is bizarre rather than formal; it is sensuous; and frequently it is quite ugly and ungainly.”¹⁹

Funk was strictly peripheral to American art. In the late 1960s, mainstream art consisted of Pop and color-field painting. Both these directions, I felt, lacked truthfulness to inner experience, which has always seemed to me to be an essential ingredient of modern art, if not of all art. Paul Klee had described his art as the path toward greater insight, but an enlarged comic strip panel, or a color-field painting lacking the passion and deep intelligence of works by Rothko and Newman, certainly do not add to our understanding of life. Moreover, I have always thought that a painting or sculpture that can be understood in a single instant cannot hold much promise of duration or profundity.

The painting of Sam Francis was very different from the color-field painters with whom he has at times erroneously been grouped. Francis, as James Johnson Sweeney observed, was “the most sensuous and sensitive American painter of his generation.”²⁰ Recognized in Europe and Japan, Francis was consistently under-rated in his own country, partly because he, like Mark Tobey, was never part of the New York art world. More significantly, the Puritan streak in American culture made it difficult to embrace the pure sensuousness and joy emanating from this artist’s work. For me, personally, his painting embodied a complete antithesis of the often tragic art that occupied so much of my concern. Francis’s jubilant explorations of light, space, and color emanates an invigorating energy. For this anthology I have selected a brief essay on his “Blue Ball” series of the early 1960s – paintings of organic forms that could be either atomic particles or vast constellations floating in space.

Another artist who, like Sam Francis, was undervalued in the United States was Eduardo Chillida, and I decided to write a book on the distinguished Spanish/Basque sculptor. Chillida’s sculptures, like Francis’s paintings, activate the void – a preoccupation that informs much of modernist sculpture, and which can be seen in the work of artists as different as Naum Gabo, Henry Moore, and Giacomo Piretti. Chillida has worked in iron, wood, steel, concrete, alabaster, and earthenware. His sculptures set up a unique dialogue with the space that surrounds them. Martin Heidegger asserted that “Emptiness is not nothing. It is also not a matter of absence. In plastic embodiment the void acts like the searching and projecting establishment of space.”²¹ Chillida’s work seems to embody this thought.

The great iron prongs of the *Windcombs*, on the promontory of the Bay of San Sebastian, seem to search for one another and relate to sky and sea. For the center of the Basque city Vitoria-Gasteiz, Chillida designed a large triangle where the empty space of an urban place is articulated into a carefully composed public environment. And *Our Father’s House*, near the sacred oak of Guernica, appears

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like the bow of a great ship that has arrived at its destination; it emanates a sense of silence and peace.

In the early '70s, many of us became interested in the phenomenon of Conceptual art, which articulated the limits of Formalist art and its criticism. The Conceptual artists, like Duchamp before them, postulated the primacy of the mental process that goes into the conception of a work of art, and many artists of the group would have agreed with Lawrence Weiner that "the piece need not be built."²² But I held that text was not sufficient for a work of visual art. I became fascinated with the work of Agnes Denes, an artist who does not fit into any standard niche and who was, therefore, marginalized by the commercial art world. She nonetheless "created an amazing body of work, distinguished for its intellectual rigor, aesthetic beauty, conceptual analysis, and environmental concerns."²³

After arriving in California in 1965 as the founding director of the University Art Museum and professor of twentieth-century art at Berkeley, I began studying the contemporary art of California and writing about it with some consistency, discussing such opposite manifestations as Funk sculpture and Sam Francis's painting.

For this collection of essays I also selected five brief articles. Llyn Foulkes was among the innovative artists who were part of the Los Angeles underground until they surfaced at the Ferus Gallery in 1957. Foulkes made paintings that resembled ordinary postcards, but they were surprisingly different. They were endowed with a uniquely unsettling and haunting magic. His rather bleak imagery, however, was not compatible with the largely Abstract Expressionist work favored by Ferus. Similarly, Harold Paris, an artist of extraordinary versatility in the use of techniques and materials, and creator of austere environments and powerful clay, bronze, and paper sculpture, could never be part of the gritty Funk atmosphere that prevailed when he arrived in California from Europe in 1960. Though as a teacher he influenced a whole generation of artists, he remained the noted outsider. As Dore Ashton also observed:

What sets him apart is not only his experimentation with new materials but his ability to find the appropriate medium in which to express his empathy, his kinship, his despair. He was not essentially a lyrical artist but rather a tragic artist in the large sense: he did not lack humor or wit or even playful impulses, but finally he subsumed them in his deep sense of the tragic.²⁴

Tragic also are the flags that Hans Burkhardt painted in response to the Persian Gulf War of 1990–91, the euphemistically named "Desert Storm." This Swiss-American painter, approaching his ninetieth year, created a series of paintings and collages based on the design of the American flag and indicting that war. He had done so earlier in portentous Abstract Expressionist pictures denouncing the Spanish Civil War, and others protesting the slaughter in Vietnam. Donald Kuspit considers the latter "among the greatest war paintings made – especially modern war paintings – but they are more than history paintings. They summarize the brutality and inhumanity not only of the Vietnam War but of the twentieth century as a whole."²⁵ The essay contrasts Burkhardt's deeply felt and emotionally charged paintings with the use of the flag in the celebrated paintings by Jasper

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Johns, who employed the same symbol simply to emphasize the planar structure of the fabric.

A more aggressive political stance was taken by the much younger Chicano artist Rupert Garcia. His use of photographs and silkscreen may be related to Pop Art, but Garcia employs them in the making of a truly committed political art. Pronouncing Warhol's works "provocative, but passionless, leading to emotional sterility," Garcia wrote early in his career.

My art is committed to the paradox that in using mass-media I am using a source which I despise and with which I am at war. In using the images of mass-media I am taking an art form whose motives are debased, exploitive, and indifferent to human welfare, and setting it into a totally new moral context. I am, so to speak, reversing the process by which mass-media betray the masses, and betraying the images of mass-media for which they are designed: the art of social protest.²⁶

In general, the dominant culture continues to marginalize political art as well as "ethnic" artists, whether Chicanos, African-Americans, or Turks, denying them full access to the global topography and its marketplace. This Eurocentric arrogance and American xenophobia was the reason for Bedri Baykam's manifesto of protest, which I received when participating in a panel discussion on Neo-Expressionism at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Baykam, a highly talented and articulate artist, is able to fuse his own Turkish culture and personal experience with the contemporary international idiom, creating an art with an authentic voice. I supported his protest against the hegemonic power exercised by Western taste makers of the mainstream.

At the time of this writing, I feel that even the current token adherence to "multiculturalism" is often little more than a patronizing capitalist designation for "The Other." But we also witness serious inquiry in which the dogmas of the past are rethought and debated. Indeed, the periphery is affecting the center in many ways, and previously marginalized cultures are not only influenced by but also act upon the mainstream culture. New paradigms are called for, and new artists will find them, and new critics will have something to write about.

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