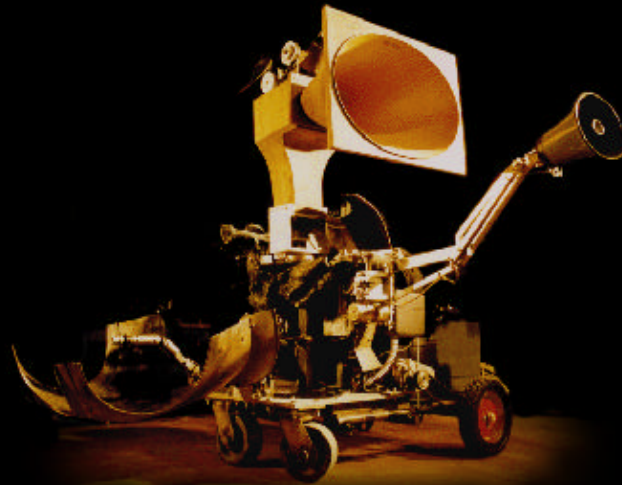


ROBOTIC AND SYNTHETIC PERFORMANCE:

Steps Toward a Culture of Liberation

a Manifesto of the OmniCircus



Frank Garvey

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I. THE AUTOPSY

For thousands of years new human codes of language, creativity, behavior and emotion have been created in the ritualized laboratory of myth, art and theater. The effort to invent tools, assimilate and master the environment, and transform it into a human society, has coincided with another more mysterious evolution: the ongoing attempt to improve the human condition by reproducing ourselves technologically, and thus struggle symbolically and actually with iniquity and physical mortality. It is in this context that our 'drama' - the epic story of the advent and implications of robotic and synthetic theater - begins. In the course of this journey, the reader will forgive me if I am forced to attempt explanations of certain more generalized and basic phenomena - such as the role of the art as the material trigger for the evolutionary processes of human culture.

Around 2000 B.C. in ancient Egypt's Middle Kingdom, the lower classes fought for and gained the right to have their corpses mummified. They believed this would allow passage to the same afterlife that aristocrats and pharaohs enjoyed. In our times many artists have developed similar ambitions. Bidding for post-modernist immortality, they struggle to have their works displayed 'in state' in Elysian galleries where mourners reverentially file by, staring at the duly prepared corpse... "it looks just like it did in life"... before being ripped from its cultural context in the local art slum, embalmed by a somber-faced curator and eulogized by madly posturing "critics". Then the undertaker/collector arrives, measures the body for its frame, and eventually transfers it (for a not immeasurable profit) to its final resting place - the Modern Art Museum.

The ceremonies are carried out with voodoo pomp and deadpan circumstance, fanfares from Art Forum, hosannas from Art in America and a chorus of approving nom-yohorenge-kyo's from the bureaucratic army of art professors, dealers, collectors and experts. But wait! The dubious circumstances surrounding these events demand a forensic examination of the body - just what is this decaying thing, this decomposition, this artwork so carefully prepared for immortality? Often, all we find upon exhumation of the remains is a dab, a blob of empty formalism or a smuch, a sodden squeech-a-goo of pop-art trivia.

A veritable ocean of blissfully decadent work is supported by the official "art world" to the exclusion of more important and progressive art. People outside this so-called art world have a tendency to give it the benefit of the doubt, despite occasional bouts of

derision and dismissal. In general, the public shrugs its shoulders and assumes that modern art institutions are filled with benign well-meaning cranks engaged in obscure, overblown but ultimately genuine intellectual labor. It's natural and reassuring to assume the art world to be the place you'd go to find those people interested in the development of progressive culture. The ultra-rich 'liberals' who dominate the art world present it as a more-or-less democratic forum for the expression of various artistic points of view. And there is in fact great freedom, as long as you agree with the party line, or you express yourself in so primitive a fashion that your work becomes decorative and safe. The myth of the avant-garde assumes that the art world includes 'opposition' tendencies that provide fertile ground for innovation and discovery.

We at OmniCircus believe the *bourgeois* art world to be the headquarters for those engaged in repressing progressive culture; it is monolithic, censorious and utterly corrupt. The 'freedom' which does exist is a smoke-screen; it is mostly the freedom to *excel at idiocy*, to drown out progressive voices of genius with an *avalanche of ego-driven mediocrity*; freedom to put on a bozo suit and *entertain the collectors, curators and courtiers*; freedom to flatter the privileged and promote the *cult of celebrity*; freedom to enter into every form of *superstition, hogwash, mindlessness and buncombe*...but no comparable freedom for proletarian artists with a serious message and the talent to put it across! The same corporate, political and social forces that engaged in recent genocidal warfare in Vietnam, Central America, and the Middle East ultimately control the art world in America, and other 'developed' countries. It is unrealistic to expect this reactionary ruling class to be more open or progressive culturally than they are politically.

In the 20th century there have been many incidents of mindless physical attacks by deranged persons upon art masterpieces residing in churches, museums and other places of worship. There seems to be a symbolic substitution, perhaps animistic, of the artwork for the hated political, religious, or economic ideal that, in the mind of the madman, has been perceived as the cause of his personal misery. Two specific cases of this interesting transfer come to mind: one in 1934 and the other in 1972. The first was the destruction, by a madman, of progressive Mexican muralist Diego Rivera's masterpiece in Rockefeller Center, New York City. This MURAL included a portrait of Lenin amidst depictions of the degradations produced by capitalism. The second case that I wish to bring to your attention was the smashing of the face and hand of the Virgin in Michelangelo's PIETA in St. Peters Cathedral, Rome. Some interesting conclusions about our society can be reached if we examine the fate of the two vandals. In the second case, the hammer attack on The Pieta, the perpetrator, whose name was Laszlo Toth, was diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic. Toth is a Maryonist, a bizarre religious sect that

opposes all images in art of the Virgin Mary. He is now resting comfortably in a sanitarium. Society put him there for his own good, though there appears to be little hope of his ever recovering.



In the first case, the destruction of the Rivera painting, the perpetrator's name was Nelson Rockefeller. His father, John D. Rockefeller, put him in charge of the decoration of Rockefeller Center. Nelson Rockefeller is a follower of a bizarre economic system called capitalism, which opposes all images of Lenin. He was appointed vice-president of the United States. He was put there for the good of his class, the billionaire class that rules the art and political world of America, and continues its imperialistic efforts to expand the empire internationally. Of course it should be pointed out that, before he became vice-president, Nelson Rockefeller was already widely known as one of the 20th century's "greatest" collectors of modern art. On lecture tours, he would often tell the story of the destruction of the Rivera mural as an amusing anecdote, noting ironically that the artist refused to speak to him for years afterwards.

The writer of this essay traveled to New York to see the actual wall where the Rivera mural once resided. The information desk clerk was visibly uncomfortable when asked if the area behind him was "the wall". He had obviously been schooled to deflect this question. He finally told me the mural never existed because it had never been "accepted by Mr. Rockefeller." I realized that by that definition, I didn't exist either.

In 1994 I sent one of my robots, Goboy the mechanical beggar, to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art to see an exhibit of BLANK WHITE CANVASES by Robert Ryman. His paintings do exist, they even sell to elite collectors lucky enough to acquire one for \$300,000 or

more apiece. Goboy was kicked out of the museum. A guard explained that he wasn't a work of art.



Just what is it that makes certain art so powerful and dangerous? There is a veritable renaissance of mechanical performance in San Francisco and elsewhere, echoing the efforts of untold generations of engineers, theater people and artists stretching back almost as long as theater itself. What is the historical impulse behind this age-old and continuing journey? I will present a new theory of the mechanism of cultural evolution and the role of art in history - the Design Language theory - and suggest a methodology for a comprehensive scientific/analytic approach to understanding art, theater, and ultimately robotic and synthetic performance.

We seldom question why there's little or nothing in the galleries and modern art museums that relates to our life, our struggle, our vision of beauty, because our framework of underlying assumptions about art is given to us by the business class, which runs these museums in its own interests. Our ignorance of our own working-class culture eventually induces a kind of paralysis. Why should we care what "they" do with "their" museums? It is our notion that art plays a key role in the power relationships between social classes, and the "aesthetic" languages that amplify and empower cultural movements act as triggers in this context.

The bourgeoisie, during their struggle for social supremacy in the 19th century, supported progressive ideologies including the notion of "social evolution", a basic premise of which is that ceaseless technological change and its accompanying class conflict lead to the possibility of progress and a higher, more sophisticated and rational level of cultural development, and that this process can be understood scientifically. Having achieved power, they now attack the evolutionary (and revolutionary) rationales that accompanied their rise, because the notion of continuous evolution suggests that no social form, not even capitalism, represents a perfect or final stage of social organization. It is difficult for the capitalists to attack their own revolutionary heritage directly, so instead they call into question the basic notion of whether social forces can be understood rationally at all.

When Charles Darwin set out to prove the theory of evolution of biological organisms, he used various kinds of evidence specimens of living forms: fossils, bones, etc. Obviously if a scientist can present a series of skulls progressing from the Eohippus to the modern horse, it is an easy matter to convince anyone but the most pinheaded Bible-thumper of the truth of biological evolution. Scientists can use these skulls as proof of their theory

because the relationship of the skull to the organism is known; it keeps the brains in and the weather out.

Social evolutionists, who believe civilization has moved through many complex interpolations from lower forms to higher, have a similar fount of material evidence on which to draw for proof of their theories; the things produced by a society are an accurate material record of many aspects of that society. But the relationship of these 'socially designed' forms to the social organism is not universally understood or taken for granted as is the skull to the horse. Works of art especially are shrouded in a heavy-handed mysticism. We believe that art plays a special role as a trigger in cultural development - a role that has never yet been defined. Most aesthetic frameworks, whether bourgeois or "Marxist," fail to successfully address a key underlying issue - why do societies make art? It is in the interest of culturally disenfranchised peoples to answer this question for ourselves rather than relying on the explanations of the "official experts."

The feminist and Black nationalist movements of recent times were compelled to sponsor a reassessment of history to include a more accurate description of the role of women and Blacks. They had to rewrite the past before they could write the future, because their past had been ripped from them and along with it their sense of identity as a people. The world proletariat, perennially excluded from the cultural landscape, must do the same. No class ever made a progressive social revolution without having a heroic conception of its own past, a shared identity for the present and a vision of epic cultural transformation. Our class has recently accomplished something entirely unique in history: in my lifetime the world's peoples have created the first international language... a language I call poly-fusion music, the amalgam of jazz, progressive rock, various classical forms and the vast panoply of the 'roots' music of the world's cultures. In the past three decades this new language with its vast armada of variants has become the most important cultural expression in the world of music. Poly-fusion music is 'unhorsing' classical (bourgeois) music as the dominant musical language and is becoming the most impressive, powerful and complex intellectual achievement in musical history. And now we're spreading our wings and attempting something even more portentous: the advent of Robotic and Synthetic (Musical) Theater, which includes these revolutionary music forms and adds dance, theater and technologically enhanced performance in an effort to supercede classical theater with a superior arsenal of expressivity and a multi-dimensional new language.

When an oppressed people have the courage and energy to understand and create new forms, and the militancy to challenge and defeat the ruling cultural ideas on the field of aesthetic battle, it's a short step to rebellion and then freedom. In order to develop our sense of this historic mission, it is important to know the history and context of the age-old and repeated efforts to make mechanical automata and theatrical performance.

II. THE RIDDLE

There is a riddle buried deep within the art forms of history, a riddle which, when solved, unlocks the social forces of the culture which created the form, makes them transparent and easily understood. Why is it so hard to unlock this puzzle? Everyone can feel the mysterious power and effect of works of art. But the immense technical and social forces of history, which find concrete expression in the things we make, speak a very strange language indeed.

In the social life of humanity, few activities are as inexplicable as those involving artistic creation. Art is seemingly the most abstract of social acts - far removed from the practical, even further from the necessary. Even so, there is something that drives us towards the miracle of artistic creation like a paper clip to a 10,000 lb. electro-magnet. Like a magic act, or a religious apparition, art seems to thrive on mystery, and disappear under the hammer blow of brute force explanation. As the uncritical media response to any number of recent apparitions proves - (Jesus in an oil stain, Mary in a chandelier reflection) - we seem to be more comfortable when the causes of the miraculous are examined with - how shall I put it? - a minimum of efficacy? Less than total enthusiasm?

Most who present themselves as judges of the quality of our present-day artistic miracles never deign to reveal the frame of reference for their pronouncements. To be sure, it is only recently that such a discussion would be possible. Plato told us that art is ideal approximations in earthly materials of unearthly ideal forms which just happen to resemble earthly things; is it any wonder that the Catholic feudal aristocracy found it easy to overthrow this early attempt at a science (?) of art and replace it with the icon? The bourgeois revolution overthrew all the old answers and opened up the game, for a time. After all, we do like our miracles simple, our explanations more so. The countless thousands murdered by the Catholic Inquisition in their struggle against science and heresy couldn't crush the new and dangerous empiricism, the corresponding activity of "realistic" drawing, the resulting creation of new artistic language-forms, or ultimately the basic question - why art? Today our noble art priesthood again attempts to create a consensus by obscuring the question amidst clouds of incense and mystic formalist double talk, and we again must ask - why art?



What motivated the nomads of primordial days to indulge in painting and sculpture even though their conditions of life involved a brutal hunt and constant threats to survival? Why has practically every culture deemed it necessary to express itself in terms of image, sound, movement, and mechanics? Marxists believe that the development of technology and material production has been the engine driving history forward, with class conflict providing the spark; what possible role could artistic expression play in the turning of these giant wheels? Is art primarily a "spiritual" or "emotional" act, expressing some fundamental human desire for self-expression, independent of, or peripheral to, the concrete needs of the society that creates it? Is it at bottom an ideological tool, simply another vehicle for the propagation of philosophic or political ends? Or does art play a material role - does it in some way contribute to the development of our technique, our mastery over the forces of nature, adding to our productive capacity, thus making our survival more assured? What role does theater, ritual and myth play in the development of human behavior? And why, why, oh me oh my, does mechanical performance appear so early, and re-appear so often, in the history and evolution of theater?

III. TWO POWERS REMOVED

One reason for our difficulty in unlocking these puzzles is that art is two powers removed from its foundations in economic and social life, and therefore the connection to its foundations are obscured. An analogy - if you're walking 5 MPH down a country road, then you drive back over that same road later at 50 MPH, you'll see certain frames of reference like a tree or fence that can tell you you're on the same road. Similarly if you're driving 50 MPH down the road then flying 500 MPH over it you'll likely see larger items like the barn and silo, which can help you recognize the road. But if you walk down the road, then fly over it later, you're not going to recognize it because you're two powers removed from your original experience.

Likewise, it's relatively easy to intuit connections between, say, sculpture and architecture, because sculpture is connected to architecture through the pedestal, the niche, etc. It's also easy to grasp the economic and social foundations of architecture; few of us can build an edifice because of an urge for personal expression. The process of construction of our architectural designscape is intimately and obviously connected to economic, social and political realities. But the connection of sculpture to those same realities is two powers removed, and therefore obscure.

Therefore, it is easy for the "art world," representing as it does the social power structure, to further obscure these connections in the interest of inhibiting the development of cultural sophistication, by promoting a purely 'personal' view of art.

IV. THE PERSONAL EXPRESSION THEORY

The official "art world" of today is trapped in a wild oscillation between support for a retrograde bourgeois realism, recalling the forms of its own heroic revolutionary past, and variations on a formalism whose spiritual and experiential emptiness reflects (uninformatively) the hollowness of late capitalist culture. Variations on the themes of realism and formalism have intertwined, like a psychotic Bach fugue, for at least 75 years. (See Leon Trotsky's excellent essay on 'pure' art.) The oscillation between the two creates the illusion of change and therefore progress.

This disgraceful and hysterical dance is made possible by the overwhelming dominance of an idea whose universal influence has had paralyzing consequences in our time. It is really an aesthetic theory containing a definition of art, but because it is accepted by educated and uneducated, progressive and reactionary, it has become part of the unspoken and unexamined underpinning of our society. It is the birthright of every citizen of the industrial world - *the personal expression theory*. In a way you already know what it is because you believe it.

The basis of this theory of art is the notion that everyone has a unique and separate personality and sees the world in a different way from everyone else. Art is driven by an instinctual need for self-expression and is therefore a "personal" expression because of the aforementioned uniqueness of the artist. The viewer of the work of art is similarly locked into his or her individuality and therefore has a purely personal reaction to the art work. Beautiful and simple, containing more than a grain of truth, the personal expression theory additionally benefits in our times from having once been a progressive, indeed revolutionary leap forward.

When the bourgeoisie were fighting in Western Europe against the tyranny of their submersion in the mass of feudal class and caste structure, individualism appeared as a massive justification for new rights and powers for the (mostly business-owning) people. The land owning class moved over, if not down, to make way for the globe-hopping merchants whose manufacturing techniques were transforming the world. The art sponsored by this newly powerful class respected, for the first time on a developed level, the complexity of the psychological identity of individuals (Shakespeare) and even their individual appearance, warts and all (Rembrandt).

The personal expression notion came to symbolize a way of looking at all human activity in economic, social, scientific and cultural spheres; it became a theory of history, a theory which posits that the actions of supposedly larger-than-life individuals, 'heroes', are the determining factor in human events, and the rest of us are passive spectators. This

ideology grew more extreme as a brazen attempt to justify the growing and monstrous privileges of the industrialists, so-called 'entertainment' celebrities and politicians in our times. It is even applied to "counter-culture" art and artists, where it serves to promote a view of isolated, alienated creators whose ideas and visions are independent of the social fabric within which they create. The gigantic and (sometimes) inspiring power of masses of people in motion, as in radicalizations, social movements and wars, and the unifying forms of consciousness that are welded by the social bonds such as class, race, oppression and the sacrifice of shared struggles, are downplayed or ignored by the 'personal expression' theory, whose basic function has evolved from a progressive defense of individual liberty to an ideological tool for de-politicizing the working class.

V. THE ROLE of the INDIVIDUAL in ART

"...In our times, art begins with the psychological make-up of certain individuals who to some degree usually suffer from psychoneurosis...Since all historic art making is the sum total of the individuals' emotional potential, it is likely that art in its last stages constitutes a structural reversion to the infantile stages of human development."---Jack Burnham, *The Artist as Shaman*

The characterization of artist as neurotic, as well as Burnham's assumption that art in general is on its last legs (another quote from the same article: "Contemporary art has finally arrived at the critical stage of its crisis, one inducing the dissolution of the component structure of art until it no longer exists in any functional capacity.") demands an examination of the role of individual artists in the evolution of art. Nowhere does Burnham state why it is that art is ceasing to exist; can this be because art is the only human activity exclusively carried out by neurotics, or is he mistaking the disintegration of a certain kind of art for the end of art itself? A very common phenomenon among kings, czars and presidents faced with the prospect of imminent revolution, is to confuse the end of their personal or class domination with the end of civilization. Mr. Burnham's song thus takes on the aspect of a lamentation for the self-immolation of bourgeois art. Is it true that "art begins with the psychological make-up of (the) individual?"

THE CRITIC AS SHAM

or, a "Structuralist" Reversion to the Infantile Stages of Human Development

The answer to this important question is no, art does not "begin" with the "psychology of the individual" any more than does physics, paleontology, or shamanism. These are all social activities carried on in the context of a historically defined social mode of organization and independent of the individual's will. Art movements, like political ones, operate in relation to a set of social and historical givens, a context which they can consciously affect only by first understanding the laws of development of said context,

and then acting within these to bring about the desired changes. Freedom is indeed, as Frederick Engels said, based on necessity. Individual artists participate in the unfolding of art not as passive spectators or as heroic loners. They are mediators representing their classes' aesthetics, while struggling in concrete situations with issues and problems that have a material base and whose dialectic the genuine artist always insists on confronting.

Art movements have often exhibited the peculiar "optical illusion" of history; the individual who appears to be the instigator, or perpetrator, of a particular tendency in art was in fact propelled to a leadership role by the dynamic of the movement itself.

Movements create leaders, not the other way around. The great Russian sculptor Naum Gabo said this about his role in the writing of the manifesto of the early *Constructivists*, one of the first important progressive art movements of the 20th century:

"I am the author of the manifesto. But if you ask about the genesis of the whole ideology then I must say that, although I wrote it and although the ideology was defended by me for a long time during the five years in Russia and later, it would be a fallacy to say that the progenitor of the Constructive ideology was one man. If the constructive movement had been initiated or created by one man alone, then the whole movement would not be worth more than the piece of paper on which it is written. An ideology, any ideology, is valuable only in so far as it is an integration of ideas already latent in the spirits and minds of the people of its time and to which they respond when it takes form. It is never the invention of one man's mind. The role of the individual artist in the Constructive movement must be evaluated by the measure of how essential were his creative contributions to the foundation of the ideology and practice of this movement and what influence they had and have on its direction and development."

In Burnham's article, *The Artist as Shaman*, he quotes from Hans Sedlmayr: "We must not fail in our trust that the individual in healing himself will contribute to the healing of the whole... the diseased condition of the whole has its starting point in the rotting away of individual cells." What is the nature of this strange disease? Nowhere do they explain it, and nowhere do they offer a solution, except to recommend the Shaman (neurotic artist) as the healer. Their analysis of present day society is not adequate precisely because they fail to see the social, political and economic context. It's no wonder then that magic is their solution, which is the famous structuralist "reversion to the infantile stages of human development."

On top of the groaning edifice of individualism, a giant superstructure of pseudo-scientific shamanism has been erected to compensate for, or obscure, one or another of its obvious failings. As a result, there are many sub-species of the present-day bourgeois

aesthetic animal. Despite the emotional collapse of the ultra-privileged and a consequent pilot fish-like tendency to feed off working class (folk) culture, the rich still have a monopoly on the high-art dialogue and are constantly finding new and "higher" levels of obscurantism beneath which they challenge each other to sink. It would be a useless task to analyze in depth even a significant portion of them - like shoveling sand under water, or herding cats...wasteful and distracting. We prefer to focus on addressing and changing the underlying conditions that give rise to such hysterical feats of acrobatic intellectual charlatanism as the "institution" theory, "structuralism", "deconstructionism", etc., which vastly underrate the role of content in art.

The other side of the official "art world's" aesthetic coinage, (heads I win, tails you lose), is the pseudo-Marxist notion of the equivalence of art and ideology. This branch of modern 'art theory' is an intellectual cottage industry rooted in the reactionary and parasitic Stalinist bureaucracies that grew to dominate and, in most cases, cause the overthrow of the revolutionary processes in the Soviet Union, China and Eastern Europe. The hacks of the pseudo-left put forth a bulky, mechanistically materialist "aesthetic" that puts the ideas contained in a work of art on the inquisition block - thus vastly overrating the role of ideological "subject matter" and content in art. Both the bourgeois and the pseudo-leftist traditions of modern art fear the development of a genuine, highly developed, working-class culture and Marxist aesthetic theory. They can't prevent it, so they have evolved complex ideologies of containment. Both the "personal expression" theory of the bourgeois avant-garde and the "mechanical materialist" notions of the pseudo-left contain a grain of truth - just enough to mask their limitations.

Now on to the real battle - forthwith, a presentation of a theory of art as the mechanism, the 'gene' as it were, of cultural evolution. Friends, hold my arms!

VI. DESIGN LANGUAGE THEORY

How was it that tribal cultures existing in conditions of varying privation afforded themselves the 'luxury' of artistic expression? Neither the mechanical materialistic theory of culture as a passive reflection of existing social/economic forms, nor the personal expression notion of the supposed compulsion of unique individuals to "express themselves", explains this adequately. There must be a material need which only art can satisfy for it to be such an essential activity.

A clue towards solving the mystery occurs when one notices the similarity of certain 20th century "abstract" sculptures by Gabo, Moore and Buckminster Fuller and his collaborators, with the revolutionary architecture of Saarinen, Goff, Le Corbusier and others. For the first time, sculpture expressed itself in three-dimensional, curvilinear, "abstract" shapes, developing an incredibly complex form-language capable of expressing a new vision of human emotion. Almost simultaneously, architects began using this same form-language to make a new kind of complex, sculptural architecture.





From the EIFFEL TOWER onwards, the new architectural forms represent the first (unconscious) attempt in over 6,000 years of building to supersede the rectangle as the *basic unit* of most architectonic solutions, made possible of course by the new technologies of construction which are capable of far more varieties of shape.



If this theory were to hold a general historical-evolutionary principle, art would have to have provided the same laboratory service for architecture during the last comparable period of history - the birth of the first architectonic language, based on the rectangle and simple plane geometry. Since the birth of private property, in the urban environments the land has mainly been divided into rectangles for purposes of ownership, and for that reason, and because early construction techniques allowed only simple shapes, buildings have been mainly rectangular, with a smattering of other simple shapes such as the circle and pyramid. This way of building required a new way of thought, a *design language*, to be developed in the laboratory of abstract art - to train the human race to think in terms of plane geometry. It is almost impossible for us now to understand what a sea-change this was in human consciousness. For one thing, in the previous epoch, lasting possibly 2 million years, human tribal culture could not conceive of the

concept of 'ownership' of the land. (When Native Americans sold the island of Manhattan to European "immigrants" for \$26, it wasn't an act of stupidity. The Natives thought it was a huge joke. To sell land to them was akin to my selling you a portion of the sky - sure, buddy, you want some sky, I'll sell it to you, how much?) I looked for a two-dimensional, largely rectilinear, decorative and 'abstract' (non-functional) style of artistic expression that might have accompanied the advent of architecture itself during the birth of class society. Was there a previous period where abstract art dominated the world of culture, this time an abstraction of the two-dimensional organization of surface comparable to primitive building technique?

In France's Lascaux Cave, where stunning quantities of Paleolithic cave art were discovered, only a very few humans were painted, and most of them have animal characteristics. But some paintings aren't depicting animal or human images. There are many painted rectangle, grids, and diagonal geometric designs! There are many more examples of Paleolithic art all over the world engaging in geometric abstraction, and this effort continues well into the agrarian and slave-holding periods until architecture is firmly developed, then it begins to diminish. Every one of the world's cultures, during its first phase of architectonic thought development, had a period of what anthropologists sometimes call the "Geometric Style", where artists drew, painted and wove rectangles, circles, squares, triangles and other linear compositions on pots, blankets and other objects. This culminated in developed rectangular and other simple geometric structure building, coinciding further with the new need in practical society to develop a language and technology for building. During the age when private property evolved and the land was divided into rectangles and rectangular structures were erected on the land, artists developed this first "abstract" geometric form-language in the laboratory of their art. Not as "personal expression", not as ideology reflecting the politics of the ruling or oppressed class. This art was a means for developing an abstract technical/social language of architectural shape that could code and decode information about form, facilitating the material progress of humanity. Art therefore plays a primal pragmatic role, underneath all of its spiritualism, without artists ever having to be conscious of the implication of what they are doing.

It is also clear that there is a fundamental practical purpose underlying the selection of the main subject matters of Paleolithic art, which were the beasts of the hunt, and carved images of female fertility. Obviously food and reproduction are elemental to survival, and objects and paintings were created to be used in rituals that encouraged success in these arenas. But the animals painted on cave walls could not only be used to encourage good hunting by means of ritual and magic, but also for recognition and even target practice. And fertility sculptures, such as the beautiful VENUS of WILLENDORF, were much harder to carve than arrowheads and early tools, thus giving an impulse to another non-spiritual but necessary pre-requisite for stone-age survival - virtuosity in carving stone.



From the earliest time, subject matter in art has addressed immediate survival issues, whether food, fertility, or in more recent times, portraits of the patrons who pay the bills, or of their ideology... but what of the means of expression of these concerns, the very 'languages' of art? Are these various 'codes' not even more primal, integral, and important than any particular 'subject matter', no matter how critical? There can be no poem without first letters, then words... no painting without similar visual alphabets, words, and even syntax... where do these languages come from?

All of the material, practical activities of our social life involve the coding and encoding of information in a vast multitude of agreed upon languages. There are languages of the things that we make, not just the things we say. Indeed the spoken language itself is a social construction much like anything materially built.

Words and concepts originate in material things and material life. The origin of many alphabets and written languages involved pictures of things, becoming eventually idiogrammatic symbols of the concept of the thing, then finally the more abstract "alphabet". But no language, whether spoken, written or built can be developed whole cloth and implemented instantaneously. A long, organic process is involved, necessitating an environment where failure isn't catastrophic - a laboratory environment. Doctors

implement new cures only after an elaborate process of trial and error in a setting where it's (relatively) safe to fail. Everything we make is designed first by the human mind/body. Multitudes of experiments, unconscious processes, feedback networks and other improvisations go into the making of the greatest of all human creations - the languages we use to communicate and create our social landscape. These processes are too complex and profound to risk a premature attempt at implementation in the mass culture. So human beings do 'art' as a laboratory for the development of design languages, defining design languages as the codification of modes of social behavior. For every category of practical social activity related to the social landscape and concrete transformation of the world, in other words, for all social activity, there is an art form that acts as the ritualized laboratory for developing the codes or languages we need for carrying on this practice.

When our struggles with nature and each other call upon us to engage in new activities that in turn demand that we create new languages to communicate, then an artistic laboratory is spontaneously and unconsciously created to provide a safe place where specifics of this code can develop. These processes are basically emotion-driven, involving as they do the complex and myriad interpolations of new forms of so-called beauty, because the conscious mind is too predictable and too passive a mirror of the existing order for it to be the source for the needed new codes. That is why the 'personal expression' theory is so easy to accept - the last stage in artistic creation is personal and subjective, and just as birds don't need Ornithology or Aeronautics in order to reproduce, evolve and fly, artists don't need knowledge of social evolution to feel and intuit new means of expression. Esperanto didn't work because language must develop in usage. In addition, the stress that produces new languages doesn't allow for an accurate assessment of their effectiveness, so we need an artificial environment - the ritualistic world of art - to bring them to fruition. Just as drawings of "abstract" geometric designs preceded the development of a two-dimensional architectural form language, and sculptures of curvilinear abstraction predated the three-dimensional architectonic language, likewise the spoken language itself was preceded by a primeval epoch of vocal utterances that eventually became what we would call "poetry" and vocal music. They expressed the rhythmic functions of early humanity, hunting, struggling and playing, eventually coalescing into the first abstract design language.

In that incredible time after our early ancestors first picked up stones and carried them around only semi-conscious of their potential, during the time they struggled to conceptualize them as tools or as weapons, but before they became tools or weapons, what were these stones if not sculptures? In the shadow world between animal instinct and human consciousness is the realm of art. When these stones were appropriated for human labor they went from being stones to being sculptures. When they were deliberately used to kill or build they become tools. Later, when humanity recognized them consciously as tools, it used art again to abstract these tools into words, so we could convey information about them to others and to the future.

**We are the tool-using animal.
We make ourselves by making our social environment.**

**All human activities are ultimately connected to the struggle for the tool
and for the built environment.**

These codes can be called design languages.

Languages for the spoken and written word.

Languages of the architectonic space.

Languages of science and material production.

Languages of war and conquest.

Languages of work relations.

Languages of human emotion, behavior and personality.

Languages are the greatest and most complex tools. Their development is independent of the conscious participation of individuals. They arise in the shadow land of primordial struggles.

Even as languages develop they must have concrete expression, but a language cannot be developed wholly in practical use. Content constantly changes, but languages do not. If each new use creates a new alphabet, new words or syntax, there isn't time for its dissemination. How are languages created? They do not spring forth fully formed, as Athena from the head of Zeus!

Art is a ritualized laboratory - through ritual, artists intuitively approximate the purpose to which the new forms will eventually be put, and they actualize this purpose in a primal, embryonic, dimly understood (ritualized) way.

It is impossible to define art in a super-historical fashion; it must be seen in the context of the time and place that creates it. Nevertheless, it is necessary to recognize that art always has this role in the development of new languages. As a rule however, the ideological content of a work of art (the specific messages which are communicated by the language-codes) is its most obvious aspect, and indeed, often the most important. (This fact provides the grain of truth in the art = ideology theory). It is only in times of great social upheaval - revolutionary times - when new languages are being created, that art is pressed into service as an unconscious, collective foundry for new languages.

During revolutionary epochs:

Sculpture is the laboratory of the built environment...architecture.

Poetry is the laboratory of the spoken and written word.
Dance is the laboratory of work relations.
Music and art are the laboratory of the aural and visual designscape.
Theater is the laboratory for new modes of emotion and behavior, which are then codified into law.

Languages are conceived in the embryo of art, born into myth, reared in the dim underworld of emotion, and then coded into law, entertainment and mass culture, at which time they are usually obsolete. Let us honor revolutionary artists!

VII. A METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Any attempt to develop a science of art must start with a technique for examining works of art in their social context. Most previous methodologies resolve into a form/content dichotomy. In the simplistic landscape of 20th century aesthetics, the world is divided into two camps, with the "avant-garde" taking the side of the supremacy of "form" and Stalinist-influenced pseudo-leftists preferring "content". This half-wit battle then takes on all the moral grandeur of a professional wrestling match. Both sides slug it out, the audience reaching a feeding frenzy when the fake blood flows, until they tire, agree to disagree and everybody goes home happy. Since the opposing positions connect in the perfect mirror image, both sides agree on far more than either would care to admit.

I propose a methodology that examines art works in terms of three basic characteristics, and always puts the work in its evolutionary social/historical and cultural context:

TECHNICAL syntax - the patterns of design structure of the art work which flow from the technology used to create it, the technologies referred to by the work, the technologies to which the art work shows allegiance, and the technology of the society within which the work was created.

FUNCTIONAL syntax - the patterns of design structure of the art work which flow from the practical activities (functions) directly suggested by the artwork, the practical activities suggested by the work indirectly, and the social purpose of the artwork as defined by the layer or class that owns or controls the means of production of the artwork.

The conflict of relationship between the ritualized technical and

functional syntax of a work of art creates its design language, which it can then use to express...

CONTENT - the ideas expressed directly in the "subject matter" of the artwork and indirectly by the underlying assumptions of the genres to which the artworks belong.

When a ruling class begins to inhibit the further development or optimum social usage of the forces of technology in order to maintain the status quo, the narrow interests of these strata become a brake upon history, and a social transformation overturning their rule becomes necessary. This dialectic between the means of production and the modes of ownership of those productive methods is reflected in the language of art and design, the abstract language of the given epoch and society.

It is the conflict between the technological potential of a given culture and the actual way the technology is used by those who control it that gives art and design its basic character. Available technology gives the set of potential solutions, but the design criterion of the class that owns the means of production gives the final solutions. A society which has the technology for a more progressive and advanced set of cultural solutions but doesn't use it, or which misuses a new technology by actualizing only forms which were a function of the old, obsolete technology (mannerism) is in the hammerlock of decadence.

When examining a work of art or a design form scientifically, it is necessary to analyze it in five fundamental ways in order to come to a full understanding of the work and, through this examination, the society that created the cultural work.

1. THE TECHNICAL MODE OF ANALYSIS - What was the technological level of the society that created the work? To what technological language does the work show allegiance? What was the actual technology used to create the work? Was the work created in a society with a different technological base than the one to which the work expresses allegiance?

2. THE FUNCTIONAL MODE OF ANALYSIS - What social class owned and controlled the means of production of the society that created the work? What are the criteria by which the form of the work is decided upon? How is the technology, which creates the set of potential forms, actively utilized? Who decided on the final form? How is the technology of the society that created the work actually utilized in relation to its potential for meeting the needs of its members? To what mode of ownership of the productive forces of the society does the artwork show allegiance? Is there a difference between the mode of ownership to which the work shows allegiance and the actual mode of ownership of the society that created the work?

3. THE CONTENT (or "subject matter") - What ideas are directly expressed in the work? What underlying assumptions or ideologies are expressed by the genre to which the work belongs? Is there a conflict between the ideas directly expressed in the work and the ideology of the genre?

4. THE DESIGN LANGUAGE MODE OF ANALYSIS - What is the relationship in the work between the technical and functional modes? What is the relationship in the society that created the work, between the means of production and those who control them? How does the content of the work relate to its design language?

5. THE DIALECTIC - What role does the class-consciousness of the artist play in this work? Which class-defined social and cultural vision is the artist expressing? What social-political role is that class playing in the context of its society and time?



VIII. THE CLASS NATURE OF ART

Since the advent of class society, art has had a class character. For every important artistic tendency there is a social layer that gave birth to it and nourishes it spiritually and economically. Each of these social layers has its own conception of art, architecture, and social design based on the historical role of the class, its place in production, and corresponding modes of consciousness. As Sergei Eisenstein put it when talking about filmmaking, "The final order (of the film composition) is inevitably determined, consciously or unconsciously, by the social premise of the maker of the film composition. His class-determined tendency is the basis of what seems to be an arbitrary cinematographic relation to the object placed, or found, before the camera."

The moving force behind social (and thus artistic) evolution for the last 6,000 years has been class conflict - a struggle between the privileged and the oppressed. But the unseen force accompanying these dramatic events, like the drone of the tamboura in Indian classical music, has been material production.

Underlying the "subject matter" of the art of class society there exists the language of design to which the works show allegiance, which is the expression of certain relations of production. These relations of production can be divided into two opposing aspects.

- 1. The means of production, the technical forces by which the society meets its material needs.**
- 2. The modes of production, the legal forms of ownership and control of the means of production.**

The basic forms of the work of art result from these social forces in conflict, in the same sense that speech arises from the relationship between the technology (tongue, voice box) and the need to project a meaningful sound.

Arising on top of this material foundation are the ideas and emotion expressed in the so-called "subject matter" of the work. The real content of an artwork is much more profound than just its ideological subject matter, because the cultural creation is always a reflection of, or participant in, the social dialectic - the conflict in society between the means of production and the forms of ownership of the means of production.



Political, religious, ideological and aesthetic notions that are expressed in the subject matter of a cultural work are arenas in which humanity becomes conscious of the underlying social dialectic and fight it out. These struggles are ultimately subordinate to the conflict between means and mode of production, and for the same reason the subject matter of an artwork is historically subordinate to its design language, its language of form, which is not abstract at all but is based on the concrete conflicts between the development to technology and the nature of the ruling class that controls it. It is a huge mistake, therefore, to look at the content of art only in terms of the subject matter directly expressed in the work.

When social struggles create the need for new forms of expression (new languages), in whatever mode of the social sphere, they arise first in art. This implies that a 'socially progressive' artwork must not only have a progressive content but must also express itself using a progressive form language. First "alphabetical symbols", then "equivalent human utterances", "words", and finally "syntax" must be created before great and new thoughts can be manifested via language. Artists - those magical infants, shamans and prodigies who we sacrifice like old toys in our inexorable quest for mammon - make these tools! This, then, is the social function of art - it acts as the "genes" of social evolution, the trigger for new forms of mass culture in the unceasing and inexorable evolution of societies. Far from being purely personal, art is the most collective (albeit unconscious) form of cultural consciousness: it is the Vulcan Forge of the modes of expression of practical life.

Shakespeare wrote his plays in a time when the English dictionary contained less than 10,000 words. He wrote his plays using over 15,000 different words - he created words as well as plays (ex. - critical, monumental, obscene, majestic) and sculpted the English language. The reason we use his words is that he invested them with great emotional power and thus sent them on wings of fire into mass culture. He examined the human psyche on a level of clarity and resolution that was needed by the bourgeois (individualist) revolution of his day, and not before. And he helped make the cultural identity of the British nation, in the same way that Dante, who helped create the Italian language, also therefore laid copstones for the eventual nation of Italy. James Joyce led a veritable phalanx of modernist writers who have experimented with making new language. The underlying evolutionary function of literature is to create new language, and the primeval purpose of the 'masterpiece' is to act as the vehicle, implement new and progressive language from the laboratory of art into mass culture.

IX. THE ORIGINS of BOURGEOIS REALISM

The modern-art age is characterized by the almost complete dissolution of Bourgeois Realism (naturalism) as a viable art form in the "art world" of the advanced capitalist countries, and a desperate search on the part of the official "art world" for a replacement. (The old 'naturalist' language has made its way into mass culture and is fully implemented in Hollywood film, television and commercial theater, so it is no longer

necessary to continue it in the research environment of art. In fact, it is so well understood by the hack practitioners in Hollywood that they have developed an official methodology, and woe unto anyone who fails to follow it when crafting scripts!) However, Bourgeois Realism will never completely die in the arts as long as the material interests and class consciousness that underlie it still exist. Indeed it seems to resurrect itself every couple of art-seasons: Pop, the New Realism, Photo-realism, Christian Schlock Realism, etc.



Sometimes aggressive attempts at reproduction are a desperate over-compensation for sense of vulnerability and lack of virility... The Formalists must fear they are doomed, like Sisyphus, to roll the stone of abstraction up the mountain of MOMA time and again, only to see it slip down under the onslaught of some ever newer "Realism!" Bourgeois Realism is the art form that first mythologized the capitalist class and expressed its early ideology. In order to understand the rise and fall of this kind of art, we must first examine how the human form came to replace the beast as the main subject of art imagery.

Class society first came into being 6-8,000 years ago, replacing a primitive communism where no one owned land or property. This Neolithic revolution brought about gigantic changes:

1. Transformation of 'hunting and gathering' mode of survival to herds keeping and farming.

2. Beginnings of townships and the end of nomadic life.

3. Origins of class divisions and a split between intellectual and physical labor (primordial alienation).

4. Beginnings of private property and the corresponding invention of geometry to facilitate division of the land. (The word "geometry" means "earth measure". Geometry was also the first abstract production language for simple building techniques.)

5. Origins of realism in art.

Corresponding with the first development of a privileged, ruling strata in society, art forms underwent a revolutionary transformation. From being a magic vehicle expressing the primary mode of survival in tribal society (the hunt), art began to explore and develop the new technologies of production, starting with the creation in pre-class society of geometric patterns on pots and blankets, and culminating with the explosive development of the iron and bronze revolutions. But in addition, art and artists took on the new social role of idealizing the ruling class then in power, a role that (along with the technological role of research and development) it has maintained ever since, through the agrarian, slave-holding, feudal and capitalist epoch of class society. This form of art has been called realism, but it should more properly be called idealism, since even in the most 'democratic' societies, its role is still propagandistic and subservient to ruling forces. This duality has plagued artistic form since before the time of KING TUT in slave-holding Egypt, to the CHRIST iconography painted by Cimabue, to Norman Rockwell's PORTRAIT of NIXON. The monolithic presence of the human form in art has always had a connotation of social hierarchy and injustice. It is only in the revolutionary ages that the rising class has given to realism a kind of heroism - Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Diego Rivera. The purpose of realism in art is to idealize the class in power, or the class about to be in power.



The human form first appears in art in a minor way, as stick figures in the cave painting of pre-class society. These paintings reflect the means of production of their day - the hunt, resulting in an art of the primordial beast, a functional art of rituals designed to facilitate in the deadly battle against extinction. The human stick figures have not individual, caste, or territorial evocation. There also exist sculptures of archetypal female forms from pre-class society. These represent the second pillar of survival for arboreal tribes - fertility. Like the dawn-age paintings, these sculptures of pre-history were never individuated. In addition, we believe they played an important and pragmatic role in the perfection of stone carving tools and techniques. It should be noted that the carving of a complex sculpture was literally the most challenging act of early engineering.

The agrarian epoch applies to those societies that have begun to develop agriculture and herds keeping, but have not yet developed the practice of keeping slaves. The art of agrarian societies is characterized by an extreme stylization of the human form. In these cultures the class structure is in an infantile state; kings and other rulers in early class societies either didn't yet exist or were elected only in times of need, as in ancient Sumer. Thus the art, while depicting the privileged caste, is not yet individualized.

In addition, this stylization reflects the development of a new language in the design of tools and structural forms. This was the epoch of the invention of farming. It is important to remember that the same individual who was charged with the making of art-pieces probably was involved in the creation of weapons, farming tools, and all other implements by which the society carries on its material existence. Techniques developed in sculpture making were implemented in early farming tools.

Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, as well as the highly developed civilizations in the ancient Americas, such as the Aztec, are examples of slave-holding societies that produced a wide variety of forms of 'realism' from the highly stylized, to the introduction of individualized facial anatomy. Class structures become increasingly complex in a slave-holding society. In general, the richer the society, the more it could "afford" limited forms of democracy, at least for the privileged. Therefore, the more accurate could be its artists' description of life, still within limitations imposed by the dominant class. Just as we find the first true portraits of the privileged in these societies, so do we find here for the first time a sometimes-sympathetic portrayal in art of members of the lower classes. In slave-holding cultures the rulers were often considered and portrayed in art as gods; in feudal societies, they were not gods but ruled by divine right, and in capitalist society they are only the most "intelligent" and "best fit" humans. It seems that the higher humanity climbs, the lower go those who hold the chains. Here at the epoch of the birth of privilege, slavery and obedience, we see also the first myths of the mechanical man. It is often extremely hard to tell how much of the stories that were told in ancient China were pure artifice, or the telling of genuine technical accomplishments perhaps somewhat exaggerated. Here is an excerpt from Lieh Tzu, from the third century BC:

"King Mu of Chou made a tour of inspection in the west...and on his return journey... a certain artificer, Yen Shih by name, was presented to him. The king received him and asked him what he could do. He replied that he would do anything which the king commanded, but that he had a piece of work already finished. `Bring it with you tomorrow,' said the king, `and we will look at it together.' So the next day Yen Shih appeared again and was admitted into his presence. `Who is that man accompanying you?' asked the king. `That, Sir,' replied Yen Shih, `is my own handiwork. He can sing and he can act.' The king stared at the figure in astonishment. It walked with rapid strides, moving its head up and down, so that anyone would have taken it for a live human being. The artificer touched its chin, and it began singing, perfectly in tune. He touched its hand, and it began posturing, keeping perfect time. It went through any number of movements that fancy might happen to dictate... the robot winked its eye and made advances to the ladies in attendance, whereupon the king became incensed and would have had Yen Shih executed on the spot had not the latter, in mortal fear, instantly taken the robot to pieces to let him see what it really was. And, indeed, it turned out to be only a construction of leather, wood, glue and lacquer, variously colored white, black, red and blue... The king was delighted. Drawing a deep breath, he exclaimed, `Can it be that human skill is on a par with that of the great Author of Nature?' "

Feudalism in China, Japan, Europe and elsewhere developed certain forms of knowledge, such as mathematics and mechanics, to a high degree and spread them far and wide. Myths of mechanical men and fantastic machines appear in many cultures in the Middle Ages. The Yantra-Purusa, or machine-man, appears in many stories in Sanskrit literature. He (or she) has all the attributes of a human being. There exist also certain descriptions of believable automata that were apparently built for wealthy kings. One of the main 'achievements' of Western European culture during this age was the invasion of this highly advanced mechanical culture, in a true Christian spirit, by the Crusades. Here is an excerpt from the twelfth-century Samararigana-sutradha-ra:

"Male and female figures are designed for various kinds of automatic service. Each part of these figures is made and fitted separately, with holes and pins, so that thighs, eyes, neck, hand, wrist, forearm and fingers can act according to need. The material used is mainly wood, but a leather cover is given to complete the impression of a human being. The movements are managed by the system of poles, pins and strings

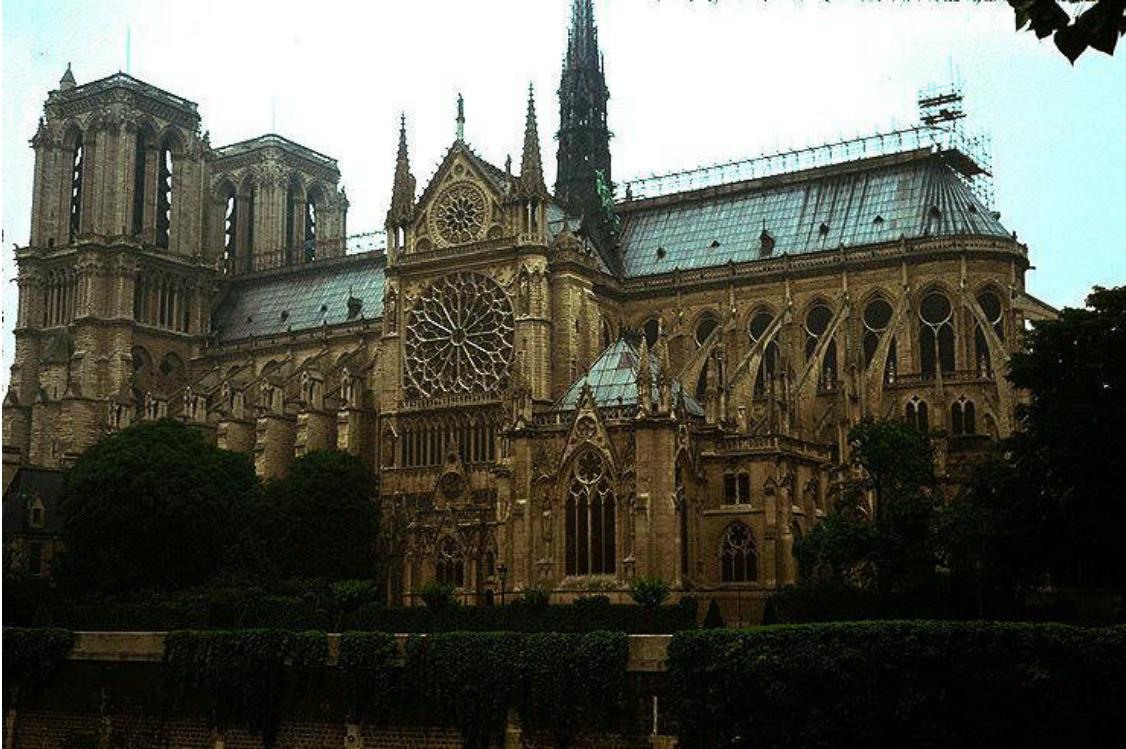
attached to rods controlling each limb. Looking into a mirror, playing a lute and stretching out the hand to touch, give pan, sprinkle water and make obeisance are the acts done by these figures."

Lest anyone conclude that ancient cultures were incapable of implementing sophisticated mechanistics, the existence of the Antikythera Mechanism will quickly disabuse. A sponge diver, in a shipwreck filled with amphorae and statues off the island of Antikythera in 1900, discovered this analog mechanical computer. Possibly made by the advanced ancient culture of the island of Rhodes, off the coast of Greece, it was constructed at least 2,000 years ago. It contained 39 gears including a differential mechanism, and its dials showed the signs of the zodiac and the path of the sun for every day of the year, phases of the moon, and 18-year cycles of solar eclipses.

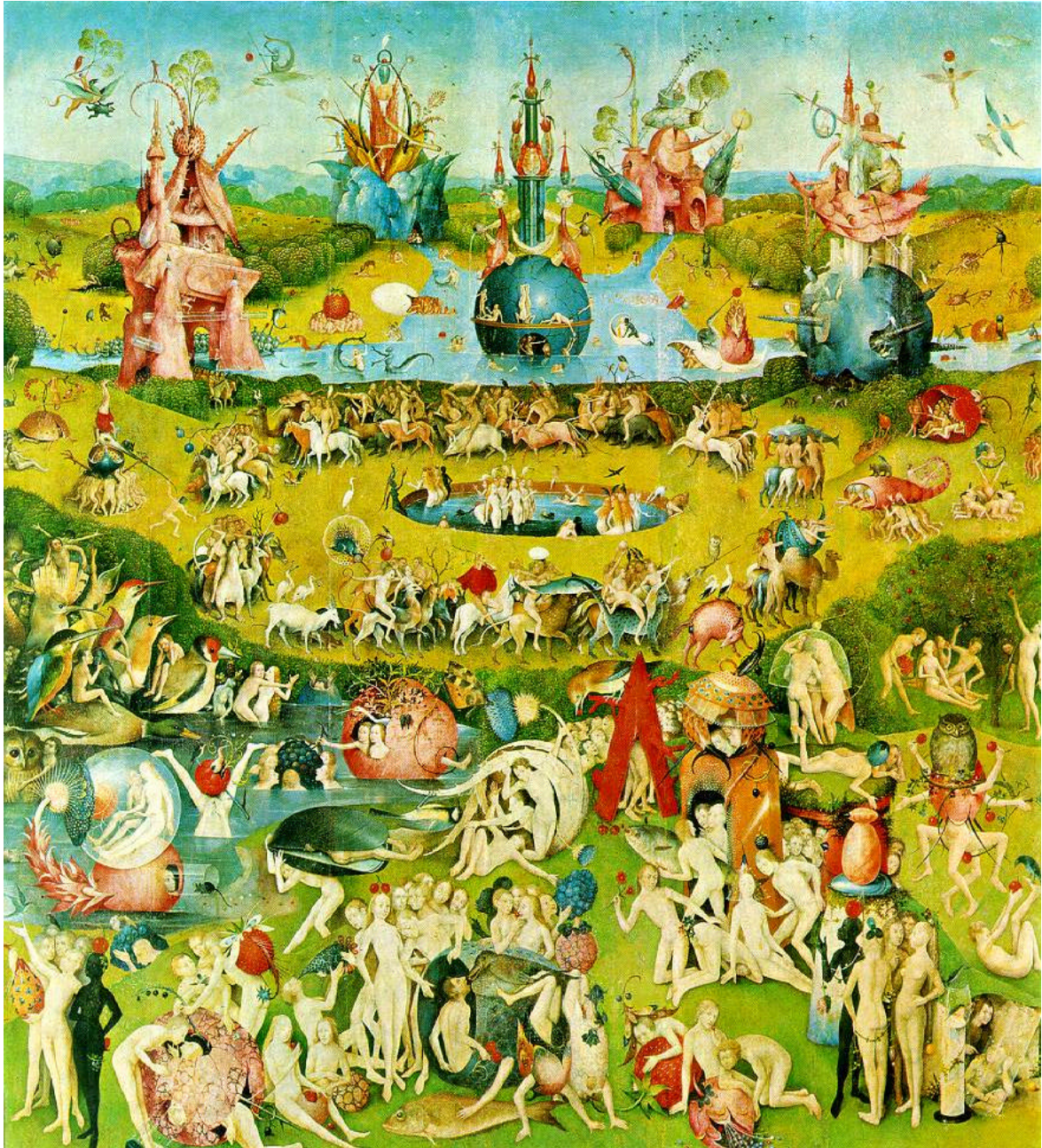
There is an age-old meshing of the traditions of magic with that of the mechanician, or maker of automata. In the ancient Christian Hermetic text the Asclepius, (c. 125 A.D.), Egyptian priests are depicted as able to animate the statues of their gods, thus partaking in supernatural powers themselves. In the conjurist tradition of Jewish Cabalism, the Golem appears as a humanoid entity that originates as shapeless clay, then goes on to threaten his human masters by becoming violent or berserk. In Elizabethan times, a scientist by the name of John Dee got in hot water with the church as a result of his mechanical prowess. He defended himself as follows: "And for... marvelous Actes and Feates, Naturally, Mathematically, and Mechanically wrought and contrived, ought any honest Student and Modest Christian Philosopher, be counted and called a Conjurer?" This combination of simultaneous fear and worship of mechanical human-like technology has continued apace, right up until our own age, and shows no signs of abatement. More recently, a certain robotic beggar named Goboy caused such anxiety at a conference of distinguished traditional "Art Gallery" owners in Los Angeles, that he was physically attacked, in a supreme example of base evolutionary resentment, not once but three times in one evening, by three different people...

It is popular to decry the feudal times as a regression from the supposed perfection and advancement of Classical Greece and Rome. The Feudal epoch brought stone construction to the highest level; one has only to compare the technique of the PARTHENON with that of the Notre Dame GOTHIC CATHEDRAL. In addition, the science of mechanics was greatly developed, giving rise to the first industry. The paintings of Heironymous Bosch, such as the panel of HELL and the GARDEN of DELIGHTS in his Millennium Triptych, and works of Breughel the Elder such as the magnificent TRIUMPH of DEATH, reflect the fact that even in its earliest days, the new industrial wage class, which evolved out of the medieval craft guilds, peasantry and bonded workers, with its social, sexual, psychological and corporeal foundry, was an earthly metaphor for a new kind of proletarian Hell. The technological and social crosscurrents of the new merchant production, with their corresponding modes of ownership and labor, signal the end of feudalism. Be that as it may, one aspect of feudal culture which carried on a tradition that lasted until the industrial revolution, was that the

scientist, technocrat and artist were many times the same person. The feudal age culminated in the Renaissance, which as simultaneously the final confirmation of feudal art and the first trumpet call of soon-to-be dominant capitalism.







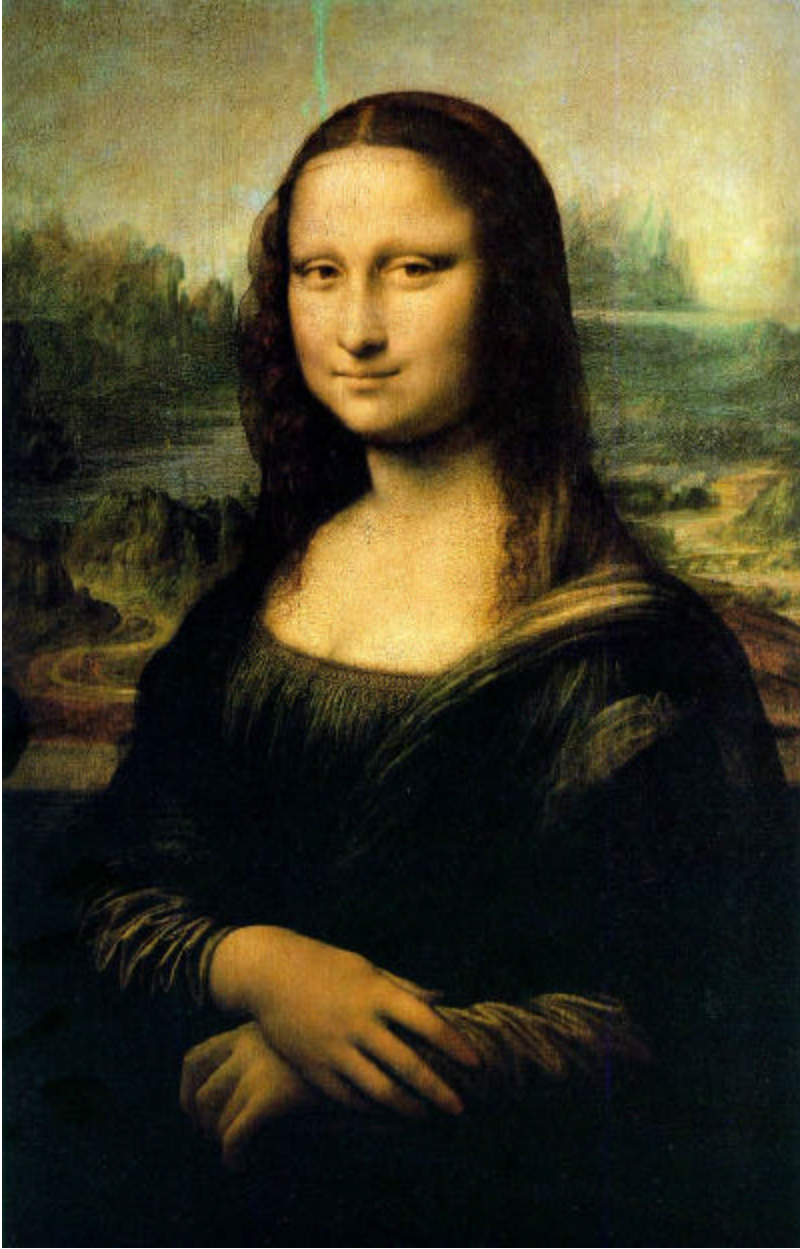


X. THE CAPITALIST EPOCH: The Culmination, Disintegration and Dissolution of "Realism"

This brings us to the three stages of the Western capitalist epoch: commercial, industrial, and monopoly. Each of these is a qualitative stage in the evolution of realism. Commercialism was the initial stage of capitalism. Industry and agriculture were freed by a series of political and economic revolutions from domination by the Catholic feudal aristocracies. Merchants, farmers and small handicraftsmen could, for the first time, own their means of production and carry out the process of wealth accumulation on a small scale by employing only a handful of workers. The ideas formed during the early commercial stage of capitalistic development gave us the myth and ideologies that still predominate today and help to sustain capitalism far past the stage of its historic usefulness. These ideas are first expressed heroically in art by the geniuses of the Italian Renaissance - Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo foremost. The Renaissance was the period when the bourgeois became the dominant class culturally, long before they took power in a political and economic sense. (In that regard it resembles our own time, when the rising class - this time the working class - is the becoming the dominant class culturally, through rock music, etc., before it 'takes over' politically and economically.)

Leonardo's VIRGIN and CHILD with ST. ANNE and his MONA LISA are fundamental and epochal in their transmission of a revolutionary and mystical new form of beauty, one based not on the idealism mandated by the church but instead on the realities of nature and society. The figures in these works are painted with an amazing new level of atmosphere, subtlety and realism, and the landscapes of these two masterpieces are some of the great achievements of art - mysterious, primal, infinite and other-worldly, they take viewers on a trance-journey to the innermost tunnels of the duality of life and death.





Michelangelo's LAST JUDGEMENT continues in the Boschian tradition of portraying the suffering of the toiling classes using the (legal) metaphors of a religious Hell. It is one of the most grandiose and profound visions of the oppressed in the history of art. Like his sculptures, it carries forth a new definition of the eroticism, and suffering, of the "slave" classes. Humanity needs a new "great" sculptor every time we need to re-invent the collective self-image of our own physical body in the laboratory of art, and implement that new perspective through masterpieces. Michelangelo lived during the period of history when the church, which had completely repressed eroticism for a thousand years, was facing the coming bourgeois revolution, which was initiating a re-appraisal of the fundamental existence of toiling and oppressed peoples. He addressed the

suffering and eroticism of the DYING SLAVE, as a metaphor for an ascetic and spiritual view of life, but his work also (unconsciously) revealed and partially created a new level of empathy and awareness of the human body and its journey through the stream of life. His sculptures on this theme also contributed in a powerful way to a political movement which ultimately re-invented the notion of the individual and the personal.





The Bourgeois Realism of the English and Dutch revolutions in the 16th and 17th centuries, whose artistry culminated in the theatrical works of Shakespeare in England, and the paintings of Vermeer and Rembrandt, in Holland, was able to go even further in some respects. This is the most progressive stage of Bourgeois Realism, when the rising and genuinely revolutionary bourgeois were struggling against the tyranny of feudal institutions for the freedom to carry on their economic relations without political or religious discrimination (racial, sexual and class discrimination were still OK, of course).





A giant affirmation of the (middle-class white male) individual, his psychological and intellectual reality, was the main progressive characteristic of the bourgeois "modes" which were created at this time. This is expressed most clearly in individual and group portraiture. In addition, the still life expressed the mysticism of the commodity, and the

great new importance that commodity production had for the new class. The landscape, cityscape, and architectural painting, expressed the desire and will of the bourgeoisie to create and recreate the environment as well as the need to understand accurately the laws of nature in order to bring them under the guidance of production. The nude, then as now, defined an archetype of the role of women in bourgeois society as a function of the capitalist "nuclear" family. Historical and (Protestant) religious paintings, the last of the bourgeois genres created at this time, helped cement the new capitalist myths as being an expression of the "eternal order" of things.

XI. INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM: The Split Within Realism - The Birth of Abstract Art

Then came the industrial revolution, spurred on by the mighty force of capitalist competition, and in the hellhole of the early factory was forged the gateway to the new world. It socialized the act of production and brought with it the potential for satisfying the material needs of all of humanity. For the first time in history, it became possible to imagine a future where the exploitation of one person by another was not the necessary prerequisite for the creation of science or culture, as it was when the ruling classes of history accumulated leisure time for intellectual development along with the other privileges of wealth and power. As a result, the socialist movement sought to end exploitation by socializing ownership of the means of production to make it coincide with the social act of production itself. A further result of the vastly increased productivity of industrialism was a crisis of values among bourgeois artists, who sensed the need to re-evaluate individualism as the basis of their language of art. At first, this crisis was reflected in a rigidifying of bourgeois genres and a hearkening back to Classicism - the Neo-Classicism of 1750-1800 - coinciding with the beginnings of the industrial revolution. As capitalist ideology loosened its grip on the intellectual, a split occurred among the Bourgeois Realists. This split continues to this day. The "art world" characterizes it as follow: The Classical school vs. the Romantic. But the so-called Romantic school has a dual character; it contained many tendencies, some of which became utterly backwards and indeed laid the basis for fascist art, and another of which laid the foundation for the abstract art, social documentary, and "Social Surrealist" movements.

The origins of Romanticism were indeed progressive. In the later work of Goya we find the beginnings of both documentary and expressionism. When Goya portrayed the DISASTERS OF WAR; without the slightest shred of idealism, he was helping to create an entirely new art which was taken up by the pioneer photographers. When he painted SATURN DEVOURING HIS SON with strokes so broad and summary that it resembles nothing less than a sculpture by Henry Moore, he was laying the groundwork for an art of expressive form. Another of the pioneer Romantics, Turner, explored this branch of art even more deeply. Turner's late land and seascapes represent a re-creation of the concept of color and form in painting. For this artist the subject matter of the bourgeois landscape painter became merely an excuse to create a giant tapestry of curvilinear shape

that expresses forces from the primeval to the erotic, from the birth of a new technology (RAIN, STEAM, and SPEED;) to the mystery of life itself (KEELMEN HEAVING COALS by MOONLIGHT). Turner was the first visual poet of the industrial revolution. His art was the embryo of a new industrial aesthetic, taken to the next step by the French sculptor Auguste Rodin, whose GATES of HELL is a supreme masterpiece exploring proletarian suffering. Rodin also continued the work of Michelangelo, in a more explicit and expressionistic vein, by exploring eroticism as a legitimate and humanizing subject, as in his DANAID.









In the New World, the novels and short stories (BARTLEBY) of Herman Melville, culminating in his uber-masterpiece MOBY DICK, are a fertile examination of similar proletarian themes in literature. Melville also wrote a short story, THE BELLTOWER, about a mechanician who builds an automaton which eventually kills him. Ah humanity! And his friend Nathaniel Hawthorne, in The ARTIST of the BEAUTIFUL (1844), from "Mosses from an Old Manse", told a strange story about an automaton maker named Owen Warland. Ambrose Bierce wrote MOXON'S MASTER about a thinking machine that plays chess. These works presage a panoply of mechanical humans making guest appearances in 20th century literature and media, such as the Tin Man in the "Wizard of Oz", Thomas Edison's mechanical girlfriend in "Tomorrow's Eve" by de L'isle-adam, the robo-woman in Fritz Lang's "Metropolis", and the moronic childishness of George Lucas' "Star Wars" efforts.

Bourgeois Realism today is like a corpse that won't be buried. From Impressionism onwards, Bourgeois Realism has increasingly dissociated itself from the task of expressing the human drama, but the techniques and genres of Bourgeois Realism are still unquestioningly learned by a significant, if shrinking, majority. The industrial revolution created an equally powerful ideological revolution - one that honored and accepted the idea of progress. The Civil War in the United States was the high pint of a heroic, socially progressive capitalist revolution. It was also the last important transformative movement that the industrial bosses were to motivate. The contradiction of progressive technology producing massive over-privilege for a few, instead of overall social improvement, inspired a profound fear in the inner core of the powerful...a fear of the slave class awakening. This eventually caused the ruling class to lose the most precious spoils from its war against the oligarchy - its realism.

The ruling class today spends most of its energy creating a false culture for the working class. Its own art suffers and eventually disintegrates. The grotesquely resurrected corpse of individualist, nationalist, commodity fetishist, bootstrap American dream-myth culture is re-animated by a multi-billion dollar "entertainment" industry. This leaves the bourgeoisie with only a small fraction of their energy to create their own modern day culture.

Starting with Impressionism in the late 19th century, Bourgeois Realist art went through a disintegration and breakdown similar to that of an aging individual. Cataracts, putting a film of dots on the picture, first *obscure* content. Then the subject breaks down into a hallucinatory and dissociative abstraction that expresses an inability to deal with reality and a corresponding need for an artificial security to replace it. Becoming hyper-mechanistic and hyper-religious at the same time, the late-bourgeois artist develops a hyperbolic forgetfulness that allows infinite regurgitation of the most retrograde, empty and trivial concepts. Voltaire said, "If I can get you to believe in absurdities, I can get you to commit atrocities," and the empty absurdities of the 20th century art world are accompanied by the greatest litany of atrocities in history.

Karel Capek wrote a play called R.U.R., for Rossum's Universal Robots, in 1920. In the play, a capitalist by the name of Rossum makes and sells robots, which eventually make an uprising with horrible consequences. (This play was the origin of the term 'robot', which comes from the Czechoslovak word meaning 'worker.') The contradictions of mass-scale mechanization under the shackles of private ownership thus commence breaking through the thin skin of the collective unconscious...

22 years later Isaac Asimov wrote a story, *Runaround*, about robots. This work is the source of the famous three rules robots should always obey:

1. A robot may not harm a human, or allow a human to come to harm through inaction.
2. A robot must obey a human's orders unless they conflict with the first law.
3. A robot must protect itself unless this conflicts with the first or second law.

Obviously the image of the mechanical worker is becoming more and more impressed upon the social landscape, and both industrial classes, capitalist and worker, are forced to clarify their views forthwith. Asimov's contribution is to imply that robots will do as they are told. The myth of "artificial intelligence" gets its first public bashing.

XII. THE CONTINUITY OF GENRES

If art works are the laboratory for the creation of design languages, including forms of personality, ideology and modes of mass culture, it should be possible to trace the lines of development from the early bourgeois artistic expressions to their descendants in modern day mass entertainment culture. Each one of the genres of 17th century Dutch Realist painting, exemplified by the genius of Rembrandt, represented an essential component of the ideology of dawning capitalism. There were eight generic categories of image making in early Bourgeois Realism: the portrait, still life, historical painting, religious painting, martial painting, family group, nude, and the "scapes" (land, sea, and city). The Dutch made the second successful bourgeois revolution, after the English, but they managed to go much further in the creation of a middle-class, democratic republic with relative freedom of thought, expression and religion. As a result, a flowering of art and science took place. Descartes settled in Amsterdam, Dutch mathematics and mechanics lead the world, and Rembrandt, Hals and Vermeer were the leaders of a uniquely "realistic" school of painting. The underlying assumptions of each subject-genre were partially, indeed mostly, progressive in the context of their day. In our time, however, these same ideals have become perverted and monstrous as has the mass culture based on them. On the following page is a chart showing the main line of development from the laboratory

of bourgeois revolutionary art to its final degradation as television "entertainment" (it is necessary to keep in mind that the bourgeois democratic revolution and its ideology had a dual character, and we are not herewith analyzing its progressive side, but schematizing its negative modern-day repercussions).

GENRES OF ENTERTAINMENT TELEVISION AND THEIR ANTECEDENTS

ANTECEDENT

IDEOLOGY: original and modern deformation

TV GENRE

1. Portrait



Individualism:
Modern degradation:
personality-based obscurantism
and celebrity cults

Talk Show

2. Still Life



Commodity Fetishism
Modern degradation:
development of a mystical,
obsessive worship of material
goods produced by alienated
labor

Game Show

3. Historical Painting



Nationalism: modern
degradation: militarism,
idealizes repressive state, police,
law; good/evil myth

Bourgeois History

4. Religious Painting



Christianity/Afterlife Mythos
Modern degradation:
disassociation, escapism and
obedience, sexual and
ideological repression,
obedience cults

God TV

5. Martial Painting



Bourgeois Nationalism/Statism

Modern degradation: idealizes national heritage, national identity.

Crime and Action Shows

6. Family Group



Patriarchalism

Modern degradation: idealizes a woman-and-child subservient, hetero/male dominant family structure

Sitcom/Soap Opera

7. Nude

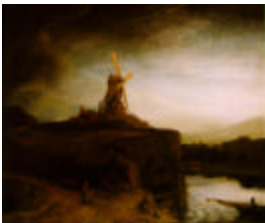


Sexism

Modern degradation: women sexually objectified, economically and politically repressed

T&A (Porn)

8. Scapes (land, sea, city)



Nature Mysticism, Empiricism

Modern degradation: infantilization, passivity

Disnification

The idea that artists should create likenesses of the surface appearance of faces, bodies, objects or nature has various hidden pre-suppositions. During Rembrandt's day the progressive movement in science and art was fighting a battle for the right to examine the self and the environment as it is. This new empiricism created a passive-reflection theory of art, which utilized accurate depictions of surface appearance as a means of exploring the reality of the material world. The early commercial stage of capitalism was concerned with the development of nationalism and individualism. A contradiction? Not really. The optimum condition for the development of a bourgeois class was a national geo-political forum as opposed to the city-state of the feudal period. Artists were expected to produce idealized pictures of the state, the 'police,' and the national heritage of that particular entity to help solidify the national identity of the people, and undercut their class-consciousness that (except for that of the bourgeoisie themselves) stood in the way of the ascendancy of the business class. Rembrandt's NIGHT WATCH and his CONSPIRACY of the BATAVIANS are anthems for the Dutch Republic, present and past. Within the bourgeois class there was a massive extension of what we would call the development of the personality. The complexity of unconscious processes, the uniqueness and mystery of genius, the dark face of greed and selfishness, heroism and cowardice, all become subject and source for the artist. The awesome power of human creativity was examined for the first time as godlike, and an attendant, celebratory fascination for the things produced by creative and industrious minds developed.



Industrialism produced a monstrous power for a few, and similarly potent new genres evolved. The monster novel, such as Mary Shelley's "FRANKENSTEIN" and Bram Stoker's "DRACULA", was an unconscious expression of the *gigantism of personality* that accompanies the terrifying rise to over privilege of the modern-day corporate power structure, the most dangerous and destructive ruling class ever to walk the earth. Similarly, the other progressive and experimental genres of Rembrandt's day produced horrifying and reactionary new offspring, born of the inner contradictions of the incomplete nature of bourgeois revolutions. The particular genius of American entertainment television is that it has packaged these cancerous pre-apocalyptic degenerations as safe and sappy escapism, with the noxious messages buried deep in layers of reassuringly disassociating laugh tracks. On a modern-day game show, the prizes are arranged like a Dutch still-life and audiences scream as in a Dionysian ritual when the refrigerator and microwave are introduced one by one, as if they were alive, as if they were themselves famous, as if they could kiss us, put us to bed and tell us everything will be there tomorrow just as we remembered it before...

A large number of artists have thrown off the aesthetic outlook of the original bourgeoisie and are casting about for a replacement. Many artists, after the Russian Revolution in 1917, began an examination of the design elements themselves - form, color, line, as a source of growth and renewal beyond realism. Their hope was to bring about a new form of beauty, an aesthetic for the industrial culture of our age. Other progressive artists such as Picasso engaged in an effort to make a world poly-fusion visual language, inspired by a synthesis of the world's folk and classical art. The worldwide Constructivist and Surrealist movements resulted. This revolutionary process has been countered by the "art world" of the bourgeoisie, creating, among other vomitous quagmires, a retrograde abstraction known as Formalism.

XIII. FORMALISM: Artform of Monopoly Capitalism

The utter dominance that the late-capitalist profiteer exerts over the realm of culture has produced an unprecedented divorcement of art from its progressive, laboratory role in the guise of "formal" exploration. Formalism and its bastard, Structuralism, are based on the notion that the formal, mathematical, internal, or "mythical" structure of a piece (rather than its social language or connotation) creates its essential artistic value. British aesthetician Suzi Gablik says this about modern Formalist art, "...the structure of much of contemporary art is determined by the internal relationships which prevail among its component parts and by generative rules, not by iconic resemblances." Formalists are usually abstract artists, but they deny the abstract form any corporeal associations or

experiential references. Structuralism theory, being rather a more sophisticated update of the Emperor's new transparent Formalist cant, postulates that internal formal relationships, when examined, give us clues to the essence of our being. Like most ruling ideologies, this appeal to "universal truths" acts as a disguise for the protection of present-day privileges. Richard DeGeorge speaks of the views of noted French Structuralist anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss:

"Levi-Strauss postulates that...art, literature, myth, religion, table manners are all ways of social expression, and all are structured by a similar unconscious process of the human mind...if one were able to bring to light the deeper structure common to the deep structures of each of the systems, one would be well advanced toward the goal of discovering the structure of human nature itself."

The Structuralists believe that there are only two ways in which art can express ideas and feelings: 1. "iconic resemblances", the technique of Bourgeois Realism that they reject as outmoded; or 2. "structure", which reveals through a process of purely formal manipulation of line, shape, color, the structure of "human nature" itself. They are abstract artists, in that they reject realism and deal with art as a design language. But they also reject the idea of a socially defined abstract aesthetic, preferring instead the idealist notion of a universal, super historic "human nature." To the Structuralist, the evolution of the productive forces (and their associated design languages) merely coincides with the evolution of art, as yet another example of the "structure of human nature" made manifest.

What causes the divorcement of the Formalist artist/designer from the social content of their work? A careful look at that bulk eraser for the human mind, American entertainment television, will suggest one possible answer. TV commercials and so-called entertainment programming are fantastically well made kinetic art works whose message is...buy this product! (And absorb the hidden ideological messages contained, like toxic Easter Eggs, in the underlying assumptions of the "entertainment".) The talented professionals who create this programming have to dissociate themselves from the content and social context of their work, in order to justify serving Mammon with their craft instead of advancing their art. Similarly, academia is rife with grant-whoring intellectual guns-for-hire who roam the ivory-covered plateaus with fully loaded PCs, furtively slaving to do the bidding of DARPA and Corporate science-dominatrixes and kill (for a huge bounty) any and all progressive science or culture that comes within range. Formalism is the intellectual justification for this professional opportunism, which is forced upon scientists and artists who have no other way of surviving economically. The "artists", technocrats and engineers who work for reactionary corporations - or who are driven by the same mentality - divorce themselves from the real content of what they are doing, from its social context, and fix their gaze with morbid fascination on the formal aspect of their craft. Imagine what physicists go through in justifying their

work on nuclear bomb or chemical/biological weapons; many imagine that they are working on "pure" physics for its own sake, ignoring the implications of their research. Here is a quote from Edward Teller, one of the main inventors of the H-bomb: "Einstein made moralistic statements with which I completely disagree. To believe a scientist has more responsibility than to discover, to apply and to explain is a remarkable, wrong kind of immodesty."

DeGeorge again on Formalism, the predecessor of Structuralism: "Formalism, as found in the Russian Formalist School of the 1920's, focused on the form of a work of art, on the craft of the artist, and on his use of the tools of his trade, in reaction to the traditional emphasis in the content of the work and on matters external to the work itself."

The corporate capitalists are the "sponsors" of Formalism and the technocratic caste implements it. But there is also a modern anti-technology, anti-science culture of great dynamism, giving birth to the Abstract Expression movement and much other reactionary effluvia. The social base of these chaotic art forms is the modern-day petty-bourgeoisie (small merchant class). This class is anti-industrial. They fear technology, because the small capitalist is at the mercy of corporations whose use of industrial forces, and accumulation of capital, make them overwhelmingly more powerful. The petty-bourgeoisie also tend to worship at the altar of technology - their fear is mixed with awe, since the solution to their historical dilemma is to master industrialism and thus become big bourgeois themselves. The small capitalist also opposes the working class, because they are usually incapable of paying union wages. So the industrial worker and industrial capitalist, and their cultures, are antithetical to the petty-bourgeoisie. In culture, this class prefers nostalgic myth mongering, occultism and idealization of nature and pre-industrial techniques of production to modernism in most of its incarnations. However, when emboldened by extended economic success, as in the United States after World War II, the petty-bourgeoisie begin to feel omnipotent again, magically free from their burden of impending extinction at the hand of voracious industrialists. They flex their psychic muscles and sponsor a mystical and escapist modern art, the imbecility of which has yet to be fully fathomed.

The ruling elite of Europe and the United States, sponsoring their army of experts in the modern-day art world, was terrified of the Russian Revolution and its immense attraction to intellectuals and artists. In those days, the modernist, abstract (design-oriented) art movement was mainly led by those who considered themselves Constructivist and inspired by the idea of the creation of an international "industrial design" aesthetic. Realizing this, the survival mechanism of the kicked in, and with the seemingly infinite craftiness which has characterized the Emperor's tailors since the time of Napoleon Bonaparte, the bourgeoisie fashioned a new set of clothes again - an "abstract" art which would use all the technical advances of modern society without the progressive political and aesthetic language of Constructivism. Thus came Formalism and its haggard and loathsome progeny. What is Constructivist abstraction, and how does it differ from Formalism?

XIV. CONSTRUCTIVISM

Formalist abstraction is not the only kind existing today; within abstract art there are two main tendencies that deal with the issues confronting art and artists in diametrically opposing ways. These tendencies are social and historical rather than organized associations. The need to generalize categories nonetheless remains, despite the danger of oversimplifying an extremely complex and contradictory process. Formalism in practice is the breakdown of the existing mode of social design into its component parts and functions, each of which is then treated as an art form. When applied to aesthetics, it is a passive 'realism' of existing design; the idealization of present day social relations as they are reflected in architecture, transportation, communications, and industrial design, the lack of overall planning, the alienation, the social randomness, private profit-seeking, and morbid individualism of the urban cityscape. Formalist aesthetics postulates no revolutionary role for the arts. There is no contradiction between Formalist art and the anarchy of bourgeois design; in fact, there is a continuum between the two.

In contrast to this we have the statement of Michel Regon, a spokesman for French artists during the May-June revolutionary uprising of 1968,

"The artist in contemporary society should be of such a kind...that the worker does not have art in his home, but that he lives in art, that his house and place of work be works of art, that the streets be works of art, that the entire society bathe in art..."

The Constructive artist creates works that are an expression of what our society could be like if we used our tremendous productivity for the satisfaction and creation of human needs rather than economic profits. Constructivists are consciously creating an aesthetic for industrial society. We create works of art, but we will never be satisfied until society itself is transformed.

The fundamental historical force behind the Constructivist tendencies is the growing notion that people who live in a society have the right to design their social landscape and plan and shape their social existence, everything from the sound and visual environment to the economic and social goals, which in the end cannot be separated. The sounds of transportation and production, the forms of home and factory should be beautiful and express our collective aspirations and feelings.

The industrial and technological revolutions of the last two centuries have made it possible to end material scarcity for the first time in history. This is the dynamic behind Constructivism, just as it is the dynamic behind the workers' revolutions of modern times. Constructivist art is a signal post of the growing idea that we all have the right to design our productive and social existence, that it need not remain in the hands of the privileged few as it was in the days of our ancestors due to the iron, unbendable reality of the law of scarcity.

XV. THE ABSTRACT LANGUAGE

Abstract art is design science in embryo. At two crucial points in history (the dawn of civilization and today), art has been called upon to create a new technological and social design language before it is implemented socially. As such, this form of art acts as a laboratory of new developments in design and production in general. The first rectangles that appear in art are actually thousands of years old, in the work of certain so-called cave painters. As the abstractions we now call rectangles and other simple geometric shapes made their gradual way into the collective human unconscious their next incarnation in the realm of art was during the period of so-called "geometric art", coinciding with the creation of plane geometry. This conceptual revolution, two-dimensional geometry, reflected the fact that when farming and private property were invented, the land was (for the first time in history) divided abstractly into two-dimensional areas. For this reason as well as for technological reasons, the form language of architectural structures and of the first agrarian villages or towns came to be based on the rectangle.

This system of design, or design language, has been in operation for 6,000 years, from the temples of Ur to the towers of New York. But today, many architects and urban designers are questioning the use of the 90-degree angle as the source of all spatial solutions. Artists and designers in recent years have developed a number of three-dimensional, potentially "sculptural" architectonic technologies, such as tensegrity, tensile structures, geodesics, and other three-dimensional uses of concrete and steel. The corporate 'skyscraper' in architecture today is a cancerous new mannerism, an application of obsolete forms to the new high-level industrial technology. The populations who live in urban environments, especially in the large cities of the industrial world, are literally under the shadow of huge tombstones, monoliths that represent incredibly destructive forces. Like the mysterious monolith in Kubrick's 2001, these pathological, monstrous and hideous buildings auger deep into the collective mind, implanting continuing messages of dark foreboding and control into the spirit of urban humanity, and laying the groundwork for a rebellion, an uprising of beggars, workers, artists and robots which, once commenced, will erupt and stun the nations with its furious drums and mechanical cadence!



Another supreme example of arrogant corporate culture is the internal combustion gasoline automobile, which is a monumentally polluting, overly individualist technology. Mass transportation, bicycles and potentially safe automotive technologies such as hydrogen and solar-electric are the only solution to transit problems in the urban centers, yet the gas automobile is sustained by the Detroit auto trusts and oil companies as the basic method of transportation. The mass transit that does exist is maintained at just the level to prevent the automobile from causing an immediate social crisis. Meanwhile, the auto and oil companies and the politicians that support them initiate wars to protect their oil interests, and engage in documented patterns of dismantling sophisticated mass transit systems in Los Angeles, San Francisco, New Orleans and elsewhere, fearing they would hurt automobile sales. Internal combustion gasoline engines continue to erode the quality of our planet's atmosphere, threatening a catastrophic runaway 'Greenhouse Effect'.

Today there is only one area where our capitalist socio-economic system allows technology to be fully applied to solve a design problem: weapons. Let the robot uprising begin!

XVI. THE POETRY of the SENSES

Can there be definite ideas contained in abstract shapes, sounds, etc., and in their relationships? If so, a populace with the help of its architects, artists, and designers could control them in a creative way. Constructivist artists are creating an international industrial aesthetic language of shape, sound, color, form and movement. The abstract formal elements of design become a language when the socially defined, concrete connotations that the viewer brings to the artwork are discovered and applied systematically and consciously by the artist. These associations are no longer the simplistic A=A syllogism of realist art; they are combinations, indeed constellations, of associations that are definite and independent of the personalities of the viewer or creator. Meaning, in abstract art, is not personal, nor is it universal or super historic. It is an historical and class-defined phenomenon, as is consciousness itself. Connotations that appear as immutable to a particular class in a particular epoch will change as the class and epoch change.

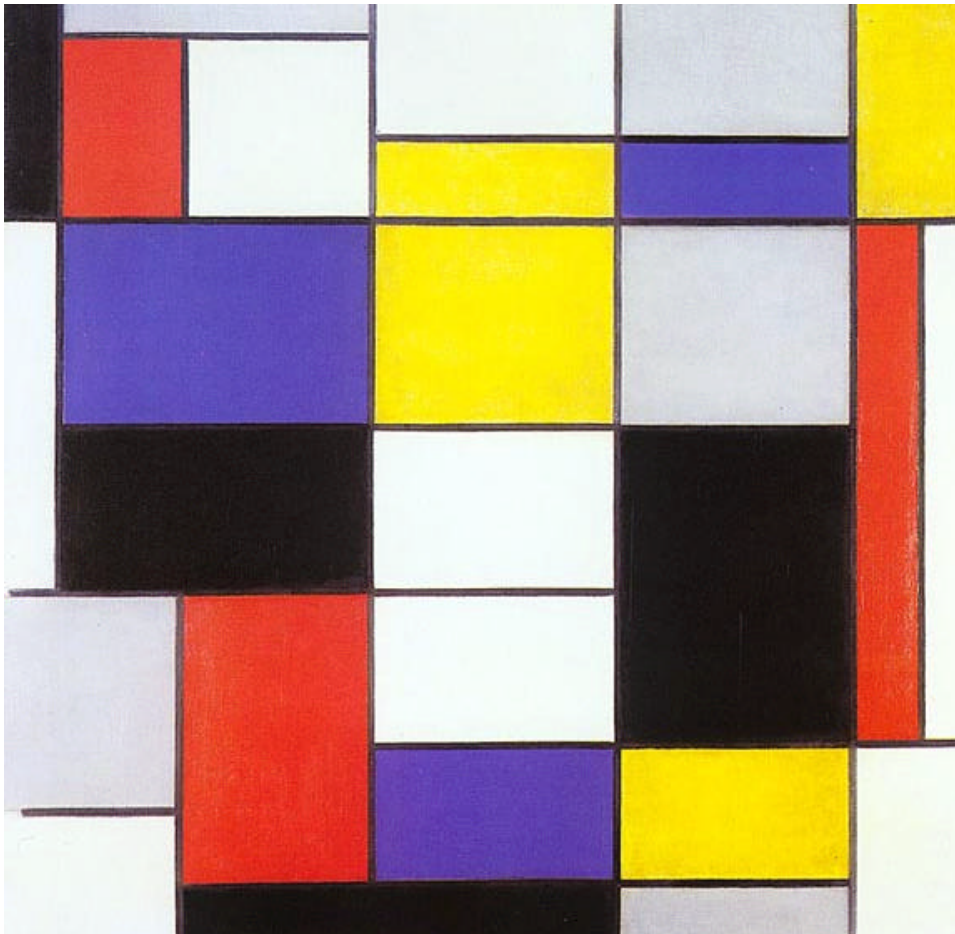
What is the alphabet of the abstract language today?

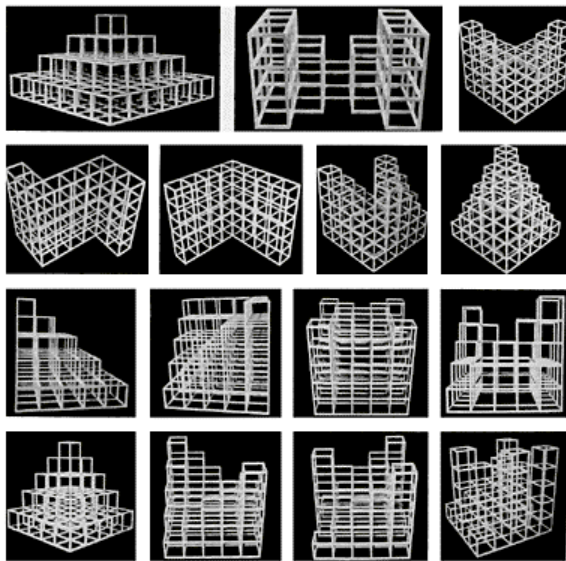
XVII. THE DIVIDED SPACE

For 6,000 years, the rectangle has been the fundamental shape of architectural constructions in class societies, (just as the elitist portrait has been the harmonic canon of art). Therefore, it has an associative importance in design and art far beyond that of any other form. It brings with it a connotation of class society, of privilege, through the

historical factors just described. The extreme example of the divided space in architecture is, of course, the prison, but all our cityscapes rise like monolithic graveyards, buildings separated by inches, abstractions of oppression and immense corporate over-privilege instead of architectonic spaces created to satisfy social needs.

Our epoch, that of advanced industrial organization, has a technical capacity to supersede the divided space, a social capacity to supersede the prison, a political capacity to supersede private property, an intellectual capacity to supersede the unconnected, alienated human relations of class-divided society. Therefore, this form, the rectangle, becomes the unconscious symbol for these forces due to the weight of 6,000 years of history and the special emphasis our epoch has put on it through the fortress-like architecture of the modern city. Thus we find the monolith in Stanley Kubrick's "2001" as the symbol for the beginnings of culture, counterpoised to the glorious curvilinear light show at the end, symbolizing the new humanity. Thus we find in the paintings of Mondrian and the sculpture of Sol Lewitt, a schematic for the cultural defense, decoration and idealization of our corporate skyscrapers.





All forms, sounds, etc. in art and design carry with them a definite set of socially defined connotations. The language of design in a progressive society could be based on the sculptural-mathematic language of analytic geometry, a three-dimensional language that contains the set of all possible shapes. And again, there is a dual reason for this: technical and social. Technically, a sculptural language that is free from stricture can be free to follow the stress lines (like bones) or flow into shapes inherent to tensile technology or other structural advances that arise in the course of the evolution of our means of production. Socially, a sculptural language allows one to design the space for the human functions that accrue without entertaining arbitrary and invisible barriers such as property lines. When architecture is socialized, it can become sculptural.

"There's no more mathematics in my work than there is anatomy in a sculpture by Michelangelo." -Naum Gabo



The greatest threat to the potential dawning of a rational and humanistic world is the pervasiveness of deadly and fanatical religion. Ours is the age of the end parenthesis of slavery, and the beginning of a culture based on the integration of technology with humanistic values! It is no longer possible both to survive and exploit...the age of blind faith is past. The stakes are too high, and the apocalypse is too well nigh upon us. We must hold our heads high, forego worship of imaginary gods and brutal men, and make our collective human genius and creativity the only thing worth worshipping! Forward, to the robotic worker!

We will not create such a society by making models of it in art. Would that it were so! Between here and there are many battlefields, and we will need, in our artistic arsenal, new weapons for the coming struggles. One of these weapons is 'Social Surrealism', an artistic language which incorporates the power and insights of Bourgeois Realism but goes far beyond it. But we can't undertake our study of Social Surrealism without first taking up an examination of its far more familiar (Appalachian) cousin - 'Classical' Surrealism... the safe, decorative, 'collectable', Dali-inspired form of Surrealism that graces so many IKEAs and Harvard dorm rooms...

XVIII. CLASSICAL SURREALISM

Surrealism started out as an antidote to the bourgeois genres; early Surrealists sought a solution to the problem of how to add realistic content to progressive form for a language that's forward-looking in style and content. The middle-class opportunism of most artists of the time allowed Salvador Dali and others to lead a split within the movement. "Social" Surrealism continued to fight for a new language and a new world, while "Classical" Surrealism devolved, under Salvador Dali's leadership, to become a mechanical juxtaposition of a decorative, 'wacky', exoticised form of realism trucked out with a sterile and obscurantist Freudianism.

Classical Surrealism takes the petty-bourgeoisie genres as its subject-source for imagery and juggles them in a psychoanalytic vegamatic, de-emphasizing social references. The brilliantly talented, politically challenged, self-proclaimed genius Salvador Dali wrote in his autobiography about the film "Un Chien Andalou," which he co-created with Luis Bunuel, "Our film ruined in a single evening ten years of pseudo-intellectual post-war advance guardism...the foul thing which is figuratively called abstract art fell at our feet, wounded to death, never to rise again, after having seen a girl's eye cut by a razor blade." Bunuel also wrote about the film, albeit in a more explanatory mode, "In the working out of the plot every idea of a rational, aesthetic or other technical matters was rejected as irrelevant...The plot is the result of a conscious psychic automatism...it should be noted that when an image or idea appeared from the collaborators discarded it immediately if it was derived from remembrance, or from their cultural pattern, or if, simply, it had conscious association with another idea...The motivation of the images was, or was meant

to be purely irrational...nothing, in the film, symbolizes anything. The only method of investigation of the symbols would be, perhaps, psycho-analysis."

There are two points to note:

1. Classical Surrealism offers a method, psychic automatism (similar to what we call "stream of consciousness"), which opposed the academic, overly predictable and consciously controlled methodology of bourgeois realism.
2. The Classical Surrealists also claimed to oppose the visual language of Bourgeois Realism, namely metaphor, symbolism, iconography and representation. No cultural or personal connotations are allowed.

Both of these goals cannot have been fully realized without a complete emptying-out of the effect of surrealist art on the viewer, and in fact they are a smoke screen, an attempt to disguise the still intimate, although secretive, connections between Classical Surrealism and Bourgeois Realism. Classical Surrealism is in some ways the artsy mistress of Bourgeois Realism rather than a revolutionary progeny. It uses irrational juxtapositions to undercut the reality of the image, making a decorative surrealism safe for collectors. In contrast, Social Surrealism uses the same techniques of exaggeration and artifice to amplify the reality-base of the image or story. For the early Surrealists, the attempt to de-louse familiar forms from petty bourgeois shallowness ironically created an idealization of emptiness, of irrationality, which was an attempt to supersede the stultification of realism and its 'passive reflection' methodology. However, in an artwork, even a so-called "abstraction", no image can be devoid of "content," regardless of what the artist wishes, because the audience brings with it a certain set of socially defined connotations which are beyond the will of the artist. It is, therefore, the task of the artist to recognize and understand these socially defined connotations as a pre-condition for dialectically superseding them and bringing the viewer to a higher level of consciousness. The misconception of certain early Surrealists is based on the notion that the audience brings nothing to the viewing, and that the process of absorption of the artwork is mechanical and passive. Many of the first-generation Surrealists replace the passive image of realism with a passive viewer.

The dialectic of art is complex, and I am one of many who believe that Luis Bunuel at his most inspired (*Exterminating Angel*, *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*) superceded most of the ideological limitations which he created for himself and explored the Stygian caves of Social Surrealist psycho-social theater at will, fully and benignly oblivious to his own surface ideology, making inspired masterpieces for himself and the world.

XIX. 'REALISM' and ANIMATRONICS

To a large extent the meaning and syntax of artistic languages is context-driven. This can be illustrated by describing three differing modalities of several brands of 'descriptionist'

(naturalism-based) visual art: the dreadfully misnamed "Socialist" Realism; the forms of realist mural art emanating from third world struggles for liberation; and the 'documentary' form of modern mass-media and film.

1. Socialist Realism, a misleading term if ever there was one, is the common Stalinist-influenced moniker for political art in certain developed countries. It evolved its status as the official petty-bourgeois radical art form from the beginning of the 1930's when a Soviet hack named Zhadanov made 'Socialist Realism' the only legal art form in the Soviet Union. This movement should be called "Stalinist," or "bureaucratic" idealism, rather than socialist realism, since it played the same role vis-à-vis the reactionary bureaucratic caste that rules the Soviet Union that Norman Rockwell's Bourgeois Realism played toward the capitalists in this country, namely that of myth-mongering, rewriting history, and idealizing the class or caste in power. It is thus reactionary in its form and content, and it is a mockery of the progressive ideals that it supposedly espouses.

2. Third World Realism, on the other hand, is often dynamically progressive, because a people who are oppressed along national and cultural lines need an art form that is an expression of their national and cultural identity. Nationalism among third world peoples can be progressive and often leads to revolutionary conclusions, but among the advanced industrial countries, it is necessarily reactionary and often leads to racism and jingoism. Realism among third world peoples is inherently progressive and leads to revolutionary art, while in advanced industrial countries, including the socialist ones, it is reactionary and expresses obsolete, 'provincial' and backward values.

3. Documentary is an art form tied inextricably to the social sciences, and as such, it is an appropriate form for examining the nature of social reality or exploring an economic, political or ideological question. Documentary can become a potent tool for social change. It can have the same relationship to sociology that Constructive art has to the design sciences, to be the most forward-looking manifestations of that science in its effort to reach out to people.

Each of these three forms of 'naturalistic' expression has much in common, yet they differ in their fundamental character and implications. The 'Entertainment Industry' transcends these muddy waters by concocting an avalanche of infantilized theme parks, television programs, movies and magazines, which express themselves in another form of 'naturalism' based on a cartoon caricature of reality; the ultimate vile, toothless fat and friendly suburban version of the 'big lie' of Adolph Hitler. Symbolized by Disney's so-called 'animatronics', the cartoon-culture of late capitalism, directed at adult working class people (for in truth, this world-view is targeting adults through their children, surely a diabolical form of child abuse if there ever was one), is the most pre-fabricated one-dimensional ham-fisted brain-sucking numbskulled narcoleptic fastfood mindcandy ever created on the surface of this planet. Utilizing all the magic, alchemy and appeal to authority of its historical predecessors in the realm of mechanical distractions, the Hollywood/Disney money-magalith has created a monumental legacy of foolishness, a

veritable Everest of idiocy, which will go down, way down, two thumbs down in history as one of the lowest epochs of human culture.

When Disney first created his 'animatronic' Hall of Presidents, he was responding in his usual prescient and brilliant fashion to the developing sympathy and awareness of the modern working class towards robotics.



He was trying to head it off into impotent channels, by referencing our 'father-figures' and bringing it all back home to typically goofy and patriotic American territory. After decades of effort, the infantile corporate culture mass-produced to the tune of many billions of dollars and force-fed to the working class from cradle to grave has still not succeeded in paralyzing us completely. Rock artists such as Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix and the Grateful Dead, and countless others, with a few guitars and microphones and the willingness to tell the truth about real people's lives, have had more influence on the soul of the American people than countless multi-million dollar movies and television onslaughts. But the war for hearts and minds goes on. Now let's bring out our heavy artillery! To the front lines, robot beggars and whores!

Why is it so hard to develop a militant working class culture? More importantly, perhaps, why do we have to at all? Won't a utopian, visionary art inspire a new world? To answer this we must examine what happens to the consciousness of a people enduring physical degradation and enslavement, as every working class does.

XX. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE SLAVE

Early in our nation's history, attempts were made to enslave Native Americans, but that population was irrepressible. This had been their land for thousands of years, and it was very difficult to crush their cultural identity and fighting spirit as a result. On the other hand, the African history and identity of black slaves was ripped from them as they were kidnapped and dispossessed. The removal of their African culture was as devastating as were the chains and dogs. Destroying the cultural identity of a people is a necessary component of enslaving them.

No ruling class in history has given up power without a struggle, and no underclass has ever waged such a struggle without a cultural identity that unifies the class and forges a fighting spirit. The working class today needs a sense of our shared history and oppression and needs to learn to reject the modern day petty-bourgeois "success" mythology. Awareness of racism, sexism, and homophobia is not enough to forge a fighting movement. Without a working class analysis and unifying identity, progressives are doomed to failure. The power structure knows this fact, and that is why they monomaniacally censor and repress highly developed working class culture, and idealize "folk" culture, the culture of the pre-conscious underclass.

The struggle of slave classes to overcome the dominant myths has psychological as well as social components. Like small clock wheels turning inside larger ones, understanding the one process leads to a clearer view of the other. Cultural activists need an understanding of the psychology of oppression, and a social science of the individual based on economic and cultural analysis. The same "double binds" that act to paralyze the individual in a dysfunctional family also paralyze the slave class in a dysfunctional society.

When an individual or a class is faced with a battering no-win situation, the result is highly destructive of life force and self-image. Much attention has been paid recently to the alcoholic family and its structure, but what about the alcoholic class? There is a 6-millennium history in the slave classes of alcoholism, drug abuse, and other forms of escapist addictiveness, for obvious reasons. We live in a culture of abuse, for which the so-called 'dysfunctional family' is an excellent metaphor. When an alcoholic parent abuses a child they also give the child an excruciating choice: 1. Be angry about the abuse, and the anger is used as an excuse for further repression. 2. Dissociate, pretend the abuse isn't happening or is a form of 'love', and the abuser is temporarily placated but the sense of reality of the child becomes skewed, and she/he often are flooded with a bizarre form of false love known as traumatic bonding, which is experienced as a love much more intense than 'real' love because it is a mechanism by an person who feels extremely vulnerable, for regaining a lost sense of power. An abused child is totally dependent on the abuser, so their survival strategy is to distort their own perceptions so as to correspond with the hidden rationalizations of the battering parent. The child learns self-defeating and self-deceiving patterns of behavior. They must deceive themselves about

their own internal state and support the parents in their deception, because even abusive parents need to be perceived as loving, and all children need love. To avoid the threat of total rejection, the children learn to falsely discriminate their own internal messages and also eventually external ones - the messages of others.

Gregory Bateson calls it a breakdown in the meta-communicative process - the ability to communicate about communication. Unable to determine what sort of message a message is, the person subjected to the double bind of traumatic bonding retreats into metaphor and an infantile denial. This primal double bind is sown so deeply and thoroughly into the processes that mold our working class consciousness that we seldom if ever notice its presence. Kidnapped persons often develop a strange kinship with their captor. Traumatic bonding is a natural result of the anguish of the powerless in any unequal power relationship, be it a family, a prison or a slave society. (The word "family" evolved from the Greek word for "slave".)

These same destructive and paralyzing psychological forces occur between slave holding classes and their victims. The working class develops a culture of dissociation from our own lives and a traumatic bonding with our oppressors, the ruling class, who act as an abusive parent in the dysfunctional family of the overall society. The end product of this denial-generating systemic pathology is the dissociative formalism and infantilization of our bourgeois culture. And it's not just workers who dissociate. Guilt produces its own alienation. As Lars Latham writes in his book, Money and Class in America, "The rich are intellectually stunted, emotionally cold and trapped by the preoccupation with the surface of life."

Could that be why they so love the heavenly blankness of the white canvas? Could that be why they so fear the unholy advent of the robotic beggar?

XXI. TWO HEADS

We are the tool-using animal; we make ourselves by making our environment. Anyone who cannot participate, on a basic level, in the creation of their society is cruelly victimized by this fact. Slaves seek pleasure as a balm for their inequities, and then become addicted to whatever becomes their most effective escape. The source of pleasure becomes the source of paralysis. Addiction is the last link in the chain that starts with the alienation of the worker from the power of creation and from the collective. When we are denied access to social conceptualization, we're reduced to a pre-social, animalistic condition. The time vs. money double bind is the archetype of this dysfunctional relation. For an individual, freedom involves having both meaningful time and the resources to

develop oneself, but the worker must buy the one with the other. For the boss it is 'heads I win, tails you lose.' A double bind is created when a person (or a class) is given two choices, both of which paralyze them. But the fact of the choice gives the illusion of freedom. "Work will set you free" was the slogan over the gate at Buchenwald.

One of the aspects of this delusionary mechanism is that the victim must participate in their own degradation. They must feel free to decide which kind of game they will play to distract themselves from their own misery. The worker is "free" to sell his or her labor, or body or soul, or not have a home, a family or a meal. People occasionally win the lottery, start businesses that make them rich, and become stars in Hollywood. There are entire industries that feed these dreams and hundreds more working class "personal escape" fantasies. Our experience tells us that the ride to work on the bus is the same now as it has been for twenty years and the same as it will be. But our head says it'll change soon, and if you're only a tourist in Hell, if your bags are packed and you've got a ticket "home", why rebel? The worker who plays the game by the rules develops two heads, one connected to the experience of everyday life, the other fetishizing a dream of escape. Progressive artists are de-programmers, whose job is to destroy the escapist head and amplify the other one, the one that is capable of confronting everyday realities - and rebelling.

The Gordian Knot myth is about riddles that can't be solved if you play by the rules. In ancient Gordium, a man named Gordius and his son Midas made a knot of their chariot's yoke so complex nobody could untie it. The legend grew that whomever could figure out and untie the knot would go on to conquer the East. Finally, Alexander the Great was shown the Gordian Knot. He studied it carefully, then drew his sword and cut it in half (naturally, he went on to conquer the East).

The capitalists, in times of relative social peace, use various techniques to repress worker culture: "substitution" of other cultures, "revitalization" of some period of the past, "infantilization" of a potentially mature culture, "trivialization" or emphasis on irrelevant daily minutia of life, on gossip, on celebrity cult worship; and the grand old brutal standby, the flooding of our emotions in a tsunami of distractions provided by sports, crime and the so-called "entertainment" provided by Hollywood films and television. These all act subliminally to enhance the carrot of the "American Dream" mythos of success (wealth) through hard work, and the stick of punishment of failure (poverty) by "evil criminals" who prey on the working poor. (Trotsky once said that America is the only culture where someone is said to be "worth" a million dollars if they own a million dollars.) It goes without saying that the bosses will use more forceful means of control if and when they "need" to, and, under the pressure of the latest imperialist war, we're now

experiencing a deepening of the contradictions between the myth of democracy and the reality of censorship and repression. But, at least for the short term, it can still be said that: **in our country we're rarely imprisoned for our ideas because we're already imprisoned by our ideas!**

Revolutionary artists make a unity between ideas and experience, and we can create shared class identity by amplifying, in an epic way, the extraordinary lives of ordinary people. Those who believe absurdities can be made to commit atrocities, as Voltaire said. Thanks to the rise of the religious right, there now exists the threat of a new dark age, a devastating period of repression of science, culture and human rights. The main task of artists today is to make, out of the degradations of slavery, a heroic and militant slave culture. Only when this is accomplished will the creation of a classless, truly human art, be on the agenda.

XXII. ANTI-GENRES

Each of the bourgeois ideological genres has led to a DORIAN GRAY - a decrepit mirror image, an anti-genre that exposes the obsolescence of its own underlying assumptions. When this is done more or less self-consciously and critically these modes can be a bridge to the creation of progressive subject genres. If the bourgeois portrait idealizes the individual, the anti-genre reveals loathsome articulations in the hyper-individualist skeleton, more or less preparing the way for an expression that places the individual in a collective and social context.

The advent of the 'FRANKENSTEIN monster' horror genre in literature and theater, with its display of gigantic and deformed individuals built from body parts using electricity and science to bring it to life, or representing nature and the supernatural spinning out of control (i.e. Dracula/Exorcist) simultaneously exhumes and creates our distrust of dark forces edging out of control. When Bill Gates can have more personal wealth than the poorest 103 million Americans combined, according to the NY Times, these unconscious fears are quite possible rooted in the abuses of hyper-individualism, power and science under a capitalist system. Similarly, modern day nationalism, racism, sexism, and commodity fetishism have inspired anti-genres which act as signposts in the disintegration of bourgeois culture.

The danger lies, of course, in the potential for hyperextension of the lifetime of the anti-genre until it becomes its own grotesquely aberrant epoch. The life-support system for these genres should be kept plugged in only until a Social Surrealist robotic transplant becomes available.

XXIII. NEW GENRES

We've pointed out that the assumptions beneath genres are more powerful than the subject matter itself. If a genre is reactionary, a progressive story is undercut by the assumptions of the genre. Anti-genres are not inherently progressive because they use the same underlying assumptions as the genre. Ergo, create new genres. What are the basic processes in the creation of our new language?

"It is not the function of art to wallow in dirt for dirt's sake, never its task to paint men only in states of decay, to draw cretins as the symbol of motherhood, to picture hunchbacked idiots as representatives of manly strength...Art must be the handmaiden of sublimity and beauty and thus promote whatever is natural and healthy. If art does not do this, then any money spent on it is squandered." -Adolf Hitler, September 11, 1935, Nuremberg, Germany

It should be said at the outset that the new, progressive genres of art subjects are not inherently uplifting or ennobling. Too many "leftist" artists want to skip the stage of making a militant slave culture born out of the dark skull of the behemoth. We won't have the luxury of fighting our battles with fully formed personalities - first we must move from passive to active slave, from Jesus to Spartacus. Only then may we deign to suggest a vision of what the future may be like. It is the new-world warrior who has the right to prescribe solutions. The dreamer can only predict. In the late 20th century, in the advanced capitalist countries, the working class has been inoculated against socialist ideology by the successful equation of socialism and Stalinism that was the goal of bourgeois and Zhdanovist culture for half a century. Blatantly leftist culture leaves workers cold, because the task of sorting out contradictory ideologies and histories is too complex and self-conscious to be appropriate for art... Art which reflects, amplifies, and restores experience can succeed where pure ideology now fails, in connecting to the class that knows its own suffering with certainty and precious little else. Indeed our very suffering is not available to us until we awaken to our slavery. Then and only then do we look for an analysis of how chains are made, and how they can be broken.

Anti-genres contain the seeds of new genres, and they are often linked in the same work. Monstrous individualism creates the impetus for showing the underlying motives of the monster - putting the forces that create loathsome behavior on the table, making them available material for the artist. Similarly, sexist and racist forms of degradation are inexorably revealed during ruthless re-examinations of soap operas and westerns. But it is still necessary to create a new language and new ideologies to replace the epoch of bourgeois individualism and nationalism. Shakespeare made a noble work out of Othello's conflicts, his anguish over his perceived need to murder his wife for her infidelities; today most cultures are beginning to doubt and deny his 'right' to indulge in

that option. Therefore there will be a need for new masterpieces that unflinchingly deal with the terror against women as a social, not just a family and psychological, drama.

Likewise, the wars and oppressions of the modern age have created subject matter that even the deepest minds are loathe to attempt. The great sculptor Henry Moore was asked to judge a competition for a Holocaust Memorial. He decided none of the entries were up to the subject. "Only a modern-day Michelangelo" was capable of dealing with such profound suffering, in Moore's opinion. We can't help wishing that Henry Moore had tackled the job himself = he would have been an appropriate choice, as his SHELTER DRAWINGS and FALLEN WARRIOR attest - but there will be others to take on these subjects! Genocide, lynchings, homelessness, the extermination camps for the human spirit known as ghettos - these are new subjects, new genres, for progressive artists. The alienation of the morning bus ride to work contains within it gigantic forces capable of profound treatment. And Picasso's GUERNICA stands as a monument to the capacity of human genius (and courage) to encompass the most horrific of subjects in an inspiring and empowering way.





There is also a need for a new eroticism in art. Religion exists partly to contain the euphoric powers inherent in our own bodies, maintaining the slave classes' addiction to alcohol and narcotics. Sexual freedom joins the list of human rights that are our sacred inheritance, (along with freedom from religion). Some modern robot artists are finding creative ways to integrate sexual themes and technology. The Centre for Metahuman Exploration has made a robotic exo-skeletal arm that allows the fondling of nude models under remote control.

"You can't write a great book about a flea," quoth Melville, "though many have tried." Profound art demands profound subjects, and our age has provided more than its share. They are available to all, free of charge, if only we can develop an appropriate language to explore them with, and the courage to do battle with our own darkest epoch.

The ultimate new subject is Uprising itself. Transforming our "traumatic bonding" into revolutionary rage is the goal of modern progressive culture. Future masterpieces will glow with the luminous light of burning tires, and they will live and breath, move and speak with the robotically re-animated voices of the disappeared!

The very first world language is now being created - it started in the realm of music, as did the original languages in pre history. People all over the planet speak to each other using this new language, a language created by the first world-identified class, the industrial working class. Right now we call this language "rock"; music, a *homage* to the primeval tools that were made of rock. Just as dawn age tools became the space program, our Eolithic "rock" music will become an epic musical-drama of great sophistication. It will be capable of forms of expression that surpass anything in classical culture. To accomplish this we'll need more than just our powerful new synthesizers and computers. We need a new method of expression, one that goes beyond surface naturalism. We need a language more real than 'realism' to tell the story of our modern age. We need a rebirth of surrealism in its empowered, socially aware form, combined with new technologies that allow the exploration and initiation of deeper levels of the human experience and human consciousness.

XXIV. MECHANICAL PERFORMANCE: Evolution, Implications

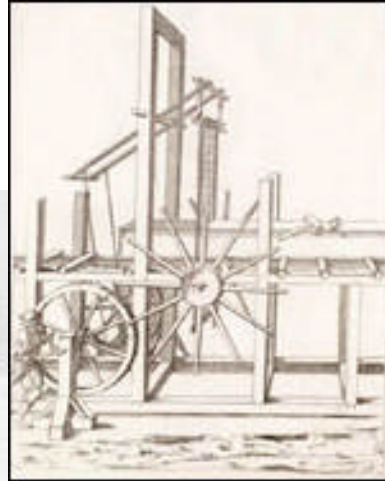
A critical component of any new aesthetic language is the drive to create and integrate new technologies into its arsenal. In the last several decades a revolution in the power, dissemination and democratization of music and art has taken place. Electronic music and imaging tools, such as audio and video synthesizers and computers, are utilizable for

unprecedented imaginative expression. It is now possible for a band or composer to make 'orchestrally' complex music without needing the resources to hire an orchestra. Computer animation is utterly transforming accepted notions of "realistic" storytelling. Mechanical engineering technologies have the capability to bring to life real-time robotic actors with virtually limitless potential of expression. An artistic language of vastly expanded articulation is evolving.

OmniCircus Center for Robotic and Synthetic Performance is a drama laboratory that strives for the creation of a new performance language. Yet mechanical performance is almost as old as theater and mythology itself. One of the first books ever written on theater was *On Pneumatics, Hydraulics and Mechanical Theater*, by the ancient Greek engineer Hero of Alexandria, written in the time of Nero. Early actors were condemned criminals, forced to enact rituals of the gods on the way to their own executions. Is it any wonder that the profession of actor was, very early on, automated? Even at the time of the birth of classical Western theater the genius of humanity intuitively knew its own evolution! There has been a periodic effort since ancient days to make automatons capable of 'artistic' or theatrical effect. In his 'Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices', Ibn al-Razzaz al-Jazari describes animated figures such as elephants and musicians, as well as water clocks utilizing rolling balls, striking the hours on cymbals. This work was completed in Diyar Bakir, now Turkey, in 1206 A.D.



An eighteenth-century Swiss inventor, Pierre Jaquet-Droz, inventor of the pocket-watch, made amazingly intricate automata such as his LITTLE WRITER a programmable mechanical computer in the shape of a man which could produce different letters and phrases by changing cams. And Leonardo da Vinci engaged in robotic theater, building a mechanical lion described by his biographer Giorgio Vasari, and a robotic warrior no doubt intended to ease the burden on real soldiers produced by one of his other mechanical disciplines, making instruments of death for what he called 'bestly madness', the business of warfare.



At the end of the 16th century the "Theater of machines" literary genre appeared. One of the first of the 'Theaters' books was produced by Jacques Besson (1540?-1573). It was called 'Theater of Instruments and Machines'. It is a fascinating compendium of early attempts at automation of labor, including descriptions and drawings of lathes, cutting and hauling machines, elevators and much else. It is clear that by this time engineering has moved from the realm of entertainment and theory to the trenches of hard labor. Surely da Vinci and Besson knew it would only be a matter of time before the OmniCircus would begin to automate the jobs which act as the sarcophagus for our collective self-loathing - hookers, beggars, junkies and prophets!

There are only two forms of economic organization that allow enough *material surplus* to create civilization- slavery (exploiting humans through bondage, in its chattel and wage forms); and a highly mechanized (and democratized) technology. The only one of these options that has yet been implemented is slavery, in all of its magnificent finery and masquerades. Social evolution has, until this very day, been a tragic carnival of contradictions, where the greatest achievements of imagination and daring - the Sistine Chapels and Taj Mahals, the indomitable Grand Canyons of human genius - are sponsored by wealth founded on the backs of exploited labor and the grossest and most palpable slavery. Robot theater exists today because it is now possible to imagine a civilization built on technology instead of degraded human labor. The dim outlines of a truly human culture are at hand and are discernable by the most astute and courageous among us, those that know that the end parenthesis of the slave epoch is to be seen in the silhouette of the robot. In the deepest and most primal sense, if you're opposed to technology, you're opposed to civilization or in support of slavery!

Soon it will be possible to end the primal tragedy upon which civilization is built - exploitation of slave labor in all its forms... chattel slavery, wage slavery, prostitution; and heal the primal split between physical and intellectual labor that materialized when the owning

classes raised up a caste of intellectuals and endowed them into the priesthood of thought, leaving the mass to their fate as beasts of burden. The means of ending the riddle of progress, namely that *progress has been based on degradation*, is at hand, and that fact is symbolized by the advent of Robotic Theater.

The theatrical endeavors of the past epoch have struggled, sometimes heroically, within the limitations proscribed by individualism and naturalism, once-progressive doctrines now propped up on life-support by Hollywood and Broadway mega-bucks. Dramatic individualism presumes that stories are best told by focusing on the exterior, perceivable lives of persons who embody the psychological forces that are the presumptive motives for the drama. This form of animated 'portraiture' favors of a historicity whose atomic structures are the psychological interactions of individuals.

Dramatic naturalism also inherently imposes a passive focus on the existing appearance, emotional landscape and modes of behavior of the culture that produces the work, an imposition that is almost totally at odds with the revolutionary role of drama, which is to create NEW myths, modes of behavior and codes of emotion. Another result of this focus on empirical, visible, pre-existing reality is a certain infantile over-simplification, one which downplays or sidesteps the complexities and psychological profundities of the main characters to the role of background, since they can't be shown directly through external action. Ironically these limitations tend to cancel out most of what can be shown in modern-day drama, eliminating or marginalizing the expressionistic, the surreal, the ambiguous and the poetic from the arsenal of the dramatist. Down with the "story arc"!

OmniCircus is extending the territory of theatrical exploration, to make both of the realms which are translucent under the cloak of naturalism - the micro-context of the interior of the individual, and the meta-context of the social landscape - visible in a corporeal way on the stage, screen or street. Our method is to bring these multifaceted interior and exterior dimensions of the story to life with sophisticated robotic actors and (digitally animated) synthetic characters, which we call VIRpts, for virtual puppets.

We are committed multi-disciplinarians, who traffic in meta-fusion music, theater, dance, digital visual art, and robotics. Since 1988, we've been engaged in an effort to build a Robotic Red-light District, an ensemble of mechanical beggars, hookers, junkies, street preachers and other living embodiments of our culture's economic ritualization. These robot warriors of the collective unconscious live at the San Francisco OmniCircus, at 550 Natoma St., itself a permanent installation as well as a theatrical laboratory. The OmniCircus Ensemble has been making a series of stage works that explore the labyrinth of life in these deformed, traumatic times. These works include:

HOUSE of the DEAFMAN, at the OmniCircus, upcoming in March 2002

ORGY of DOUBT, at the OmniCircus, 1999

FEEDING FRENZY, at the OmniCircus, 1999

SERMON on the MOUND, at the OmniCircus, 1998

SEASONS of the VEIL (first version), at the OmniCircus, 1997

RAPTURE of the DEEP, at the OmniCircus, 1997

DETOUR, at the OmniCircus, 1996

DAMAGED MAN and WOMAN, at the Climate Theater, 1995

One of our current projects is the perfection of a midi VIRpt (digitally animated puppet) controller, which allows the real-time performance of animated characters. This device initiates a symbiosis of the strengths of film (the epic scope), theater (the interactivity and immediacy), and animation (access to surrealistic and fantastic inner and outer worlds). Our troupe of robot and synthetic performers now includes digital actors capable of expanding the performance vocabulary of humans in the same way that music synthesizers expanded the language of sound for the electronic composer in the past three decades. Robotic researchers, artists, virtual reality artists, composers and others are coming to work at the OmniCircus to do cutting edge engineering, make robotic theater, and create projects that further new multimedia and experimental performance techniques and tools.

The struggle to join art and technology is a metaphor for the immense effort needed to create a more equalitarian society. Our newest project is an effort to apply this methodology to the world of disabled performers. We are applying our collaborative energies to the making of a robotic exo-skeletal arm based on the snake-arm or elephant trunk design, which will be combined with our already existing performance 'chariot' to allow a paraplegic dancer to literally extend their reach and the fluidity and expressivity of their movements past that of non-disabled dancers. There is no greater task and metaphor for the extension of human capabilities with technology than to build robotic devices that extend the movement and performance capabilities of disabled (partially paralyzed, wheelchair-bound, nervous system damaged, or otherwise limited in their motion) performers past that of the non-disabled performers in specific, limited but profound ways. And

there is no greater goal for theater artists in our greed-besotted times than to participate in the making of new and empowering codes of emotion and behavior, going to war with the Hollywood 'entertainment' (distraction) industry for the heart, mind and mojo of the working-class audience.

We believe that the science and art of robotics, when combined with biology, nanotechnology and engineering, will allow the implementation of human consciousness on other planets many years before we can send astronauts. Robotics is the arena where the extension of the human body and human capability in all of its dimensions into unimagined potentialities ensues. Robotics lays open the possibility of ending wage-slavery and grinding exploitation by mechanizing a much larger portion of the grind of alienated labor. Robotics will allow the implosion of the simplistic naturalism of infantile theatrical modes. Robotic art can be a holy place for the ritualized baptism of new forms of consciousness and physical empowerment. Robotic and Synthetic Theater has the potential to be the metaphor for the technologizing of human work, and the humanizing of technology. And Robotic and Synthetic Theater can be the Coliseum within which Liberation Gladiators will do battle for the right to begin social evolution anew, freed from the evils of human exploitation! To win this war, artists need to master not only the new technologies but also new languages of expression - surrealist expression.

XXV. SOCIAL SURREALIST METHODS: Beyond Eisenstein's Montage

The Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein analyzed the creation of filmic compositions. He discovered scientific principles of organizing material that reflect the way the human brain works in its creative activity. His techniques start out with the idea that any time a scene is shot, the audience can see it as an organic "cell" which is taken as one entity. Then the next shot juxtaposed to it or sequenced after it, is another "cell." The audience inherently sees the relationships between the shots and comes up with a third entity that is not contained in either of the separate shots. In other words, the composition is the product, not the sum of the constituent elements. There is a multiplication of meaning between the two, not just an addition of separate meanings. Eisenstein used examples from the Chinese pictographic language. The Chinese ideogram for "keyhole" is a picture of a keyhole. The ideogram for "eye" is a picture of an eye. When you superimpose the two pictures, they become the word for "spying". There's nothing inherent about the concept "spying" in either of those two. For Eisenstein the essential force of montage, or editing, is the clash of opposing structural or thematic elements to create a new idea that is greater than the sum of its parts.

There exist six fundamental techniques of montage construction. The first three were explored by Eisenstein and codified in his theoretical writings. The last three techniques, however, are sequential stages in the building up of associative montage in Constructive abstraction or Social-surrealist drama. Eisenstein's montage techniques were limited by

his (Stalin-enforced) naturalistic bias. We can now go beyond Eisenstein's montage both in our understanding of the emerging capabilities of the human mind and in our use of them.

SIX TECHNIQUES of MONTAGE:

- 1. Theme/counter theme** - the essential cell of all montage, the clash of opposing structural or thematic elements to create a new idea which is greater than the sum of its component parts (the product, not the sum, of the constituent elements).
- 2. Juxtaposition** - the most basic method of montage, a sequencing of opposing elements in time or space to create purely intellectual, subjective unity.
- 3. Superposition** - simultaneous layering of elements to create visual or aural, not just intellectual, unity.
- 4. Interpolation** - this is the key to surrealistic montage. It is the critical point of transformation from the reflective to the active image. Interpolation is another word for the process of merging, a critical component of design language creation. Design is the active construction of social reality, materially speaking. We pass here from explanation (documentary, science) to creation (design, art). Interpolation is the process of reforming each thematic element in the montage structure. The superpositions made from disparate themes are taken as single new themes and combined. This involves translating the forms which represent the ideas you are expressing into a montage containing the "buried corpse" of realist imagery; within the abstraction an associative process occurs, and thus the viewer finds meaning in the work. These associations are constellations of socially defined connotations and therefore constitute a language. The means and modes of production of society reflect themselves in art, but art can, in turn, create new modes of design. The parent becomes the child, the child the parent. This is the process by which a building, a chair, or an abstract form can become sculpture, or express ideas and feelings. This is the role of montage in design and art.
- 5. Combination (or synthesis)** - the artist takes the finished synthetic image and makes it a new theme, the basis of a new montage construction. A new level of image or idea then exists. Interpolations of theme and counter-theme translate the images into the design language, then blending these images with other interpolated themes, creating a new starting point. This new synthetic image can then be opposed by bringing forth the...
- 6. Counter synthesis** - this is the surrealist montage. The original interpolated or abstracted theme-counter theme becomes a new starting point to be opposed by its own abstract counter theme or counter synthesis. The dialectic starts anew on a higher level, a

level which transforms art into the laboratory for social design. Montage exists simultaneously on all structural levels, small and large, micro and macro montage.

Meaning in sound or image is based on social connotations that reference functional elements of our surroundings as well as internal visions; a reference to a jet or El-train is as powerful and important as a reference to nature or individuals.

For example, Henry Moore's ATOM PIECE sculpture is a masterpiece of Social Surrealist interpolation. It originates with the following cells - human skull, atomic mushroom cloud, warrior's helmet, phallus, cathedral. These images are merged to create a single, new form, one that contains tragic evocations of our potential for creation and destruction. The large version of this work sits on the site of the first controlled chain reaction on the University of Chicago campus, where it broods, silent witness to the mystery of our age. The site is not a stop on any tourist bus.



Similarly, his INTERNAL-EXTERNAL FORMS is a montage of sarcophagus/embryo, eros/thanatos, birth/death. It is a profound and moving symbol of the death of one epoch, the age of war and exploitation, and the birth of another, an age of empowerment and liberation. INTERNAL-EXTERNAL FORMS is the greatest and most archetypal visual icon of our revolutionary and transitional age that exists in the realm of modern public sculpture.



The assemblage sculpting team of Nancy and Ed Kienholz, surely one of the great "social surrealists" collaborations of the 20th century, collected junk, recycled objects and industrial effluvia and made powerful and moving works such as *The BIRTHDAY*, *BACK SEAT DODGE* and *The STATE HOSPITAL* which corporealized the deformations and contradictions of our complex society. Many of their works were multimedia installations that used mechanical, electronic and audio technologies to create mood and effects.





This leads to an examination of montage on the largest scale - architage, or architectural montage. This mode of thought and set of techniques can be used to solve not only artistic problems, but also political problems of the design process itself. A city, for instance, can be collectively designed by its inhabitants when opposing tendencies can be combined in the most profound way. This ideal of Constructivist, Surrealist and progressive art - the democratic creation of social design using the techniques of montage - we call "architage". The implementation of this vision will be a hard road paved with sweat and struggle, for those who oppose it are powerful.

XXVI. THE NEW EPIC - LIBERATION CATHEDRAL

Today there is the beginning of a world fusion theater, dance and music, the culmination of which is an epic, reality-based, robotically synthesized musical drama, a Theatre Concrete. The working classes are solving the paralytic knot of muteness, the TOWER of BABEL slave-knot, by merging all of our planet's constituent cultures into a truly international artistic language. It is a political and social necessity for the world's peoples to learn to speak to each other. Because of our common economic and social interests, the working class is the only truly internationalistic class in the cultural sphere, and also the only class capable of full mastery of technology. Unhampered by the blinders of privilege, those who built the machines are also the ones with the motive to implement them fully and humanistically. The gray-skinned, corpse-faced, mind-blanked, soul-dead bourgeoisie have created a fully realized technology of death. We must create a language of life, and not fear the profound art of suffering and eroticism that accompanies that process.

Slaveocracies have always made multimedia installations for the transfer of social and political power from the slave to the owner - they're called churches. The rulers became very skilled at assigning responsibility for human creations to God, which then iconically transfers back to the earthly stand-in, the God-chosen: the king, priest, and ruling class, who created the gods in their own image. Art plays a key role in this power transfer. When feudal stonemasons walked into a Gothic cathedral, in full blush of chorus and rituals, they were transported to a transcendent reality by the incredible power of the aesthetic experience. And if, during the rites, a spectacularly robed figure repeatedly tells them that God is responsible for this wondrous experience, the masons soon forget that they built the cathedral themselves.

I think true spirituality is based on courageously facing one's mortality, and making the absolute most of your limited life on this earth. Cult leaders lead by flattery, and the greatest and most brutal form of flattery is to tell someone they are like a God, immortal in soul, thus stealing from them the opportunity to fully realize the short but incredibly beautiful journey of this life. Why pour a true measure of your mojo into this brief span of three-score and ten if your life essence is immortal? Why not just tolerate the suffering of your current incarnation, if it shall be relieved after you pass under the mental influence of the anti-materialistic blather-radar of whatever tinsel-heaven your latest

stealth-guru hacks together for you? True leaders say what needs to be said, regardless of whether their message will be popular. Today we have unprecedented tools for artistic creation and communication: computers, the internet, robotics, synthesizers, digital video. What we need is a new language, which will be forged in the primal laboratory of art. We need a visionary ritual that implements our technology in the creation of Liberation Cathedrals; musical-dramatic environments within which we take the power back to the source of the true mystery - our own human creativity.

In our cities, they still test a pre-apocalyptic air-raid siren, like the voice of the serpent from Eden, reminding us of our potential for self-extinction. We have a choice between the siren and the drum - a song of collective fear and paralysis, or the rhythm of people rising, reaching out to each other, making the world in our image, then re-making ourselves as truly human beings.

- Frank Garvey 8.1.93, revised 10.31.01