

V. I. Lenin is supposed to have said "ethics is the esthetics of the future."

IN our discussions about moving things around I suggested it would be useful to define art simply as skill which is based on knowledge and practice and to say that bad art is non-art, that is, what happens when one doesn't know what one is doing. In our revolution both slaves and money will be abolished.

ARTIST workers are losers in the class-money system. In other words, as workers we are supposed to be poor. In the past our choices have been, first, to advance ourselves within the entrepreneur class by making more money thru increased and cheaper production. And second, by the surrender of a certain amount of license regarding the choice of what we do, to obtain glory from the dispensers of glory, that is, by seeking patrons from among the rich and powerful.

In society as it is now structured, in this object-oriented, industrialized, and socialized society, the problems of individual and independent art workers may phrased in this way: The problem now is one's inability to exchange a sufficient amount of objects for money sufficient to obtain the living and working conditions one desires. In other words the immediate problem of contemporary art is selling it and the foremost question is WHO WANTS IT?

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The apparent answer is several thousand rather rich people known as art collectors. They are a species of the genre which includes stamp collectors, coin collectors, and gun collectors. They have in common a perverted materialism in which the abstract and objective value, monetary worth, falsely proclaims itself to be the supposedly ancient and subjective value, beauty. Selling, even of art, is per se a social act. Where money is the source of social power, society will value all things, even art, accordingly.

The things which we make, if they are to be sold, must generally conform to international standards for currency. This means that art objects which can be ~~so easily~~ easily counterfeited are no good to a collector. It means further that art objects must be preservable, that is to say, insurable, and they must be transferable or negotiable. ~~That the prime utility of collectable objects is currency~~ That the prime utility of collectable objects is currency means that these things which we make and indeed we ourselves are subject to financial manipulations which have nothing to do with art and which are not necessarily of any value to ourselves.

Art as currency is institutionalized through the policies of museums. This is inevitable. Museums are started by collectors. They are maintained by annual contributions from collectors. All objects in their permanent collections, excepting those donated by ~~art workers~~ art workers, are given by collectors or purchased from funds donated by collectors.

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In return museums provide a number of services which are

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valuable to collectors. Foremost among these services is that of certifying the authenticity and historical merit of particular art objects, namely those collectors own. In this sense each museum functions as a semi-autonomous branch bank in a world-wide system to guarantee the value of collected art. Second, museums with the collusion of the government provide collectors with a device to avoid paying taxes by treating contributions as tax deductible like a business expense. The rationale is that museums are educational institutions and the government's presumption is that any education is per se in the public interest. The fact that the educators are by and large simply our richest citizens is in no way discouraging to the government.

Third, museums, by opening themselves to the public, are able to educate non-collectors as to what their personal attitude should be vis-à-vis the private property of the rich. Namely, DO NOT TOUCH. Also, don't smoke and keep moving.

Finally, museums publicize collectors by way of admiring their collections and praising their generosity. This publicity is ~~more~~ valuable to collectors and their wives both in their own milieu and in liberal circles.

THE problem of revolutionary art workers is our inability to obtain the living conditions which we desire. In the official syntax, we lack money. I do not believe that art collectors or their museums will, even under our pressure, make any substantial contribution to the solution of this. At best they will attempt to buy off a couple of hundred art workers whose art 39 may or may not interest them.

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Nor will the galleries be much help toward a solution. With few exceptions, they would rather sell one thing to a rich collector for a high price than than ~~three~~ ^{SEVERAL} to the public at any price.

The solution will rather be found partly through our art, that is esthetically, and partly through political action. To the extent to which one may wish to sell what one makes, art workers will have to make an art which is appropriate to the living conditions of a vastly greater number of people than those who currently buy it. The ultimate dignity of art, as all art workers ought to know, is in making ~~it~~ art, not in owning it. What is the dignity in owning an object which is so valuable that it is worth your life to defend your possession of it? To these ends art workers ought to prohibit museums from displaying our art in such a way as to discourage ordinary people from wishing to have it. Indeed, what art workers ought to require from museums is complete license regarding the terms under which their own art is shown. That would include whether and to what extent the police should be allowed to guard it and it would include whether the public had to pay to see it and if they did who got the proceeds.

As for political action, I urge the Art Workers Coalition to support anything which tends to increase the wealth of the relatively poor, that is, which undermines the utility of money. As the motherfuckers writes, "the hip revolution~~ism~~ is a product of history and exists in this time and space: It is not a replaying of 'bohemianism'; it is not an artistic 'drop-out' class open only to the bourgeoisie; it is

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not an 'elite' criticism of american culture; and it is not a harmless anomaly. The hip revolution is the product of material conditions. It grows out of a real change in economic possibilities -- technology as the tool not the rule. Man as free being confronts the possibility of being free and the mirror is shattered by ~~play~~ PLAY. Before sophisticated electronics, total unemployment was only a dream -- now it is only limited by fear and that fear becomes a new class distinction -- those who have it and those who don't." The proper goal of art workers is to include everybody. War, victory, unemployment should be our slogan.

Total communized unemployment.