

SECTION ONE
A REVISED SURVEY OF WESTERN
CIVILIZATIONCHAPTER 3
MODERNISM

A man named Allan attempts to meet a woman in an art museum:

ALLAN: (To Woman.) *Uh...that's quite a lovely Franz Kline isn't it?*

WOMAN: *Yes, it is.*

ALLAN: *What does it say to you?*

WOMAN: *It restates the negativeness of the universe—The hideous, lonely emptiness of existence—nothingness—the predicament of man, forced to live in a barren, godless eternity, like a tiny flame flickering in an immense void—with nothing but waste, horror, and degradation—forming a useless, bleak straitjacket in a bleak, absurd cosmos.*

ALLAN: *What are you doing Saturday night?*

WOMAN: (Exiting.) *Committing suicide.*

ALLAN: *What about Friday night?*

—Woody Allen

The eighteenth century, a watershed in Western history, witnessed a conflation of social, political, scientific, and religious changes, resulting in what we call modernity. Ratcliff (in Lovejoy, 1989) writes, “The Modern Period began when . . . succeeding generations could no longer feel that they lived in the same world.” The goal of society, newly secularized by science, shifted away from acquiescence to a deity toward “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” The linkage of technology with capitalism produced the industrial revolution, resulting in an improvement in material standards at the expense of the environment. The uneasy marriage of capitalism and democracy produced a tense, divided society. The belief that reason alone was an adequate means to solve human problems resurfaced. Intuition as a mode of knowing was devalued as feminine and illogical.

Human anatomy and Biblical authority were cited as proof that the ideals of women’s modesty and purity rested on physiological principles. One romantic riposte was to resurrect goddess worship. Romanticism’s emphasis on emotion and imagination blended well with the exultation of the ‘noble savage’. Tribal cultures were thought to contain answers to humanity’s origins. The presumption was that such cultures represented an evolutionary stage through which humanity passed as it approached civilization. God-

dess worship was associated with these cultures, and god worship with ‘advanced’ cultures. In 1922, James Frazer published a twelve-volume tome which argued that humanity needed to pass through three stages of belief: magic, then religion, then science. He associated goddess worship with magic and god worship with religion, concluding that both were mere variations of paganism.

Phallo-theocracy bred the notion that the goddess was more accurately perceived as a witch. Our understanding of the term ‘witch’ is encrusted with layers of prejudice accrued over centuries. This understanding is reflected in popular culture, which depicts witches either as Halloween crones or television temptresses. These definitions are found in our dictionaries. Only in the last 150 years, following fifteen centuries of unrelenting underground activity, have ‘witches’, male and female, emerged from the broom closet to reclaim the word’s original meaning.

The Western world of the nineteenth century witnessed the refining of democratic ideas born in the eighteenth; yet these ideas did not extend to women. In 1700 Mary Astell (in Mitchell and Oakley, 1976) asked these questions:

If absolute Sovereignty be not necessary in a State how comes it to be so in a Family? or if in a Family why not in a State? since no reason can be alleg’d for the one that will not hold more strongly for the other?

If *all Men are born free*, how is it that all Women are born slaves? As they must be if the being subjected to the *inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary Will of Men*, be the perfect Condition of Slavery?

The birth of psychology, the discoveries of Charles Darwin, and John Dewey’s scientific approach to the ‘art’ of teaching precipitated change in American schools. Liberalism, predicated on the assumptions that reason is humanity’s greatest tool and that individual autonomy is sacrosanct, became established (Jaggar, 1983). Liberalism was the radicalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in that its belief in individual worth was expressed in the concept of democratic government. This idea undermined that of any god-given ‘natural’ order.

Other hallmarks of nineteenth century social change included the emergence of populism as an ideology, the development of trade unions, the births of the abolitionist and women’s rights movements, and the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. Many women were active in the abolitionist movement, although denied full membership in abolitionist organizations. Their efforts in this movement made them aware of their own lot. Often they formed their own abolitionist groups and learned to write, speak and petition. A number of abolitionist women, including Sojourner

Truth and Susan B. Anthony, became leaders of the later movement for women's rights (Collins and Sandell, 1984).

The forms of art education available to women and men in America until the late nineteenth century tended to be specific to sex and class. Upper class women were expected to have dabbled in embroidery, sketching, and painting—art forms separated from any practical need. Women of the other classes pursued art activities scorned by their upper class counterparts—weaving, quilting, knitting, and sewing. Upper class men learned art history; men of other classes learned drafting. Members of either sex who aspired to professional art careers almost always taught themselves, which accounts for the so-called primitive styles that characterize much American art prior to the emergence of modernism.

Technological advancements, notably the camera and the collapsible paint tube, expedited artistic production. The camera freed artists from representational obligations and the collapsible paint tube gave artists freedom to leave the studio. Modernism was born.

The romantic rebellion was a reaction against the negative aspects of contemporary changes. The roots of modernism are found in romanticism in that it was the first movement in which rebellion—an attitude at the heart of modernism—played a prominent role. The romantic revolt was pacific yet resolute. Both their inspiration and their protest involved retreats to the safe havens of nature and classical mythology. Their art itself was not innovative and generally was accepted by the public (Janson, 1986).

Often, however, their lifestyles were not. The now popular stereotype of the artist as mad visionary is historically recent; it was introduced by romantic artists, philosophers, writers, and composers. Under the influence of romanticism, science—for 200 years the dominant means by which truth was sought—lost ground to art. Artistic inquiry was perceived by some as superior to scientific, partly due to a new belief that artistic originality was an intuitive window to truth.

The impetus underlying this shift was economic. The industrial revolution swelled the middle class, placing art within the reach of a larger market. Art thus became a commodity to an unprecedented degree, comparable to its commodity status today. The market was flooded—through the newly developed method of mass production—with factory-made artifacts of inferior aesthetic quality. Much like today, a visually illiterate public responded as enthusiastically to the latter as to the former. Artists, no longer patronized by the church or the court, had to cater to this whimsical and faceless public. Free enterprise introduced the gallery system, placing an intercessory between artists and the public. The dissemination of art magazines and newspapers institutionalized criticism as the authoritative voice in artistic discourse. Art

history emerged as a discipline. The definition of the word 'artist' as genius, rebel, pioneer, eccentric, and visionary ossified into granite, and the word 'art' became associated with terms such as vigor, virility, thrust, force, and mastery. Vincent van Gogh told a fellow artist, "Eat well, do your military exercises and don't fuck too much, and because of not fucking too much, your paintings will be all the more spermatic" (in Parker and Pollock, 1981).

Modernist art movements can be characterized as incestuous, rebellious responses to prior movements—'art about art'. This is the first and so far only point in the history of Western art in which artists chose not to mirror the modern world, but to turn inward on themselves. (A measure of the complexity of the task: by the time of the abstract expressionists—if not before in the work of Vassily Kandinsky, Kasimir Malevich, and a handful of other Russians—artists had given up, producing images devoid of content altogether.) Typical of this process was the breaking down of barriers without the construction of new ones. This nihilistic pattern of modernism's reductivist retreat into the cocoon of abstraction, and the comment that makes about the twentieth century world, are the most important aspects of the century that began with the impressionists in the 1860s. The differences in philosophies and appearances from one modernist 'ism' to another pale when compared to this overall destructive momentum, a momentum which culminated in the attempted suicide of visual art in the 1960s in the form of the conceptual movement. It will be primarily for this that this century will be remembered in art history.

The climate in Paris in the second half of the century made the city a likely site for an art revolution. The urban renewal initiated by Napoleon III and Baron Haussmann drew Parisians from every class to mingle in the streets, parks, and cafes. Baudelaire called for a new art, an art of the transitory, of modern life. The impressionists, who followed on the heels of the romanticists, formed a potent nexus between their predecessors' rebellion and the vibrancy of the new era. They limned this New and Improved Paris with dabs of light, unblended color. For this they suffered the wrath of the Academy. The crime of Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot, Eva Gonzalez, Marie Bracquemond, Edgar Degas, Maurice Cignac, Mary Cassatt, Camille Pissarro and the rest of the loosely knit group was to alter the picture space in ways that led to permanent changes in the history of Western art. They resented the Academy's exhausted recipes and chose to tamper with the formal elements of painting. The specific formal/technical issues they dealt with (painting the commonplace in a sketchy style with unblended dabs of paint, attempting to capture fleeting moments in time, observing the shimmering effects of sunlight) are less important than the fact that they lessened the importance of representation. French impressionism weakened the five-century-old grip of renaissance-based realism by claiming that the world was no

longer a sharply drawn place. It put a new emphasis on art's formal elements (line, color, shape, value, and texture) and principles (such as unity, contrast, balance, and movement) in their own right—a shift that would become a modern orthodoxy. The impressionists transferred the romanticists' rebellious spirit to their canvases.

The Impressionists' loyalty did not always cross gender lines. Attempting to amuse his cronies (apparently one had to be there), Renoir declared, "I consider women writers, lawyers, and politicians . . . as monsters and nothing but five-legged calves. The woman artist is merely ridiculous, but I am in favor of the female singer and dancer" (in Chadwick, 1990). It is not surprising that Renoir felt threatened by professional women but approved of singers and dancers; the livelihoods of the latter depended on entertaining men. Renoir's *oeuvre* is known for his studies of women as objects displayed for the male gaze. Chadwick further quotes him as issuing this laconic desideratum: "I paint with my prick." Pithy, that Renoir.

The uncertain scenario of newly industrialized society bred insecurity. Prior to modernism, many of the most important artistic decisions were not made by artists. The content of art was clutched in the fists of holy mother church and the bourgeois aristocracy. Modernism saw a transfer of power away from church and crown and toward White male artists. As they became liberated from externally imposed constraints, they began to generate their own. (Women and minority artists were spared this stress, since they were still struggling for opportunities to make art, period.)

This shift of power changed the temporal character of art history. Since the late nineteenth century, there have been no long-lasting periods in art such as the renaissance or baroque. Instead there have been 'isms', at times coexistent and always fleeting. Often they have passed too quickly to be understood by the public. In nineteenth century France, for example, neoclassicism—a propagandistic expression of the Napoleonic state; realism—a populist movement that portrayed a working class imbued with dignity; and romanticism—an existential, apolitical school of thought—coexisted. This coexistence established the pluralism that characterizes not only modernism but postmodernism even more, a coexistence that contrasts with prior periods, each with its own monolithic style and content.

Art educational opportunities for women expanded during the nineteenth century, but access to art societies with their opportunities for exhibition developed more slowly. Women's study and exhibition of art not only challenged codes of feminine propriety, but they created opportunities for women to put their experience, as well as their ability, on public display. Their struggle became part of the general struggle for educational access. Prompted partly by a class-

tiered economy that denied a living wage to many men of the working class and partly by the casualties of the Civil War, design schools for working women appeared at mid-century. The curriculum stressed such skills as embroidery and china painting, which perpetuated gender separation in art education and the belief that women were less able to produce 'fine' art. Rosa Bonheur and Elizabeth Thompson, two artists who circumvented the restrictions of the mid-eighteen hundreds, came from cultured homes. Both had fathers who encouraged their artistic pursuits. Both received early art educations. These circumstances, combined with their ability, enabled each to become that nineteenth century rarity—a successful artist who was a woman. Categorized as exceptions, they were tolerated by the male art establishment.

During the third quarter of the century, a number of young American women from well-to-do families studied art in Europe. Barred from the academies, they studied in private studios under male artists. Despite such discrimination, they found this Sisyphean stone to be lighter than that in 'the land of the free'. Mary Cassatt, a member of this group, wrote, "After all give me France. Women do not have to fight for recognition here if they do serious work" (in Chadwick, 1990). Edmonia Lewis, the only major African American woman artist of the century, also studied in Europe. Prior to that, she studied at Oberlin College as one of a group of 250 students of Color, and then went to Boston. Refused instruction there by three male sculptors, she learned by copying sculptural fragments. In Rome she turned to African- and Native American themes, including *Forever Free*, a marble sculpture of an emancipated man and woman. Lewis' later life and work remain mysteries.

The early years of modernism saw the numbers of women artists mushroom. Their presence became undeniable, and numerous critical accounts of their work exist, but their victory was pyrrhic. Critics attended to them as a group apart. Their work was evaluated in terms of the 'characteristics of their sex' rather than integrated with the work of their male counterparts. A comment written by Joseph Guichard, one of Berthe Morisot's childhood art teachers, to Morisot's mother about Berthe and her sister reveals the world a female prodigy would encounter. Guichard (in Chadwick, 1990) made this point:

Considering the character of your daughters . . . my teaching will not endow them with minor drawing room accomplishments, they will become painters. Do you realize what this means? In the upper-class milieu to which you belong, this will be revolutionary, I might say almost catastrophic.

In 1910, Dr. John Jenks Thomas was quoted in a news article as saying, "Not one woman in a hundred has a true artistic sense, or even a genuine liking for the aesthetic in any of its forms." The writer of the article issued this response:

It seems a trifle hard on Cecilia Beaux, Mary Cassatt, Louise Cox, Rhoda Holmes Nicholls, Clara Macchesney, and other American women artists we could name, not to speak of the many eminent women artists of other lands, to credit the Doctor's statement, but that there are few women who can paint or model as strongly or successfully as men is an undoubted truth. The recent exhibition of watercolors and pastels made by the Woman's Art Club of New York, as well as the recent annual display of the Miniature Painters Society, contained far too much weak and ineffective work. But that so few women have any true artistic sense or liking for the aesthetic as Doctor Thomas states, we must, from our experience, deny. The Doctor forgets that 'the brain's the measure of the man and not the Hottentot or Malay' (American Art News, 1910).

The impressionists inadvertently established a variety of precedents. The public, taking its cue from the Academy, chose to reject their work. This established a legacy of ignorance that lingers on: the public's assumption that it knows more about art than artists do. At this time, critics quickly and easily colonized the visual arts. With enthusiastic help from dealers, critics enabled the work of the impressionists to find acceptance among the new wealthy middle classes, who were attracted as much by financial speculation as aesthetic sensitivity. The christening of this fringe work with critical legitimacy formed a bridge to this new body of patrons and transformed impressionism into Impressionism.

Impressionism was the first major art movement to be influenced by the camera. Manet stated that he chose not to compete with it. In keeping with the new idea that the world could no longer be depicted as clearly as it had been, Manet stated that his paintings were not windows but surfaces (Janson, 1986). This new definition of painting influenced many artists. Artists responded to the challenge of portraying an increasingly complex world by making their images all the more simple. Paul Cezanne flattened illusionistic space, which led to the cubists' more extreme flattening of space, as well as their violent shattering of the subject and use of multiple perspectives, and to the abstract expressionists' removal of space altogether. This flattening of space—a theme that punctuates modernism—was inspired by the new presence of Japanese prints in late-nineteenth-century Europe. This occurrence exemplifies one of the few times European artists up to this point had encountered the visual imagery of a non-European culture, and their enthusiastic response is the exception that proves the painful point that the exclusion of other cultures—intentional or not—exact a price on the exclusive culture.

The membership of women in the impressionist group was not emulated by the next wave, which did not form a 'group' as such. The impressionists' ability to survive public rejection paved the way for the postimpressionists—Vincent van

Gogh, Paul Gauguin, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Georges Seurat, and a handful of others—to continue experimenting with new ways to portray the world. Customarily, an art movement is named for a style that characterizes it. With postimpressionism, however, the experimentation of the major figures was so idiosyncratic that no one style characterized the movement. Hence, art historians named it as a time period. This has occurred only once since then, in the instance of postmodernism. The postimpressionists didn't so much move painting farther from realism than the impressionists did, but considerably increased the number of options for abstraction. This expansion set the stage for the marvelous visual experimentation that occurred at the turn of the century.

The postimpressionists unintentionally contributed to the image of the 'destructive artist'—one of art history's oxymorons. Seurat died at 32, Toulouse-Lautrec and van Gogh at 37. Gauguin abandoned his wife and children to go to the South Seas and paint. Given such prototypes, it is not surprising that modernism, for all its stylistic innovations, did nothing to undermine the gender hierarchy of the renaissance. The notion of the destructive artist appealed to young male artists who followed. They assumed the fashionable despair of *fin de siècle* Europe. (One observes similar pessimistic affectations today, particularly among young art students who have not yet found identity in their work.) As artists they could symbolically destroy themselves by 'destroying' art through the use of increasingly reductive imagery. For a century this was artists' primary goal; yet they seldom if ever realized it.

The bellicose manifesto that trumpeted each new style invariably assaulted the art of prior movements and for good measure the wretched state of humanity. It then offered hyperbolic promises, bold dreams and new realities. When the substance of these realities was revealed as mist, the movement would be jostled aside by another, which in turn issued its own jeremiads and *deja*-voodoo visions. The art production behind this internecine frenzy, however, resulted in the richness that characterizes European work of the early twentieth century. One must look back to the renaissance to find its match. The failure of public art education programs to embrace modernism—the art of its own time—coupled with the exclusion of women and minorities from modernism's membership, prevented this glistening tide from spilling beyond the banks of the art world and splashing into every corner of culture.

The impressionists and the postimpressionists changed traditional concepts of form, space and color, as well as the role of the subject. The later expressionists, struggling to come to grips with the early twentieth century, turned to the late-nineteenth-century work of van Gogh and Gauguin for inspiration. Their subject was the human figure, and their

theme was disenchantment with what they perceived as the tragedy of modern life (Ashton, 1985). This has formed the *raison d'être* of many art movements since then, but at the time it was unexplored territory. So the persona of the self-destructive artist became more entrenched.

As the new century began, movement elbowed movement for space. The pendulum didn't swing; it flew back and forth with blurring speed. The aesthetic purview of the prior five centuries, renaissance-based 'realism', had exhausted itself. The publication in 1914 of *Art*, Clive Bell's thesis of 'significant form', influenced the avant garde to further emphasize design and color over content. Matisse and the Fauves trivialized detail, shading, and perspective. In so doing, they left artists with fewer visual tools. This reduction was a significant step toward art's attempted suicide.

The collaborative experimentation of Gabriele Muntz and Vassily Kandinsky in Germany contributed significantly to the development of abstraction as the visual language of the twentieth century. Kandinsky is said to have painted modernism's first non-representative painting in approximately 1910 (Barr, 1986). This event snapped art's last tenuous ties to depiction of the natural world.

The symbolic import of Kandinsky's gesture (contemporary with similar gestures by his Russian compatriots the suprematists, and the German constructivists) is profound. Kandinsky's decision to look entirely inward for his imagery was, by default if not deliberation, a decision to use art no longer to comment on society. This 'no comment' became a comment and more; it was a shibboleth in visual language, a segue to high modernism decades before its time. This tale wagged the dog, and wagged it too hard for even the artistic vanguard of the day. Pure abstraction was abandoned until the late 1940s and 1950s when it emerged in abstract expressionism.

The possibly apocryphal tale of Kandinsky's breakthrough is that he was on a trip to Paris when he saw a painting from Monet's haystack series. This was the first nonrealist painting he had ever seen. He returned to his home, and one night in his studio he glimpsed one of his paintings on its side. In the uncertain light he did not recognize it and responded to it as a nonrepresentative image. He realized (with a sense of having seen a deeper truth) that art did not need to be paintings 'of objects'. This anecdote illustrates the relationship between generations of artists in this century-long drive toward the demise of the image: An unbiased artist beholds his first nonrealist painting and consequently his conception of art is broadened beyond that of the artist who did the painting. This step enables the younger artist to respond to future experiences in a way that the first artist could not have.

The deconstructive motifs of cubism, as with all formalistic developments in art, reflected ways the world was changing. An interesting aspect of analytical cubism was its attempt to depict objects from multiple perspectives. This 'analysis' was often violent. One can chart in his paintings the cycle Picasso repeated in his relationships with women. In the early stage he portrays his lovers with tenderness. This tenderness is gradually replaced with anger until in the late stage he creates hideous images of women that presage Willem de Kooning's *Woman* series. Synthetic cubism was more influential because it moved from periphery to center the philosophy that an object of art is an object in its own right, owing little allegiance to anything external to it (Geis, 1980). This opened the door for pop artists in the 1960s to postulate the postmodern premise that art should in no way stand out from anything else in the physical world. Both movements furthered art's gesture of turning its back to a world that asked it for spiritual nourishment but gave none in return. Art was thinned still more.

Sonia Terk moved to Paris in 1905 at age twenty. There she assimilated the lessons of the postimpressionists and the fauves with the folk art of her native Russia. She married the painter Robert Delauney in 1910 and together they developed a form of cubism called orphism. Significantly, Sonia's first nonrepresentational work, *Couverture*, was not a painting but a quilt. Seeking new interpretations of form and texture, she investigated a variety of fiber media, producing objects that lay within the conventions of 'women's work'—curtains, lampshades, and pillow covers. In 1913 she turned to dress design, incorporating modern ideas into fashions with a political message: dresses were to be comfortable for women, not pleasing to men. Decades later, this message—the personal is political—was to become a rallying cry of feminism. The power of Delauney's work is not weakened by her choice of media; the stature of the media is enhanced through the power of her work.

The politics of Delauney's dress designs influenced the futurists, who began to look to clothing as a signifier of a modern revolution. However, the anarchic ideology of futurists such as Gino Severini, Umberto Boccioni, and Giacomo Balla poised itself on a phallic pedestal. They clamored for the destruction of all past culture, boasting, "We want to glorify war...beautiful ideas which kill, and contempt of women. We want to destroy museums, libraries, to combat moralism, feminism and all such . . . acts of cowardice" (in Chadwick, 1990). So the reduction and destruction of art continued.

Delauney and Kandinsky were not the only Russians to contribute to the early development of modernism. A number of their countrymen and women wielded influence. One of the reasons the effort of this ethnic artistic group is notable is because within it the sexes enjoyed equality, which doubled the size of their artistic pool. And by refusing to distinguish

craft expressions from painting and sculpture, they yet again increased the numbers of people to be called artists.

In 1912, Natalia Goncharova exhibited with the *Blaue Reiter* in Munich and in the second postimpressionist exhibition in London. The influence of her work—which fused fauvism, cubism, and Russian folk motifs—on Kasimir Malevich is clear. Nadezhda Udaltsova, after studying with the cubist Metzinger in Paris, returned to Russia and by 1913 was incorporating letters and words into collages and constructions. The zenith years of the Russian vanguard, 1914-1917, saw the return to their homeland of Kandinsky, Marc Chagall, and Ed Lissitzky. Both the suprematists and the constructivists sought to subtract even more from the painted image than Kandinsky did. They rejected not only recognizable imagery but any vestige of emotion as well (Ashton, 1985). The constructivists in particular heralded the machine as the vehicle for social salvation—*deus ex machina*. As Kandinsky pointed to action painting, they pointed to the color field branch of abstract expressionism. This absence of emotional expression was echoed by Mondrian, who eliminated organic forms, and all colors but the three primaries. He melded cubism and suprematism and brought them to their logical conclusions (Hamilton, 1978).

Following the Russian Revolution of 1917, the younger artists—most of whom supported it—turned their attention from painting to the design needs of what they believed would become a utopian society. The populist idea that well-designed products for daily life ('applied' art) were more important than paintings ('fine' art) was established by 1921 in a Soviet art movement called productivism. The constructivists presaged postmodern ideology in their desire to abolish the production of 'fine art' by autonomous 'art masters' in favor of a system predicated on collective practice. Extending the utilitarian themes of constructivism, the 'end of painting' was announced. Artists were asked to 'serve the people'. As the reality behind this rhetoric revealed itself, as Lenin's 'utopia' became the betrayal of socialist ideals we now call communism, it lost artists such as Kandinsky, Chagall, Goncharova, Alexander Archipenko, and Antoine Pevsner.

At this time the dadaists, a group of men and women who came of age during World War I, were engaging in a variety of activities, all with the underlying theme of being anti-art. An article in *American Art News* dated April 2, 1921, enlightened its readership to dadaist philosophy:

[It] is the sickest, most paralyzing, and most destructive thing that has ever originated in the brain of man. It is a negation of everything under the sun and the sun itself, and everything beyond the sun as far as infinitude can reach. To the Dadaist life means nothing, death means nothing, good means nothing, evil means nothing. Ideals are as nothing,

aspirations count for nothing, religion is nothing, and atheism nothing. Even Dada is nothing.

That's pretty close, actually. The dadaists' hostility was directed at Western culture for having committed a crime—World War I—on a scale that, for the first time in history, encompassed the globe. They tried to make art into a weapon, but instead of turning it onto society, they turned it onto itself. Hans Arp removed planning and study from the creative process by dropping pieces of paper to the floor and gluing them to a background in whatever positions they landed. Hannah Hoch's development of photomontage severed the sanctity of the photograph as an autonomous object. Sophie Tauber, whose background was in textiles, in 1915 began to collaborate with Hans Arp (whom she eventually married) to produce nonrepresentational paintings, collages, and weavings. Marcel Duchamp picked manufactured objects from his environment and simply anointed them works of art. Duchamp wrote to Alfred Stieglitz, "I would like to see [photography] make people despise painting until something else will make photography unbearable" (in Crimp, 1981). This statement generates laughter with a bitter timbre, echoes of which are heard throughout the dark humor of the dadaists. Kurt Schwitters rejected traditional art materials, creating assemblages with refuse discarded by society. Schwitters inadvertently (and in his role as a Dadaist, ironically) offered a slogan of modernism: "Art is a primordial concept, exalted as the godhead, inexplicable as life, indefinable and without purpose" (in Krausse, 1981). He was, of course, mostly wrong.

Because dadaism defies neat categorization, its three contributions are sometimes ignored by art historians who fail to recognize that it is: 1) a model for the activist art of the late twentieth century, 2) that it deconstructed the myth of the sacred work of art (Schwitters' comment notwithstanding), and 3) that women substantively contributed to these accomplishments.

At this time a young woman named Kathe Kollwitz was receiving her art education in Germany, where she developed a high degree of drawing skill. This skill, used to render images of social protest in printmaking media rather than oil, offered ample excuses for her contemporaries to dismiss her as an illustrator. Kollwitz' concern with social injustice reached beyond her imagery; she was active in feminist political causes as well. Today Kollwitz' place is assured as one of the great graphic artists of the twentieth century. Her work pointed to aspects of postmodernism, including the return to recognizable imagery, themes of protest, and the use of a 'lesser' medium.

The surrealist movement attracted a number of women, including Leonor Fini, Frida Kahlo, Meret Oppenheim, Dorothea Tanning, and Leonora Carrington. Surrealism's

disdain for academic training removed a barrier often erected elsewhere throughout modernism, and its emphasis on personal visions promised women the freedom to explore their own experiences. The reality, however, was that women found themselves excluded from the theoretical debates that shaped the movement. If they had been included, no doubt the conclusions of these debates would have been different. The men tackled such questions as Andre Breton's, "To what extent is the man aware of the woman's orgasm?" Breton's answer was, "There are only subjective ways, which one can trust to the extent that one can trust the woman in question" (in MacAdam, 1992). They discussed the ages they preferred their woman to be (for easy-to-please Raymond Queneau, it was 14 to 50), how clean women should be, their views of women with physical deformities, and of women who did not speak French (Breton found them "unbearable"). Breton on homosexuality: "I accuse homosexuals of confronting human tolerance with a mental and moral deficiency which tends to turn itself into a system and to paralyse every enterprise I respect" (in MacAdam, 1992). Breton, while identifying patriarchy as an oppressive societal force, sought to subvert it by having men appropriate feminine qualities to complete themselves. The idea of women appropriating masculine qualities to complete *themselves* was not part of his solution. Meret Oppenheim (in Parker and Pollock, 1981) later wrote a statement that, deliberately or not, responds to Breton:

... men, since creating patriarchy, that is since [devaluing] the female, projected [their] femininity onto woman. This means [women] live their own femininity plus the femininity projected onto them by the males. They are therefore females squared. They are not allowed to live their masculinity. The same applies vice versa for the male.

Surrealist women, rejecting traditional roles, viewed the movement as a chrysalis springing forth a new egalitarianism. They were to find instead that surrealist men saw them as artbabes on whom they could project their fantasies of violent eroticism.

The work of many of modernism's mightiest studmuffins depicts women as objects of sexual subjugation: nearly everything Auguste Renoir ever painted; Paul Gauguin's corpus from the South Seas; Pablo Picasso's portrayals of women throughout his seven decades of productivity, much of Salvador Dali's work, and so on and so on. In this respect, modern 'masters', busy refuting the formal conventions of renaissance art, did not meddle with the renaissance precedent of men making meaning and women bearing it, of men watching women and women watching themselves being watched. Berger (1972) suggests that the male gaze functions as an oppressive mechanism by elevating men to the status of privileged spectators. Gombrich (1960) states that

the art audience is never innocent. There is no such thing as art for art's sake.

As the modernists turned increasingly toward abstraction, a parallel school of thought called design theory appeared in art education. Spearheaded by Arthur Wesley Dow, it made reference to the 'pure' abstract qualities of music, and showed interest in Non-western art forms with their emphases on art's formal elements. One of Dow's students, Alan Bement, taught Dow's principles to Georgia O'Keeffe, who in turn taught them in the public schools of Amarillo, Texas, from 1912 to 1914, and later in Virginia and South Carolina. O'Keeffe went on—unwillingly—to fill the polar roles of the modern woman artist: archetype and token.

A number of women art educators born in the nineteenth century influenced the field in several ways (Collins and Sandell, 1984). A handful of those who published influential books include Mary Ann Dwight, who published *Introduction to the Study of Art* in 1856, and in 1856-1857, a series of articles on art education the *American Journal of Education*. Margaret Mathias published *The Beginnings of Art in the Public Schools* in 1924, *Art in the Elementary School* in 1929, and *The Teaching of Art* in 1932. Mathias' books were within the progressive stream of Arthur Wesley Dow and John Dewey. The first edition of *Art in Everyday Life*, by Harriet and Betta Goldstein, was published in 1925. The second edition was published in 1932, a revision in 1935, a third edition in 1940, and a fourth in 1954.

Women also published significant art educational research. Florence L. Goodenough, a developmental psychologist, developed the Draw-a-Man Test for her doctoral dissertation. The work, titled *Measurement of Intelligence by Drawings*, was published in 1926. In 1947 Rose Haas Alschuler and LaBerta Hatwick published *Painting and Personality*, a two-volume study of children's artistic expression. *Creative Expression*, published in 1932, was edited by Gertrude Hartman and Ann Shumaker. This collection of articles by members of the progressive movement was first published by *Progressive Education* in 1926. Margaret Naumburg took the first course for teachers offered by Maria Montessori in Rome. In 1915, she opened the Walden School in New York, one of the foremost of the progressive schools. Her books include *The Child and the World* (1928), *Dynamically Oriented Art Therapy* (1966), and *An Introduction to Art Therapy* (1973). Naumburg's sister, Florence Cane, studied painting with Robert Henri, and taught at the Walden School. She published *The Artist in Each of Us* in 1951. Many women who contributed substantively to art education are found (or not found, as the case may be) within the hiddenstream of art education. Many are anonymous outside of their small spheres of influence, and, although the efforts of feminist scholars to discover them are sometimes successful, most will remain unknown.

The modernist flame of revolt against academic realism briefly flickered in art education at this time in the form of design theory. Many artists and art educators seemed to feel that the world of the modern, characterized by separation from nature, capitalist exploitation, and world-scale war, lacked subject matter fit for inspiration, so they turned their backs on it and looked to the expressive potential of the visual elements themselves—line, shape, color, texture, and value. The years immediately following World War I—the ‘Roaring Twenties’—were characterized by a feeling of security on the parts of the victors. Culture thrived. The Nineteenth Amendment, giving women the right to vote, was passed in 1920. Victorian attitudes abated. Freud’s ideas weakened the Puritanism that had been omnipresent in the United States for its first century. The progressivism of thinkers such as John Dewey shaped education.

Then came the Great Depression of the 1930s. It wounded progressive thought in education as well as in other fields. New ideologies based on fear, such as Naziism and the isolationistic America First movement, attracted adherents. The Works Progress (later Projects) Administration (WPA), Franklin D. Roosevelt’s visionary program to support the visual arts during the Depression, awarded mural commissions based on unsigned submissions. This enabled young women artists such as Louise Nevelson, Lee Krasner, Isabel Bishop, and Alice Neel to receive support from these programs.

The WPA funded not only artists who would later be considered important (establishing a precedent that was extended by Lyndon Johnson’s National Endowment for the Arts), but a number of art education programs in the schools. Unfortunately, the art education programs were not as successful as the support programs for artists. The WPA employed artists, rather than art educators, to teach in the schools. These artists, often with little knowledge of teaching strategies, art history, the stages of children’s artistic development, or other pedagogical fundamentals, were unable to develop strong art education programs. Personal knowledge of art production was deemed sufficient; a body of knowledge for teaching was dismissed as fiction.

The monied mandarins of 1930s America, concerned that the Depression would touch them, began to view art education pragmatically. They borrowed the instrumentalist rationale that art education could make a better society. This attitude was expressed in the ideas of Dewey and other reconstructionists who argued that education was best viewed as an instrument for social remediation. Although their writings do not claim it, their view went beyond populism to achieve kinship with philosophies of tribal cultures, many of whose languages do not have words for art, so intertwined is their artistry with daily life. Ziegfeld (1944) describes this ‘new’ definition of art as it was appropriated in

1931 by the Owatonna art education project, a project carried out in Owatonna, Minnesota, a community chosen because it was ‘typical’: its population was between 5000 and 8000, and it supposedly was not dominated by a particular racial, religious, or economic group. Given that Minnesota may be the whitest state of the fifty, one wonders how many of Owatonna’s 5000 to 8000 residents in 1931 were not working- or middle-class Protestants with roots in northern Europe. Ziegfeld reached this conclusion:

They had discovered that although art permeates all the areas of living, it becomes most significant and most meaningful when it touches those areas in which people carry on the greater part of their daily activities—in other words, when it is intimately connected with everyday experience. Therefore if art is to become a usable medium of expression it must be taught in relation to the fundamental areas of living. For example: To everyone, young or old, one’s own self and one’s personal problems constitute the most important area of experience. Next comes one’s home, as the results of the community study so unexceptionally revealed. Next, for children, comes the school, and after that the community as a whole.

Ziegfeld’s thesis is solid, but his interpretation overstates Owatonna’s success. Rarely does one find such ideas in school art rooms today. Nevertheless, the Owatonna project poses interesting research questions for art education, especially in urban America. The instrumentalist view of ‘art for society’s sake’, as opposed to ‘art for art’s sake’, suggests that art education divorced from community life, art education that creates a timeless artistic canon, may be unsuitable within the public school, in that it can foster a view of art as cult, as a closed community. Conversely, art education that serves all of the people, art that flexes in response to community needs, may be well placed not only within the public school, but within our lives.

As twentieth century artists came to realize the expressive power of tribal art and the imagery of children, a small number of art educators redefined their views along similar lines. Franz Cizek claimed that children’s visual imagery was art in the adult sense. He then gave this useful idea a curiously unproductive interpretation: he became a pioneer of standards-free art education. Efland (1990) observes:

Cizek sometimes did allow his pupils to use sophisticated adult concepts, provided that they brought out the decorative qualities he considered most suitable for child art. But he did not introduce children to those adult concepts that he thought unsuitable for them, such as realistic color schemes. He knew what child art was supposed to look like, and he knew how to get children to produce it!

Macdonald (1970) describes the art of Cizek’s students:

Far from being free and fluent with the bold, delightfully crude, and imaginative touches found in free child art, the work illustrated is extremely sophisticated, extremely competent, and very much influenced by adult folk art and illustrations done for children's tales by adults. Many of the works, notably the patterns of the complicated woodcuts and papercuts, require very careful measuring and working out.

Efland points out that, in fairness, Cizek's approach was free for its time, but the fact remains that his ideas laid the groundwork for the 'creative self-expression' movement that dominated art education at mid-century and dictated the 'holiday art' curriculum that rendered the late-twentieth-century American public one of the world's least visually literate. Rarely do noted artists of the latter third of the twentieth century cite public school art programs as helpful to their careers.

This setback resulted from the upper class euphoria that followed the Allies' victorious emergence from World War II. Dwight Eisenhower, a career soldier, was swept into the White House on a tide of sentimentality. The postwar economy prospered despite his lack of leadership. Art was ignored. Given the culturally indifferent climate of the late 1940s and 1950s, the public did not view children's artistic growth as important. Art education became an imitation of itself.

The fact that 'creative self-expression' flourished at mid-century under Cizek's student Viktor Lowenfeld demonstrates the change in attitude toward art education on the part of the ruling class from the depression to the postwar era. Lowenfeld (1947), a charismatic, influential teacher, moved art education to a child-centered curriculum that called for a nurturing environment in which children could express themselves free of adult imposition. His romanticized views of children and 'free expression' divorced the art education field from its content, lending it a hollowness that amounted to little more than recess in the children's seats.

World War II, often used as a historical dividing line, serves art education in that role. The anti-communist witch hunts of the 1950s identified progressivism as a threat to America, and targeted Dewey's ideas. The launch of the Soviet Sputnik satellite convinced many Americans that the country was in danger of invasion. Progressivism was attacked from the left as well with the claim that it was anti-intellectual. Lowenfeld's blatantly anti-intellectual approach to art education held sway. Meanwhile, the education field in general moved toward a 'back to the basics' curriculum. Suburban flight swept whites from urban centers as the flow of southern African Americans into northern cities accelerated. Whites grabbed up their money and fled to the suburbs, where they created the kinds of schools they wanted, generally progressive in philosophy. Schools in major cities, mean-

while, began the process of decay that plagues them today. An irony is that by the 1970s, Lowenfeld's expressionistic art education programs had created artistically illiterate adults within both genders, all ethnicities, racial groups, income levels, and neighborhoods. One cannot fault these programs for being undemocratic.

An event in art education during World War II illustrates the degree to which the field was a tool of the ruling class. Powerbrokers in government assigned to art education the task of supporting the war effort with the rationale that our enemies were trying to take away artistic freedom. If art education programs wished to receive funding, they were to produce antiwar propaganda. To survive, art educators accommodated this assignment. Posters propagandizing the fascist attack on free speech flooded the nation (critics of the National Endowment for the Arts, take note). Freedman (1987) describes these posters:

Images of strong, handsome, and determined young men illustrated convictions about the inherent good of the Allied countries. Depictions of Allied women and children were to evoke sympathy for the helpless and innocent. The images of people in nations fighting against the United States, in contrast, took on inhuman characteristics. Germans were represented as eerie, dark, skeletal figures without faces or identities.

An irony occurred following the war when art educators were pressured to produce posters promoting world peace.

After the war, as Lowenfeld's ideas took over art education, abstract expressionism emerged in New York and made that city the new world art capital. Abstract expressionism formed two branches—action painting and color field. Temporal and geographic distance separate Kandinsky from action painters such as Joan Mitchell, Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning, Helen Frankenthaler, Lee Krasner (whom some art historians have recorded as first the wife of Jackson Pollock and second a gifted artist), and Hans Hofmann—who once described a Krasner painting as "so good you'd never know it was done by a woman" (in Chadwick, 1990). However, it is Kandinsky—modernism's Rasputin—who is their first mentor.

They further thinned the modern concept of art by claiming that although they did not do paintings of objects, their work did indeed have subject matter—the process itself. Their products held value only as records of this process. The cultural artifact as artistic subject was eliminated philosophically, if not physically (Rose, 1967). Abstract expressionism is significant primarily for this reason. At last the art community was ready for this monumental 'no comment,' even if the public was not. For nearly two decades the movement, with its deliberate lack of content and the sobering cultural

message entailed therein, dominated the art scene. Although women and minorities participated, and some eventually received credit, they were as marginalized during the movement's life as were those who came before them.

Generally, the abstract expressionists viewed the social environment as unworthy of their attention. In art education, Viktor Lowenfeld viewed the social environment as a corruptive entity from which children should be sheltered in order for their creativity to blossom. The first progressive rebuttal to Lowenfeld's theories came from Manuel Barkan (1955), a Deweyan who considered the social environment the ideal place for children to grow into socially responsible adults. Elliot Eisner (1972) agreed with Barkan that art teaching should consist of more than simply encouraging children to be creative. He argued for academic content in the art education curriculum and became an important figure in the development of discipline-based art education.

In the post-World War II period, one again finds little connection between what was happening in art education and what was happening in the art world itself. This is not surprising given the presiding art educational theory of the time. Color field painters, represented by Mark Rothko, Helen Frankenthaler, Barnett Newman, Morris Louis and others, were eliminating art's formal elements as fast as they could, acknowledging little more than the dimension of color. They likely did not realize it, but they were only a cog in a wheel that ground inexorably toward the elimination of art. In responding to the action painters, the color field painters continued the ideas of holistic composition—eliminating the idea of composition as a sum of separate parts—and expressivity of materials, but denied texture and energy, concepts important to action painting. Helen Frankenthaler and Morris Louis even removed paint from painting by simply staining unprimed canvas. In a word, the color field painters stayed true to the spirit of the art of the age by removing visual vocabulary and replacing it with nothing. The abstract expressionists brought the reduction of virtual space one step forward by eliminating it in their paintings. There are no differences between the images they painted and the physical realities of their painting themselves. The idea of color field painting was given a sardonic, forward-looking twist a decade later by minimalists such as Frank Stella, Anne Truitt, Elsworth Kelly, and Eva Hesse. Whereas color field painting was *about* nothing, minimalism *was* nothing. The new level of 'contentlessness' in the minimalists' body of work contributed to this century-long process that engulfed them and every other major movement, a process that led to the denial of content in visual art, period.

The launching of Sputnik in October of 1957 reinvigorated the debate between self-expressionist and discipline-based art education. The former argued that the contribution of art to educational reform was the development of creative prob-

lem-solving ability. The latter argued that an academic thrust placed art education more in the center of the reform movement. Jerome Bruner (1960) suggested that the solution to the debate lay in distinguishing between disciplines and subjects. He claimed that disciplines such as science, literature, and art were fields of inquiry pursued by adult scholars, whereas subjects such as spelling and arithmetic exist nowhere outside the school. A discipline was defined as having an organized body of knowledge, its own methods of inquiry, and a community of scholars that agreed on the field's fundamental tenets. Bruner's argument influenced art educators to present art as a group of disciplines.

June King McFee (1961) questioned Lowenfeld's stages of children's artistic development and his theory of visual-haptic dichotomy, which suggested that children are disposed at birth to learn either through vision or touch. She cited research demonstrating that these dispositions are learned. McFee, one of the few prominent female voices in art education at the time, revived progressive populism. In the 1965 report of the *National Society for the Study of Education*, she called for art education for oppressed groups.

Until the late 1980s, little effort was put forth to adjust the gender imbalance between public school and higher education faculty. Public school art education positions were filled overwhelmingly by women, whereas the majority of university art and art education positions were filled by men. This lopsidedness continues in the public schools, although in higher education the sexes are moving toward balance. Minority women too are making inroads into higher education in the arts, while minority males, particularly African Americans, remain a rarity.

Efland (1990) traces three streams of influence in educational thought since World War II: expressionism, scientific rationalism, and reconstructionism. Expressionism, which embraces the definition of the artist as visionary, is rooted in nineteenth century romantic idealism. It rejects rules in general, and especially the pedantry of academe. Its spirit is echoed in the impassioned manifestos of modern art movements, which called for the abandonment of tradition in favor of new forms of expression. The tenets of expressionistic art education suggest that the child as an artist, uncorrupted by adult strictures, is to be idealized.

Scientific rationalism redefined modes of thinking. Bloom's (1956) cognitive taxonomy defines thought on six tiers: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Scientific rationalism defined thought as knowledge already known by the teacher (often boxed in a prepackaged curriculum) rather than a product of the student's inquiry. It defined success as the degree to which this prepackaged format was digested to the student. The

insights the student gained through experimentation and invention were overlooked.

Reconstructionists sought to cure society's ills through public education. They argued for arts in education with the rationale that the arts would lend vitality to the climate of the school. Of these three streams, expressionism enjoyed the greatest popularity. This is not surprising given that the postwar economy prospered for the white middle and upper classes, echoing the expressionistic resurgence that had followed World War I.

The idea of the White male as hero had been resurrected by the war. Despite the facts that women were both mother and father during the war, and that the war could not have been won without their labor in American factories, women's contributions were minimized. Likewise the roles of soldiers of every color other than white were almost entirely ignored.

The Cold War kept powerbrokers from relaxing completely, but their positions were strong. If we resurrect the continuum of censorship, indifference, and freedom described in the Introduction to this book, we can place postwar America in the middle. Art during this period defied lay understanding, so it was ignored. Art education, likewise ignored, succumbed to the dictates of 'free' expression.

The liberalism of the 1960s created a conservative backlash in the 1970s. 'Accountability' became a buzzword. Attention shifted from the content of the various disciplines to the development of instruments that presumably would measure student achievement. Implementation of instructional objectives, competence-based education, and mastery testing characterized education during this decade. Art educators embraced this menu, influenced by the strident call for back-to-basics education with its accompanying emphasis on verbal learning at the expense of the visual. Disenchantment with Lowenfeld's approach encouraged this acceptance. In any case, state legislatures, threatened by public criticism of education, mandated such changes, which limited the debate to the pages of academic journals. The accountability movement was presented not only as a value-free means to determine schools' effectiveness—it was also quick, cheap, and easy.

Despite the fact that it has become recognized as value-laden and corruptive of intellectual inquiry, standardized testing continues. Some efforts have been made to develop the tests into more effective measures of complex thought by including writing samples and so on, but they remain tools that measure the knowledge of the White middle class. Teachers, under pressure from administrators, continue to 'teach to the test' at the expense of more profound modes of knowing. One result of this is to distract children from developing

modes of critical inquiry, and to present the 'realities' of America's powerbrokers as above question.

The next climb and drop of the educational roller coaster was the emergence of qualitative inquiry, which viewed educational research as a comparatively holistic undertaking. Gathering their data in classrooms more often than in laboratories, qualitative researchers sought to generate a kind of knowledge that was less amenable to the suspect claim of objectivity.

As qualitative means of inquiry grew more popular in education, the art world also was struggling to overcome manipulation by elitists. Artists associated with the pop movement, such as Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Marisol Escobar, and Claus Oldenberg, sought to remove the pedestal that propped up the concept of 'fine art'. They did not seek to elevate the everyday object to the status of art, as is sometimes claimed, but rather to lower the art object to the status of the everyday object—an age-old view of art in many world cultures, but brand spanking new to the West.

In this endeavor they failed—note the prices their work brings today. Pop artists not only removed emotion from their works; in some cases they removed themselves from the physical construction of their works, as in the case of Warhol—the jet set's artsy *wunderkind*—who hired technicians to produce images he designed. This metaphor is interesting: as artists withdrew themselves, first emotionally and then physically, from their work, they symbolically withdrew from the societal *milieu* in which the work was made. The message (however unintended) of the 1940s and '50s generation of artists—the negation of Euro-american values—was lost on society because the language by which the message was expressed—the vocabulary of non-representative images—was unfamiliar. Likewise, the message of 1960s pop—equally contemptuous of capitalist values—was missed by the public. When a culture's educational system chooses to deny that visual literacy is a worthy equal to verbal literacy, that culture will navigate its path to the future without the bellwether of art to guide it.

Pop flashed the first signals that modernism was becoming exhausted. The palimpsest Robert Rauschenberg created when he erased Willem de Kooning's drawing became a manifesto of postmodernism. Aptly named, pop embraced the imagery of popular culture that modernism had so disdained. Although *l'enfant terrible* Warhol was not the first to distance himself from the production of his art (Cartier-Bresson never printed his own photographs, and Rodin's casting was often done in foundries he never visited during production; nor did he check the finished product before it was shipped to the client) he was the first to make this distancing a part of his message. Andy Warhol was to Ronald Reagan what Jacques Louis David was to Napoleon

Bonaparte. Reagan's somnambulatory stateship revealed his gift for lacking ideas, and Warhol strove (with smashing success) to lack them as well. Both understood the media-based mechanisms of celebrity and, as Hughes (1982) comments, together they signified a new moment: the age of supply-side aesthetics. Pop's noble intentions (ever so briefly realized) of placing art beyond the reach of capitalism's tendrils became nothing more than a disguise for its commodification. If selling American cigarettes in third world markets is economic imperialism, is the transnational sale of van Gogh's *Purple Irises* to a Japanese collector for \$54,000,000 only cultural exchange?

Meanwhile, the vacuum-packed ideology of minimalism was deconstructing the anaesthetic images that color field had touted as the purest form of the aesthetic. Warhol, linking the ideology of pop to that of minimalism, said, "If you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it" (Konig, Hulten, and Granath, 1969). Singing a one-note song as flat as his silk screens, he pirouetted in front of the beautiful people until they *believed*—and snap, crackle, *pop*, they anointed him the world's glitziest gallery doll.

Following pop and minimalism, there was one last mountain to climb, but the next generation of artists chose instead to make the mountain vanish. The object of art not only had lost all qualities that referred to things outside itself, but it also had lost all qualities that referred to anything within itself. It was now essentially one-dimensional; it merely took up space. There was only one thing left to do: remove the space. This movement to eliminate the artifact came to be called conceptualism—the *ne plus ultra* of modern art. Although today justly criticized for its 'male intellectual' approach, conceptualism kicked down art's last boundaries. In fact, it punted them out of the stadium.

Typically during modernism, artists resented capitalists' insistence on recasting their art into investment opportunities. As modernism neared its close, artists made it increasingly difficult for the wealthy and the middle class to collect their work. The earth sculpture of Beverly Pepper, Nancy Holt, and Dennis Oppenheim placed art outside the 'private ownership' framework. Linda Benglis ran advertisements for her exhibitions that showed images having nothing to do with art, such as photographs of her riding huge phalluses. Benglis's images redefined the woman's role in sexual relationships by making her the controller (an idea introduced to popular culture in the 1980s by the singer Madonna). The decomodifying of art culminated in conceptualism. The Happening formed a bridge leading to conceptualism. Through video and performance art, Yoko Ono, Yvonne Rainer, and Carolee Schneeman linked minimalism with conceptualism. In 1969 Dennis Oppenheim arranged for

five piles of building materials to be placed on the floor of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. Each pile weighed 158 pounds, the artist's weight. Once a week, the artist was called at his home in New York. He reported his weight to the ounce, and the five piles were adjusted to match. In 1970, Hans Hacke put on an "Information Show" at the Museum of Modern art in New York. Visitors were asked 'yes' and 'no' questions about current issues and the answers were tabulated and posted daily (Hamilton, 1978).

Examples of conceptualism include Raphael Ferrer's "Ice," (Meehan, 1971) a work that involved the delivery of blocks of ice to the entrance ramp of the Whitney Museum in New York. When collectors complained about "Ice's" short lifespan (a few hours), Ferrer told them to collect the ice truck driver's bill as a drawing. Vito Acconci (1991), another leading conceptualist, built a wooden ramp against a gallery wall. The viewer entering the gallery found only this ramp. The logical—in fact, other than walking out, the only—thing to do was walk across the gallery and up the ramp. The viewer did not know that the artist was under it. When Acconci heard the steps above him, he would attempt to initiate conversation with the person. If the person responded, Acconci would then attempt to set up a dialog of sexual fantasy. If the person continued to respond, Acconci would masturbate. The show lasted two weeks. When it ended, the artist took his ramp away and that was that. Not only did he defy the collectors, but by attempting to involve the unseen viewer in intimate conversation, he made a statement about how uncomfortable we have learned to be when discussing sex as opposed to, say, violence.

The pessimism of racial minorities erupted in the 1960s. Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett, Raymond Saunders and Faith Ringgold, presaging postmodernism, generated politicized images that refuted the formalism of the prior two decades. Their collages, prints, and paintings forced middle American viewers to confront the distance that lay between them and African America. In 1966 Harlem hosted its first art exhibition by African Americans since the 1930s. The simmering anger of American women and blacks in the art world boiled over in December of 1969 when the Whitney Museum opened its Annual with 135 male and eight female artists. Demonstrations against the Whitney resulted in the formation of Women Artists in Resistance (WAR). Faith Ringgold formed Women Students and Artists for Black Art Liberation. The Art Workers Coalition initiated the New York Art Strike Against War, Racism, Fascism, Sexism and Repression, which closed the city's museums for a day. The transition to postmodernism had begun.

As the nineteenth-century 'first wave' of feminism grew out of abolitionist activism, so the second wave grew out of the Afro-American activism of the 1960s. Women involved in the civil rights and anti-war movements recognized the same

phenomenon their counterparts had recognized a century earlier: women were excluded from leadership roles. It was the 'second wave' that pushed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)—first proposed in 1923—to the forefront of national attention in 1970. The Amendment passed both houses of Congress in 1972, but failed to be ratified by the required three-fourths of the states. This fact caused adherents to the liberal branch of feminism to turn their attention to state legislatures. The ensuing twenty years have seen significant increases in the numbers of both women and minorities involved in state and local government. The next attempt to add the ERA to the Bill of Rights will succeed.

The results of the civil rights laws passed in the 1960s show that, to a degree, the liberal social agenda can be legislated. The twentieth century has created conflict between the twin streams of liberal philosophy: individual freedom from governmental interference, and a 'fair share' for every individual. Ironically, in their efforts to protect the individual's right to his or her 'fair share', liberals have turned to government to legislate this right.

The path of visual art through modernism has established some precedents. Possibly for the first time, art found itself in a world it lacked the language to describe. In one frantic movement after another it painted and repainted itself, backing into an ever smaller corner until it ran out of room and ended up leaving its prints all over itself. This experiment shifted art, movement by movement, from realism to a point approaching nonexistence. It is primarily for this that modernism will be remembered in the annals of art history.

One finds presumptuousness, even arrogance, in this endeavor; yet one is struck more by the sadness of both artist and society when that society turns to the artist for answers and receives only a shrug. What is the nature of a culture that defies its artists' attempts to paint it? The primary agents in this experiment—the artists themselves—seemed to have no conception of their ultimate goal—the elimination of art—indeed, those who began it might have opposed its outcome. As is often the case in human events, new generations venture where their forebears feared to tread. This explains why the tumultuous journey from realism to conceptualism took a hundred years. Those of us born in the middle third of the twentieth century witnessed the closing moments of a time when art's tenets were shaken as never before. After the impressionists opened the floodgates by tampering with the formal aspects of realistic depiction, there was no stopping until the art object no longer existed, leaving only the idea. (One assumes that surely some artist produced a work that ostensibly had no idea, but since deliberately having no idea is an idea, conceptual art seems to be as far as one can go.) Conceptual artists eliminated the art object as such, expressing in words and diagrams concepts they envisioned but chose not to execute. Some conceptual

artists seemed indifferent about communicating with audiences, and when they did communicate, sometimes their ideas were banal—deliberately. This observation is altogether to the point. In the quest to eliminate art, a trivial idea constitutes less (and therefore more) than does a profound one. The *gestalt* of conceptualism, like Dadaism, was that it tried so earnestly to have no *gestalt*. And it succeeded no more than Dadaism did.

As I have mentioned regarding earlier movements, the specific content (or lack thereof) of the conceptualists was secondary to the cultural irony of giving art permission to speak after cutting out its tongue. In the course of a century, art shed first its external, and then its internal, trappings. It tried to impale itself on its own sword, but at the last moment, in a gesture harkening postmodernism, the conceptualists removed the sword. In place of a dramatic, self-inflicted death, art only fell down, picked itself up, dusted itself off, and continued on its way.

The next question was, what now? The experiment had to be performed, each barrier smashed to see if there was substance behind it. But now that the object itself was gone, what was one to do? Had visual art committed suicide, forcing humanity to express itself only via poetry, music, and the other arts? No; conceptual art and its predecessors proved only that the annihilation of visual art was not the answer. All was not lost. The art world rose up and demanded an art that spoke to society's strengths and weaknesses. And today's artists are delivering in spades.

Modernism was exhausted. As a field of artistic inquiry it continued until it could yield no more. The grand experiment to eliminate art—the *logos* of modernism—forms its own chapter in art history, but the chapter is complete. Tompkins (1976) writes, "One no longer hears so much about the 'crisis' of contemporary art—a critical cliché of the 1960s. Artists continue to work."

If art reflects the whimsical realities of human existence, then modernism was a funhouse mirror. It shortened, lengthened, widened, and narrowed twentieth-century realities until they all looked like White, Protestant males. But a mirror also cuts. For too long art has settled for reflecting realities. It must expose them. And it must create them. Marcuse (1968) cautioned against the 'affirmative character of culture'. Art may be socially critical, he claimed, but by translating its messages into aesthetic language, it becomes cathartic, and consequently confirms existing social relations. He argued for the replacement of affirming culture with negating culture, and looked to 1960s youth with its rock 'n' roll, long hair, flower power, and "erotic belligerency" to lead the way. He called for new forms of art that involved the audience more actively than did the art of modernism (Marcuse, 1969).

Enter postmodernism. Artists have resurrected the artifact, recognizing this time that art is like fire—of itself neither good nor evil, but entirely willing to be used either way. The *samurai*, masters of the graceful martial art *kendo*, embodied poetry in motion as they defeated their enemies. The youth of the sixties are the leaders of today. The opportunity lies before us.