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Art, Alienation And Mass Communication

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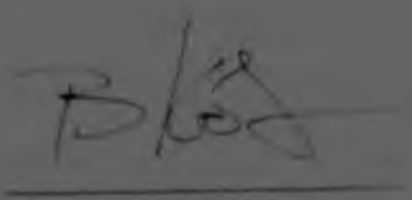
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a dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Art,
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg,
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts in Fine Arts.

Johannesburg, 1981.

DECLARATION

This dissertation is the unaided work of the candidate.
No part of this dissertation has been or is to be
submitted for a degree at any other university.



BENZION PHILIP KOTZIN

Johannesburg 1981

ABSTRAC

Th dissertat on nvest ar s th relationship between art and ociety and discusses th nfluence of ideological factors in the creation of the artwork ttention is therefore devoted to the problem of the autonomy or non-autonomy of art and to a discussion of methodologies ertinent to his question.

Consideration is given both to the intimate interaction between art and society in Prehistoric and western art executed before the Rennaissance, and t the signi icance of the existence of functional aesthetic concepts in these societies. This is contrasted to the role of art following the rise and influence of capitalism during the Renaissance, with particular emphasis being placed on the growing schism between the artist and society, culminating in the alienated image of the Romantic artist

The ntinuation of this trend in late 20th century art is discussed with reference to the hermetic mystification and unintelligibility of the works of many contemporary avant-garde artists. Further consideration is given to the elitist impli ations of modern western art, and to the avant-garde artist's insistance that his work is autonomous. This is placed in the context of evidence suggesting that while the rtist is independent of, and alienated from the general public, he is nevertheles subject to control by the capitalist ideology presently dominant in the western world.

The need o adopt a me hodology which recognizes the importance of external influences on the artist and his work is therefore stressed,

and investigated with particular reference to the Marxist theory of historical materialism and the consequent Marxist aestheticians to the need to encourage an active integration of art with society. The development of art under the influence of Marxist interpretations of the function of the artwork is also dealt with in relation to the period following the 1917 revolution in Russia.

The relationship between art and society is also discussed with reference to the South African context. Particular emphasis is placed on the tendency for South African artists to avoid pertinent socio-political issues, as well as the fact that they seem to lack a unified identity. While this is ascribed to the rigidly enforced separation of different population groups, it is also suggested that a refusal to deal with social issues pertinent to the South African situation amounts to a compliance with the interests of the dominant ideology.

Since this ideology does not recognise basic human rights, active opposition to it is proposed. In the visual arts, the mass produced, socially relevant poster executed in an intelligible style is suggested as an appropriate medium for achieving this aim. The poster is further suggested as an alternative to the inaccessibility and incomprehensibility of contemporary avant-garde art, and is discussed in relation to the practical work executed in partial fulfilment of the degree.

NOTES

1. The candidate recognises that artists are not necessarily male by gender. However 'he', 'his', and 'himself', rather than 'he/she', 'his/her' and 'himself/herself' is used in general reference to the artist to ensure the uninterrupted flow of the text.

2. The replies received to the questionnaire discussed in Appendix I have not been individually transcribed. The originals are, however, in the candidate's possession.

3. Reproductions of the practical work, and photographs documenting the locations in which they were put up, as well as responses to these from the general public, are to be found in Appendix II. Further documentation will be presented at the exhibition of the practical work to be held in the Fuchs Gallery, University of The Witwatersrand, February 1983.

4. Illustrations to the main text are identified by figure numbers. Documentation and illustrations of the practical work are identified by plate numbers.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the fundamental disagreements in the study of art centres around the problem of autonomy. While some artists, historians, critics and philosophers see art as an independent entity, devoid of any external influences, others argue that the products of society, including art, cannot be meaningfully separated from various determining factors. On the one hand art is seen as the embodiment of universal, eternal truths, on the other as a product of external forces which are forever changing and in a constant state of flux. This problem is further compounded by the fact that numerous historians and philosophers, while arguing that art must be seen in the context of historically determining factors, nevertheless also believe that it deals with concepts which ultimately transcend the particular historical moment.

Although Plato himself did not conceive of art as an 'intuitive vision of ultimate reality' (Osborne, 1968, p. 87), it is with the rise of Neo-Platonism in the Renaissance that this concept comes to fruition. Continuing the trend, the 17th century Italian theorist, Bellori, gave a lecture in 1664 in which he spoke of the true artist as one who sees eternal truths which he then reveals to 'less favoured mortals'. (Osborne, 1968, p. 87).

The idea that art transcends the particular is also encountered during the 19th century in the writings of some philosophers. Especially

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1. According to Plato, the senses cannot reflect the true nature of things. Works of visual art are therefore but a copy of a copy. (Osborne, 1968, p. 87).

interesting in this respect is the German philosopher, Schopenhauer, who conceived of the artist as a uniquely gifted individual whose art exists without 'concern for causal connections, utility or use'. (Osborne, 1968, p. 91). For him, the artist as creative genius shares his vision of universal truth with the rest of humanity.

In contrast to Schopenhauer, the German art historian, Wolfflin, set out to write an objective history of art, i.e. one devoid of personal value judgements. This, he believed, could be achieved through a concept of style as 'the expression of a certain way of seeing, thinking and feeling'. (Encyclopedia Brittanica, Vol. 1, 1973, p. 221). But instead of evolving an objective methodology, his approach led him to make extensive formal analyses of works without a concomitant consideration of their content. Wolfflin's essentially formalist methodology ultimately led to extensive criticism of his major text, The Principles of Art History, first published in 1915. Nevertheless, he has had a profound influence on art historical research and art criticism during the 20th century.

In terms of formalist theories all possible external influences on the work of art are ignored and it is therefore seen as autonomous, i.e. as having an existence independent of 'our ordinary every day commerce with our environment'. (Osborne, 1968, p. 22). Osborne further notes that the formalist outlook involves

> an assumption that the exercise of our perceptive powers ... needs no justification of an instrumental kind; it is worthwhile for its own sake and for the sake of the heightened awareness of the world which it brings.
> (Osborne, 1968, p. 22).

Although art historians and critics who tend to adopt this methodology cannot be said to form a coherent school of thought, a formalist approach to art ha become extremely widespread during the 20th century and is of major importance in 20th century western aesthetics. (Osborne, 1968, pp. 22 - 24). It underlies the ideas of such eminent art historians and critics as Clive Bell, Herbert Read and Clement Greenberg. Bell, for example, sees function as irrelevant to the concept of fine art, and argues that 'beauty' is 'significant form'. (Albrecht. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 18). According to him, the viewer (and presumably also the artist)

> need bring ... nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions ... nothing but a sense of form and colour and a knowledge of three dimensional space. (Bell quoted by Albrecht. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 18).

Encompassed within this concept of art as an autonomous or semi-autonomous entity, are the views of most sociologists, who see art either as a social institution of secondary importance or as having no importance at all. According to them, it does not constitute a 'real' institution as do the 'basic' institutions of economics and politics.[2]

Of central importance to the concept of autonomy is the idea of the artist as an individual genius, which originally gained currency

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2. 'Social institutions are commonly defined by sociologists and other social scientists as the principle structures through which human activities are organized and established to serve basic human needs'. (Albrecht. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 2).

during the renaissance and which he widely held in the 16th century. As Gerbert and argues: 'The perceiver passes [...] threshold into the autonomous world and only then knows what it is meaning' (Gerbert and argues, 1973, p. 15), therefore becoming not a product of culture but a creator of culture. The artist's consequent freedom and lack of concern for social realities, entrenches the concept of art for art's sake as the philosophy for all creative activity.

This theory, which had its inception in the romantic period and is generally regarded as central to the writings of the French art critic, Theophile Gautier, is founded on the view that art is

> justified by its own existence ... does not and should not derive its social purpose and ... has no relevance to normal social life.
> (Clive Bloomfield, eds. 1973, p. 21).

This can result in the art's need arising for a concept of art as the unique expression of the individual, and in the basis for a formalist approach. In his article 'Culture is not neutral, what does it serve?' Goodrich has argued that the adoption of art for art's sake is a response by the producers of art to a market which is oppressive and stimulates it form. Marx Dalrymple, on the other hand, sees it as a welcome metamorphosis in which art becomes separated from its function, and does not 'no other end than itself' (Dalrymple quoted by Cazeaux, Clarence, 1980, p. 204).

Regardless of whether or not they are seen as positive developments, the ideas of the artist and his art as autonomous, the elevation of

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but Marxists argue that culture itself can be defined partly through ideology.[3] In an interview of 1976, the contemporary artist, Hans Haacke, elucidated this principle when he stated that 'no system of values is exempt from ideology', and suggested that even his own statement about the importance of ideological considerations could not be divorced from an ideological framework.[4] (Hans Haacke interviewed by Sheffield. Sheffield, 1976, p. 119).

According to Marx, Engels and Lenin the true artist 'approaches reality to capture its essential features, to reflect it'. (Vasquez, 1973, p. 28). This certainly does not mean that the artist deals with absolute truths and is therefore able to transcend ideological considerations, but rather that he comes to terms with concrete reality. The inevitability, and indeed necessity of dealing with reality is stressed by the Marxist aesthetician Plekhanov, who goes so far as to suggest that the greater the writer, the more he will subordinate his work to the nature of the times, thereby also reducing the possibility of personal residue. (Arvon, 1973, p.12).[5] On the other hand, Lenin also maintained that although the artist cannot be separated from an ideological framework, his work exceeds 'ideological limitations to reveal the truth about reality'. (Lenin,

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3. 'Culture can be so defined as to include the particular characteristics of everything people in recognizable groups say, signal, do and make, as well as the values, perceptions, symbols, codes and assumptions which are the blueprints or templates for their behaviour'. (Schlemmer. Hare, Wiendieck and Von Broembsen eds. 1979, p. 45).

4. Both the dissertation and the practical work for the present research are equally inseparable from a particular ideological framework. This issue will be discussed with reference to the candidate's practical work in the Conclusion.

5. Plekhanov's observations on literature can obviously be extended to the visual arts.

Materialism and Emperico-Criticism. 1909, quoted by Vasquez. Vasquez, 1973, p. 16).

While the artist is therefore ultimately expected to transcend falsifications of reality effected through ideology, the importance of ideological considerations to the art work can be seen to operate on many different levels. Particularly significant in this respect is the fact that the viewer, in addition to the artist, is conditioned by ideology. Furthermore, as John Berger suggests, individual art works and art works viewed in relation to one another confirm and re-affirm the ideological superstructure. This is especially apparent in the modern advertising image which offers a choice of products to the consumer yet reinforces a particular ideological system.(Berger, 1979, p. 131).

When speaking of ideology, it is important to realize that orthodox Marxists argue that all ideological systems, whether political, religious, cultural or philosophical, are determined by the prevailing economic conditions. This concept of an all-encompassing economic determinism would obviously also include the products of culture. Thus art and its mode of production is inseparable from the mode of production and its resultant class differentiation in society as a whole. At the same time, the economic base must also been seen as forming part of a complex dialectic which involves all social phenomena. Within this dialectic, historical factors not only affect one another, but also influence the assertive economic base.

Marxist philosophy thus differs radically from that of religious

Utopians, like Buchez and Pecquer, who see God as the dominant determining factor in history, as well as the philosophical systems of secular Utopians, like Saint-Simon and Fourier, who advocate human reason as the ultimate determining factor.

As regards the relationship of art to the economic base, Marxist aestheticians suggest that it generally serves the dominant ideology, i.e. the ideology of a class that a certain economic system has made the predominant power'. (Arvon, 1973, p. 25). This idea is, in fact, already prevelant in the writings of the first self-professed anarchist, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who said of the art of his own time (the mid-19th century) that it was an instrument 'serving dubious pleasures' and in the hands of rulers who used it as a powerful means for oppressing the ruled'. (Raphael, 1980, p. 38). Similarly, Meredith Tax argues that since it is impossible to divorce any product of human labour from its conditions of production and reception, culture always serves someone's interests. 'Culture', she states, 'is not neutral'. (Tax. Baxandall, ed. 1972, p.15).

In Marxist terms, art is thus seen as maintaining the status quo, as serving the interests of a dominant ideology through which the function and the content of the art work is usually determined and controlled. This fact is also recognized by some art historians who certainly cannot be described as Marxist. Kenneth Clark, for instance, states that art as ideology often confirms and upholds a system of belief and is consciously used in the maintenance of that system.[6]

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6. Clark perceives this in the theocratic art of Egypt and sees the Parthenon as the embodiment of Greek philosophy. (Clark. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 636).

Marxists also argue that the divisions and stratifications evident in western capitalist societies, resulting from the mode of production, must lead to alienation. In these societies, they maintain, the object of production (which would include the art work), has a monetary or exchange value but little or no use value, i.e. it does not satisfy a particular human need.(Vasquez, 1973, p. 89). This leads to an uncertain relationship between the worker, the product and the consumer, and therefore ultimately also to a society alienated from itself.

The problem of alienation in the context of the fine arts is rather more complex than this, and manifests itself in several different ways. In the first instance, the artist working in a western capitalist society is alienated from that society in that what he produces is no more than another commodity on the open market. This is reinforced by the fact that he is not in control of his market, for it is usually in the hands of art dealers and art critics. Secondly, consequent to the hermeticism and unintelligibility, and the apparent lack of social content of much contemporary western art, the alienation between artist and viewer is further increased.

A final problem encountered in the debate between those who insist that art is an autonomous entity, and those who argue that it is ultimately linked to society, are the theoreticians who try to bring these two views together. Vasquez, for instance, maintains that although the artist is historically conditioned and influenced by class ideologies, 'class ideologies come and go but true art persists'. (Vasquez, 1973, p. 25). In keeping with this belief, he argues that Plekhanov's analysis of the relationship between art

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and society is incomplete because it does not realise the 'necessity for analysing the artistic merits of the work of art as well as situating it in the social discourse' (Vasquez, 1973, p. 13). Vasquez, in fact, believes that art precisely has its own internal coherence and laws, for he states that 'the work of art surgices the socio-historical ground which gave it birth'.(Vasquez, 1973, p. 24).

Equally significant to this problem of autonomy versus social relevance are the writings of Herbert Read. For while he asserted the independence of art from any social restraints in his early works, Read finally came to the conclusion that the artist is influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by his own environment and beliefs. He also suggested that although 'great artists are by definition unique individuals', originality and individuality should not take precedence in the artist's work, since this would make it unintelligible to the public.(Read, 1967, p. 129).

Read's recognition of the need to temper originality in order to preserve intelligibility is not, however, generally heeded by modern avant-garde artists, who consciously re-affirm the concept of the artist as individual genius and of art as an autonomous entity. As a result of this, the relationship of the avant-garde to society is an essentially negative one, and as Poggioli suggests, avant-garde art can therefore be seen as 'an indirect expression of the human and social conditions which ... created this schism in the structure of culture'.(Poggioli, Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 699). He further argues that

> by transgressing the norms of society, by proclaiming itself as an anti-humanism and anti-bourgeois, avant-garde art does not realize that it pays involuntary homage to democratic multi-class society. (Pogglioli, Albright, Barnet and Griff., eds. 1971, p. 289).

Similarly, the Neo-Marxist Aesthetician, Herbert Marcuse, suggests that the dialectic between the avant-garde and society eventually leads to the absorption of the radical into the established. In other words, all 'fringe' ideologies are sanctioned by the dominant ideology of which they eventually become a part. Thus, ironically, there is no truly radical, revolutionary art. Given this situation, Marcuse believes that if art is to remain revolutionary, a new relevent language of communication must be found.(Marcuse, Kassindall, eds. 1972, p.87).

CHAPTER ONE:

SECTION ONE : EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT IN PRE-RENAISSANCE ART

A meaningful understanding of the interaction between the 20th century artist and his audience is ultimately dependent on a knowledge of the changing role of the artist in society as well as the changing concept of aesthetics. Although it can be defined very briefly as 'the theoretical study of the arts and related types of behaviour and experience' (Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. I, 1973, p. 221)[1], it is important to realise that the theory of aesthetics has never been static. Indeed, it has witnessed endless shifts in meaning and has therefore always been a highly polemical field of study. As Stolnitz notes, aesthetics (like all philosophy), is 'a process not an end product, an enquiry not an almanac' (Stolnitz, 1965, p. 1).

A study of aesthetic concepts in the context of the visual arts involves numerous complex issues which are nevertheless also central to a consideration of the role of the artist in society. Amongst the most notable of these are the problems of the definition of art, the function of art, the relationship between form and content in the Art work, and the relationship of art to society. Although often discussed in isolation, these issues are interlinked and ultimately inseparable from one another. They all form part of the dialectic out of which art is constructed in different historical periods.

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1. The term 'aesthetics' is attributed to Alexander Baumgarten (1714 - 62), the author of a book entitled Aesthetica. (Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. I, 1973, p. 224).

The danger of divorcing the definition and concept of art from the function of art is demonstrated by the fact that art as human artifact (in contrast to natural phenomena) is a product of conscious labour regardless of whether the art work is believed to be intuitively derived or deliberately and systematically created. Although not needed for the vital functions of life, the work of art usually did have an important role in historical societies. As Osborne points out: 'By and large all works of art were made for a use'.(Osborne, 1970, p. 251)

In the context of a philosophical and theoretical definition of art, the function of the art work is not always easy to determine. The views of philosophers writing on art through the centuries have ranged from believing that art is autotelic, i.e. that it has no purpose beyond itself, to seeing its function as specifically social. But even though many agree in principle that the function of art cannot be divorced from society, their interpretations of this social role of Art is often complex and varied.

In his article, Art as an Institution, Albercht states that the concept of aesthetics is universal and can be traced as far back as the Stone Age (Albercht, Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, pp. 15 – 16). While this observation is probably valid, it must be qualified, for it has already been posited that the concept of aesthetics cannot be divorced from the particular historical moment in which it is formulated.

Reconstruction of possible intention in the creation of art in the Paleolithic age suggests that the work of art originally had its

foundation in magic, ritual and cult (Benjamin, 1979, p. 225), which

> implies an active influence of [man] on the world around him without the mediation of mechanically and causally understandable actions (Encyclopedia of World Art, Vol. 9, 1972, p. 371)

and the reaffirmation of magical power through repetition, i.e. ritual.[2]

For Paleolithic man, art was a means of objectifying nature.(Fig.1). It was through this objectification, and subsequent humanization, that he found a means to relate to the 'alien and terrible power which he could not integrate'.(Vasquez, 1973, p. 78). Vasquez also states that an 'aesthetic sense' of nature only emerged when man could see his essential powers confirmed in it, by 'integrating it into his world as humanized nature'. (Vasquez, 1973, p. 78).[3] Natural phenomena, he argues, become 'aesthetic' only when they acquire a social and human significance. (Vasquez, 1973, p. 79). Aesthetic value is therefore not a property or quality inherent to the objects found in nature, 'but rather something they acquire in human society by virtue of the social existence of man as a creative being'.(Vasquez, 1973, p. 92). In his attempt to overcome nature by objectifying it, i.e. by depicting it,

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2. The concept of art as magic is undoubtedly at the root of all ritual and religious art, i.e. art operating within an organised magical framework. As will be discussed more fully in Chapter Two, magic and ritual also form the basis for much 20th century art, but with one important difference. Whereas art as magic functioned as an extension of society in the Paleolithic age, the artist as magician in modern western societies paradoxically gives expression to the schism which has taken place between him and his audience.

3. Read sees Paleolithic art not only as an expression of man's duel with nature, but also regards each image as an aesthetic expression in its own right.(Baynes, 1975, p. 65).

prehistoric man thus created objects which we now regard as having aesthetic value.

It is unlikely that prehistoric man was actually concerned with aesthetics. It is, however, conceivable that the form of the objects he created was directly and intimately connected to its content and function. In other words, the tendency to naturalism in the depiction of animals served to enhance the Paleolithic hunter's chances of capturing game following ceremonies in which the painted or carved images were ritually hunted and killed.

As in prehistoric societies, the 'artist' (and his 'art') are inseparable from their social function in non-literate, i.e. so-called 'primitive' or tribal societies. Whether ritual object, fetish or an embellished utilitarian artifact, art generally has a specifically utilitarian function in these societies, for it is invariably linked to myth, religion, ritual and social organization. Nevertheless, it would seem that in these societies objects can only fulfil their designated function if they conform to certain 'aesthetic' norms,[4] otherwise they would probably be discarded.

The artist working in this context is 'not expected to importune society with his own private affairs'. Indeed, his own personality is seen as irrelevant to the creative process for he is judged

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4. A similar situation is apparent in ancient Egypt for a beautiful monument was called MENEKH, i.e. an efficient work. (Duvignaud, 1972, p. 73).

> only by his ability to e o and reflect ommon experience, the g t events and ideas of his people .... The artist's task s ... to solve for them the riddle of ssential relationships between man and ature and man and society. Fischer, 1978, p. 41).

mporary aestheticians there are some who advocate that the tendency for different and particular art styles to manifest themselves in different societ s indic tive of the direct and vital link between the work d the society in which it was create'. Duvignaud, for instance, believes that the Pharaoic, theocratic society of Egypt finds expression in a hieratic style oscillating between 'cruel maje y' and 'divine serenity'. (Duvignaud, 1 , p. 104). With the obvious exception of works ex ted during the ign of Amenhotep IV, this i ecially pparent in th painted nd sculpted images of succe Egyptian rulers, for whil they are haracterized by an emotionless rigidity, their very lack of expression gives them a certain quality of erenity.(Fig. 2). In ntrast to this, he argues that patriarchal societies move away from mythological beliefs to human themes. In n attempt to socialize osmic forces, such s cieties create 'heroic characters who embody possibilities for man of exercising hi authority over ociety and the natural world'. (Duvignaud, 972, p. 106). It could therefore he said that in ancient Egypt the human king aspired to the divine (Fig. 2), whereas in patriarchal ncient Greece the divine i made to seem more human.(Fig. 3).

book, The Sociology of Art, Duvignaud also posits that since ame concentrated in the city in ancient Greece, the

resultant increase in social density led to a concomitant increase in the importance of communication. (Duvignaud, 1972, p. 114). The rise of the city has further significance as an expression of man's ability to conquer or at least stand up to nature. Where man in prehistory saw nature as the ultimate power, man in the Greek city state recognized himself as a potent force, with the result that he was now able to devote much more energy to self-evaluation and to an ever-increasing portrayal of self, of man, in the arts.

In the History of Western Philosophy, Bertrand Russell takes the argument one step further for he maintains that just as ancient Greek art can be seen as a reflection of the society for which it was produced, so Greek philosophy up to Aristotle basically expresses a mentality appropriate to the city state. (Russell, 1961, p. 751).

The concept of creativity in art, i.e. the concept of production and the idea of expression by a uniquely gifted individual, is absent from Greek philosophy. Broadly speaking, philosophers such as Plato (c. 428 - 348 B.C.E.) and Aristotle (b. 384 B.C.E.) subordinate the theory of art to a theory of manufacture 'based on the twin ideas of function and technique'. Thus the 'competent artisan must of necessity know the "good" which is the end or object of his craft'. (Osborne, 1970, p. 34). In the Republic Plato writes that

> the virtue and beauty and rightness of every manufactured article, living creature, and action is assessed only in relation to the purpose for which it was made or naturally produced. (Osborne, 1970, p. 34).

For Plato the work of art and its value is therefore determined by the nature of its function, its purpose, and to what extent that purpose is achieved. In his dialogue, Hippias Major, he actually defines Beauty as 'fitted [?] for some good purpose'. (Osborne, 1970, p. 27).

Aesthetics, then, (even though the concept had not yet been formulated), involves the notion that form and function are inseparable from one another, and that the form an object takes in fact enhances its function. Greek artistic theory thus has much in common with modern Marxist aesthetics partly because of its essentially sociological approach to art but also because of its consequent assessment of artistic value in terms of the contribution made by art to society. (5)

This, and other ideas central to artistic production in ancient Greece, is further elucidated in Plato's philosophy of 'art' which is characterized by four main themes. Firstly, Plato conceives of art as 'TECHNE' or the ability of 'knowing and making' (Hofstadter and Kuhns, eds. 1976, p. 4), i.e. of knowing the function or the purpose of the art work and the most appropriate way of executing it. The artist must therefore know the nature of measure which is basic to all the arts. 'Measure for Plato embraces the principles of the good and the beautiful, and in our terms the principle of

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1. Osborne sees poetry and the other arts as the most important influence in 'moulding the life of the individual and the structure of society in ancient Greece'. (Osborne, 1970, p. 31). Greek epics, poetry, theatre, music and sculpture were all intimately linked to the philosophy, religion and education of ancient Greek society.

[illegible] Plato's [illegible] of [illegible] reality, an [illegible] that the artist was one degree of more [illegible] only an appearance of nature). Nevertheless, art must be 'true imitation' (EIKASTIKE) and not 'false imitation' (PHANTASTIKE). Thirdly, while art must imitate nature, it encompasses a dimension that cannot be reduced to 'TECHNE', namely inspiration or divine assistance which Plato calls 'poetic madness'. Finally, there are four types of madness: prophetic, initiatory, poetic and erotic. 'Such madness relates men to the gods and to the beauty of the eternal realm they inhabit' (Gotshalker and Kohns, eds 1976, p. 4). This concept of 'madness' is now interpreted as intuition and is by and large regarded as central to creativity in 20th century western art.

In the Republic, Plato further stresses that artistic values are subordinate to moral principles and that unless art promotes wisdom, courage and temperance, it is not acceptable. While believing that the better or worse a work of art has some influence on its audience, he nevertheless condemns art that is false and that 'misleads and corrupts' (Rees, 1981, p. 45).

Although Aristotle also defines art as 'TECHNE' and as 'the capacity to make or do something with a correct understanding of the principle involved' (Osborne quoting Aristotle, Osborne, 1970, p. 57), he does not agree that art must be subordinated to moral principles. Like Plato, however, he believes that art has

function beyond itself, and that it is 'not pursued for its own sake'. (Osborne, 1970, p. 39).

Despite the fact that the two philosophers are in accordance on the fundamental issue of function, they nevertheless disagree on the value of the arts. Plato believed that some of the arts, e.g. tragedy, are misleading for the seeker of truth because it feeds the passions. (Hofstadter and Kuhns, eds. 1976, p. 79). In other words, it falsifies truth. Aristotle, on the other hand, regarded all art forms as valuable and beneficial instruments of education. He further argued that art is a form of catharsis, 'an innocuous outlet for pent up emotions which are denied their full natural outlet in the conditions of social life'. (Osborne, 1970, p. 142).

Plato's and Aristotle's concepts of art, as well as their views on the role of the artist in society, seem to have remained essentially unchanged during the Middle Ages. There is, for instance, little evidence to suggest that medieval art was valued for purely aesthetic reasons and apparently no notion of fine art (as opposed to craft) during this period. (Encyclopedia Brittanica, Vol. 1, 1973, p. 225). As Osborne observes: 'Works of art were discussed in relation to the uses which they could be made to serve' (Osborne, 1970, p. 132) and there was therefore no concept of art for art's sake.(6)

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6. This is also apparent in Byzantine art. As Michelis notes: 'Byzantine art, especially Byzantine painting, was not only a religious but a didactic art'. (Osborne quoting P.A. Michelis, Osborne, 1970, p. 136).

SECTION TWO : RENAISSANCE TO ROMANTICISM: THE RISE OF INDIVIDUALISM

Despite the fact that the names of many ancient Greek sculptors are known, artists were regarded as a class of craftsmen and did not hold a high place in the social scale during this period. It was not until the Renaissance that a significant shift away from the concept of the artist as artisan took place and his social status increased.

It has been suggested that this change in status can be attributed partly to the new emphasis on perspective, mathematical theories, proportion and historical and classical learning which had the effect of giving prominence to the philosophical (and theoretical) content of the visual arts. Consequently, the artist came to be seen - and also saw himself - as a kind of scholar or scientist. (Osborne, 1970, pp. 3 - 4). This change must, however, be seen in a broader perspective. As Levi-Strauss suggests, while Renaissance painting was 'perhaps an instrument of knowledge ... it was also an instrument of possession'. (Lévi-Strauss quoted by Berger. Berger, 1979, p. 86).

That art became an instrument of possession can be related to a 'major change in the market relations' and the subsequent change 'primarily from religious to secular patronage' (Rensman and Gerver. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 662), which is generally ascribed to the rise of the merchant classes. The attitude of these new, wealthy classes - the seafaring traders and the landed gentry - had the further effect of encouraging a greater emphasis on individualization. Fischer suggests that the very

success of the first capitalists hinged on 'individual skill, determination, mobility, cleverness and luck' (Fisher, 1978, p. 43) and that objects as objects lost their utility value and became nothing more than exchange value. Whether metal, linen or spice the object itself was thus of secondary importance. Consequently, its utilitarian value became abstracted and 'the most abstract form of property', i.e. money, became the essence of things. (Fischer, 1978, p. 43).

Inevitably, the emphasis on 'individual skill' and 'cleverness' in the accumulation of capital spread to the arts. The artist working during the Renaissance still belonged to a guild which could impose some constraints on his work, and the content (if not the form) of his work was still dictated by his patron, be it the church, the state or a private person. Nevertheless, it was above all the artist's individuality that was now nourished and encouraged. Thus he became an independent personality, a genius whose talent was felt to be God-given, in fact a demi-god with an 'inborn and uniquely individual creative force'. (Hauser quoted by Wolff. Wolff, 1981, p. 26).

The most important consequence of private patronage was the gradual elimination of the public and social role of art. The privately-owned easel painting (unlike the more usually publically displayed frescoes of both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance) obviously no longer addressed a large audience. And when, for example, sculpture was placed in a public space, it often acted more as a symbol of the patron's power than as an expression of widely held beliefs

[illegible] attitudes, [illegible] can be [illegible] Donatello's and Michelangelo's treatment of David under Medici patronage, for David was apparently a symbol of Medici power and benign government in Florence during the 15th and 16th centuries.(Von Einem, 1959, p. 29).[7] However, the art of the Renaissance was still largely integrated into the life of Renaissance man 'for artistic creation continued to be considered a spiritual pr[illegible]ti[illegible] (Vasquez, 1973, p. 175).

On the other hand, the concept of Renaissance man itself was very limited. As Bertrand Russell points out, the Renaissance was by no means a popular movement. Rather, 'it was a movement of a small number of scholars and artists, encouraged by liberal patrons, especially the Medici and the humanist popes'. (Russell, 1961, p. 548).

In return for the support of this secular and clerical aristocracy, the artist gave tangible visual evidence of the patron's power on this earth. As Duvignaud points out, free city states often became tyrannies with the result that art turned away from richness of communication to put itself in the service of power. (Duvignaud, 1972, p. 114).

Like ancient Greece, Renaissance Italy was organized into city states. Beyond this superficial similarity, both Renaissance art

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7. A similar propogandist intent is apparent in much Baroque art, especially religious works created under the influence of the Counter-Reformation. But even when executed as consciously popular propagandist images for the Catholic Church, such works still served to uphold the primacy of a particular patron. This is often the case with Bernini's sculptures executed for the Barbarini family, e.g. the Baldicchino. (Hibbard, 1978, p.79).

and philosophy owed an enormous debt to that of the ancient Greek world. The search for the ideal in Renaissance art and aesthetics was undoubtedly influenced by (and perpetuated) some of the ideas put forward by Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle. The idea that art and poetry must 'imitate nature' and that they must pursue 'a moral purpose of social amelioration' (Osborne, 1970, p. 146), i.e. that they must act for the betterment of man, as well as the idea that the goal of the arts is Beauty - 'an objective property ... consisting in order, harmony, proportion and propriety' (Osborne, 1970, p. 146) - can all be attributed to the importance of Greek thought for the Renaissance.

In contrast to the Renaissance, which found sanction in the thought and art of the ancient world, Fischer suggests that the Romantic movement of the late 18th and early 19th centuries was a

> petty bourgeois revolt against the classicism of the nobility, against rules and standards, against aristocratic form, and against a content from which all "common" issues were excluded. (Fischer, 1975, p. 53).

It was during this period that the philosophy of art for art's sake, with its emphasis on the autonomy of art and the necessity of self-expression, first gained prominence. Thus the Romantic artist who expresses his own feelings and emotions instead of acting as a mirror to external reality, becomes the first artist-genius of the modern age. And if Romantic art is a mirror, 'it is a mirror which reflects its maker' (Osborne, 1970, p. 197) as creative, imaginative seer. Indeed, the Romantic artist is no longer a person merely

inspired by God but God-like in his creative powers.

This view is anticipated in the writings of Kant (1724 - 1804) who argued the case for the artist as genius and his art as a product of that genius. (Diffey, 1979, p. 18). Genius, he maintained, is the natural endowment or innate mental aptitude which 'gives the rule to art'. (Osborne, 1970, p. 195). It therefore becomes the source of aesthetic ideas which must be incorporated into the art work so that these ideas can be revealed to the viewer. (Hofstadter and Kuhns, eds. 1976, p. 279). Kant also maintained that 'originality must be the prime property' of the fine arts. (Osborne, 1970, p. 195).

In keeping with this stress on individuality, originality and genius, Kant believed that Beauty cannot be judged in terms of purpose or function. Steinkraus has therefore suggested that he can be seen as the 'leading historical proponent of Formalism' (Steinkraus, 1974, p. 43), which is understandable in view of the growing emphasis on art for art's sake in the period immediately following his death in 1804.(8)

Where Kant actually speaks of function he equates it with Beauty, for he argues that the true artist must produce an object within the parameters of his own art (be it architecture, painting or sculpture) 'which will at the same time be beautiful'. (Hofstadter and Kuhns, eds. 1976, p. 279). In fact, the role of the artist

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8. For definitions of 'formalism' and 'art for art's sake' see the Introduction.

ultimately to fulfil the generic aesthetic purpose of satisfying taste' through his particular art form.(Hofstadter and Kuhns, eds. 1976, p. 379).

Another important factor in the changing role of the artist and his art during the 19th century was the division of the visual arts into 'fine art' and 'applied art' categories, first realized during the 18th century. (See Introduction, p.). Before this time, no distinction was made between the 'high arts' - which Clark sees as being concerned with the actual image - and the 'lesser art ' - which he defines as 'ornament'. The image, he says, was made 'because events or the object' were important, whereas ornamentation served to enrich the significance of such events or objects. (Clark. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 635). With the gradual disintegration of the union between the fine and useful or functional arts during the 18th and early 19th centuries, the schism between the viewer and the artist (who no longer saw himself as an artisan working within society), thus became increasingly apparent.

A further important issue is the tendency for many prominent 18th and 19th century philosophers including Hegel (1770 - 1831) and Schopenhauer (1788 - 1860), to see art as a means through which truth could be presented and revealed. Hegel, for instance, equated truth with the Idea and argued that art 'aims essentially at beauty which is one way in which truth is expressed'. (Hofstadter and Kuhns, eds. 1976, pp. 379 - 38). For Schopenhauer, the artist becomes the 'possessor of the Idea', which he then

communicate to others, and art becomes the highest form of human consciousness 'whereby mind finally realizes itself'. (Hofstadter and Kuhns, eds. 1976, p. 14).

For many philosophers writing during the Romantic era, art was often also an extension of religious, mystical and spiritual truths. Thus Schlegal (1767 - 1845) stated that art was a 'visible appearance of God's kingdom on earth' (Osborne, 1970, p. 173), while Nietzsche spoke of art as a road to salvation. (Encyclopedia Brittanica, Vol. 1, 1973, p. 830). He also saw it as an interpretation and the reenactment of life so that 'from the meaningless flux of experience a meaningful whole, ordered world would emerge'. (Hofstadter and Kuhns, eds. 1976, p. 496).

It is partly through the metaphysical and esoteric concepts of these philosophers that the artist as individual genius found sanction, and that the Romantic artist was therefore able to ignore the society in which he worked. Consequently, his art lost its social dimension and became, instead, a protest against bourgeois values and hence also an expression of alienation from society. (Poggioli, Albrecht, Barnett and Britt, eds. 1970, p. 12).

This problem is discussed at some length by Culley in her thesis, Artists' Life-Styles in 19th Century France and England: The Dandy, The Bohemian and The Realist. Arguing that the 19th century artist's declaration of independence from society was more than a creation of the writings of contemporary philosophers, she points out that the dissapointment of democratic aspirations following the 1830

[illegible] that thi[illegible]s. (Culle[illegible], [illegible] became a Bohemian [illegible] other [illegible]. [illegible] conforming and unconventiona[illegible], and [illegible] depicted [illegible] [illegible]. (fig. [illegible].

[illegible] Stude[illegible] - w[illegible] the most characteristi[illegible] conditions manifested [illegible] a narcissistic concern with achievin[illegible] refinement in all things pertaining to one's own [illegible]. This cult, Baudelaire argued, [illegible] contemporary expression in the art [illegible] attitude of the dandy while [illegible] was synonymous with the [illegible] work of Delacroix. [illegible], op. cit., p. [illegible].

[illegible], Painter of Modern Life, [illegible]

[illegible] context of dandyism [illegible] follows:

> [illegible]dyism appears above all in pe[illegible] transition, when democracy is no[illegible] at all-powerful, and aristocracy i[illegible] only just beginning to totter and fall. [illegible] the disorder of these times, certa[illegible] men who are socially, politically and [illegible] financially ill at ease, but are all [illegible] in nature energy, may conceive [illegible] idea of establishing a new kind [illegible] aristocracy, all the more difficu[illegible] to shatter as it will be based on the [illegible] precious, the most enduring

> faculties, and on the divine gift which work and money are unable to bestow. (Baudelaire, 1964, p. [illegible].

It was also during the [illegible] century that [illegible] claimed the right to

> teach, assess and regulate the affairs of the fine arts, were found to be an intolerable infringement on the rights of the individual.
> (Bell, Lipset and Lowenthal, 1961, p. 39

This eventually led to a situation where many artists including several of the Impressionists refused to study in the academies, exhibited their works independently, and sold them through new established art dealers.

The 19th century emphasis on individualism, and the contemporary move away from the academies to markets controlled by art dealers, thus inevitably led to the avant-garde artist and his product becoming alienated from 19th century society. The work of art was now another commodity on the open market, and since its content was no longer monitored by a patron, the public now found itself confronted by an art which it could not understand. The avant-garde had become an artistic force.

CHAPTER TWO

20TH CENTURY WESTERN ART AND CAPITALISM

The American Abstract Expressionist artist, De Kooning, once said that 'nothing is positive about art except that it is a word'. (De Kooning quoted by Wollheim. Wollheim, 1980, p. 9). Using this statement as a basis for extrapolation, Wollheim argues that 'nothing is positive about art except that it is a concept'. (Wollheim, 1980, p. 9). In effect, both his and De Kooning's statements suggest an extension of the definition and concept of art to a point beyond enquiry and investigation. To understand the development of this attitude - which has become increasingly common in the present century - one must consider the context in which western art has evolved, particularly in the present century.

It has been suggested that it is impossible to arrive at a definition of art in any historical period without referring to its function, its purpose, and the relation which it has to a particular society. This premise does not automatically discount the contention of some theoreticians that art is an autonomous entity, or imply that all theoreticians see the vital function of art as communication. In fact, while many 19th and 20th century sociologists and psychologists generally argue that art plays a significant role in society, they see that role solely in terms of its apparent ability to release social tensions, a contention which can be traced as far back as Aristotle. (See Chapter One, [illegible])

Like most sociologists, Albrecht argues that art is a social institution.(See introduction, p. 1.) But he qualifies this observation by stating that it is an institution of a minority culture which 'functions for stability and change in a complex, pluralistic society'. Art, he maintains, can act for the stability of society by 'balancing emotional against instrumental needs or by releasing tensions'. (Albrecht, Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 14).

In keeping with this contention that art has an essentially cathartic purpose, several sociologists (as well as some contemporary art critics), speak of art as expressing 'vast continuums of space and imaginative release' (Clark, 1979, p. 13) and feel that it can act as a corrective to the psychological strains of work, in which respect it may 'require exaggeration to balance successfully the one-sidedness of [such] instrumental roles'. (Parsons and Mills referred to by Albrecht. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 10). The primary function of art is thus to operate as a kind of 'safety-valve' for society.

Related to this interpretation of the role of art is Spencer's contention that art is the aesthetic development of unused extra energy. (Barnett. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p.622). And this, he believes, is the reason for aesthetic emotion.

Combining his theory of art as a manifestation of surplus energy with the idea that it is essentially a kind of recreation or

play,[1] Spencer argues that art was originally the development of 'leisure-time' activities yielding enjoyment apart from use. He goes on to say that these activities 'eventually ... assumed the quality of beauty'. (Barnett. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 622).

Not all sociologists agree with Spencer's theories of surplus energy and play. Sumner and Keller, for example, refer to art as 'self-gratification' rather than recreation, and argue that this is one of three basic human needs, the other two being 'self-maintenance' or survival and 'self-perpetuation' or procreation. (Albrecht. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 9). Despite such minor differences of interpretation most sociologists ultimately conclude that artistic production and work or labour are at opposite ends of the scale of human activity. Although undoubtedly of relevance to the present discussion, this belief in an irreconcilable schism between art and labour is particularly significant in a consideration of Marxist aesthetics, and will therefore be dealt with more fully at a later stage.

Recent sociological interpretations of art, especially with regard to the separation of art from work, raises the controversial problem of the autonomy and function of the art work. As Chiari points out, many contemporary western aestheticians argue that art 'is not a means to an end : it is its own finality'. (Chiari,

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1. This analogy between art and play is also drawn by other sociologists and philosophers, among them Herzler, Schleiermacher, Schiller and Vischer.

1977, p. 24). [2]

This attitude, which is usually founded on a belief in the individual genius of an artist who has no obligations to society, informs the ideas of several prominent early 20th century art historians, among them Clive Bell, who goes so far as to suggest that 'art is above morals'. (Bell quoted by Eckman. Eckman, 1970, p. 356).

The ideas of Bell and his close contemporaries, Roger Fry and Herbert Read, are not unique. They find an almost immediate precedent in the attitude of members of the English Aesthetic Movement of the late 19th century. Oscar Wilde, whose links with this movement is widely acknowledged (Culley, 1975, p. 86), possibly spoke for many of its members when he claimed that art is completely divorced from morality and can only be judged in terms of its ability to give pleasure. 'An ethical sympathy in the artist', he once said, 'is an unpardonable mannerism of style'. (Wilde quoted by Steinkraus. Steinkraus, 1974, p. 174).

Conversely, while arguing that art is above morals, Bell nevertheless maintains that 'all art is moral because ... works of art are immediate means to good'. (Bell quoted by Eckman. Eckman, 1970, p. 356). In terms of his essentially formalist approach this statement is perhaps understandable. But its ultimate inaccuracy is demonstrated in that a formalist methodology necessarily excludes a consideration of content and function in the work of art, allowing

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2. Both Wolfflin and Benedetto Croce similarly see art as a purely cognitive activity. (Duvignaud, 1972, p. 36).

only for an appreciation of form, which therefore becomes an aesthetic and intellectual end in itself.[3]

roblematic th ugh Bell's ideas may be, they are both reinforced by the observations of other aestheticians and philosophers, and extended by those who believe that art has become so autonomous that it no longer needs an audience. In this regard one can cite the American philosopher, George Santayana, who argues that the essence of art is 'pleasure objectified'. Works of art, he says, are independent of moral and other issues and only 'acquire aesthetic value because of our pleasure in them'. (Steinkraus, 1974, p. 45). Another theorist, Chiari, maintains that 'the creative artist ... does not require an audience in order to express his talent or genius'. (Chiari 1977, p. 8). The latter contention finds some support in the writings of the art historian, William Tucker, who believes that 'the making and appreciation of sculpture is a fundamentally private activity'. Any audience, he maintains, merely 'gives breadth and air to the private vision' of the sculptor. (Tucker. Brighton and Morris, eds. 1977, p. 57).[4]

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3. Although Bell states that formalists are not against content, he does say that the representational element is actually irrelevant in a consideration of the art work. (Lyas, 1973, p. 378). Given this contention, it is difficult to imagine how he would approach the art produced by inmates of Nazi Concentration camps during the Second World War as a document of the atrocities perpetrated by the Third Reich. These images have now been collected and published by J. Blatter and S. Mitton in a book entitled Art of the Holocaust.

4. Although Tucker refers specifically to sculpture - his special field of interest - his contention presumably extends to the other visual arts.

Evidently, therefore, 20th century art historians and theoreticians who argue that art is an autonomous entity generally concentrate on the art object as pure form, which furthers the notion of the artist as separated from society so that his work remains untouched by the day to day realities of life.

In 1937, Meyer Schapiro reacted against the methodology of contemporary formalists by arguing that abstract art, far from being an art of pure form was 'a rebellion against the materialism of modern society'. (Schapiro, 1978, p. 204). Abstract artists, he maintained, were concerned with spiritual as well as stylistic matters, a contention which is supported by more recent research into the work of early 20th century painters like Kandinsky, Malevich and Mondrian. Kuspit, for example, points out that these artists consciously protested 'against the superficial view of man as being determined by social rules and political orders rather than by ontological spontaneity, i.e. the spiritual in nature'. (Kuspit, 1970, p. 31).

Many of the critics and art historians against whom Schapiro was reacting also equate art with spiritual or metaphysical concepts, but for somewhat different reasons. Read, for instance, maintains that art is 'related to the structure of the universe' (Read quoted by Lutchmansingh. Lutchmansingh, 1974, p. 7) and argues that the artist is a kind of prophet who leads man into the uncertain future. If we refuse to follow where he leads us, 'we are without courage, without freedom, without passion and joy'. (Read quoted by Rothschild. Rothschild, 1973, p.v). A very similar attitude

is expressed by Jaques Maritain, who believes that the artist is 'one who sees more deeply than other men and who discloses ... the real spiritual radiances which others cannot discern'. (Maritain quoted by Steinkraus. Steinkraus, 1974, p. 51). It is, however, ironic that while an art historian like Read raises the status of the artist to the level of prophet or seer, he concludes that the apparent inability of ordinary people to comprehend modern art is a result of 'a confined vision or a narrow range of sensibilities' for which the artist cannot be held responsible. (Read quoted by Rothschild. Rothschild, 1973, p.v.).[5]

More recent formalists - Greenberg is especially significant in this regard - have continued to argue that abstract art has a multi-faceted spiritual nature despite the fact that contemporary non-representational paintings of artists like Morris Louis, Helen Frankenthaler and Kenneth Noland ignore the original intentions of non-objectivity. As Kuspit points out, their works are no longer a

> protest against rigidification of the concept and meaning of art, and against academic codification of style, in a word, against totalitarianism in art. [Rather, they have become] another spiritless convention full of technical bravado,... ultimately one more formality with rigid, academically approved laws of its own. (Kuspit, 1970, pp. 435 - 436).

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5. It should, however, be noted that Read constantly contradicts himself. He has, at times, suggested that originality must not take precedence over intelligibility in the artist's work. (See Introduction, p. 11).

In his book, The Savage Mind, Lévi-Strauss extends Kuspit's argument and also provides a plausible explanation for the development of non-objective art to its present academic form. Abstract art, he maintains, is characterized by two important features. Firstly, it rejects the idea that art is made for a purpose, and secondly, execution becomes the 'pretext or occasion of the picture'. Hence the style of a work is also its subject matter. This results in a paradoxical situation, for as Lévi-Strauss points out, non-objective paintings ultimately become 'realistic imitations of non-existant models'. He therefore concludes that abstraction is

> a school of academic painting in which the artist strives to represent the manner in which he would execute his pictures if he were to paint one. (Lévi-Strauss, 1974, pp. 29 - 30).

In the final analysis, the freedom that apoligists talk of in abstract art is, as John Berger suggests, no more than a 'freedom of the desert island'. (Berger quoted by Barnett. Barnett, University of Cape Town, 1979, p. 66). According to Berger, the artist who forsakes his society, and humanity as his subject matter, is also forsaken by humanity and his society. Finding himself without an audience, the artist's freedom thus becomes a freedom of constraint, and his work ceases to have any value other than an exchange or monetary value. In other words, art loses its social function and its meaning is therefore 'no longer in what it uniquely says but what it uniquely is'.[6] (Berger, 1979, p. 21).

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6. All products made by man have a purpose or function and are social objects by virtue of this function. Ross, however, sees a distinction between utilitarian objects and works of art, arguing that the latter are sovereign but not separate from society. (Ross, 1981, p. 145).

since art is a deliberate and purposeful creation by man, it is, by extension, also a social phenomenon. (See Chapter One, p. 1[illegible]. And for it to work as a social phenomenon 'it must reflect the times and conditions that give rise to it'. (Papanek, 1[illegible], p. [illegible]. This contention, which obviously negates the standpoint of formalist writers, is widely held. Morawski, for example, states that because the art work is a socio-cultural phenomenon, 'the sociological aspect is inextricable from the substance of its overall structure'. (Morawski. Baxandall, ed. 1[illegible], p. 365). Similarly, Vasquez argues that art is necessarily social, firstly because it is the 'unique creation of a socially conditioned individual', and secondly because 'it satisfies both the creator's and the consumer's need for expression'. (Vasquez, 1973, p. 234).

The latter statement raises the problem of expression in art. The art historian, Benedetto Croce (1866 - 1952), regarded aesthetics as the science of intuition, and argued that to 'intuit is to express; and nothing else than to express'. (Croce quoted by Steinkraus. Steinkraus, 1974, p. 52). Rothschild similarly maintains that 'selection and decision must be intuitive' in artistic expression. (Rothschild, 1973, p. [illegible]). Like Croce, and indeed many 20th century formalists, he also believes that intuitition and expression are vital to artistic creation.

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7. Although Papanek speaks specifically about industrial design, the same criteria are relevant for the visual arts.

It must, however, be noted that regardless of whether it is discussed from a formalist or functionalist viewpoint, and regardless of whether it is seen as an innate attribute or as conditioned by social and environmental factors, intuition is only relevant in the creation of the work of art if it does not falsify reality and is intelligible to the viewer. As Proudhon points out, art is 'the natural and specific expression of freedom'. (Proudhon quoted by Raphael. Raphael, 1980, p. 10). But this freedom, he argues, is only valid within specific boundaries which are determined by the artist's willingness to subordinate his intuition to what he calls the concepts of justice and truth. (Raphael, 1980, p. 10).

If it is to have validity both for the artist and for society, artistic expression must therefore remain a 'highly conscious, rational process ... not at all a state of intoxicated inspiration', (Fischer, 1978, p. 9). Or, as Berenson maintains, it cannot be 'reckless, freakish, fantastic' because its role is to 'console and ennoble and transport us from the work-a-day world to realms of elevated happiness'. (Berenson, 1950, p. 32).[8]

Many aestheticians, including Marxist aestheticians, argue further that if art is seen as a social phenomenon, its role must be defined in terms of communication, morality, and the physical and spiritual growth of mankind. In reaction to the repudiation of the social role of art by those who evolved the concept of art

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8. Obviously Berenson does not, however, argue for a social role in art.

[illegible] Proudhon suggested [illegible] actual form of the art work is secondary to its role as [illegible] [and] [illegible] feelings of [illegible] refinement'. Proudhon [illegible] by Raphael. Raphael, [illegible] may say that art which 'does not [illegible] the purpose of improving society ... exists for its [illegible]' (Proudhon quoted by Raphael [illegible], 1980, p. 37), [illegible] further suggests that 'hieroglyphics, erotic figures, or use-[illegible] images of spirituality' can hardly serve as a means for [illegible] and moral improvement. Proudhon quoted by Raphael. Raphael, [illegible], p. [illegible].[1]

[illegible] on' based on the artist's social responsibility to society [illegible] iterated by Papanek who feels that any design must be on [illegible] of social good'. (Papanek, 1978, p. 53). The ultimate [illegible] of industrial design is, he maintains, to 'transform man's [illegible] environment ... and by extension man himself'. (Papanek, 1978, [illegible]. Although worded differently, Vasquez's contention that [illegible] essential aim of art is to 'widen and enrich the human [illegible] territory' (Vasquez, [illegible], p. [illegible] undoubtedly [illegible] expression [illegible] same [illegible] tion'.

Whether this enrichment is to be achieved through form or through relevant anthropomorphic content is one of the central issues

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1. Proudhon's interpretation of the role of art is echoed in the ideas of later writers who also had affiliations with the anarchist movement. Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), for instance, spoke of art as a means to promote 'human brotherhood' and 'transmit religious perception'. (Steinkraus, 1974, p. 53).

which separates the proponents of formalism from those who argue against a formalist methodology. In their rejection of irrelevant social content, the former argue that form itself has a social perception and even act as a catalyst for social change. Questionable though this contention may be, it finds support in the writings of Roger Fry, and above all, in those of Herbert Read. While Fry believes that content is not directly relevant to pictorial appreciation (Todd, 1981, p. 317), Read's insistence on the concept of individual genius leads him to suggest that the means of communication, i.e. the form of the art work, is primary. Indeed, he condemns art which has, as he puts it, become 'the handmaid of religion or morality or social ideology' and feels that it is regrettable that 'men will forget that in art it is only the mode that matters'. (Read 1937, p. 204). As with most of Read's assertions this statement is, however, problematic. For while he argues that the rise of capitalism has led to a degradation of art (Read, 1937, p. 204), Read never points out that it is precisely under the influence of capitalism that form has taken precedence over content in the art work. As Fischer argues in The Necessity of Art, the champions of capitalism tend to overlook content and to emphasise form 'as though it were the essential thing, indeed the only thing worthy of attention'. This, he argues, has

> affected a large section of the intelligensia in the capitalist world and has brought into being the phenomenon of "formalism" in the sphere of the arts ... a phenomenon typical of a social form no longer in keeping with its time .... (Fischer, 1963, p. 130).

Also significant in this context are the ideas of the neo-Marxist aesthetician, Herbert Marcuse, who rejects the views of orthodox Marxist theoreticians by adopting an essentially formalist methodology. In keeping with other Marxists he still argues that art has political potential, but unlike them, he believes that this potential lies in the form, not the content of the art work. He qualifies his observation by saying that the work of art is authentic and true

> not by virtue of its content (i.e. the "correct" representation of social conditions) nor by its "pure" form, but by the content having become form. (Marcuse, 1979, p. 8).

But since he also believes that all revolutionary art forms are ultimately absorbed by the dominant ideology, Marcuse finally suggests that an entirely new language of communication must be found. (Marcuse. Baxandall, ed. 1972, p. 57).

Marcuse, as well as orthodox formalists, thus refuse to accept the fact that the content of a work cannot be separated from its form and its function. Proudhon, on the other hand, argues that form and content are inextricably linked and can therefore never be looked at in isolation. For him 'the objective content also has form, and the subjective forms have content'. (Raphael, 1980, p. 42). He goes on to suggest that form and content are in constant interaction and that 'they are gradually perfected' (Raphael, 1980, p. 42) through this dialectical process.

The views of the Russian revolutionary poet, Mayakovsky, are not

unlike those of Proudhon. Arguing that poetry must be seen as a manufacturing or technical process rather than as an end in itself, Mayakovsky maintains that this process makes 'the poetic work fit for use'. (Mayakovsky quoted by Wolff. Wolff, 1981, p. 13). (10)

The observations of these writers are certainly no isolated expressions of a functionalist aesthetic. Many art historians, artists, and especially architects have argued (as Kenneth Clark does) that 'form is [only] alive when it is functional'. (Clark. Albrecht, Barnett and Grift, eds. 1970, p. 648). Indeed, the phrase 'form follows function' (Osborne quoting Sullivan. Osborne, 1970, p. 51) was originally coined in 1901 by the American architect, Louis Sullivan, and popularized by his pupil, Frank Lloyd Wright, who insisted that form and function should be seen as one. (Osborne, 1970, p. 51).

These, and other so-called functionalists of the early 20th century 'saw no fundamental distinction between the fine and useful arts' and believed

> that if a thing is made to function well, if its construction is well suited to the job it has to do, then that thing will be beautiful. (Osborne, 1970, p. 46).

Undoubtedly, the functionalist architects often maintained that

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10. Mayakovsky is, of course, referring specifically to poetry but his observations are equally valid for other art forms.

the visual arts, especially painting, should be subordinated to, and enhance architecture. In other words, they did not simply argue for a communication of relevant social issues in painting and sculpture but spoke, instead, of the total work of art (Gesamtkunstwerk) in which the visual arts were to form part of a complete strategy for social change and development. (Fig. 5).

According to Morawski, all forms of art, whether objective or non-objective, fine or applied, autonomous or non-autonomous are embraced by a common function, that of communication or what he calls 'the informative one'. (Morawski, 1974, p. 309). This contention finds support in the views of prominent figures from a wide variety of disciplines including art, sociology and social anthropology. Levi-Strauss, for instance, maintains that 'the process of artistic creation ... consists in trying to communicate' (Levi-Strauss, 1974, p. 27), while Duvignaud argues that art is 'deliberate communication' (Duvignaud, 1972, p. 144), and Diego Rivera goes so far as to suggest that art has an advantage as a means of communication because it speaks 'a language that can easily be understood'. (Rivera. Shapiro, ed. 1973, p. 57).

Morawski takes this argument one step further by suggesting that the art work becomes a collaboration between the artist and his audience. 'Every art work', he states, 'not so much is as happens'. (Morawski. Baxandall, ed. 1972, p. 367). In other words, communication is effected through a meaningful dialectic between the artist and his audience. The latter contention is particularly

significant insofar as it stands in direct opposition to the views of formalists like William Tucker who insist that art is a fundamentally private activity. (See Chapter Two, p. 35).

But while many theorists agree that the fundamental role of art lies in communication (i.e. with the obvious exception of certain formalists), McLuhan points out that 'any attempt at communication ... from one mind to another entails simplifications and distortions'. (Miller, 1971, p. 8). Thus all forms of communication or language, including visual language, operate on the level of symbol and can never be a true translation of ideas.(11)

In art, further distortions and simplifications are effected through ideology. Indeed, in many instances, the work of art reflects a complex of interacting ideologies. This has led Hadjinicolou to describe aesthetic effect as the 'mirroring between an artist's visual ideology and the ideology of the viewer'. (Fuller, 1980, p. 20). Fernandez also points out that aesthetic preferences are either a response to social structure or, conversely, social structure 'is to some extent the expression of aesthetic preference'. (Fernandez, d'Azevedo, ed. 1975, p. 357).

Fernandez's observation is allied to the Marxist concept of a

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11. A recognition of the importance of this problem is certainly not new for, as has already been pointed out, Plato never conceived of art as being an accurate reflection of ultimate truth or reality.

dialectic interaction or movement which will be discussed more fully at a later stage. But regardless of any methodological preferences, it is essential to realize that the form as well as the content and function of art cannot be divorced from ideological influence.

A further issue of considerable importance is the fact that the dominant ideology within a society usually has the greatest control over art. Thus when Carl Popper argues that 'observation is always selective' (Popper quoted by Miller. Miller, 1971, p. 18), it would certainly not be inaccurate to qualify his statement by pointing out that a process of selection is never arbitrary or objective. On the contrary, it often reflects the interests, and works to the advantage of the dominant ideology or ruling class. As Kenneth Clark points out, all images illustrate or confirm a system of belief held by an 'elite' and are very often consciously employed 'in maintaining that system'. (Clark. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 636).

With specific reference to 20th century western society, Papanek argues that the tendency to be selective leads the bourgeois consumer to place an emphasis on form rather than content. His interest is therefore primarily in the actual appearance of things. (Papanek, 1978, p. 154). Fischer also points out that when an interest in form is primary it can be seen as 'a typical reaction of every ruling class when its position is threatened'. (Fischer, 1973, p. 111).

In keeping with this contention, Diego Rivera argues that those who believe that 'propaganda ruins art' and who therefore advocate an art of pure form are victims of 'bourgeois prejudice'. Bourgeois society, he maintains, does not want any ideals in art 'because its own ideals cannot any longer serve as artistic inspiration'. (Rivera. Shapiro, ed. 1973, p. 64). The South African artist, Gavin Younge, similarly argues that artists who insist that art is neutral are blind to the fact that their works carry, 'in concealed form, a bourgeois political attitude'. (Younge. University of Cape Town, 1979, p. 43). While both artists are evidently sensitive to the fact that art can never be neutral, neither actually goes so far as to point out that all art is a form of propaganda. This is valid both for art forms which systematically and consciously advance a particular point of view and for those which mirror ideas not consciously formulated.

Under capitalism, which is dominated by a stress on individual control of capital for the accumulation of profits (i.e. more capital), art simply becomes another commodity on the open market.(12) Thus, instead of working to order from a client, the artist works 'for an unknown buyer' (Fischer, 1978, p. 49), a

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12. Williams states that the essence of capitalism lies in the fact that the basic means of production is privately rather than collectively owned. Decisions about production are therefore in the hands of a group occupying a minority position in society who are not responsible to the majority for their actions (Williams, 1980, p. 186). For a discussion of the origins of this development and its influence on art see Chapter One.

situation which inevitably leads to alienation between him and his audience.

Furthermore, whereas the importance of art previously lay in what it communicated, under capitalism its significance lies in the fact that it is a unique object 'with a price on its head'. (Cork, 1979, p. 14). As a direct consequence of this, the work of art loses its use value and its exchange value thus becomes dominant. In other words, art becomes an 'expression of abstract labour' which makes its exchange in the market place possible. (Vasquez, 1973, p. 90).[13] And like all other commodities, it is therefore also subject to the fluctuations of supply and demand.

Given this situation, one could argue, as Marx does, that 'capitalist production is hostile to certain branches of production ... in particular, art and poetry'. (Marx quoted by Vasquez. Vasquez, 1973, p. 102). Mor over, Marx contrasts the capitalist accentuation on 'quantity and exchange value' with the emphasis on 'quality and use value' in classical antiquity. (Egbert, 1967, p. 20).

The capitalist stress on art as a form of investment, as a commercial rather than a social commodity, also means that art often becomes elitist, i.e. it is created for the wealthy few rather than for the majority of society. Certainly, artists have

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13. As was suggested in Chapter One, this trend is already evident in the Renaissance. It has, however, become much more marked with the increasing growth of capitalism in subsequent centuries.

not always accepted this state of affairs willingly. For as Fischer points out, the concept of art for art's sake actually arose

> from the artist's determination not to produce commodities in a world where everything is a saleable commodity. (Fischer, 1978, p. 70).

It is therefore all the more ironic that this particular movement was little more than a symptom, indeed a confirmation, of the capitalist principle of production for its own sake.

The influence of capitalism can be held partly responsible for further ironic developments in later 20th century art. For although the rise of capitalism initially led to what Fischer refers to as an enormous range of expressive, original works, capitalism has since become stagnant. As a result of this, the only function left to art is that of embellishing the private life of the capitalist, while at the same time serving as a good investment. (Fischer, 1978, p. 51).

Given its primary function as private property in modern western societies, the role of art - particularly within public museums as they have evolved over the last century - has become increasingly confused, and whether the work of art is a social object or a commercial commodity is therefore no longer clear. Raphael refers to this development as a 'confused connection between idealism and business' (Raphael, 1980, p. 85), while Vasquez points out that the 'principle of private property' cannot be

reconciled with the 'social function of art' since the latter (in a contrast to the former) exists as an 'inter-connection between the artist and his public'. (Vasquez, 1973, p. 238).

In the final analysis, the freedom which art is supposed to have within a capitalist system is nothing but a well constructed myth. With art being subject to the exigencies of the market and the artist ultimately controlled by the 'tastes, preferences, ideas and aesthetic notions of those who influence the market ... the creative potential and individuality of the artist' (Vasquez, 1973, p. 84) is stifled. Yet in spite of this, the art market itself is largely based on the fact that individuality and originality have a high commercial value under capitalism.

The paradoxical nature of this situation, the control of art by capital, and the consequent uncertainty of the artist's role within society are all symptomatic of an alienated relationship between him and his audience. As Tax points out, the artist sends his product into an unknown market where, to the consumer who has no knowledge or understanding of its creation, it appears as if by magic. (Tax. Baxandall, ed. 1972, p. 23). The division and sometimes even hostility between the artist and the general public is further expressed in the separation of artistic labour from ordinary labour which 'leads to the concentration of creative talent in a few individuals' (Vasquez, 1973, p. 234) who are seen as outsiders precisely because their work is exclusive and essentially unique.

The concept of alienation was first formulated by the French philosopher, Jean Jacques Rosseau, and later developed by Hegel and Marx.[1A] In his 1884 Manuscripts Marx argues that 'the economic foundation of the capitalist social order is the main cause of alienation'. He goes on to list what he considers to be the three basic stages in this process:

> the alienation of the product, the alienation of the production process and the alienation of the human species essence (Morawski. ed. 1974, p. 327),

all of which have already been mentioned briefly as relevant to a discussion of the visual arts. Considered together, they enable one to formulate a relatively coherent picture of the problems experienced by artists working under capitalism. In the first instance, the artist is alienated from his product because he does not know why or for whom he is producing it. This situation is exascerbated by the fact that he no longer has an intimate relationship with his materials: paint comes in ready-to-use tubes, steel is forged and moulded by mechanical presses, etc., etc. Finally, the consumer is also alienated both from the art object and its producer partly because the content of the art work is unintelligible to the uninitiated (usually a direct consequence of the artist ignoring the social role of art), and partly because works of art are now quite often about process,

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1A. Marx defines alienation as the feeling of futility and isolation which the individual experiences when he realizes that he is completely estranged from society, which has lost awareness of the human condition and of its own historical mission. (Poggioli. Albrecht, Barnett, Griff, eds. 1970, pp. 671 - 672).

[illegible] specifically, as [illegible] growth of industrialization has led to the estrange- [illegible] (see Horkheimer [Adorno], 1969, p. 28f), i.e. [illegible] activity versus irresponsible consumer. Whereas [illegible] is [illegible] are in fact looked upon as work, [illegible] production is discussed in terms of creativity. Thus [illegible] is viewed positive within society.

[illegible] is a dialectic system, labour is fundamentally always problem- [illegible] for 'instead of affirming himself, man loses himself in it [illegible]' (Vasquez, 1973, p. 92). In other [illegible], labour becomes a process of dehumanization since man is [illegible] able to 'recognize himself (in the products of his [illegible], in his activity or in himself' (Vasquez, 1973, p. 93). [illegible], with capital gain and accumulation serving as the [illegible] for [illegible] activity, 'qualitative values' are reduced to [illegible] 'quantitative abstractions' (Kadar, 1966, p. 41), i.e. everything [illegible] can himself begins to assume an abstract monetary [illegible] which are less [illegible] are escaped.

[illegible], the function and content of art has become increasingly [illegible] and fragmented under capitalism. This [illegible], of course, [illegible] attributable to the fact that art has lost all social [illegible] through an elitist total emphasis on form, and according

to Papanek, through a preoccupation with space, 'the transcedence of space, the multiplication of space, the division and negation of space'. (Papanek, 1978, p. 43). He goes on to say that this concern with space must actually be seen as denying man and society for 'it is ... devoid of man as though mankind did not exist'. (Papanek, 1978, p. 43).

This may seem contradictory, particularly since capitalism is often linked with democratic systems of government. It must, however, be remembered that while both capitalism and democracy are apparently concerned with furthering individual freedom and growth (Rothschild, 1973, p. 10), individualism tends to affirm exclusivity, for it leads to the creation of elite groups rather than communal integration.

In its contempt for mass produced articles and mass consumption - which are, after all, potential means for breaking down social and class distinctions - the capitalist elite tends to use contemporary art to further its own exclusivity. As Glaser points out, the nouveau riche have taken over the role of the clerical classes and the aristocracy in supporting artists, partly because they wish to effect a 'connection with the societal well springs of so much art of the past'. (Glaser in Preface to Baynes. Baynes, 1975, p. 5).

The power of this new elite cannot be underestimated, for not only does it control capitalist production (and therefore what society consumes), but it undoubtedly also controls artistic

production, a point which has already been discussed with reference to the false sense of freedom which the contemporary non-objective artist often has. For instead of being an expression of freedom, abstraction re-inforces the exclusivity of the position of the wealthy buyer through its tendency to adopt an hermetic, and indeed, often unintelligible content. Through its emphasis on individuality and esotericism, avant-garde art thus inevitably serves the interests of the ruling classes or dominant ideology.

While the connection between the artist and the exclusive buyer is by no means new - art has always been 'made for a minority by a minority' (Clark. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 650) - Clark nevertheless argues that during the past 100 years the values in art have been created by so small a minority and have become so divorced from the sources of life that one can no longer refer to an artistic elite. Rather, one must speak of a 'priesthood' preserving its mysteries from 'the profanation of an all-conquering materialism'. (Clark Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 650).

Paradoxically, the capitalist who buys art tries to break from his materialistic existance through his support of art forms which are ostensibly concerned with spiritual issues. This situation becomes even more ludicrous when one considers that he himself is actually responsible for the fact that art has lost its spiritual function and is now little more than a commodity or material possession.

But while the elite which supports art may have pretensions to spirituality, its concern ultimately remains with elevating its own status. As Read points out, it tends to 'demand symbols of its position ... above all those which reflect its pomp and glory'. (Read, 1939, p. 144). Thus 20th century western art has shifted away from being an art for 'man in general' to serving 'a special class of men who may not be better but who are evidently different'. (Ortega y Gasset, 1968, p. 8).

In part, the difference between the capitalist elite and the ordinary public is expressed in terms of 'high', i.e. exclusive, and 'low', i.e. popular forms of culture. In most art forms this difference manifests itself in the form and content as well as the function of the art work, and is manipulated by the dominant ideology to maintain the status quo. In other words, most forms of painting, sculpture and limited edition graphic works - the so-called 'high' or fine arts - are the exclusive domain of the capitalist elite, whereas popular art forms such as advertising images, posters and Hollywood-type 'movies' etc. are created by the dominant ideology for mass consumption. (Clark. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 636 and p. 646).

The exclusivity of 'high' art is ensured through an emphasis on individuality and the uniqueness of the art object, as well as through its incomprehensibility to the general public. This unintelligibility, which is effected through a mystification of content or meaning, 'divides the public into two classes ... those who understand and those who do not'. (Ortega y Gasset,

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1968, p. 6).

According to Rothschild, the history of individualism in 19th and 20th century art follows a tendency from what he calls 'naturalistic individualism (Impressionism)' towards 'subjective individualism (Expressionism)' and 'hence toward unintelligibility'. (Rothschild, 1973, p. 16). One could argue that the move from Expressionism to Abstraction represents a further important step in the direction of greater individualism and unintelligibility in the art work. Thus the progressive elimination of anthropocentrism in art can be linked to an emphasis on the uniqueness of the artist.

Extending his discussion on this subject, Rothschild argues that a stress on individualism has led to a growth in 'courage, strength, initiative, heroism, leadership and self-respect'. Rothschild, 1973, p. 91. But he then goes on to say that individualism ultimately has a negative effect for it gives rise to 'pretense and vanity and conceit', qualities which serve to 'disguise a social chaos in which war, misery, poverty, deceit, exploitation, deprevation and charlatanism' (Rothschild, 1973, p. 20) are rampant.

Although Ortega y Gasset does not project as pessimistic an image of the effects of individualism, he certainly recognizes the importance of its influence on art. While suggesting, firstly, that the unintelligibility of modern art creates a kind of class division, he argues further that the 'new art is an artistic art'

for it can only be understood by those who have an education in the field. (Ortega y Gasset, 1968, p. 12). It is, moreover, a self-interested and inward-looking or introverted art, i.e. one which defines and redefines its own parameters rather than turning to society for its content.

On the one hand, the artist's preoccupation with self and with artistic problems thus serves to extend the schism between him and the general public, while on the other, it belies his own elitist attitude which has led him to believe that his dreams and anxieties are a significant source of inspiration in art.

Precisely because it needs a sophisticated knowledge and has therefore become 'inaccessible and incomprehensible to those who have not acquired the aesthetic standards of appreciation' 'Bensman and Gerver. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 661), contemporary art humiliates the uninitiated viewer and finally leaves him indignant. As Ortega y Gasset points out, if the viewer understands the work of art at which he is looking, it will not leave him indignant, even if he does not like it. 'But when his dislike is due to his failure to understand, he feels humiliated'. (Ortega y Gasset, 1968, p. 6). This situation ensures that the status quo, the division between the initiated and uninitiated, is maintained. For

> with the new art ... which is the art of a priviledged aristocracy of finer senses ... the average citizen is compelled to realize he is the average citizen, a creature incapable of receiving the sacraments of art (Ortega y Gasset, 1968, p. 6).

Cork similarly suggests that 'reasonable men and women' are willing to 'acknowledge the importance of the arts' but feel alienated by the 'extremism, incomprehensibility and exclusiveness of contemporary visual art'. (Cork, 1979, p. 87). They either feel that they are being excluded from a 'secret game' (Cork, 1979, p. 87) or else that contemporary art is a 'worthless hoax'. (Cork, 1979, p. 261. Thus 'instead of giving insight' into the world (Todd, 1981, p. 305), contemporary western art mystifies, confuses and distorts the reality of social relations.

As has already been mentioned, it could also be argued that since the hermeticism of much modern art provides the bourgeois world with a means to evade social decisions with a reasonably clear conscience (Fischer, 1978, p. 95), contemporary western art cannot be divorced from ideological considerations. Berger in fact suggests that mystification enables a privileged minority to justify its ruling position (Fuller, 1980, p. 5), while Fischer sees it as a consequence and expression of man's alienation. (Fischer, 1978, p. 95).

This alienation of art from society is further attributable to the mystification of the theory and practice of art. In Art, An Enemy of the People, Taylor insists that a tendency to mystification and an avoidance of reality in both art and philosophy turns these branches of knowledge into 'enemies of the masses'. He therefore argues that the masses should retaliate by arming themselves against art. (Taylor, 1978, p. 2).

Diego Rivera does not suggest as radical a solution to the problem of mystification, but like Taylor, he maintains that it is the 'mysterious character of art which makes it aloof and inaccessible to the masses '. (Rivera. Shapiro, ed. 1973, p. 56).

The mysterious nature of art is not, however, the only factor determining its inaccessibility to the general public. For although they are intended to encourage a wide appreciation of art, public museums and art galleries often prove to be very hostile environments. In his book, Ways of Seeing, Berger provides evidence that art galleries are visited primarily by those with a priviledged education, and that the majority of people of all social classes identify museums and galleries with churches and libraries, i.e. with institutions that are generally mysterious and imposing. (Berger, 1979, p. 24). Given the fact that art galleries are often silent environments in which the viewer is apparently required to meditate on the art object, this reaction is, of course, understandable. It could also be pointed out that museums tend to create an atmosphere of sterility so that they often give an impression of clinical cleanliness akin to that of a hospital, and seem to demand the same degree of deathly silence and decorum.

Apart from the fact that it seems to have become an 'elitist preserve of aesthetic snobbery' (Cork, 1979, p. 20), the museum also tends to give credibility and sanction to the art work. Thus regardless of what it may (or more often may not communicate) the

fact that it has been placed in the museum environment implies that the work of art must necessarily be valuable.

The museum's exploitation of its own hallowed position, its tendency to exhibit works in which the artist himself is often both the creator and the product, and the general acceptance that the two together are an invincible and unquestionable authority on art, encourages the glorification of the 'present social systems and its priorities'. (Berger, 1979, p. 24). In other words, the museum is primarily a voice for the dominant ideology, certainly not a mirror of the real world.

In a paper delivered at the Sixth International Congress of Aesthetics at Uppsala, it was pointed out that the museum has failed to educate the majority of people in art. (Dorfles, G. Uppsala University, 1972, p. 307). Furthermore, although a museum like the 'Museo de Solidoridad Chile' claimed that it was set up for the Chilean people, 'for the factory worker, the miner and the peasant' to consider as part of his heritage, and saw to it that sections of the collection were 'perpetually on the move, so as to reach the whole country', Kunzle argues that the true museum of the people is on the streets. (Kunzle. Millon and Nochlin. eds. 1980, p. 362). Indeed, if the ordinary person is to appreciate and understand art, it must become part of his daily existance, a natural extension of his life. Precisely because it is accessible to the majority of people, the mass communications media could become the means to impart such an easily accessible, as well as intelligible and socially relevant art form.

As things stand at the moment, modern art is undoubtedly unpopular, 'in fact anti-popular', and in its present form it will 'always have the masses against it'. (Ortega y Gasset, 1968, p. 5). Thus despite the fact that sociologists argue that art is a social institution, it has become thoroughly anti-social in its tendency to advance the schism between 'high' and 'low' culture. Furthermore, the gradual adoption of an increasingly abstract formal vocabulary, which has led to the dehumanization of art, means that it has ultimately become a thing of no real consequence. (Ortega y Gasset. Holland and Ulanov, eds. 1972. p. 35).

Undoubtedly, the artist is in a position to alter this situation, but unfortunately he is generally 'too independent to contemplate immolation, [i.e. sacrifice] to society'. (Bell. Lipset and Lowenthal, eds. 1961, p. 402). In addition to his desire to protect his independence and individuality, there is also the fact that he is mainly concerned with conducting a 'specialized dialogue' between himself and other initiates (Cork, 1979, p.80), and with giving vent to his own emotions, usually 'at the expense of the spectator and/or consumer'. (Papanek, 1978, p. 41). With such interests dominating his activities, the artist is unlikely to become a meaningful social force.

Ironically, many contemporary art movements actually claim to be socially relevant, but as with Minimal art, their social protest is exhibited 'mainly on the level of form'. (Poggioli. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 685). In other words, protest

often registered negatively through a complete rejection of the social reality. This tendency is recognized by Malraux who argues that the modern abstract artist is protesting against the cosmopolitanism and universalism of contemporary culture 'where photographic reproduction has made all artistic creations accessible to all''. (Poggioli. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 680-681). It is for essentially the same reasons that Poggioli argues that the main function of abstraction is to register protest against bourgeois taste. (Poggioli. Albrecht and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 680).

Significantly, although large-scale technological advances in fields relevant to art - the camera, mass communications media like film and television and automated lithographic reproduction - could be exploited in an attempt to reach an ever-increasing audience, contemporary artists often try to avoid or escape the reality of mechanization. Some see the machine as a threat to their individuality and therefore ignore all technological advances in an attempt to perpetuate the romantic myth of a unique, original and superiorly crafted object. Others, like Rauschenberg (Fig. 6) and Warhol (Fig. 7) look upon the machine as useful content and have therefore often used mass communication techniques as well as images and objects of popular culture in their works. This has lead Read to come to the erroneous conclusion that Pop Art destroys the 'boundaries between art and the image of mass-communication'. (Read, 1967, p. 34). For since the Pop artist's work is a unique, original object in spite of the

often registered negatively through a complete rejection o social reality. This tendency is recognized by Malraux who argues that the modern abstract artist is protesting against the cosmopolitanism and universalism of contemporary culture 'where photographic reproduction has made all artistic creations accessible to all' (Poggioli. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 680-681). For essentially the same reasons that Poggioli argues that the main function of abstraction is to register protest against bourgeois taste (Poggioli. Albrecht and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 680).

Significantly, although large-scale technological advances in fields relevant to art - the camera, mass communications media like film and television, and automated lithographic reproduction - could be exploited in an attempt to reach an ever-increasing audience, contemporary artists often try to avoid or escape the reality of mechanization. Some see the machine as a threat to their individuality and therefore ignore all technological advances in an attempt to perpetuate the romantic myth of a unique, original and superiorly crafted object. Others, like Rauschenberg (Fig.) and Warnol (Fig.) look upon the machine as useful content and have therefore often used mass communication techniques as well as images and objects of popular culture in their works. This has lead Read to come to the erroneous conclusion that Pop Art destroys the 'boundaries between art and the image of mass-communication'. (Read, 1967, p. 34). For since the Pop artist's work is a unique, original object in spite of the

techniques he has used and the final appearance of his product, it remains incompatible with mass produced images originating in fields like advertising and television.[15]

Many early 20th century art movements, including Constructivism, Dada and Surrealism, were concerned both with social issues (which led them to ally themselves to radical political organisations), and with coming to terms with contemporary technological advances - of which the Dadaist photomontage is a good example.(Fig. 8). But their effectiveness was often reduced through an insistance on an esoteric and hermetic orientation which ultimately made them inaccessible and unintelligible to the general public. Although probably not entirely valid in a consideration of Constructivism and Dada, this is certainly true for the Surrealist movement.

If art is to be accessible to all, both its form and its content must be relevant and intelligible, and its location must be suitable. This does not mean that the publically placed sculpture is necessarily accessible to the ordinary viewer, for its location is certainly no guarantee against an exclusive content and the projection of personal rather than public values (as is often true of Minimal sculpture and Land Art).

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15. Although copies of works by Pop artists are now easily accessible through modern printing techniques, it should be noted that neither these, nor posters and prints of e.g. Leonardo's very popular Mona Lisa, can ever be equated with the extremely valuable, signed and - in the case of printed works - numbered editions which separates these from reproductions.

For art to be relevant to the society in which it is created, it also has to take cognisance of the economic, political and social conditions of that society. In the present state of monopoly capitalism, mass production and mass consumerism it is therefore anomolous to produce art works that are neither widely accessible and comprehensible, nor produced on a large scale. As Berger points out: 'Authenticity is an obsolete category in an era of mass production'. (Fuller, 1980, p. 11). In accordance with this sentiment Diego Rivera also argues that in a highly developed technological society the technological advances available to the artist must be used in the creation of his art work. (Rivera. Shapiro, ed. 1973, p. 58).

But in the absence of his willingness to do so, the artist has been forced to relinquish the primacy of his role and his art to the advertising media, and advertisements have therefore become the new official art works of the modern capitalist society. This development finds expression in the fact that advertisements are 'what "we" put up on "our" streets and use to fill up to half of "our" newspapers and magazines'. (Williams, 1980, p.184).

Obviously, the actual content as opposed to the form of contemporary advertising serves to uphold and reinforce the values of the dominant capitalist elite and can therefore hardly be used as a basis for a new art. Papanek in fact argues that advertisements have an extremely negative effect on the general public because they persuade people to buy things 'they don't need with money they don't have, in order to impress others who don't care'.

(Papanek, 1978, p. 9). They also tend to distort and mystify reality by depicting people as they think they behave and not as they actually behave. (Goffman, 1979, p. vii).

This is not, however, why advertising and other mass communications media like film and television are seen as a threat by those who want to maintain the status quo in art. To them, the danger of the mass media to art actually lies in the fact that they

> produce no exceptions ... no masterpieces, no works of genius ... [and] never exalt anyone or make them aware of anything but 'trivial potentialities'. (Fuller, 1980, p. 22).

Fuller also points out that with advertising the 'artist's style is eliminated since the image is corporately conceived [and] mechanically executed'. Consequently, it ultimately lacks 'any stamp of individuality'. (Fuller, 1980, p. 21).

The idea that the mass media art forms and advertising present some kind of threat to art is a direct outcome of elitist prejudice which can be attributed partly to a recognition by the avant-garde artist that he does not have control over all forms of visual communication. But while the artist generally regards the mass communication forms as non-artistic and utilitarian, the fact remains that they have an enormous impact on people. Not all of this is necessarily beneficial, but it is important to realize that the many

> shortcomings and ill effects attributed to the mass media arise not from their

> nature but from the use we [and those in control] make of them. Dorfles. Uppsala University. 1972, p. 307).

Contrary to common sentiment, mass communication forms are not necessarily a threat to art. Once this is recognized and accepted, the artist will be in a position to become part of the mass media rather than make superficial use of mass communications techniques in his works. Given the potential for clarity and immediacy of communication in these forms, he will of course also be in a position to reach a much wider audience than he does at present.(16) Thus, if the artist wants to escape the technological enslavement and alienation of modern society, he will have to re-humanize man's relationship to the machine which (up to the present) has led to man becoming 'a mere appendage, thus aestheticising our relationship to the machine through a new sense of ritual'. (Dorfles, G. Uppsala University. 1972, p. 307).

Undoubtedly, it is the lack of relevant ritual that differentiates 20th century western art from the mass communication art forms. For while the objects and images of the mass media form a part of the rituals of everyday life - this despite the fact that they are manipulated and controlled by the dominant capitalist ideology - the same cannot be said for modern art. As with art in non-literate societies, the newspapers, magazines, television programmes, films, comic books and advertisements of contemporary

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16. This was one of the major considerations in the candidate's practical work.

western society confirm and give expression to the socio-political, cultural and also economic life of the society.

In the 20th century western context the artist has been stripped of power. No longer a leader of men, he finds himself on the outer fringe of society, but constantly tries to reaffirm his former control by turning to pseudo-ritual, magic and Shamanism. In other words, by setting himself up as a magician or sorcerer, he hopes to recapture the influence and control which the artist-magician had in prehistoric and still has in traditional non-literate societies.[17] Artists like Manzoni, Beuys and Oppenheim thus create 'magic circles' in which they emerge as priests, saints or martyrs who become the conscience and give vent to the guilt of society.

But their art remains an expression of 'a negative cultural relationship'. (Poggioli. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 570). Instead of addressing themselves to the realities of contemporary society, they create an esoteric and hermetic content for their activities. Thus they are no more than an elitist sub-culture, and as Poggioli suggests, the artist who insists on setting himself apart from society in this way 'has no right to protest that [he] is not treated like a wild flower when [he] is a hothouse flower'. (Poggioli. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, p. 579).

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17. This discussion on Shamanism and ritual in avant-garde art is indebted to Neville Dubow. (Dubow, University of Cape Town, 1979, p. 116).

According to Proudhon, the public has a right to declare its preferences in art as well as the right to reject those which it feels are irrelevant. It is for society, he says, to

> give orders; it is for the artist to obey. For if you have rejected my inspiration in your art; if you have tried to impose your own imagination on mine, then I despise your art for all its wonders; I say no to it. (Proudhon quoted by Raphael. Raphael, 1980, p. 11).

Cork expresses much the same sentiment when he writes that avant-garde artists should 'no longer see themselves in romantic opposition to the society they inhabit'. (Cork, 1979, p. 89). Rather, they should forge 'a language and a subject matter of demonstrable relevance to the people who view their art' and without becoming

> uncritical servants of their society, artists have once again to play a part in reflecting, diagnosing and so far as they are able changing the condition of 20th century existance. (Cork, 1979, p. 89).

If art is to regain its use value and rekindle a vital and healthy relationship with society, it will have to convince the general public that it serves 'to confirm their beliefs, to inform them about matters of lasting importance and to make the invisible visible'. (Clark, Albrecht, Barnett and Grift, eds. 1970, p.638). Only then will it regain some of its former power and become a significant force. At present, it is obviously not 'seen as dangerous, nor as a threat' (Ogbow, University of Cape Town, 1979, p. 117) because its primary role is to serve as an exclusive plaything or investment for the rich.

CHAPTER THREE

ART, SOCIALISM AND MARXIST AESTHETICS

Marxist aesthetics has its basis in Hegelian aesthetics. Thus the Hegelian dialectic between Beauty and Truth, i.e. between form and content, is also fundamental to Marxist aesthetics. (Arvon, 1973, p. 42). However, whereas Hegel argues that perfection is achieved through the unity of form and content (Arvon, 1973, p. 41) - content being a reflection of the Idea or spiritual truth - Marx 'transforms the Idea into a social entity'. (Arvon, 1973, p. 113). He therefore also maintains that the Hegelian concept of spiritual truth must be replaced by the idea of a social reality. (Arvon, 1973, p. 42).

According to Hegel it is through work that man 'produces and creates himself' (Vasquez, 1973, p. 52), while art provides him with the means to achieve 'self-affirmation or self-consciousness' and to 'answer the need of humans to externalize themselves', i.e. to make a human impression on external things. (Vasquez, 1973, p. 57).

Marx's attitude to work as well as art differs from that of Hegel in certain fundamental respects. As regards work, he points out that Hegel only discusses its role in giving form to things and in forming man. In other words, Hegel considers only the positive aspects of work, whereas Marx argues that work can be negative since it is 'based on private property and alienated

labour'. (Vasquez, 1973, p. 52). Furthermore, while Hegel maintains that 'the only kind of work ... [is] the work of the spirit, for man is a spiritual being' (Vasquez, 1973, p. 53), Marx demystifies Hegelian idealism by rejecting the transcendental and metaphysical character of Hegel's Idea. (Vasquez, 1973, p.59).

He effects a similar break with Hegel in his concept of aesthetics, for in contrast to the Hegelian implication that 'art is made by man but not for him', Marx emphasizes the anthropocentric nature of art and aesthetics 'by relating them to concrete, real and historical human beings and their practical and material activity'. (Vasquez, 1973, p. 57). For him, therefore, art is an 'advanced stage of humanizing nature'. He also argues that the essence of humanity lies in creative work, while that of art is to satisfy a specific 'human need' which goes beyond survival and procreation. (Vasquez, 1973, p. 58). Thus art is one of many needs created by man in the course of his social development. (Vasquez, 1973, p.60).

According to Arvon, Marxist aesthetics is almost impossible to understand because it has been subjected to extremely varied interpretations. (Arvon, 1973, p. 24). Orthodox Marxists do, however, seem to share some fundamental ideas, for they generally argue that the products of man (including art) must be seen as social phenomena which are all bound by a complex dialectic involving economic, political, sociological, historical and environmental factors. In other words, like all other products of society, art cannot be separated from the Marxist concept of historical materialism.

Given its attempt to consider and co-ordinate the many complex and sometimes contradictory factors influencing the products of man, it is often argued that Marxist aesthetics has had some share in the 'devaluation of subjectivity' in the study of art. (Marcuse, 1979, p. 6 . Yet many western aestheticians feel that this assumption is essentially false and that Marxist aesthetics actually involves an approach to art which is no less subjective than their own. This, they maintain, is particularly evident in the tendency for Marxist aestheticians to concentrate on content rather than form in the consideration of the art work. It is, however, important to realize that western aestheticians are able to reach this conclusion only through a refusal to acknowledge both the depth and scope of analysis made possible by an historical materialist method.

In terms of their belief in the fundamental necessity of a dialectical approach to the history of man and his products, Marxist aestheticians never reject or discard information which may further our understanding of art. Rather, they tend to assess the importance of this information relative to other factors which may have played a role in determining or influencing the artist's approach, whether it be social, political, economic, historical or cultural.

In essence, Marxist aesthetics is therefore quite undogmatic, and can be contrasted with the Neo-Platonic view that art is 'based on ideal principles considered to be valid universally and for all time'. (Egbert, 1970, p. 106).

Nevertheless, western art critics tend to insist that Marxist aesthetics is, on the contrary, based on a totally inflexible methodology. While this involves a palpably false evaluation of Marx's own writings, it is evidently founded on the fact that Stalin and his successors shifted away from an orthodox Marxist approach and adopted an 'increasingly dogmatic, sectarian and class subjectivist method in aesthetic theory and artistic practice'. (Vasquez, 1973, p. 19).

Before Stalin's rise to prominance, the attitude to art of those leading the Russian Revolution was certainly not characterized by a similar inflexibility. While Lenin maintained that art must have an ideological content and play a didactic role within society, he

> opposed any tendency of any group of artists towards a monopoly of artistic activity and refused to commit the revolutionary government to any official position on art, leaving the road open for artistic experimentation.
> (Vasquez, 1973, p. 17).

This observation finds support in a letter from Lenin to Gorky in which Lenin insisted that the artist must have the freedom to 'extract from any philosophy many things that are useful to him, even though that ideology may be idealistic'. (Lenin quoted by Arvon. Arvon, 1973, p. 34). On the other hand, Lenin's views sometimes come very close to the Neo-Platonic notion of universality for he also argued that 'great artists exceed ideological limitations to reveal the truth about reality'. (Vasquez, 1973, pp. 15-16).

The complexity and often contradictory nature of Lenin's views on art is further illustrated by the fact that he saw art as a semi-autonomous entity, arguing that 'objective reality exists independently of the human consciousness that reflects it'. (Lenin quoted by Arvon. Arvon, 1973, p. 49). The artist, he further maintained, has the right to express himself without subjecting his product to a 'mechanical egalitarianism and a domination of the minority by the majority'. (Lenin quoted by Arvon Arvon, 1973, p. 16). The latter statement, which comes from Lenin's Concerning Art and Colture, can be seen as an extension of his belief that there should be no monopoly of artistic activity by a single group of artists. In a further passage from the same source, Lenin states that

> greater scope must undoubtedly be allowed for personal initiative, individual inclination, thought and fantasy, form and content

in the creation of the art work. (Lenin quoted by Vasquez. Vasquez, 1973, p. 14).

Trotsky similarly argues that art is a semi-autonomous entity which cannot be 'judged, accepted, or rejected [only] on the basis of Marxist principles'. (Arvon, 1973, p. 18). He does, however, qualify this statement when he writes that 'only Marxism can explain why and how a certain orientation has arisen in art in any given historical period'. (Trotsky quoted by Arvon. Arvon, 1973, p. 67). In keeping with these views, he maintains that the works of the Russian Formalist writers are valid insofar as they extend our understanding of literature, but lose credi-

bility by ultimately reduci[illegible] their works to a style of expression.[1] (Arvon, 1973, p. 67).

In contrast to this reductive process, Trotsky urged artists to extend the vitality and dynamism of the revolution into art, regardless of the fact that their works might well be 'unexpected' and lack a specific proletarian direction. (Arvon, 1973, p. 17). Significantly, he was particularly enthusiastic about the Futurist experiments into movement and space and about the consciously social architectural programme developed by Gropius in the context of the Bauhaus. But throughout his writings, he constantly mutions against dogmatic prescription, and reacted forcibly when attempts were made to suggest that Soviet art of the immediate post-Revolutionary period was monitored and controlled by the State.

> It is our true [he maintained] that in our society we regard only art whose theme is the worker as new and revolutionary, and the belief that we force poets willy-nilly to write about nothing but factory chimneys or a revolt against capitalism is absurd. (Trotsky quoted by Vasquez. Vasquez, 1973, p. 18).

Whatever such early attempts to discredit those who claimed that art had been forced into an inflexible mould under Soviet rule, it is all the more ironic that it was ultimately controlled by a specific demand for Socialist Realism under Stalin and subsequent Stalinist regimes.

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1. Trotsky's observations are presumably equally applicable to the visual arts.

As has been stated, Marx himsel[illegible]
other fields - progress is governed by the Hege[illegible]alec
(Egbert, 1970, p. 101). This pre-suppose[illegible]har[illegible]ych[illegible]
including 'subject and object, knower and the thing know[illegible]
a continual process of mutual adaptation'. (Russel, 1961, [illegible]749,
Marx shows this dialectic interaction as involving [illegible] organic
progress towards the classless society, in contrast to the secular
Utopians of the 19th century who argued that the progress towards
greater egalitarianism would be linear. (Egber[illegible], 1967, p. 24).
For Marx, therefore - as, indeed, also for Proudhon - 'everything
depends on everything else and all things are linked in solidarity
with one another'. (Proudhon quoted by Raphael. Raphael, 1980,
p. 7). But whereas orthodox Marxist aestheticians argue that the
artist 'must understand and make use of his knowledge of past art'
(Egbert, 1970, p. 103) beca[illegible]e that past is an integral part of
man's historical devel[illegible]pment, Proudhon feels that this is backward
looking and 'unfruitful, a mere means of fleeing reality'.
(Raphael, 1980, p. 53). This difference between Marx's and
Proudhon's attitudes to history helps to elucidate both Lenin's
and Stalin's responses to works of art executed in post-Revolutionary
Russia. For, believing as Marx did that tradition is one of the
'inescapable determinents of art and other aspects of life', they
could not accept art which appeared to reject the past completely.
(Egbert, 1970, p. 103).

In terms of the Marxist dialectic in which everything is in
constant flux, development is not necessarily consistent for all
spheres of human activity. Thus one can never determine the

prospects for art in any given society 'because artistic development will not necessarily accord with changes in the social condition of man'. (Vasquez, 1973, p. 101).

In keeping with this interpretation of historical development, Marx adopted Hegel's concepts of 'thesis', 'anti-thesis' and 'snythesis'. In Marxist aesthetics, 'thesis' is translated as the 'dynamic unity' of form and content. But since contradictions must inevitably reside within this dynamic unity a counter-tendency or 'antithesis' will develop, with the ensuing struggle between the two resolving itself in a 'synthesis'. (Egbert, 1970, p. 98). Given his belief in an eventual classless society, Marx maintained that 'bourgeois capitalism and its art' could be seen as the thesis, in reaction to which there would be a 'dictatorship of the proletariat with its art', while the 'classless society with its art would constitute synthesis and therefore would produce the finest artistic results of all'. (Egbert, 1970, p. 98).

A central aspect of the historical materialist doctrine developed by Marx, and adopted by later aestheticians influenced by his writings, is the idea that man's identity is determined by the fact that he is a social being, and therefore that all human products - including art - must be seen in terms of man's relationship to society. In contrast to Kant whose only concern was with 'the isolated individual', Marxist aestheticians thus endeavour ' to take into account the participation of creative individuals in the common effort of mankind' to perfect the world. (Arvon, 1973, p.27). Ultimately, therefore, their concern is with society as a whole

rather than with man as an individual. As Egbert points out, Marx undoubtedly considered the individual 'to be subordinate to society' for he argued that 'the social organism is more than the sum of its individual parts'. (Egbert, 1967, pp. 22-23). Given this emphasis on defining man's identity in terms of society, it is not surprising that Marxist aestheticians are against individualistic self-expression and generally deride the philosophy of art for art's sake. Instead, they usually urge the artist to devote 'his art and himself to social action' toward the eventual attainment of the classless society. (Egbert, 1967, pp. 22-23).

This attitude finds expression in Lenin's contention that

> art belongs to the people. It must have its deepest roots in the broad masses of the workers. It must be understood and loved by them. (Lenin quoted by Egbert. Egbert, 1967, p. 58).

According to him, the tendency towards abstraction evident in Russian art of the period immediately before and after the October Revolution was too individualistic and socially undisciplined to be acceptable. Artists who adopted an abstract formal vocabulary, he argued, were 'specialists' who alienated themselves from the masses and arrogantly assumed the right to

> speak in the name of the working class and [take] advantage of the turmoil of the revolution to present as novelties their petty-bourgeois ideas. (Egbert, 1967, p. 58).

Believing, moreover, that these artists - as well as those

associated with the avant-garde European art movements on which Russian abstraction was founded - were far too willing to divorce themselves from history and the doctrine of historical materialism, Lenin finally maintained: 'I cannot value the works of Expressionism, Futurism, Cubism and the other isms as the highest expressions of artistic genius'. Evidently, however, his response was not entirely determined by a belief in the necessity for the artist to establish and maintain an awareness of history, for he concluded the above statement by saying that he neither understood nor found pleasure in the works of artists associated with these movements. (Egbert, 1967, p. 57).

Undoubtedly, Marxist aestheticians would relate such an inability to understand and appreciate the work of art to a lack of social and historical awareness on the part of the artist. As Raphael points out, Marx himself believed that

> only an autocthonous mythology could serve as a step towards art, i.e. a mythology originating in the same soil, the same people, the same cultural background, the same economic order. (Raphael, 1980, p. 89).

For a mythological system or artistic tradition to be relevant, it must therefore be a 'product of the people' and not a purely private or personal activity. (Raphael, 1980, p. 89). This observation must, however, be qualified, for most Marxist aesthetic-ians would certainly not equate the idea of ar art for the people with a national or localized artistic tradition. On the contrary, they argue that aesthetics should ideally be a universal field and

consequently maintain that national movements in art are unacceptable partly because they are often dogmatic and sectarian. (Vasquez, 1973, p. 22).

Egbert and Vasquez, both of whom have looked at the problem of the relationship between art and society, and more particularly at the implications of Marxist aesthetics, have concluded that art can never be defined entirely in terms of a specific social dimension. Egbert's reasons for this contention stem from the fact that he believes that works of art are not only 'products of a given social environment but also unique products of exceptional individuals'. (Egbert, 1967, p. 3). While evidently agreeing in principle with what he has to say, Vasquez nevertheless also feels that the autonomy of the art work 'exists only by, in, and through its social conditioning'. (Vasques, 1973, p.98). He further maintains that 'there is no such thing as "art for art's sake"... only art by and for man' (Vasquez, 1973, p. 44), and suggests that even though man is not always the direct object of artistic representation, all objects which are represented artistically ultimately reflect a certain relationship to mankind. (Vasquez, 1973, p. 30). Thus regardless of whether or not they agree on the question of autonomy in art, Marxist aestheticians always return to a basic belief in the fact that reality is 'primarily a social reality', (Egbert, 1967, p. 17). Orthodox Marxists go one step further for they maintain that this social reality must, in turn, be seen as a product of the prevailing economic conditions. (Egbert, 1967, p. 17).

However, contrary to what western critics generally maintain, Marxist aestheticians never argue that art is determined by economics alone. As Osborne points out, Marx's viewpoint undoubtedly 'fell short of a complete economic determinism' for he believed that the cultural superstructure and not only the economic base can be said to play an important role in determining social relations. (Osborne, 1970, p. 28).

Engels believed that this superstructure, which Marxists equate with political, judicial, philosophical, religious and literary institutions, has a dynamic relationship both to the economic base and to itself, thereby ensuring that a complex dialectic will always be in progress. Thus 'the economic situation is not the cause, it is not the sole agent' dominating all other factors, nor do these other factors forming the superstructure of society have a 'merely passive effect; rather there is a reciprocal effect....' (Arvor, 1973, pp. 25-26).

Arvon further suggests that it is possible to draw an analogy between the relationship which form has to content in the work of art and the relationship of the economic base to the ideological superstructure in Marxist theory. Just as the 'superstructure is surordinate to the economic base', he writes, 'so is form subordinated to content, but like ideology it has some autonomy'. (Arvon, 1973, p. 41).

As regards the relationship between art and the doctrine of a dialectical interaction, Marxist aestheticians further maintain

that the constantly changing principles of design and composition in painting (as well as other visual art forms) are influenced by the changing modes of economic production in a particular society, time and place . (Egbert, 1970, p. 105). At the same time, Marx was well aware of the fact that

> cultural production is not necessarily proportionate to economic development and that progress in one does not mean progress in the other. (Rader, 1967, p. 238).

This recognition that development is not always uniform for all spheres of human activity, and that it certainly does not necessarily parallel economic changes within society, helps to explain why Marx refused to regard works of art as economic commodities except under the influence of capitalism. With capitalism, he argued

> all the so-called higher forms of labour - intellectual, artistic etc. - ... having lost their former sacredness ... are admired for what they will fetch rather than their quality as art. (Egbert, 1967, pp. 19-20).

Marx thus believed that an emphasis on the exchange rather than the use value of works of art could be seen as an apt reflection of a society dominated by a capitalist economy and by a particular mode of production, political organization and class structure.

But while Marxists maintain that works of art cannot be considered as commodities (except under capitalism), they generally argue that art and labour are closely related. Unlike Aristotle and

Hegel, both of whom spoke of man as a rational animal, Marx regarded man as a 'productive, labouring animal', and believed that it is the inevitability of this labour which enables him to humanize not only himself but also his environment. (Rader, 1967, p. 238).

However, where there is a division of labour man loses contact with his immediate environment and thus becomes alienated from it. Under capitalism, this division evidently extends to artistic production, firstly because art is no longer seen as a form of labour, and secondly, because it has witnessed a growing schism between mind and hand, project and execution, goal and realization. (Vasquez, 1973, p. 67). A further consequence of the division of labour under capitalism is the tendency towards increasing specialization which in art has led to the 'concentration of artistic talent in certain individuals, and its ... suppression in the broad masses of the people'. (Marx and Engels quoted by Egbert. Egbert, 1970, p. 100). In contrast to this development, Marxist aestheticians believe that within the ideal environment of the future classless society art and labour will cease to be divided and will, in fact, share the essence of creativity. (Vasquez, 1973, p. 63).

A further aspect of Marxist theory is the idea that social classes are essential vehicles of the dialectical interaction which leads to change within society. (Russell, 1961, p. 753). Since Marxist aestheticians generally argue that 'all art is class propaganda for good or bad' (Egbert, 1970, p. 108), this stress on the importance

or class structure is undoubtedly also fundamental to a consideration of art.

As has already been noted, Marx believed that the ideas of the ruling class are always dominant within any given society, and consequently that any art created within a particular context will undoubtedly reflect the ideology of those in power. (Vasquez, 1973, p. 84). On the other hand, Marx also believed that great works of literature - and this would presumably apply to the visual arts as well - 'are never cast in the partisan mould of a single class', for

> they express the relationships of various classes within a society as a whole, enabling their authors to rise above their class bias in a manner of speaking. (Arvon, 1973, p. 32).

In other words, Marx felt that while an artist obviously cannot be divorced from his own social background, in some instances he has the ability to 'become aware of the dialectic of history' and therefore reveal the 'real dynamic forces underlying social evolution' in an objective manner. (Arvon, 1973, p. 32). According to him the novels of the 19th century French writer, Balzac, typify this potential for the artist to transcend his own class. In his novels, Marx argued, Balzac succeeded in depicting the relationship between various classes in a realistic way, and this despite the fact that he himself had grown up in a comparitively priviledged environment. (Arvon, 1973, p. 33).

The undeniable importance for Marx of a realistic and objective analysis of the social and historical conditions of man raises the problem of what he referred to as 'false consciousness', which he believed to be the outcome of a system where labour is divided. According to him, a division of labour inevitably leads to a division of 'material and mental' processes so that man's awareness of and insight into reality becomes narrow and subjective. (Arvon, 1973, p. 32). Evidently, Marx admired Balzac precisely because he was able to circumvent this problem and give an accurate portrayal of society as a whole, not just a fragment seen from a partisan point of view.

In Marxist aesthetics the idea of 'false consciousness' is also significant to the relationship between form and content in the art work, primarily because Marx believed that since content must always be the expression of 'truth', the artist's only scope for freedom and originality lies in the actual form which his work might take. This tendency to subordinate form to content - in fact, to reject a formalist approach as meaningless - has often led to Marxist aestheticians being criticized because their emphasis on content is seen as no more than a means to ensure that art will play a party political and hence propagandist role. Such criticism is certainly not entirely groundless, for Lenin once actually said that the 'cause of literature must become part of the general cause of the proletariat ... ' and condemned literary activities that did not further the efforts of the Party. (Arvon, 1973,

pp. 14 - 15).[2]

It must, however, be remembered that Marxist aestheticians - and indeed, many other critics and art historians - believe that all art, whether consciously or unconsciously, is invariably propagandist. In totalitarian states such as the U.S.S.R. and Cuba, art is carefully controlled to ensure that it actually conforms to party political ideals. This attitude finds expression in Fidel Castro's observation that art is either for the revolution or against it. (Castro. Baxandall, ed. 1972, p. 276), as well as in his contention that the 'government has the right to review and censor the media that so influence the people'. (Castro. Baxandall, ed. 1972, p. 282).

In 1938, Andre Breton and Diego Rivera made a joint statement in which they said that they believed 'that the supreme task of art in our epoch is to take part actively and consciously in the preparation of the revolution'. (Breton and Rivera quoted by Egbert. Egbert, 1967, p. 104). Evidently they were both convinced that art could actually be used as a weapon for social change. Not all Marxists would agree with this contention, for at least some of them believe that art is a distraction in the class struggle and that the good Marxist should devote himself solely to political

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2. This statement, made by Lenin in 1905, was later refuted by his wife who maintained that Lenin had only intended his words to be a guideline for 'party publications and not creative works of literature'. (Arvon, 1973, p. 15). Given Lenin's generally inconsistant attitude to art, it is impossible to determine the validity of her assessment of his views.

Egbert, 1970, p. 104). In other words,
Marxist actually feel that art can play no meaningful role
ging the human condition.

itude, art has certainly not been eliminated in
es asserting to be Marxist. On the contrary, the govern-
ountries tend to manipulate both art and the mass
Castro believes they should be manipulated,
the philosophy of the Party. (Kiralyfalvi, 1981,
from the fact that this subordination of art to
requirements in 'socialist' countries is an extremely
attempting to enlighten the people (Fischer,
,). It inevitably leads to a state of alienation between
. As Poggioli points out, far from
onsensus', i.e. a true
, Soviet art is nothing more than what
'suprematization' of culture. (Poggioli. Albrecht,
rift, 1970, pp. 682 - 683).

is therefore very far from the ideal, a fact
when one considers that during the 1920's
felt was the genuine freedom of artists
context to the 'mere show of freedom enjoyed
writers in a moneyed and corrupt world'. (Arvon,
1973,). Those writers, he argued at the time, were no
(Arvon, 1973, p. 16), presumably because

socialism, i.e. the era of the [illegible] or communist society. In this future Utopia, he argued, art would cease to be exclusive or elitist since all men would be artists. The artist would, moreover, no longer be

> [illegible] [illegible]
> [illegible] communist society, there are no painters, but at most men who, among other things, also paint. (Marx and Engels quoted by [illegible]gbert [illegible]ert, 1970, p. 100).

[illegible] social and above all didactic. Undoubtedly, this partly accounts for the official adoption of Socialist Realism in many [illegible] socialist countries.

[illegible] contact with life and therefore suggested that

> a work of art must contain as little of [illegible] as possible; everything in it must be ... expressed concretely [illegible] (Quoted by Hilton. Hilton-[illegible]ton and [illegible]in, eds. 1970, p. 110).

maintained that content remained the [illegible] important

who [illegible] usually classified as Constructivists, placed considerable stress on [illegible] in their [illegible] of these

ment which was led by [illegible] his wife [illegible] and the Vesnin sculptors - rejected all content in art and simply developed a [illegible] ment was [illegible] by the [illegible] and Persner and continued by [illegible] Stenberg brothers [illegible] the Pevsners' departure from the U.S.S.R. in 1920-21.

rule firstly because they [illegible] to disregard the past and hence also the necessity of a dialectic development towards the classless

and secondly, the avant-garde nature of their

The initial art's were s unsystematic that further problems were in determing the importance of and other regional art forms as well as the artistic traditions of western

the 1920's, by 1924 a sharp schism had developed between one action wh. n was d by Bukharin, and another which was led by alike the latter group maintained that the Revolution sh uld be international rather than regional and there-

Egbert, 1967, p. 2).

As already been Trotsky in fact approved of the new styles and techniques of the Futurists because he believed that

. 64) and presumably also because of the international scope which

very important of the Communist Party who appro to the Third International (Fig. 1)

ularly sympathetic to the development o a functionalist architecture - the International Style of the - for which the Bauhaus had been partly responsible.

experimental techniques of Tatlin

utonomous almost synonomous

ecting a separation between form and

Stalinist ttacks on Trot ky for his so-called

were certainly emphatic

laimed that Bukharin believed that

this, they felt, [illegible] a denial of the Party as the leading agent [illegible] communism. (Egbert, 1967, p. 67).

By 1929 Stalin had begun to attack all art which could be considered mechanistic and was therefore also unwilling to accept some seemingly conservative academic artists for what he called their photo-realism, i.e. their 'mechanically literal reproductions of [illegible] all passive in their observation of life. (Egbert, 1967, p. 69). It was to counter this mechanistic trend that he adopted Socialist [illegible] historically concrete representations of reality, as the official doctrine for the arts. (Fig. 14). In a statute issued by the Congress, the artist was urged 'to contribute to the ideological [illegible] Socialist Realism was that the artist follow a Marxist-Leninist ideology, [illegible] that the new official art could only be translated into genuine art through talent, experience and profess- [illegible]

By 1936 this dogmatic attitude was further extended by the Central Committee on Art which attempted to ensure a far more careful control of the ideology of artists by laying down specific rules for content. A direct consequence of the entrenchment of Socialist Realism through the actions of this committee was the establishment

'6 . p. 81).

Following Stalin's death in 1953, the [illegible]ionists questioned the [illegible]'s right to control the [illegible] even advocated a certain [illegible] sculpture continued to be domin:ted by a [illegible] on social cont.nt. Baxanda Baxandall, ed. 1972, p. [illegible] The apparent freedom o; the art st[illegible]

CHAPTER FOUR

Many artists, critics and

the present position and future potenti

of South African art.

values and

African art does exist:

which are pertinent to the

South African situation, th[illegible]rt produced in South [illegible] subject to the influenc[illegible] of ideological and [illegible].

According to Kinloch, South Afr[illegible] is dominated by a 'class-caste system' (Kinloch, 19[illegible]2, p. 4[illegible]) which has its origins in an economic dif[illegible]ferentiation between the various population groups. (Kinloch, [illegible], p. 7[illegible]). At its most basic level, this economically determined [illegible]ass structure is evident in the schism between black and [illegible]Sc[illegible]h Africans, but it is also apparent in the struggle for economic and political control between the Afrikaans and English-speaking population groups. To this must be added further determining influences such as culture, religion and history. In other words, the [illegible]ial and [illegible]storical factors forming what Marx called the superstructure [illegible]society, and which he believed always interacted with the economic base to ensure the perpetuation of a [illegible]dialectic within [illegible]ven [illegible]ocial situation.

While these issues are complex, their probable significance to the [illegible]ception of [illegible]ltural products, including art, must nevertheless be acknowledged. Also significant is the incompatibility of the concept of society with that of plurality. For while the former [illegible] [illegible]r th[illegible]n number, denoting division and differences, [illegible]s Kinloch points out, means 'a group together'. (Kinloch, [illegible] p. [illegible] Epigirdles. of how incorrect this juxtaposition of a multiplicity of cultures with the idea of a single society may be, it is nevertheless precisely because differences and divisions have been cultivated within South Africa that the whites - and more especially, the Afrikaners - have succeeded in maintaining

resistance and political control. As Boonzaier argues, '... the strength of group identity among Afrikaners is ... a function of economic and political interests', (Boonzaier, Cars, Dimmick and Van Breemen, 1984, p. 3). Thus within the South African context, barriers are artificially maintained between the various population groups on stressing cultural differences, and a splintering of society into relatively small and unstable sub-groups is consequently ensured in the face of Afrikaner unity and white control.

Inevitably, these artificially created and maintained barriers, which extend beyond the cultural sphere to economic, political and economic activities as well, has led to the establishment of rigid theories on the nature of social behaviour and social change (Kissack, 1972, p. xii, and hence also on social products such as art. Given this situation, it would be inaccurate to speak of the nature of art in South Africa in terms of '(inter)nationalism', 'provincialism', and 'ethnicity'. (Watson, N.U.S.A.S., 1979, p.27). As Watson argues, while the issues of cultural influences, of liaison contact with avant-garde developments elsewhere, and of cultivating ethnicity are constantly in the news with reference to South African art, they remain more or less irrelevant to the local situation. For 'it is the nature of the state ... which bears ultimate responsibility for the nature of art' in this country. (Watson, N.U.S.A.S., 1979, p. 27). In other words, the needs of the dominant ideology is much more significant to a consideration of the development of locally executed art works than any outside factors. And since this ideology is founded on a belief that divisions within

society must be stringently maintained, [illegible] cer[illegible] Africa is characterized by extremely marked cultural di[illegible] Black artists working indigenously thus execute works [illegible]h generally differ enormously from those created by whites, and [illegible] within these broad categories substantial differences between the art of smaller sub-groups are evident. Whether the South African artist likes to admit it or not, his art ultimately gives expression to the divided structure of our society.

While numerous South African artists recognize the importance [illegible] their relationship to society, there are many more who believe tha[illegible] art has an autonomous identity. They generally refuse to acknowledge that it is often a form of propaganda and that it usually reinforces the interests of the dominant [illegible]logy. (See Clark. Albrecht, Barnett and Griff, eds. 1970, pp. 635 - 650).

As will be demonstrated, this tendency to stress the autonomy of art is more common among South African painters and sculptors than among poets, novelists and playwrights. The development of this situation can, in part, be ascribed to the dependence of music and literature on active audience involvement, i.e. a direct communication with, and participation on the part of society, while painting and sculpture are generally restricted to a museum environment. Moreover, unlike most painters and sculptors, musicians and playwrights tend to depend on widespread public patronage for

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1. It should be noted here that there is a vast difference between a consciously cultivated ethnicity stemming from the artist's pride in his own heritage, and the imposition of a cultural identity from without to ensure the division of one population group from another.

the survival of their art forms. They are therefore generally encouraged to deal with issues that are relevant and intelligible to many South Africans, in fact, to ensure that art remains a means of communication in the broadest possible sense.

In the visual arts, the emphasis on pluralism, and the consequent general lack of a unified identity seems to have led South African artists to conclude that a truly representative indigenous art cannot be achieved. (Coetzee. Herber, ed. 1979, p. 20). South African painters and sculptors thus tend to conceive of their identity as determined by universal criteria or, more correctly, by links to western Europe and the U.S.A. Hence they express little or nothing about the reality of their immediate environment.

In keeping with this tendency to avoid or ignore pertinent social issues, many South African artists, among them Christo Coetzee, are also in favour of the romantic notion that artists tend to work according to their intuitions. At the same time, Coetzee maintains that they can act as a mirror to, and are therefore not divorced from society. (Coetzee. Herber, ed. 1979, p. 18). Taken together, these statements are highly significant for they suggest an unresolved attitude to the role of the artist and his art, which seems to be quite common among painters and sculptors working in this country.

Although evidencing some contradictions, Coetzee's views on art are nevertheless not as clearly oriented to a belief in the autonomy of the artist and his works as are those of Bill Ainslee. According

to him, the artist's primary challenge is to define the limits of art. He also maintains that art need not 'serve any orthodoxy ... religious ... state or commercial orthodoxy' and can therefore be freed from all ideological ties. (Ainslee. Herber, ed. 1979, p. 105).

This attitude is taken to an extreme by Judith Mason, who categorically denies the significance of all external influences to her work. In a recent interview she said: 'I'm not interested in being a white artist in South Africa, or a woman artist in South Africa'. (Mason. Herber, ed. 1979, p 76). Thus Mason not only refuses to accept that her environment may have an important influence on her work, but actually goes so far as to negate her own fundamental identity as a white South African woman.

Mason's contention regarding her own identity is symptomatic of an attitude that has become widespread among English-speaking, as well as several Afrikaans-speaking South Africans who question the validity of an exclusive group identity, for they tend to deny their links with South Africa. Since the cultures of the indigenous black population is generally inaccessible to them due to enforced separation between whites and blacks, and since they have not developed a truly distinctive culture of their own, these South Africans tend to cling desparately to their cultural links with Europe and the U.S.A. In painting and sculpture, this finds expression in a tendency to emulate contemporary European and American trends.

In contrast to this aspiration to an autonomous artistic identity

and an affiliation with contemporary art movements abroad[2] there are several, mainly Afrikaans-speaking painters and sculptors who are not alienated from their social situation, and who therefore produce works which often give conscious support to the ideological aspirations of the Afrikaners.[3]

This tradition seems to have been established by Anton Van Wouw, initially in relatively simple but monumental realist images of prominent Afrikaner figures like Paul Kruger, but ultimately also in public monuments erected to the memory of Afrikaner men and women who made a meaningful, if often anonymous contribution to the establishment of the Afrikaner's group identity. The sculptures for the Women's Momument near Bloemfontein, which Van Wouw executed in 1914 in rememberance of those who died in concentration camps during the Anglo-Boer War, are some of the first works created in this genre. (Fig. 16). The more contemporary works of an artist like Coert Steynberg serve to continue and confirm this trend.

Any art conforming to a particular view of the social conditions of man is nevertheless generally regarded with considerable scepticism by the majority of South African artists. Like their European and American counterparts, most South African artists thus reject the idea of creating works which give conscious and direct expression to their attitude to specific socio-political issues, in the apparent belief that this will necessarily lead to an infringement on their

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2. This is discussed more fully with reference to a questionnaire sent to seventy South African artists in February, 1982. See Appendix I.

3. A similar integration is usually evident in traditional or tribal African art. This observation is probably also valid in a consideration of the traditional arts of South African tribes, but must await definite confirmation. Apart from the research presently being conducted on the traditional figurative carvings of the Shona and Venda by A.E. Nettleton, and on the paintings and beadwork of the Ndebele by E. Schneider, hardly any research has thus far been undertaken in this field.

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creative freedom and talent.

In keeping with this attitude, the South African composer, Peter Klatzow, argues that

> too much emphasis is laid on ... whether art is African or not African or even South African. A nationalist art, in one sense, is a narrow art. (Klatzow. Herber, ed. 1979, p. 82).

His attempt to separate art from its immediate social reality finds support in Wilma Stockenström's contention that it would be 'narrow' for the artist to commit himself to social comment. (Stockenström. Herber, ed. 1979, p. 64), as well as in Neville Dubow's rejection of the idea that the artist should work against his natural instincts in the cause of social commitment. According to him, this would lead to 'artistically hollow' statements. (Dubow. University of Cape Town, 1979, p. 122).

However, Dubow and others who have broached this subject omit to comment on the incredibly forcefully maintained State ideology in South Africa. In view of this situation, any artist who does not actively resist ideological pressure gives support to the dominant ideology, even if this support is usually only indirect and not consciously intended.[4] It is therefore all the more important to produce works of art which will counterbalance - if not actually counteract - the images produced by artists who give either direct or indirect support to the dominant ideology.

Since one of the central postulates of the present dissertation is

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4. The importance of this issue is discussed by Tax, who argues that 'in our times, to refrain from mentioning genocide, racism, cultural schizophrenia, sexual exploitation and the systematic starvation of entire populations is itself a political act'. (Tax. Bixandall, ed. 1972, p. 16).

that works of art either consciously or unconsciously give expression to the social environment in which the artist finds himself, it has also been suggested that if he denies the influence of this environment on his works, he will become alienated from his audience, and create a false impression of reality in the images he creates. Undoubtedly, such falsifications are often encouraged by the dominant ideology to ensure the maintenance of existing conditions through an avoidance of pressing social issues.

If the artist is to avoid falsification and subordination to an ideology which he does not wish to support, his work has to involve a conscious exploration of his environment.[5] The importance of this has been stressed by the writer, Adam Small, who believes that the artist's work must reflect the realities of a specific time and place. (Small. Herber, ed. 1979, p. 101). The validity of his contention is further demonstrated, as well as extended by Robert Medley's apt comparison between food and ideas:

> Ideas, like food, are transportable. But like food they don't always travel well and are often best consumed on the spot where grown. (Medley. Brighton and Morris, eds. 1977, p. 130).

In other words, the ideas informing works of art will have far greater relevance to the society in which they are created than to an audience unfamiliar with the environmental factors influencing the artist.

This attitude is upheld by many South African writers, playwrights, actors and poets. Ampie Coetzee, for instance, argues that

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5. The term environment is used in the widest possible sense, i.e. in reference to the social, political, economic and cultural realities with which the artist comes into daily contact.

literature, like theatre, is a social act and therefore cannot be divorced from its social context. 'Literature and theatre' he states 'have to comment and take note of the society....I'm saying I don't think we can afford an elite kind of literature.' (Coetzee. Herber, ed. 1979, p. 119). Andre Brink similarly argues that writing is a social act: 'Essentially one writes for the audience one knows, all the people one lives with, that one shares things with'. Brink further states that if his writing is to have any relevance, 'it must be tied to my specific society'. (Brink. Herber, ed. 1979, p. 10). The director-actor Benjy Francis, extends this argument, and acknowledges the most fundamental reality for any South African artist when he states that

> I cannot run away from the fact that I'm a child of apartheid: I'm a child of South Africa. And whatever I say seems to have, or should definitely have, some colour of that experience. (Francis. Herber, ed. 1979, p. 158).

But if art is to reflect the social reality of the artist and be relevant to the audience it addresses, one is still posed with the problem of what can be defined as 'relevant' communication. Although obviously not unique to South African society, the controversy centring around this issue is demonstrated by the answers received to a questionnaire sent out to a number of South African artists. (See Appendix I). It is also an issue which preoccupied the playwright Bertolt Brecht, who posed the problem of which 'truths' were actually worth telling. As he sarcastically noted: 'It is not untrue that chairs have seats and that rain falls downward',

But these, he pointed out, are trivial truths, and those who represent them 'are like painters adorning the walls of sinking ships with a still life ....'. (Brecht quoted by Tax. Tax. Baxandall, ed. 1972, p. 17).

Meredith Tax uses this statement as a basis for her attack on critics who accept trivia in the name of art. Mimicking what she believes is a widespread attitude among contemporary critics, she writes that

> a poet's job is to do his thing .... Naturally he will write about what is important or central to him, personally, and who am I to interfere with another man's system of values?'. (Tax. Baxandall, ed. 1972, pp. 16 -17).

As Tax implies, if a system of values is trivial, if the artist is oblivious to the larger issues within his environment, he denies his own potential as a thinking and feeling human being concerned with relevant anthropomorphic communication. Her contention finds support in Diego Rivera's belief that

> The social struggle is the richest, the most intense and the most plastic subject which an artist can choose. Therefore, one who is born to be an artist can certainly not be insensible to such developments. (Rivera. Shapiro, ed. 1973, p. 55).

Despite the fact that the works of artists such as Goldberg and Stopforth are informed by a consciously demonstrated awareness of

social realities in South Africa, Goldberg does not believe that art can play any significant role in the struggle for political liberation. (Goldberg. University of Cape Town, 1979, p. 126). Evidently, Paul Stopforth would agree with this contention, for although he regards his work as being essentially anthropomorphic and political in content, he does not believe that it is important for it to be seen by a mass audience. (Fig. 17). Whether it becomes visible to twenty or thirty or a hundred people, is, he maintains, not the issue. He further argues that the act of communication is

> peripheral to the actual making of the work .... The fact that I deal with this kind of imagery [i.e. political subjects] is an attempt to try and exorcise this constant worrying or 'scab-picking'. (Stopforth.[i.e. political ed. 1979, p. 54).

For Stopforth, therefore, dealing with issues which are highly pertinent to the society in which he lives is above all a personal cathartic process.

Significantly, his interpretation of his position relative to his own work has the further effect of negating the primary function of art, i.e. communication, and gives expression to an elitist attitude through his stated indifference to the general public. At the mid-1982 'Culture and Resistance Symposium' held in Gaborone, Botswana, the importance of ensuring the contrary, i.e. of upholding the role of art as communication to a mass audience, was stressed in an anonymously quoted statement :

> If a [illegible] play is relevant to our situation of conflict and if it is sympathetic to the masses, it will still serve no serious purpose if it is staged in the wrong place. (Art and Conflict in South Africa. Culture and Resistance Symposium, Gaborone, 1982, p. 3).

Given the fact that Stopforth deals with highly emotive political issues like death in detention and detention without trial, a concern with communicating this content to a wide audience, and not just the relatively few people who frequent South African commercial galleries, would involve a small but highly significant shift in emphasis.

In contrast to his works, those of black artists working for a white market are often ineffectual and quite sentimental. In an apparent attempt to appease their white audience, these artists generally uphold the myth of the black man as naive and picturesque. (Fig. 18). Although much of this art, which is now usually referred to as 'township art', is typically anthropomorphic in content, the tendency for black artists to sentimentalize social situations and to produce stereotypical images of their own population groups finally leaves their works without any real meaning. As Ozynski points out: 'Ultimately, the black artist has to remove the sting from his story, in order to render it innocuous for his audience.' (Ozynski. University of Cape Town, 1979, p. 35).

Apart from the control of 'township art' by a white market, it should also be noted that the art of black cultures is traditionally

[illegible] the objects [illegible] separable from the [illegible]. Even [illegible] able that the two-dimensional images [illegible] artists are ineffectual and socially irrelevant. On this basis, a further significant distinction can be drawn between contemporary black theatre, poetry, music and literature, and the visual arts. For while the former have their roots in oral traditions, and like these traditions, all strive to communicate socially relevant issues to a black audience, the visual arts have shifted out of their traditional three-dimensional medium and away from their traditional black audience.

According to Andrew Verster, black and white South African artists are generally 'technically proficient', but in spite of this their works 'can be discounted as irrelevant and out of touch with contemporary South African reality'. (Verster. University of Cape Town, 1979, p. 21). Cecil Skotnes similarly argues that 'western political and cultural domination' in South Africa has led to 'a universal art form quite detached from the present social and political trends' (Skotnes. University of Cape Town, 1979, p. 17). While these observations are not inaccurate, it could be argued that all works of art produced in South Africa give expression to an essentially unique social situation.

Apart from the obvious control which the State has over the erection of public buildings, sculpture and monuments, there is also

[illegible] more unobtrusive [illegible] look upon themselves as independent artists. Among these [illegible] are many white South African painters, including Sumner, Pierneef and Preller (Fig. [illegible]) who have devoted their energies to landscape painting [illegible] depiction of the indigenous people of southern Africa, but whose works could ultimately be said to reflect the white man as master and colonist. As such, their paintings are an extension of the topographical works executed in the first wave of British colonial expansion in South Africa by artists like Baines and Daniell.(Fig. 20). These images, it could be argued, celebrate the white man's ownership and conquest of the land as well as its people.[6] As Ozynski points out, the stereotypical depiction of people in early topographical paintings as well as in many contemporary South African works, serves 'to actively reinforce the idea of white superiority', and this. together with the treatment of the landscape itself, tends to 'mystify ... actual social and economic relations ....' (Ozynski. University of Cape Town. 1979, p. 32). Ozynski further argues that the stereotyping of the black man 'transforms the subject into a spectacle for the benevolent, paternalistic white viewer' and prevents the participants from evolving active social relationships. (Ozynski. University of Cape Town, 1979, p. 32).

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6. Studies on the history of landscape painting in which the authors concentrate on the social relations depicted in them are relatively new, but have become increasingly common in the past decade. Particularly significant for the development of this methodology is Barrell's The Dark Side of the Landscape which considers attitudes to the rural poor reflected in the works of Gainsborough, Morland and Constable. See also L. Bell's [illegible] on 'colonial' art which is listed in the Bibliography.

the more unobtrusive images of those who look upon themselves as independent artists. Among these there are many white South African painters, including Sumner, Pierneef and Preller (Fig. 19) who have devoted their energies to landscape painting and to the depiction of the indigenous people of southern Africa, but whose works could ultimately be said to reflect the white man as master and colonist. As such, their paintings are an extension of the topographical works executed in the first wave of British colonial expansion in South Africa by artists like Baines and Daniell.(Fig. 20). These images, it could be argued, celebrate the white man's ownership and conquest of the land as well as its people.[6] As Ozynski points out, the stereotypical depiction of people in early topographical paintings as well as in many contemporary South African works, serves 'to actively reinforce the idea of white superiority', and this, together with the treatment of the landscape itself, tends to 'mystify ... actual social and economic relations ....' (Ozynski. University of Cape Town. 1979, p. 32). Ozynski further argues that a stereotyping of the black man 'transforms the subject into a spectacle for the benevolent, paternalistic white viewer' and prevents the participants from evolving active social relationships. (Ozynski. University of Cape Town, 197-, p. 32).

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A tendency to avoid contentious issues in this way, to falsify social conditions, is an accurate reflection of accepted practices in South Africa. The works of artists like Preller can therefore be said to give expression to the aims of the dominant ideology by mystifying and romanticizing, i.e. distancing the life of the black man from the reality and experience of the white man. (Fig. 19). Artists like Bill Ainslee, George Boys and Gavin Atkinson, all of whom have adopted an abstract vocabularly of forms, could also be said to reinforce the interests of the dominant ideology through an avoidance of relevant social content. This contention finds further support in Ozynski's belief that abstraction in the South African context complements 'the powerfully repressive forces of State morality through its inability to express an active opposition to the ruling class.' (Ozynski. University of Cape Town, 1979, p. 33). Given this situation, one could conclude, as Gavin Younge does, that

> the political and economic dominance of the white middle classes ensures that it is their values and their culture which predominate. (Younge. University of Cape Town, 1979, p. 42).

This statement finds support in the views of other South African artists. Verster, however, argues that it is more specifically the culture of the Afrikaner that predominates. The Afrikaner, he maintains, has defined both his own identity and that of the other population groups living in South Africa. (Verster. University of Cape Town, 1979, p. 22). The effect of this on the visual arts has been to encourage a state of alienation between the artist and

his immediate environment, for he seldom has to active personal relationship with it. Consequently, South African art has become impotent and the visual artist is therefore simply 'either tolerated or ignored'.[7] (Andrew, University of Cape Town, 1979, p. [4]).

The unwillingness of South African artists to oppose the dominant ideology is, in fact, so widespread and so complete that the government is able to 'use art extensively to promote the country's image abroad'. (Verster, University of Cape Town, 1979, p. 27). Whether black or white, academic or avant-garde, there are undoubtedly very few South African artists who do not contribute to the maintenance of the present political, social and economic conditions. Ironically, it is their insistance on ensuring the autonomy of art that has, and will continue to blind most artists to the fact that they are bound by powerful controlling forces.

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7. Gavin Younge suggests that a toleration of art in South Africa is more relevant in a consideration of content than in the actual form which works may take. An image of a resettlement camp for a limited edition of prints executed by him was subsequently banned when presented as a poster. (Younge, University of Cape Town, 1979, p. 44).

CONCLUSION

Whether capitalist or socialist, truly democratic societies traditionally encourage freedom of speech and action regardless of whether this may manifest itself in criticism against powerful and controlling institutions. In these countries the artist is at liberty to express his own artistic preferences provided that he does not, in the process, infringe on the rights of others. Yet his work is generally quite ineffectual: It plays little, if any, role in the life of most people and is subject to the whims of an acutely fashion-conscious market. Thus regardless of whether the images he executes are abstract or representational, socially relevant or not, it would appear that his art often becomes a peripheral form of entertainment. In many instances it is no more than a means of enhancing domestic interiors, and in capitalist countries, it has simply become another form of investment.

In South Africa, which is essentially oligarchic in its political structure, the State restricts the freedom of the individual. This restriction of freedom extends to the creation and presentation of cultural products - music, literature, theatre and the visual arts - which are all subject to censorship and may even be banned. The authorities thus pay artists 'the compliment of seeing them as ... potentially dangerous' when they do not conform to the canons laid down by the State. (Dubow. University of Cape Town, 1979, p. 117). It is, however, significant that in South Africa the visual arts are considered comparatively innocuous, and unlike literature and the theatre, they are therefore generally ignored by the

Censorship Board. With very few exceptions this is also true for art works of a political nature.[1]

The reasons for the distinction which the South African government appears to draw between the visual and other art forms is, as Gavin Younge has pointed out with reference to his poster, probably related to the actual medium of communication rather than just the content of the work. In other words, art forms which could attract a comparatively large audience or which may have a wide distribution, are subject to far more stringent governmental scrutiny if they are critical of existing social and political conditions, than politically or socially motivated painting and sculpture which are generally inaccessible to the public at large. Thus, unless the arts utilize mass communication techniques or mass media forms, they evidently pose no significant threat to the authorities.[2]

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1. The poster by Gavin Younge discussed in Chapter IV is a significant exception.

2. An important exception to this tendency is provided by several images of political detainees executed by Paul Stopforth and chosen to represent South Africa in the Chile Biennale of 1982, but prevented from leaving this country because of the government's contention that they could not be considered as representative of mass public sentiment. This reaction could also be ascribed to the fact that one of the images, entitled Biko, would have proved politically embarrassing in the wake of an international outcry following Biko's death in detention. Significantly, the latter incident also tends to confirm Verster's belief that South African art is used as a propaganda tool by the authorities, i.e. that it is only of interest to them if it serves to promote the country's image abroad.

However, since art generally tends to have a limited relevance and is incomprehensible to all but an elite few (Clark. Albrecht, Barrett and Griff, eds. 1970), the possibility of communicating with a mass audience is unlikely. The consequent alienation of the majority of society by virtue of the form as well as the content of the artwork, thus places the contemporary artist in a precarious position.

This situation is augmented by the fact that western artists are still intent on creating unique objects which are often expensive and can therefore only be purchased by the comparatively wealthy few. This situation persists despite the reality of a world dominated by mass consumerism. While the trend towards mass production and mass consumption, particularly in the western world, has been encouraged by the forces governing capitalism, artists have continued to use antiquated modes of production in an apparent attempt to ensure their own exclusivity and uniqueness in the face of this development towards greater uniformity.

In most western countries - South Africa included - the major mass communications media, i.e. radio, television, newspapers and magazines, are either controlled by the State or by commercial companies whose primary motivation is the accumulation of profits. Thus apart from a few 'pirate' radio stations, 'cable' television stations, and 'alternative' newspapers and magazines which attempt to counteract the influence of the dominant ideology, but which tend to have a limited distribution, the only mass communication

form available to the artist who hopes to maintain his freedom of expression is the poster.[3]

Posters combining slogans with colourful and striking visual images were originally executed in the late 19th century to advertise commercial products and theatrical events. Although still used in a similar context on modern billboards, the medium has also acquired a growing political function in the 20th century. The suffragettes were the first group to use it extensively as a propaganda tool, but it has since become a major means of registering political protest. Its use by university students condemning the French government during the Paris riots of May 1968, is well documented. (Fig. 3). More recently, it formed part of the campaign launched by the Solidarity Trade Union Movement against the stringent laws controlling personal freedom in Poland.[4]

Posters of this kind, which are usually executed in an easily comprehensible style, and located in prominent public venues, must be distinguished from the recent tendency to reproduce originally unique works of art in poster form. For despite this trend, these unique works of art are still separated from mass produced posters by fundamental differences of intention affecting both style and content. This difference is highlighted in a comparison of the

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3. As Gavin Younge's experience suggests, executing posters is no absolute guarantee against censorship. Nevertheless, it remains the only mass communications form relatively free from external control.

4. This discussion is indebted to Harper. (Harper. Millon and Nochlin, eds. 1980, pp. 150-153). For further information on the political use of posters, see the above article.

seemingly realist yet inaccessibly hermetic works executed by an artist like Salvador Dali during the late 1920's and early 1930's (Fig. 21), with the Constructivist posters of El Lizzitsky in which a visually striking pattern of forms was combined with political slogans before being located on large billboards in the streets of Moscow during the early 1920's. (Fig. 22). Thus while Lizzitsky's posters were intended for a mass audience,(5) Dali's paintings were originally executed for an exclusive market. It is only in recent years that the latter have become widely accessible through reproduction, and now serve as an inexpensive means of interior decoration for the general public.

The ideas informing the works of artists, as well as politically motivated organizations which have used the poster as a means of mass communication, were of major consideration in the adoption of this medium for the 'Apartheid' posters which form the practical component to this research.

Particularly significant to these, as well as to politically motivated posters, is a desire to communicate what may be considered as a socially relevant content, in a comprehensible style, for a comparatively large audience. Responses to the 'Apartheid' posters

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5. While the abstract works of most of the Constructivists were rejected following Stalin's rise to power, the Productivist wing of the movement remained active in industry until the early 1930's. Lizzitsky continued to execute political posters until 1932. (Frampton, 1968, p. 267).

suggests that this intention was successfully realized.(6)

A further concern in the execution of the posters was the communication of a content pertinent to the South African situation. Believing that the vitality and success of an artwork depends on a direct relationship to the society in which it is executed, particular attention was paid to the need to encourage a greater consciousness of the realities of apartheid. It was, however, felt that the posters would probably not address an unlimited audience, particularly since they were created with the conscious realization that they reflected a personal experience of, and attitude to apartheid.(7)

A further desire to break with the elitist and outmoded techniques which are still used in the works of the majority of visual artists, led to the decision to have the posters produced by photo-lithographic means. Furthermore, a style influenced by the clarity

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6. Frequent spontaneous contact occurred with people who found the 'Apartheid' posters accessible enough to feel that they could contribute ideas for new posters, to enquire about existing ones, and to express a preference for, or indicate the success of some as opposed to others. While response was obviously encouraged by the location of the posters on the campus of the University of the Witwatersrand and on the streets of Johannesburg, many requests for posters were received. Moreover, those publically displayed were often defaced and covered with graffiti. (See Appendix II). The posters were sold for R6 (1 colour) and R3 (2 colour) and were taken or sent to the U.S.A., Britain, Germany, France and Australia.

7. It would be presumptious for a middle class white South African to reflect on the social conditions of black South Africans.

advertisements, was adopted in an attempt to reach an audience educated in the unambiguous forms of the medium through constant exposure.

In addition to the use of everyday objects to give subtle expression to a negative attitude to the political realities of apartheid, visual and verbal puns which serve to reveal and extend the symbolic implications of dominant metaphors like the Afrikaner bull (Plates 2, 4, 7 and 9) and the sheep (Plates 10, 14 and 18) provide further links with techniques used in advertising.

One of the primary functions of the use of the metaphor is to transfer the concept of separate development to the products appearing in the posters. While these products have no direct relationship to any political ideology, they are made to serve as vehicles for commenting on the system of apartheid. The metaphor is thus seen as an unexpected but effective means of establishing interactions between images and ideas. (8) Although it operates through a play on words which sound the same but have different meanings, the pun is used in much the same way as the metaphor.

Similar techniques are used in contemporary advertisements. But whereas modern advertising is generally concerned with effecting a positive association between the product being advertised and

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8. Aristotle described metaphors as 'things that are related to the original things, and yet not so obviously related - just as in philosophy also an acute mind will perceive resemblances even in things far apart'. (Johnson, 1981, p. 7).

the concept, object or environment to which it is linked, the 'Apartheid' posters invert this process. Their primary function is therefore a satirical one since they advertise the concept of separate development as a negative product.

A complete understanding of the posters is dependent on a reasonably fluent command of both English and Afrikaans, as well as an awareness of the association and interaction between the literal and figurative meanings of the words and images used. The basic implications of most of the posters can, however, be discerned in the use of easily recognizable images like the Afrikaner bull, which is intended to be seen as a verbal pun on the word 'Afrikaner'. The Afrikaner is, in turn, associated with the statutory institution of racism in South Africa after 1948. A similar mode of association operates in the use of the sheep, which is a traditional metaphor for the unthinking human being, the 'ja-broer' or yes-man who follows political and social dictates without considering the implications of his actions. Further associations between the bull and the idea of obtuse strength and intransigence are also intended, while the sheep could be seen as its symbolic opposite. Together, these two images give expression to what may be considered as irreconcilable characteristics of white South Africa.

In several of the posters an attempt is made to place the 'Apartheid' product in a casual, everyday situation (Plates 1, 3, 4 and 6) to give expression to a feeling of constant, daily contact with the realities of racism. Some of these make a further, literal reference in the colour, white, to draw attention to the importance

of issues concerning colour or race in the South African context. (Plates 1 and 3).

Where a single image like the bull provides a context for racial prejudice, additional variable meanings may be implied in the associated slogan, the product itself or the setting in which it is placed. Thus Apartheid Filters (Plates 2 and 4) suggests bad health through an association with cigarettes, and makes reference to the idea of filtering, which serves to separate tar from the lungs of the smoker, much as apartheid serves to separate black from white South Africans. Similarly, a barren landscape setting (Plate 2) is intended as a symbol of a society in which there is no growth or beauty, while 'twak' is not merely the coarse, pungent, boer tobacco, but also means 'nonsense' when it is translated literally from the Afrikaans usage of the word (Plate 7).

Apartheid Fat (Plate 9) conflates the English and Afrikaans meanings of the word 'slim' (thin and clever) to comment on the stubborn insistance of the 'obese' white population who live off the fat of the land; while Petty Apartheid (Plate 13) suggests a pun on the mindlessness of apartheid through an association with dog food. It also reaffirms, through the inclusion of a fence, the separation and bondage of the different population groups implicit in Apartheid Filters (Plates 2 and 4), while the 'Beware of the dog/ Pasop vir die hond' sign suggests a potential for aggression. The verbal metaphor used in Apartheid Nuts (Plate 17) works on a pun involving the implication of madness, as well as the idea of a 'hard nut', i.e. a problem for which there is no

easy solution and which can therefore not be 'cracked' at will. Apartheid Skyties (Plate 20) suggests geographical fragmentation and is intended as a reference to the 'chips' or homeland 'segments' prescribed by the policy of separate development. Another analogy is that drawn between the Voortrekker Monument and the idea of monumental propaganda to which totalitarian governments often resort. (Fig. 21).

The posters and wallpaper [9] dealing with the 'ja-broer' theme all use the sheep as a symbol of conformity, but like the Afrikaner bull posters, their meanings ultimately vary in relation to the product and its setting. Thus the hieratic image of a figure wearing a sheep-covered tie, serves to foreground the conservatism of the ever-conforming yes-man (Plate 18), while the sheep-covered wallpaper is a metaphor for yes-men who cover up social and political realities through an unwillingness to break away from the conservative racist flock. (Plate 14). Less explicit is the 'ja-broer' aerosol can (Plate 10) which is a reference to poisonous insecticides, or alternatively, to deodorants, the instant but temporary answer to bad smells.

In three of the posters, colloquial phrases or words of abuse appear in the associated slogans, but are also extended, either literally or figuratively, to the visual images. Apartheid se Voet

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9. It should be noted that the execution of the wallpaper involves an intention which accords directly with that of the posters. In both instances, the primary aim was to achieve mass communication of a socially relevant content. The intention in choosing wallpaper as a medium was therefore determined by the metaphorical associations suggested in the idea of covering something up.

(Plate 5), loosely translated as 'apartheid be damned', uses the 'velskoen' as a reference to the emphasis which is placed on skin colour in South Africa, while the shoe itself is poised in a threatening position. Apartheid se Moerkoffie (Plate 11) relies on an association between the litera' meaning of moer (ground - as in ground or filter coffee - and bolt), and the crude metaphorical reference to violence in the colloquial phrase: 'ek sal jou moer'. The screws, rather than ground coffee found in association with the packet, provide a further extension of this metaphor through the phrase: 'screw you', which can be associated with the Afrikaans phrase:'jou ma se moer'. Die Doos (Plate 15) also has crude and derogatory implications through the figurative use of the word 'doos' in Afrikaans. A further reference is made to matches, which are literally inflammable, as well as to the idea of worthless values through the name 'white elephant'. On closer inspection, what appears to be a white elephant, proves to be a mammoth. This draws attention to the fact that apartheid, like the mammoth, should be extinct.

A similar association between apartheid, and the concept of living in the past and having outmoded ideas, is established in Apartheid Airways (Plate 12), where an antiquated mode of transport is given ironic implications through an association with a common catch-phrase of modern airline advertisements. Furthermore, the phrase 'fly now, pay later... ' suggests future retribution in the face of the present lack of concern towards racial discrimination in South Africa. The representation of a 'laager' on the can of lager beer in the Apartheid Lager poster (Plate 16), is another reference to an out-

moded form of transport, the ox-wagon, which the Voortrekkers used to form 'laagers' when threatened from without. Hence, too, the implication of a 'laager mentality', a colloquialism commonly used to give expression to the idea of a limited, self-interested, defensive and narrow perception of a situation. Further negative references to apartheid are intended through the association with alcoholism in the degrading context of a gutter.

The lemon in Apartheid Lemon (Plate 8) hovers above the landscape a bitter, acidic bomb which threatens to fall and explode. At the same time the policy of separate development is seen to be a 'lemon', i.e a 'bad buy' or a 'dud'. The bottle of 'witblits' in the Witblits poster (Plate 19) refers to the potent home-brew of the power-drunk Afrikaner whose authority was established in 1948 with the election of the Nationalist Party to govern South Africa. Furthermore, it refers to the destructive white lightning (witblits translated into English) of apartheid.(10)

In most of the posters, a blatant and direct association of Apartheid with South Africa is ensured through the 'Product of South Africa/Produk van Suid Afrika' label which serves to reaffirm the inescapable reality that apartheid is a product of South Africa.

Although a dependence on metaphor has, at times, been regarded as a means of ensuring exclusivity and alienation, and has even been referred to as 'the most radical instrument of dehumanization' by

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10. The above explanations present some, but not all of the associations implicit in the posters.

Ortega y Gasset (Ortega y Gasset, 1968, p. 35),[11] its present use in advertising suggests that it may be able to overcome these problems. Thus it was intended that the creation of metaphorical 'apartheid' products, rather than the use of images of violence and horror to which people are constantly exposed in newspapers, magazines, films and television, and against which they therefore tend to build up a defensive armour, would invite interest through their unexpected and novel use of a medium generally reserved for commercial advertisements.[12]

Throughout the period in which the posters were executed, an awareness of the inability of the visual artist to remain socially and politically neutral, was maintained.[13] The belief that the function, form and content of the artwork is inevitably informed by external forces, i.e. by ideological, social, political and economic considerations, has therefore been of seminal importance both to the 'Apartheid' posters and to the present dissertation.

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11. It must be realized that Ortega y Gasset's statement was made in 1925 when his book, The Dehumanization of Art was first published, i.e. before the development of modern advertising techniques.

12. This potentially positive function of the metaphor is recognized by Aristotle, who maintained that it could play a 'philosophically significant role in the making of persuasive arguments'. Metaphor, he maintained, 'is a powerful means of achieving insight'. (Johnson. 1981, p. 5).

13. This problem is dealt with in the Introduction and Chapter Two. (See also Tax. Baxandall, ed. 1972).

APPENDIX I

In an attempt to gauge the attitude to art of artists living and working in South Africa, I sent out a questionnaire to seventy South African artists on 1st February, 1982. My intention was to determine their views on the function, relevance and meaning of their own work, as well as their attitude to the role of art in general. Nineteen replies were completed and returned, while several of the questionnaires sent to black artists were evidently incorrectly addressed and returned unopened. The majority of artists to whom the questionnaire was sent were chosen at random from a booklet published by the South African Association of Arts, although several known through personal association were also asked to answer the questions.

The questionnaire comprised five different questions:

1. What is the relevance of art?
2. What form of art do you produce?
3. Is your artwork relevant?
4. Is your artwork relevant within the South African context?
5. Any further comments?

The questionnaire thus focused on the problem of relevance in art; the artist's personal interpretation and definition of the term itself; the relevance of his work with regard to form, which can be variously interpreted as a reference to the technique, style, medium, and content; and the artist's perception of the specific

relevance of his art to the South African context.

The questionnaire was motivated by a desire to determine the South African artist's attitude to the relationship between art and society, to establish whether he regards this as a relevant issue, and to determine what he believes he has to offer to the South African public.

In a letter accompanying the questionnaire, I requested that the artist return his answers in a self-addressed, stamped envelope which I had included in the hope of encouraging a large response by reducing the overall effort involved for the respondent. I also indicated that replies would be welcome regardless of whether or not the artist was willing to reveal his identity. Only one anonymous questionnaire was returned, while a further two were completed with the request that the writer's identity must not be revealed. Several respondents were highly critical both of the questionnaire and of my unstated but assumed intentions in sending it to them. None of the latter replies were anonymous.

Most of the replies tended to confirm my belief that South African artists do not have a unified identity and that they generally regard the socio-political climate in South Africa as irrelevant to their work.

In essence, the replies to the questions were as follows:

1. What is the relevance of art?

Three artists did not answer this question. Those who did, considered the problem of relevance as both complex and relative, arguing that it is determined by factors such as the artist's personality and perception of the world, the attitude of his audience to the role of art, the influence of the society in which he lives, as well as the historical factors to which he is subjected. (Robert Hodgins, Terry King, Paul Stopforth and Gunter van der Reis). However, most of those who answered the questionnaire ultimately concluded that relevance is determined by essentially personal, private issues, with emphasis being placed on the autonomy of the artist and his work. (Erica Berry, Richard Cheales, Christo Coetzee, Robert Hodgins, Helmut Starcke). Consequently, almost all the respondents believed that their art addresses a very small, elite audience (Paul Stopforth) and that it has no relevance to the general public. (Robert Hodgins and Christo Coetzee).

2. What form of art do you produce?

This question was motivated by a desire to determine whether or not answers given to the first and second questions could be reconciled with answers given to the third and fourth questions.

In the replies which I received, most people spoke about the anthropomorphism of their work, usually adding certain qualifications in an attempt to clarify preferences with

regard to style and content, and also indicated the medium and techniques used. Several did not, however, recognize the intended ambivalence of the word 'form' as a possible reference to technique and medium as well as style and content.

3. Is your artwork relevant?

All those who answered the question maintained that their work is relevant but often gave no indication of the possible reasons for coming to this conclusion. (Walter Battiss, Erica Berry, Larry Scully). Those who did discuss the relevance of their work tended to repeat answers given to the first question: They therefore spoke of a generally unspecified personal relevance (Christo Coetzee, Jo Rorich, Helmut Starcke, Paul Stopforth), or relevance to a limited audience.

4. Is your artwork relevant within the South African context?

The majority of artists seem to feel that a specific contextualization of art with regard to time and place is limiting and irrelevant. Instead, relevance is seen in terms of what are said to be universal issues, usually dealt with in anthropomorphic terms. Most of the respondents thus believe that they can give expression to ideas that are universally valid through a personal perception of 'truth'. Some artists (Erica Berry and Terry King) do, however, regard a specificity of context as important to their work: both use the natural

indigenous environment as source material. In contrast to this.Helmut Starcke stresses the need to decontextualize art altogether, maintains that he regards it as an indulgence of the senses,and believes that the work which is 'engaged, applied, functional ... is less and less Art (with a capital A.)'

5. Any further comments?

The additional comments received attempted to extend or clarify answers given to the previous questions. But several artists used this space, as well as that provided for answering the previous questions, to criticize my assumed intentions and the questionnaire itself. The questions appear to have been perceived as threatening, and answers received were therefore defensive and often rude and derisive.

APPENDIX [1]

The posters were produced in 1981 and 1982 and were located mainly on the streets of Johannesburg and the campus of the University of the Witwatersrand. In the city centre and selected suburban areas they were placed in shop windows, on walls, poster boards, vacant sites, building sites and any other places which did not infringe on municipal by-laws controlling damage to public and private property. In most instances, the posters were placed where other posters - generally advertisements for theatre, movie and live musical entertainment - had already been located. Several suitable new locations were also discovered in the process, and have since been appropriated by local commercial advertisers using the poster medium. On campus, the posters were located on the notice boards scattered along main walkways, in the Senate House Sweet Shop, and the front window and notice board of the Gertrude Posel Gallery. Several posters were also published in student literary and commercial magazines: Wits Wits '81 contained two posters and Frontline Vol. 2, No. 1, 1981, published a further three posters, while two also appeared in Wits Student Vol. 33, No. 15, 1981 and one in Stet Vol. 1, No 1, October 1982.

The Frontline and Wits Student posters were accompanied by inter-views in which I tried to express my attitude to the role of art in society. Posters were also exhibited as part of the student Art Exhibition held in the Gertrude Posel and Studio galleries at the beginning of 1982. These were pasted up in the courtyard separating

[illegible] Association of the provisions of [illegible] Rental Housing Act, [illegible] on the subdivision roll of properties with the Collector of Assessment Information on Thursday, 28 July, 1983. On the streets [illegible] the notices were posted up in the following areas:

(Commercial)

Amethyst Street, (a part Street), 28 Ruby Street, Corner De Smith and Main Streets, (an Square), (Green Street, Corner Jordan and Henri Streets, Corner Jolris + and Simmonds Streets, Corner Hall and Main Streets and Station Street).

City Centre

Commissioner Streets, (The Carlton and King Centres), Corner Commissioner and Young Streets, Corner Commissioner and [illegible] Streets, Corner President and Wm Streets Street, [illegible] Square Court).

(Suburbs)

(Mt Annan)

(Ardsley)

(Mt Sunset).

(Hillbrook)

(Hamptons Street).

(Villages)

(Corner First [illegible]

Milner Park

Corner Jorrisen [illegible]

Orange Grove

Louis Botha Avenue and Harrison [illegible]

Rosebank

Oxford Road, Corner Oxford [illegible]

and Tyrwhitt Avenue.

Yeoville

T-junction at Louis Botha Avenue and Bedford Road, Raleigh Street.

Rocky Street and Corner Rocky and Raymond Streets.

With the exception of two instances in which they were exhibited in a gallery situation, the posters were therefore located in areas with a potential for mass communication. As is apparent from the locations chosen, particular emphasis was placed on the city centre and northern suburbs of Johannesburg. This selection was deliberate and was motivated by a belief that while the relevance of the works to the South African context may be widespread, they would inevitably reflect the perception and attitudes of a white middle class South African. Thus although reactions to the posters were received from blacks and whites alike, they were consciously directed at the white elite of the northern suburbs and Wits Campus.

Apart from the people who wrote, telephoned or made personal enquiries about the posters, there were many more who tried to destroy or mutilate them, or alternatively, to remove them with the

obvious intention of keeping them. This, as well as comments written in favour of, or against the visual and verbal implications of the posters, have been recorded in photographs included in the present appendix(1).

A more comprehensive visual documentation of the location of the posters, as well as the responses which they encouraged, will form part of the exhibition of the practical work.

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1. Also recorded because it was felt to be of considerable significance to the research, is the fact that political posters were often placed on or around the 'Apartheid' posters, thereby strengthening and giving continuity to the messages contained in both.

POSTERS



Title: 'Apartheid Washing Powder'

Size: 50 x 76 cm.

Medium: Colour photograph

Location: For copyright reasons, this poster could not be reproduced for public display.

Quantity: 1

PLATE NO. 1



Title: 'Apartheid Filters'

Size: 18,5 x 25 cm.

Medium: Photographic lithograph (4 colours)

Location: Wits Wits 1981

PLATE NO. 2



Title: 'Apartheid Toothpaste'

Size: 3,5 x 8 cm.

Medium: Photographic lithograph (black and white)

Location: Wits Wits 1981

PLATE NO. 3



Title:	'Apartheid Filters'
Size:	34,5 x 40 cm.
Medium:	Photographic lithograph (4 colours)
Location:	Streets of J.H.B. Wits Campus and Frontline Vol. 2. No. 1
Quantity:	+ 130
Distribution Date:	14/6/81

PLATE NO. 4

APARTHEID SE VOET



Title: 'Apartheid se Voet'

Size: 31 x 42,5 cm.

Medium: Photographic lithograph (2 colours)

Location: Streets of J.H.B., Wits Campus, Wits Fine Arts Student Exhibition 1982, Frontline Vol. 2., No. 1, 1981 and Wits Student Vol. 33, No. 15, 1981

Quantity: + 150

Distribution Dates: 19/7/81 and 2/8/81

PLATE NO. 5

MENU



SPYSKAART

Title: 'Outydse Apartheid'

Size: 32 x 42,5 cm.

Medium: Photographic lithograph (2 colours)

Location: Streets of J.H.B., Wits Campus, Wits Fine Arts Student Exhibition 1982, Frontline Vol. 2., No. 1, 1981 and Wits Student Vol. 33, No. 15, 1981

Quantity: + 150

Distribution Date: 30/8/81

PLATE NO. 6



Title: 'Apartheid Twak'

Size: 30 x 43,5 cm.

Medium: Photographic lithograph (2 colours)

Location: Streets of J.H.B., Wits Campus and Wits Fine Arts Student Exhibition 1982

Quantity: + 175

Distribution Date: 31/1/82

PLATE NO. 7



Title: 'Apartheid Lemon'

Size: 25 x 31 cm.

Medium: Photographic lithograph (4 colours)

Location: Streets of J.H.B. and Wits Campus

Quantity: + 220

Distribution Dates: 14/3/82 and 28/3/82

PLATE NO. 8



Title: 'Apartheid Fat'

Size: [illegible] x 43 cm.

[illegible]: Photographic lithograph ([illegible] colours)

[illegible]io[illegible]: Streets of J.H.B. and Wits Campus

Quantity: [illegible]

[illegible]stribut[illegible]

[illegible]ates: [illegible]/4/[illegible] and 23[illegible]/82



Title:	'Apartheid Ja-Broer'
Size:	37,5 x 47,5 cm.
Medium:	Photographic lithograph (2 colours)
Location:	Streets of J.h.B. and Wits Campus
Quantity:	+ 110
Distribution Dates:	31/5/82 & 8/7/82

PLATE NO. 10



Title:	'Apartheid se Moerkoffie'
Size:	35 x 47 cm.
Medium:	Photographic lithograph (2 colours)
Location:	Streets of J.H.B. and Wits Campus
Quantity:	+ 100
Distribution Dates:	18/7/82 and 29/8/82

PLATE NO. 11



Title: 'Apartheid Airways'

Size: 35 x 49,5 cm.

Medium: Photographic lithograph (2 colours)

Location: Streets of J.H.B., Wits Campus and Stet Vol. 1, No. 1, October 1982

Quantity: + 110

Distribution Dates: 15/8/82 and 29/8/82

PLATE NO. 12



Title: 'Petty Apartheid'

Size: 35 x 49,5 cm.

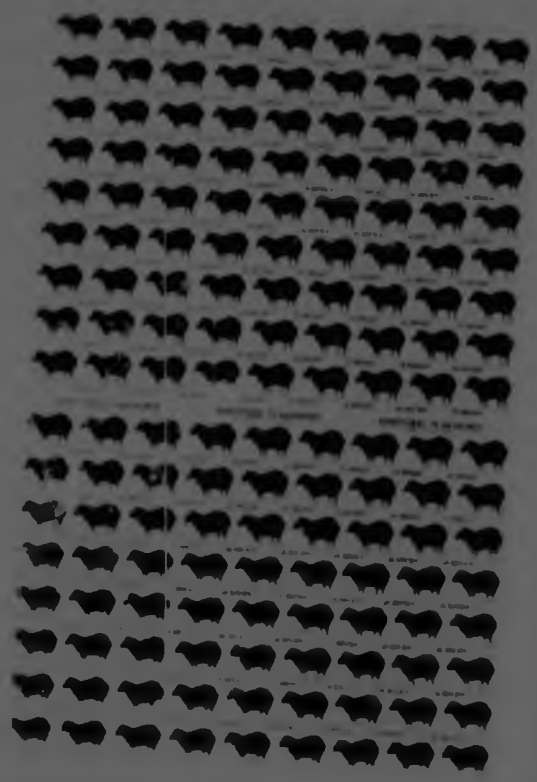
Medium: Photographic lithograph (2 colours)

Location: Streets of J.H.B. and Wits Campus

Quantity: + 100

Distribution Date : 29/8/82

PLATE NO. 13



Title: 'Apartheid Plakpapier'

Size: 55 x 800 cm. (role)

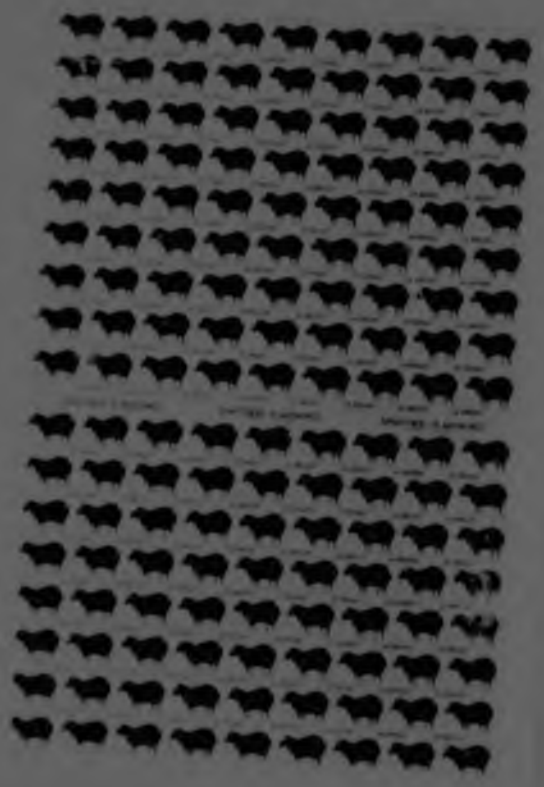
Medium: Silkscreen on wall-paper

Location: Streets of J.H.B., Wits Campus and Wits Fine Arts Student Exhibition 1982.

Quantity: + 24m.

Distribution Date : 26/9/82

PLATE NO. 14



Title: 'Apartheid Flakpapier'

Size: 55 x 800 cm. (role)

Medium: Silkscreen on wall-paper

Location: Streets of J.H.B., Wits Campus and Wits Fine Arts Student Exhibition 1982.

Quantity: + 24m.

Distribution Date : 26/9/82

PLATE NO. 14



Title: 'Die Doos'

Size: 43 x 61 cm.

Medium: Photographic lithograph (2 colours)

Location: Streets of J.H.B. and Wits Campus

Quantity: + 100

Distribution

Date : 26/9/82

PLATE NO. 15



Title: 'Apartheid Lager'

Size: 28 x 37 cm.

Medium: Photographic lithograph (4 colours)

Location: Streets of [illegible] and Wits Campus

Quantity: + 120

Distribution Dates: 17/10/82 and 24/10/82

PLATE NO. 16



Title: 'Apartheid Nuts'

Size: 35 x 49 cm.

Medium: Photographic lithogram (2 colours)

Location: Streets of J.H.B. and Wits Campus

Quantity: + 100

Distribution Date : 24/10/82

PLATE NO. 17



Title:	'Apartheid Ja - Broer'
Size:	35,5 x 48 cm.
Medium:	Photographic lithograph (2 colours)
Location:	Streets of J.H.B. and Wits Campus
Quantity:	+ 100
Distribution Dates:	31/10/82 and 19/12/82

PLATE NO. 18



Title: 'Apartheid Witblits'

Size: 27 x 37 cm.

Medium: Photographic ithograph (4 colours)

Location: Streets of J.H.B. and Wits Campus

Quantity: + 110

Distribution Date : 6/10/82

PLATE NO.19



Title: 'Apartheid Skyfie[illegible]'

Size: 41,5 x 50 cm.

[illegible]
(2 colours)

[illegible]: Streets of [illegible]
Wits Ca[illegible]

([illegible]: + [illegible]0

Distributio[illegible]
[illegible]



Title: 'Monument'

Size: 5 x 49 cm.

Medium: Photographic lithograph (2 colours)

Location: Wits Campus. (Legal advice led to the avoidance of distribution elsewhere).

Quantity: + 50

Distributio

Date : 13/10/82

LATE NO. 21

DOCUMENTATION OF LOCATIONS AND RESPONSES TO THE POSTERS



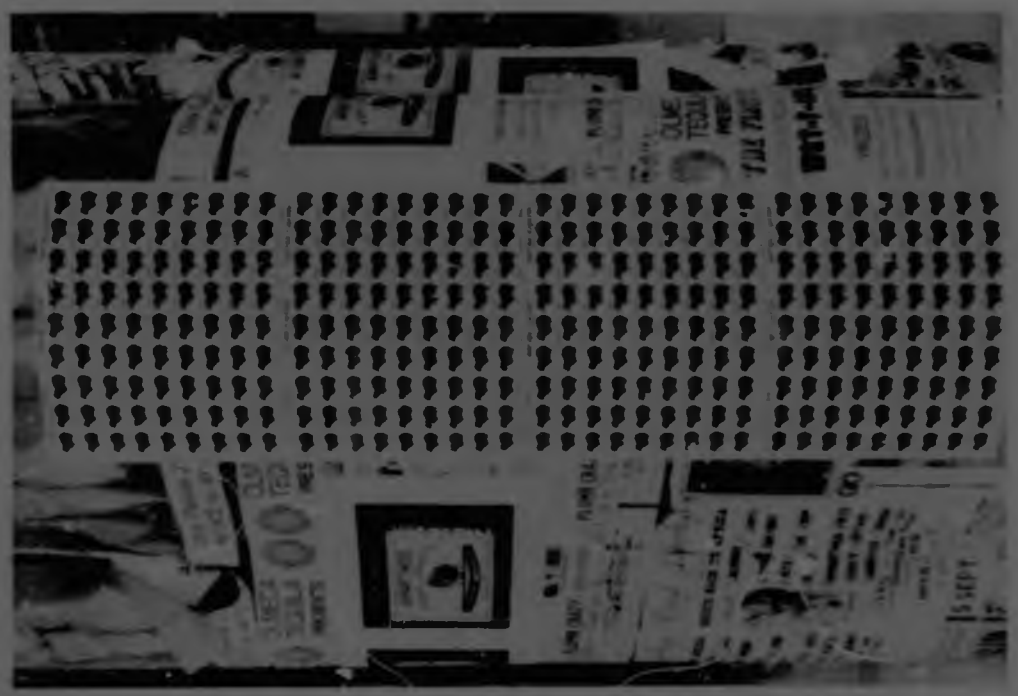


661




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10
5 S·A·SU

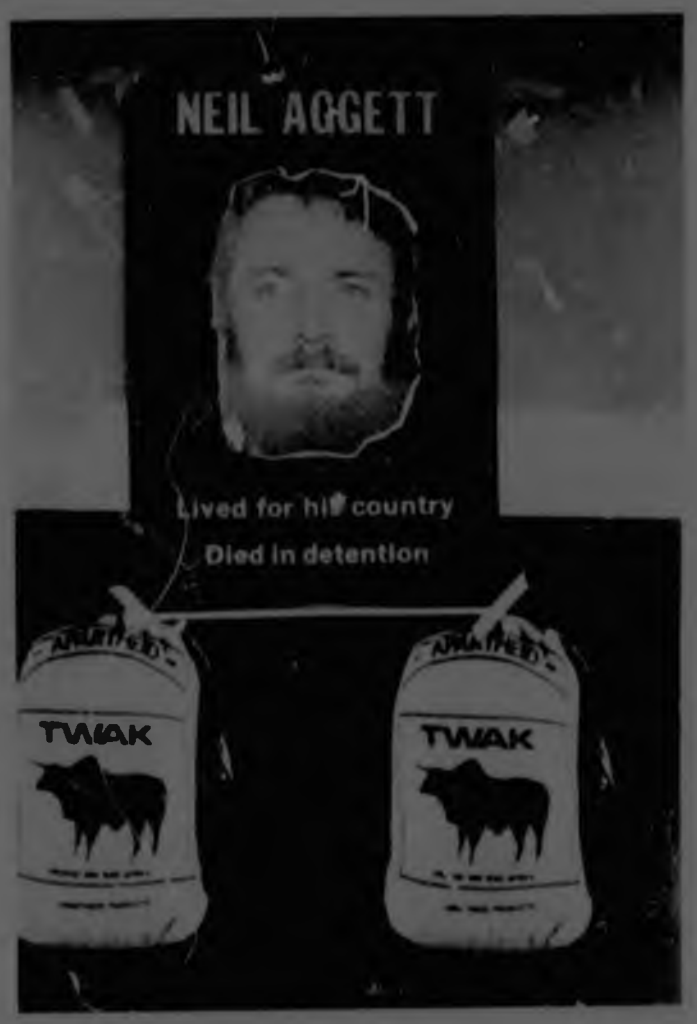

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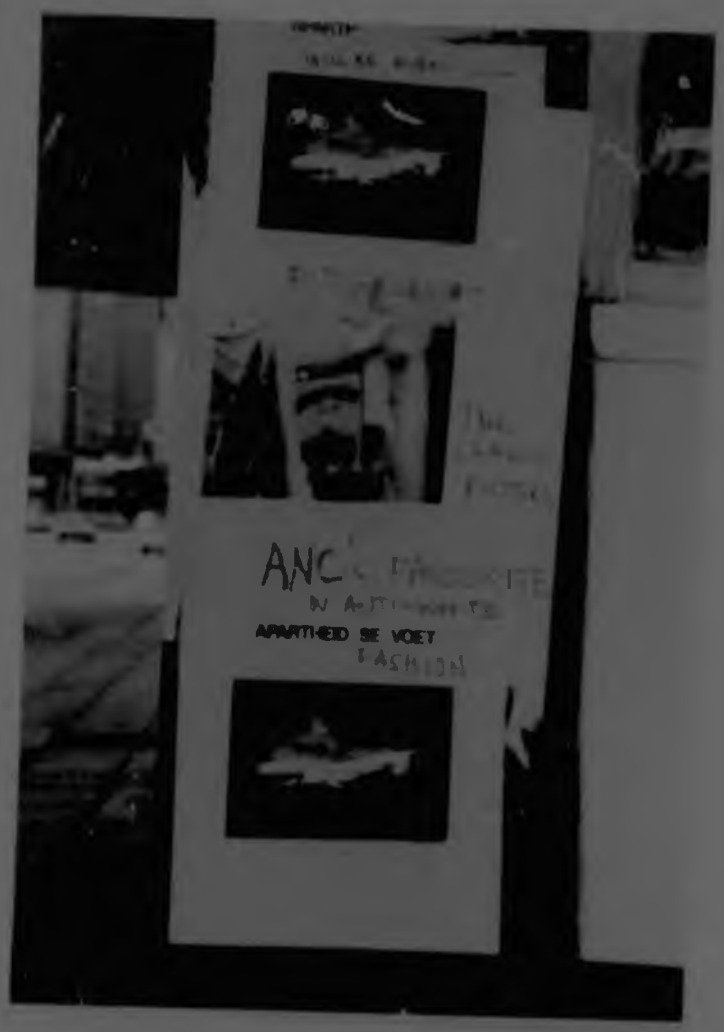

African studies
institute 6th floor


NEIL AGGETT
Lived for his country
Died in detention
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APARTHEID
* WHITE ELEPHANT *
MATCHES · VUURHOUTJIES
CONDEMN REPRESSION




ANC
APARTHEID SE VOET


PREVENTS
LUNG CANCER
PROMOTES
SAFE SMOKING

THE BOOT

APARTHEID SE VOET



OF THE FUTURE


APARTH
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LIST OF FIGURES

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FIG. 1: Yellow Horse. Lascaux.



FIG. 2: Chefren (from Giza)
(c. 2530 B.C.).
Diorite, 161.7 cm.
Egyptian Museum, Cairo.



FIG. 3: Poseidon (Zeus ?)
(c. 460 - 450 B.C.).
Bronze, 200.8 cm.
National Museum, Athens.



FIG. 4: T. Géricault. Portrait of
Eugene Delacroix (c. 1818).
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen.



FIG. 5: G. Rietveld.
Schroder House-Interior
(1924).



FIG. 6: R. Rauschenberg.
Retroactive (1964).
Oil and silkscreen ink on
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Wadsworth Atheneum,
Hartford, Connecticut.



.. Warhol.
our Campbells Soup Cans (1965).
Oil and silkscreen on canvas.
m. each.



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(1920 - 21). Collage and
Lomontage.
uy



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Menshikov in Exile
(Late 19th century)



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October Revolution (1919).



FIG. 11: A. Rodchenko.
Reclining chair for a theatre production (1929).



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Construction in Space (c. 1921).
Iron. 74.7 x 27.5 x 153.4 cm.
Whereabouts unknown.



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Oil on canvas. 23.2 x 31.9 cm.
Museum of Modern Art, New York.



FIG. 22: El Lissitsky.
Propaganda poster in a street of Vitebsk (1920).



FIG. 23: French Student Protest Poster (1968).

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