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WHAT HAPPENS TO ART DURING WAR TIMES?

OPINION ARTICLE

INDIVIDUALISM IN FIGHT CLUB

MOVIE REVIEW

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INTERVIEW



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WHAT HAPPENS TO ART DURING WAR TIMES?

BY CATARINA RIBEIRO

Are these two conflicting or irreconcilable concepts? Is the artist's creativity completely wrecked in the devastation of war or does it emerge perhaps reinforced by new messages? Does art really become a refuge for those who seek peace, or can it be transformed into a destructive weapon, like any other, as it has happened in the past?

War is a distinctly human activity and so is art. For as long as humanity has fought wars and sought peace, artists have responded in diverse ways. During, prior and following conflicts many artists voice their judgements through their creations, condemning all the visceral atrocities committed inside and outside the battlefield. Visual art has always maintained a longstanding relationship with war, continuously playing a key role in how warfare is portrayed to the nations it involves and recorded in the History archives. Frequently artists, so-called war painters, were commissioned to illustrate the landscape of the warfront. For the first time during WW1, given the emergence of a new panorama of industrialized weaponry, instead of romanticizing images of triumphant battles painters represented the cruel reality of soldiers and the devastating scenes of complete destruction witnessed.

Traffic to Mont st Pere by George Harding, 1918. Public domain.



Other forms of art have also had impact in war's portrayal; two of the greatest British war poets would be Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. Following their experience of fighting in the French war frontline of WWI, they experienced an astonishing period of creative energy, making the subject of their poems their experiences during battle and elaborating on their deepest intimate feelings with substantial realism. Both found their creative stimulus in a compassionate identification with soldiers.

The subsequent trail of destruction that hunts the world, after the culmination of wars, has always sparked reactions in those directly or indirectly affected by it. In the artistic scape, it was considered the source of certain school of arts, such as the Dada movement, ignoring the often-rigid rules of art and embracing irrationality meant to offend and posed tough questions to viewers. Many artists have shown to struggled to come to terms with the meaning and causes of war and one can easily observe such interpretation attempts in different works emerging from different conflicts around the world and throughout time.



Hannah Höch's Cut with the Kitchen Knife.

Examples include Francisco de Goya's Disasters of War (1808-1913), Otto Dix's depiction of the horror of First World War trenches in Flanders, and Pablo Picasso's Guernica (1937).

Wars have always provoked diverse representations raising competing notions of what is the actual 'truth'; these conflicting ideas of truth have often bled into the artistic sphere, influencing the course of war. The use of propaganda, to bolster morale and nation-building has been a recurrent practice. Some of the art it produced, especially at the beginning of wars, was used to excite and mobilize people for war. Some of it was overtly racist, like the anti-Japanese pieces in the United States, to instigate anger and disproportionate and unreasonable reactions. Some other was even created in the expectation that it would convince populations to help their invaders or to obey their rule faster.

In the light of current events, where threats are exchanged fluidly, as if they carried no consequences to those directly affected by the upcoming destruction, certain debates become an absolute necessity. The struggle to understand the extreme motivations behind war and the urgent concern to find shelter for those directly affected by it leaves the public preoccupied away from subjects such as art

In the light of current events, where threats are exchanged fluidly, as if they carried no consequences to those directly affected by the upcoming destruction, certain debates become an absolute necessity. The struggle to understand the extreme motivations behind war and the urgent concern to find shelter for those directly affected by it leaves the public preoccupied away from subjects such as art. While in peaceful times artworks are continuously held as something extremely precious and priceless, they tend to become dispensable and even collateral during times of war.

“The Palace of Culture has had its windows blown out; its concert hall is dust-caked, and the ticket booths have been ripped asunder. ”

We have observed it several times in past conflicts, as the waves of authoritarianism try to assert their power, leaving a wave of artistic inestimable destruction behind. For instance, the drastic case of China's Cultural Revolution that motivated not only the destruction of numerous art relics and artifacts but also forced a regression in all fields of art: cinema, theatre, literature, music, and painting were recreated, so they would become more aligned with the proletarian and socialist ideals of the time. More than 2,600 people in the arts field were prosecuted and killed.

Artistic destruction has repeatedly been seen as a mere casualty, raising doubts about whether humankind is now taking actual precautions so that history does not repeat itself in the same ways: “the Palace of Culture has had its windows blown out; its concert hall is dust-caked, and the ticket booths have been ripped asunder. Halfway between the (Ukrainian) capital and the Belarusian border, I had to contort my body through twisted studs to enter the levelled Ivankiv Historical and Local History Museum (...) Here in Kyiv the masterpieces have, like many of its citizens earlier, gone underground.” *By J. Farago for the New York Times.*

But also, the concern arises on whether the ethical responsibilities of being an observer and image-maker are currently being taken in consideration by artists covering the multiple conflicts bursting all around the world, and if the right cultural symbols are used to interpret conflicts. Art offering a means to expand our understanding of the nature and character of conflicts and society's changing attitudes to war and peace should be given a primary role and portrayed with reinforced importance at all times.





Individualism in Fight Club

BY MIGUEL FERREIRA

"In Tyler we trusted."
-The Narrator

Reflecting on consumerism, masculinity and individualism, David Fincher's *Fight Club* depicts frustrated men who, in pursuit of purpose and community, manufacture conflict to assert their violent impulses.

At first, the Narrator's perceived emasculation is framed by a dehumanising corporate consumer lifestyle, continually working and collecting Swedish furniture. The Narrator's ideal self, Tyler Durden is a violently unconstrained rebel, and yet the embodiment of his society's values and ambitions.

As Marla Singer becomes the only woman with a speaking role past the first act, Tyler conversely becomes a messianic authority figure, often framed from below as he dazzles recruits with his anti-authoritarian independence.

Compelled by Tyler's charismatic yet self-destructive alternative to materialistic conformity, members become copies of copies of each other, nameless pawns who shave their heads and wear the same uniform to belong in a home base resembling labour camps.

A distillation of the exploitative power structure it allegedly rejects, Project Mayhem franchises an autocratically-led system of conformity. Just like the Narrator's yin-yang table and countless Starbucks cups, Tyler's machismo is a homogeneous product-based identity, another ideal society fed but failed to deliver.



INTERVIEW WITH

Teresa Franco

Digital Artist

YOU TOOK A MASTER'S DEGREE IN MANAGEMENT AFTER GRADUATING IN SCULPTURE. HOW DID BOTH WORLDS COME ACROSS FOR YOU?

To be honest, I never thought I would end up doing a master's degree in Management. After graduating with a sculpture degree, I took a gap year during which I had to manage my personal, academic and professional time. I studied digital marketing through an online course and read in a way of research to expand into different subjects of study while continuing to develop my creative skills. I was participating in an artistic residence, working alongside a professional ceramist in Caldas da Rainha and participating in a painting course. In addition to this, I have also been giving home school art lessons for young children. Then, I got to the point where I understood that I lacked several tools that would help me professionalize my art and one day be able to build my own art business. So, without a doubt, I took my chance and enrolled myself in the management course! The one I felt would be more challenging and provide me with the right set of tools.

HAVING BEEN WORKING AS A FREELANCE ARTIST SINCE 2019, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE SO FAR AND THE MAIN CHALLENGES YOUNG FREELANCE ARTISTS FACE?

As a freelancer, one might face the challenge of having to embrace several roles simultaneously. You create your artworks, you need to communicate them, to sell them...So, to orchestrate the entire process and learn how to coordinate your creative focus with the "business" side of it. Also, to deal with the uncertainty of not having fixed orders or sales without it interfering with your creative process. Fortunately for me, as I have a full-time job, I can dedicate my time freely to any creation I decide to do. Yet, this also points out one of my current main challenges. Coordinating my artistic creations with my full-time job, as both are demanding and time-consuming, most of the time I need to set aside my art projects.

YOU HAVE RECENTLY CREATED A VIRTUAL REALITY ART PROJECT FOR THE LISBON BLOCKCHAIN CONFERENCE 2.0. HOW WERE YOU FIRST INTRODUCED TO THE PROJECT AND HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCE?

I was first introduced to the project by Tiago Godinho (Head of Nova SBE Digital Experience Lab). He challenged me to participate in the Lisbon Blockchain Conference 2.0. and I instantaneously said yes! I had never experienced such a medium so I couldn't miss my chance to try it out. So, the journey began. An exciting, completely new experience. Standing in a room and escaping into an entirely new reality. Being able to draw a line in the air and see it standing there. No gravity or weight. I could walk around it. I could pass through it. I could make it look giant or tiny. And then came the colours, the different materials, and the infinite possibilities of exploring this new medium. So, second after second, I emerged into a living canvas and lost myself in colours and shapes, forgetting people were watching me, forgetting the room I was in. In a nutshell, it was an intense yet fascinating journey.

VIRTUAL REALITY ART PRESENTS ITSELF AS AN UNPRECEDENTED FORM OF MAKING ART. WHAT NEW POSSIBILITIES DO YOU THINK ARE BEING INTRODUCED BY VIRTUAL REALITY IN TERMS OF WHAT ARTISTS CAN WORK WITH AND THEIR CREATIVE PROCESSES?

I believe working in virtual reality and working in the physical world aren't mutually exclusive. Both can complement themselves depending on the objective of the artist and the art piece. Yet I believe it makes it possible for an artist to reach places and people that might be on the opposite side of the globe or even to co-create with people that aren't physically in the same place. I also see it as a way of exploring bigger dimensions while having no physical boundaries. You have no space limit and don't need to worry if the art piece will fall apart. As I said before, there is no gravity and no weight. Whatever you draw will stand there until you decide to move it to a different place.

WAS THE CONCEPT OF DIGITAL SCULPTURE NEW TO YOU?

Yes, completely new. And I believe that was what also made my first contact with this type of creative process so exciting.



AS SOMEONE WITH A STRONG ACADEMIC BACKGROUND IN SCULPTURE, WAS IT A CHALLENGE FOR YOU TO TRANSITION FROM TRADITIONAL SCULPTURE TO DIGITAL SCULPTURE?

I guess that every time we try something new, we go from pure excitement to a slight feeling of strangeness for not being used to something. So yes, it was a challenge. It felt like a merger of drawing, painting and sculpting all at once. Drawing, as you must draw tridimensionality, in space, with depth. Painting, as you must use the right colour palette to harmonize your piece. Sculpture, for the material and tridimensional shapes you create, but this time without being able to mold or touch what you are doing. It's no longer a matter of pressure or touch, it's the gesture you make and the control you have that counts.

DO YOU SEE YOURSELF WORKING ON MORE VIRTUAL REALITY ART PROJECTS IN THE FUTURE?

Yes, I am clearly up for more opportunities that might arise and to explore this medium, as I feel like I have just explored the tip of the iceberg. Every new project will be a completely new and exciting journey, which I will be more than happy to embrace.

Gladly, I was challenged to create an art piece in partnership with the law firm Antas da Cunha and convert it into a solidary NFT. This NFT was auctioned, and the money will be donated to the organization "Aldeias de Crianças SOS Portugal".

AWARENESS RECOMMENDATIONS

BY FRANCISCA PEREIRA

RUI RAMOS AND JOÃO MIGUEL TAVARES, E O RESTO É HISTÓRIA (ONLY IN PORTUGUESE)

PODCAST

Rui Ramos, a Portuguese historian, and João Miguel Tavares, a columnist and political commentator come together to deliver E o Resto É História, a podcast that, according to them, aims to turn history into what it deserves to be: fascinating, captivating, debatable and polemical.

For more than one hundred episodes, Rui Ramos dives into the questions presented by the audience via email, covering topics from the more traditional ones as the Portuguese monarchy to more abstract issues, as the development of the idea of childhood.



ARCTIC MONKEYS, THE CAR

ALBUM

Arctic Monkeys' seventh full-length studio release, The Car, comes to depart the band from their roots, introducing non-rock styling and more experimental sounds. However, no matter how much it changes the form, one can still expect glimpses of its substance to remain intact, as the familiar theme of love and lust, portrayed in Body Paint.

Alex Turner is said to have delivered one of the most reflective motifs to the date and the band arranges it in a way of giving space to more 80's Bowie, soul and funk melodies.

This record may not allure to the fans that are stuck on AM, however, The Car comes with the purpose of taking people (including the band) away from the past.



MIKE WHITE, THE WHITE LOTUS SERIES

The White Lotus (HBO) is a limited series created by Mike White that explores the ecosystem created by the coexistence of the guests and employees at a luxurious resort.

Both seasons start with the idea that someone dies, and then the story jumps back in time one week, where it starts to unravel. While the first season has a bigger focus on money, inequality, and how seemingly inconsequential one's actions can be because of it, the second season is centered around the theme of sex, whether it is desired, tolerated, paid for, or just a mean of getting something. Always filled with tragedy, horror and an ingrained amount of dark humor, The White Lotus has a way of keeping one invested.



AFONSO CRUZ, THE BOOKS THAT DEVoured MY FATHER BOOK



This is the story of Elias Bonfim, a boy who's certain that his father once got so lost in a book that he disappeared into it.

Through a constant shift between reality and fantasy, the narrator embarks in a search for his father, transporting us, along with him, to the world of the classics.

The Books that Devoured My Father is a short piece by Afonso Cruz, that claims it is "a book about books". Moreover, this novel is about generational bonds through literature and the capacity that books hold to set us adrift

BARRET SWANSON, THE ANXIETY OF INFLUENCERS WRITER

In The Anxiety of Influencers, Barret Swanson, a Harper's Magazine correspondent and university professor reports his experience on undertaking the challenge of spending 24h with teenagers that make a living of Tiktok.

Throughout this letter, Barret dwells on the topic of social media and its effects on critical thinking, moral contemplation, and information literacy. Furthermore, he targets one of the most common symptoms of social media, the mental health issues that come with a world based of instant gratification and dissociative sense of self.



CULTURAL AGENDA

"ART IS AN INSTRUMENT IN THE WAR AGAINST THE ENEMY."

- PABLO PICASSO

January

27

DMarcelo D2, Casino Estoril - Salão Preto e Prata, Music Concert

29

4 Amigos, Aula Magna, Stand-up Comedy

February

10

Linda Martini, Lisboa ao vivo, Music Concert

11

Jorge Palma, Campo Pequeno, Music Concert

14-19

Cats, Campo Pequeno, Theatrical Performances

March

2-4

Romeu & Julieta, Teatro Maria Matos, Ballet

17-18

Roger Waters, Campo Pequeno, Music Concert

21

Assim Caminha a Humanidade by Renato Albani, Casino de Lisboa – Auditório dos Oceanos, Stand-up Comedy

24

Relatório DB Ao Vivo by Diogo Batáguas, Campo Pequeno, Live Podcast / Comedy

April

22

Bárbara Tinoco, Campo Pequeno, Music Concert

27-29

Monólogos da Vacina, Teatro Tivoli BBVA, Theatrical Performance

May

7

YES – The Album Series Tour, Campo Pequeno, Music Concert

October

28

Barbara Bandeira, Campo Pequeno, Music Concert

