

ART IS ART

A Practical DIY Manifesto

Iteration ONE: [mostly] Dead White Guys

NOTE: DIY Manifesto[®] has currently in production Practical DIY materials suitable for other gender, ethnic, and sexual-orientation-specific documents. These will become available seriatim as soon as research, editing, and focus group testing are complete.

INTRODUCTION: In these days of cultural fragmentation and globalized “post-industrial” capitalism, everyone, including art-workers, needs a piece of stable ideological ground on which to stand. This is perhaps especially true of those artists whose work has become increasingly esoteric and ideology-dependent, eschewing alike both object and site, performance and non-site. In short: **EVERY ARTIST NEEDS A PERSONAL MANIFESTO**. Unfortunately, not all artists are equally adept at crafting coherent verbal statements capable of buttressing their ephemeral, transgressive, opaque, or otherwise intransigent cultural production. Not to mention the fact that modernist manifestoes tend to be so tirelessly focused and universalizing (ART: it’s my way or the hi-way!) that their potential to serve as models for non-dis-ambiguated post-modern statements is greatly reduced. The good news is: DIY Manifesto[®] is here to help. After intense and in-depth research, we have provided a list of time-tested and artist-approved items guaranteed to provide ideological support for whatever theoretical position seems most amenable as a justification of your own art. Just scan the following list, tick off the appropriate items, and create your own manifesto, sure to be both adequately historicized and to incorporate the latest appropriative and re-purposing techniques. Let DIY Manifesto[®] supply the raw material; you provide the re-framing and the desired level of ironic detachment, or not. If none of the items seems appropriate, DO NOT DESPAIR! A blank sheet of paper can be just as eloquent as an unacknowledged series of quotations from Plato, Michelangelo, and Immanuel Kant.

FINAL NOTE and RE-ITERATION: DIY Manifesto[®] recognize the significant limitations imposed by the current availability of only a single ideological module, “[mostly] Dead White Guys.” But be assured that, as further ideological modules become available on-line (“Do Women Have to Get Naked” is currently in beta-testing) the possibilities for creative ideological re-configuration and theoretical ambiguation will increase exponentially (see, for example, # 26 in “[mostly] Dead White Guys” for a distant adumbration of this future state of affairs). And remember that if indeed, “the future is now,” then “today is tomorrow” and yesterday is the winter of our discontent. LET 1000 FLOWERS BLOOM.

Signed –

Glenn Harcourt on behalf of DIY Manifesto .®

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And . . . May the Force be with you.

[mostly] Dead White Guys

1. [All art] . . . consists in representing a semblance of its subject . . . with no grasp of the reality.
2. Because thou hast seen me Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have *not* seen, and yet have believed.
3. When Pheidias carved his Zeus, he did so not by basing it in any model which is perceptible to the senses, but rather by taking from his mind an image which reflected the way Zeus would appear if he did in fact decide to make himself visible to our eyes.
4. [Art] substitutes for the spendthrift ways of nature a concise, direct method of doing [those] things that are possible . . . an efficient plan, which avoids nature's wastefulness, and straightens out her circuitous wanderings.
5. Painting has a divine power, not just because, as is said of friendship, it makes absent ones present, but it makes the dead seem to live, after centuries, so that they are recognized with pleasure.
6. Painting . . . compels the mind of the painter to transform itself into the very mind of nature, to become an interpreter between nature and art.
7. What absolute beauty is, I know not. God alone knows.
8. For when religious images are no longer in the heart, they can do no harm when seen with the mind.
9. The best of artists never has a concept/A single block of marble does not contain/Inside its husk, but to it may attain/Only if hand follows the intellect.
10. I would chiefly recommend, that an implicit obedience to the *Rules of Art*, as established by the great MASTERS . . . should be considered as a perfect and infallible guide, a subject for . . . imitation, not . . . criticism.
11. In a product of beautiful art, we must become conscious that it is art and not nature; and yet the purposiveness of its form must seem to be free of all constraint and arbitrary rules as if it were a product of mere nature.
12. But the difficulty is not in grasping that Greek art . . . [is] bound up with certain forms of social development. It lies rather in understanding why [Greek art] still constitute[s] for us a source of aesthetic enjoyment and in certain respects prevail[s] as the standard and model beyond attainment.

13. A fifteenth-century painting is a deposit of a social relationship.
14. I maintain . . . that painting is essentially a *concrete* art and can only consist in the representation of *real and existing* things. It is a completely physical language, the words of which consist of all visible objects; any object which is *abstract*, not visible, non-existent, is not within the realm of painting.
15. [Monet] said he wished he had been born blind and then suddenly regained his sight so that he could have begun to paint in this way without knowing what the objects were that he saw before him.
16. All art is quite useless.
17. It is the spectator and not life, that art really mirrors.
18. Art is not a pleasure, a solace, or an amusement; art is a great matter. Art is an organ of human life, transmitting man's reasonable perception into feeling.
19. Whether Mr. Mutt with his own hands made the fountain has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under a new title and point of view – created a new thought for that object.
20. We all know that Art is not Truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize the truth . . . The artist must know the manner whereby to convince others of the truthfulness of his lies.
21. A work of art is not always created exclusively for the purpose . . . of being experienced aesthetically. But a work of Art always *has* aesthetic significance . . . whether or not it serves some practical purpose and whether it is good or bad.
22. [A]rt is an adventure into an unknown world, which can be explored only by those willing to take the risks . . . There is no such thing as a good painting about nothing . . . [O]nly that subject matter is valid which is tragic and timeless.
23. Art is the exclusion of the unnecessary.
24. Art should not be different from life, but an action within life.
25. Where there is no vision, the people perish.
26. The act of sewing is a process of emotional repair.
27. Art is art. Everything else is everything else.