

YAWN is a sporadic communiqué which seeks to provide a critical look at our culture in all its manifestations. We welcome responses from readers, especially observations of a critical nature. Be forewarned that anything sent may be considered for inclusion in a future issue without specific prior notification. It is our policy not to attribute work, unless the content benefits from such attribution. **YAWN** is a collective, mostly anonymous, effort. Contributors receive a copy of the **YAWN** in which their work is used. Monetary donations are requested to help defray the costs of publication. Subscriptions are available for \$10 (cash or unused stamps) for 25 issues. Archive at <http://yawn.detritus.net/>.

An Early Assessment of the Art Strike (1990–1993)

Well, here we are in the first spring of Art Strike (1990–1993) and how is everybody doing? Spring being the time of running saps and fertile growth, Art Strikers are undoubtedly feeling the strain of non-production. Art Glutters (produce as much as you can for the next 10 years and flood the marketplace) are full-steam ahead and into the swing of spring already. Most of the Art Scabs I've talked to are still bitching about the strike, all the while furtively hustling their work at abandoned gas stations. Meanwhile, the Art Terrorists are entering juried exhibitions, sending in thousands of slides of faked Pollacks under the name of Karen Elliot. Here at Art Revolution headquarters, we've been instigating an experiment known as The Anti-Art Performance Festival and Exhibition of Propaganda.

A few years back, I entered some slides in an Ohio Arts Council sponsored competition—the first time I'd ever done so. My motivation, as I remember it, was that I was getting tired of looking at all the finished pictures crowding my walls. It seemed like it was about time I let others have a chance of looking at them. So, I got a notice saying that one of my pictures had made it to the final round of judging. This meant that I had to get it framed and deliver it to the gallery. The framing set me back 80 bucks, but it did look good under that non-glare glass with museum-grade matting so that it would last for all eternity or something like that. Naturally enough, after going through all this bother, including typing up a resume which featured no credits and no prestigious art training background—I received a notice of rejection.

THE END OF HISTORY

It is not a matter of realising the art strike, or even building on every level of life everything that hitherto could only be an art strike memory, or an illusion, dreamed and preserved unilaterally. The art strike can only be realised by being suppressed. And in suppressing it with the automatism of an even more passive and hierarchical spectacle, we freeze dry its contents into something stable, quantifiable, investment worthy, in short homogenous.

The art strike is not only a commodity but also a symbolic representation of this order, the justification of its concept of reality.

There will be an empty space left by the art strike as a comprehensive order binding everything, the social consensus will be destroyed, we will have reached the end of the great history of our common culture. The empty space left by the art strike will be occupied by another order, the economy. The ideal of change as value, adopted by our culture, has found its full significance in the art strike.

The art strike in its honesty, says about itself that in its state of exhaustion it is not able to put forward values. It can only be a description of a situation, the world of exhausted values of our culture. It can only be a quotation of history, a substitute for something that has ceased to exist.

The art strike opposes the logical way of mind which has led to this cultural devastation. The art strike will be a resounding stroke of the gong, its ringing will drown out the squawks of the malingerers, their strained voices will fade into thin air.

To speak of the art strike means to speak of the unknown, to speak of a door to a new world, to speak of a desire to discover what one does not know. For how can one know a desire without satisfying it?
(ASAC-San Francisco)

tion. And yes, I felt properly humiliated as I slunk into the gallery to pick up my picture.

A year later, I mounted my own exhibition at the Bauhaus, Akron's one and only art bar—now defunct. This turned out to be one of the highest points in my "career" as artist. Since there was no gallery owner or jury of experts, I was free to do as I wanted. I had a contest: Match the titles with the pictures. The prize was a night on the town with the artist. No one person got all the titles matched up correctly, so I declared everybody a winner! Those people who bothered to show up were treated to a tour of downtown Akron's back alley-ways and favorite dumpsters! Also, I was able to combine performing with the exhibition by premiering my bag lady show on opening night of the display. The last night turned into Drink 'n' Draw Night

with Sockeye. I took down all my work and had piles of paper and markers for everyone to create their own works which we taped up all over the bar as Sockeye provided their usual exquisite musical accompaniment.

Every now and then, I contemplate the idea of selling out. Gee, it sure would be great to get big bucks for my artwork, quit my shit job and do nothing but produce great works of art that get snapped up by millionaire collectors and museums immediately! With this in mind, I have hung onto what I consider to be my "masterpiece," although, I did sell two pictures as a result of the Bauhaus show—to my good friend and now "patron of the arts," Joe Collins. Thanks, Joe—those pictures will be worth a fortune just as soon as I'm dead. In the meantime, I'm here sitting in my dumpster just waiting to be discovered.
[*Dumpster Times*]

DEFIANCE FOR POWER



Some of the 771 young men who announced that they would refuse to serve in the ART

Letters

The New Religion

Dear **YAWN**,

I [have] remained truly against the Art Strike the whole of its life, but my reasons [a]re various and only partially explained during that neo-situationist action. I suppose the most serious reason for my opposition is that I don't see any real value in art at all, yet that is what I live my life for. I see value in food, shelter, kindness, and that's about all. Art is a sideline for anyone—a game for people with time, money, hope. And I like games. But I can't take seriously a group of people interested in trying to expose the worthlessness of a game that so obviously lacks any value.

Imagine this: I am an atheist but I came to that conclusion—for it is a conclusion, not a state of being—after living many years as a pious (not a religious) person. If I had to give up the validity of God and godness and the hope that was wrapped up in those ideas, I also had to dispose of the weaker idea that there was something noble about art. I didn't believe the stories about art and the special status of artists. I never forgave a poet for his meanness, a painter for her excesses against others. Our actions toward other people remain the important things, and I remain almost

ashamed of this valueless product I strive to find and make and describe.

The Art Strikers [believe] in the value of art. They [a]re the acolytes ringing the bells as the priest raise[s] the Host up, up, the acolytes drawing naked women on their underwear and giggling, afraid of the truth they really [believe]: that art [makes] their lives valuable, [gives] them purpose. It is the person who has given up all those hopes, who doesn't believe in the value of any art but continues to produce it, it is that person who is the real striker. Not to believe but to continue to practice is much more difficult, much more revealing, much less dramatic than anything a covey of nervous strikers could hope to do.

I had planned on writing back a shocked and nasty note after you published my anti-Art-Strike essay in **YAWN** [no. 38, *What Makes the Art Strike Such a Bad Idea?*], but I decided that you might misunderstand it and think that I was really upset by the comments of the unreal. I enjoyed it, actually, and was glad to see my ideas out there regardless.

Geof Huth, Schenectady, N.Y.

Meaninglessness Halted; History Stopped

Dear **YAWN**,

Thank you so much for informing me in detail about the Art Strike 1990–1993. I support the

strike. What could be more rational than to step outside of history. Stop the flow of consumer meaninglessness NOW!

Till 1993 I *pledge no more "artwork."* Until 1993 I will produce only "*stuff*." Hope you like the enclosed "*stuff*."

Strike now while the mediocrity is hot, and nobody gives a damn. Join the new wave of endless nothingness!

Helping to spread the rumor,

Maximum Traffic (enclosures)

Stand Back, Everyone!

Dear **YAWN**,

A while back a Yawnist wrote a diatribe confusing words and the ideas they symbolize. I wrote a letter explaining the mistake. They wrote me a response demonstrating that their head was incapable of being penetrated by the most straightforward logic. Their conclusion was that words are a prison from which man can never escape, a concluding only a college professor who got his tenure by hiring the Mafia to assassinate his intellectual competition could ever hold. I answered this letter too, but my second letter was "returned to sender" because the Yawnist was (apparently) address unknown. Then strangely enough the first three letters (Yawnist, me, Yawnist) appeared in **YAWN**, [contending] that "meaningful interaction among people and groups striving for cultural change" is impossible. That is what **YAWN** is about.

Recently I have become convinced that **YAWN** was correct, not because of any fault of words, but simply because the contemporary system is so devastating to the human mind that there are no people or groups emotionally capable of ... cooperating for social change. The social implications of this are rather great. It means people are too crippled to fix the social mechanism which has gone berserk, and we must simply wait for it to explode. Since we cannot live free human lives until after the explosion, the logical conclusion is to try to encourage the explosion as soon as possible. Destruction does not require the emotional maturity cooperation does. So now I am encouraging destruction of the berserk mechanism no one has the will to fix....

I think you ought to make up your minds as to whether you are trying to coordinate people for social change, or trying to convince people that change is impossible. Change is inevitable. But because so many people have been convinced that change is impossible, when the changes do come, they will not be guided by a group of coordinate people, and so will be as ugly as possible. It's kind of sad.

Elliot Cantsin, North Merrick, N.Y.

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ASAC (United Kingdom), BM Senior, London WC1N 3XX, England
Lang Thompson, P.O. Box 49604, Atlanta GA 30359
Plaster Cramp Press, P.O. Box 5975, Chicago IL 60680
The Drawing Legion, 1103 3rd St SE, Cedar Rapids IA 52401
Dialectical Immaterialism Press, P.O. Box 22142, Baltimore MD 21203

