

[Beurgeois Aesthetics](#)

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Date: Mon, 25 Mar 96 11:08:39 EST

From: Erik Tsao <ETSQA@CMS.CC.WAYNE.EDU>

I'm working on a paper dealing with bourgeois criticisms of avant-garde art, focusing in particular on the art/murder conjunction. In other words, Art and murder transgress bourgeois cultural values (of aesthetics and morality). My question is where this bourgeois aesthetic comes from, and how it is threatened by avant-garde art. A good example of the type of conflict I am talking about is the recent argument in our government over the public funding of the arts. The conservative reaction to avant-garde art can be seen as an expression of a certain type of middle-class disgust. I believe that most liberal-minded middle-class persons would not feel this way about works of art such as Mapplethorphe's photographs (The controversial ones) or Serrano's *Piss Christ*.

Any thoughts or suggestions would be very much appreciated.

Date: Thu, 28 Mar 1996 00:52:03 EST

From: "Charley Shively, (617) 287-5727, 661-7534"

<shively@umbsky.cc.umb.edu>

Perhaps check John Waters' movies. In one *Divine* asks an audience, "Who's ready to die for art?" The man holds up his hand & she kills him; in the electric chair she says (Academy Award style): "I want to thank all the peopole who made it possible for me to be here tonight."

Date: Wed, 27 Mar 1996 11:37:33 -0800 (PST) From: Matthew Price <price@Csl.Stanford.EDU>

Maria Tatar's recent book "Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany" (Princeton: 1995) deals with the themes of murder and disgust in avant-garde art, though I'm not sure her work goes in exactly the directions you're investigating. Still, probably worth looking at...

matt

Date: Thu, 28 Mar 1996 10:15:32 -0500 (EST) From: Thomas Pearson <tpearson@email.unc.edu>

re: Eric Tsao's request for analysis of bourgeoisie aesthetics:

see, Pierre Bourdieu's collection of essays "The Field of Cultural Production," Columbia University

Press, 1993 -- especially his classic article contained there-in, "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed."

Bourdieu is a French sociologist/anthropologist working out of a neo-marxist tradition. Some complain his analysis is reductionistic, but it is extremely nuanced, rigorous, and fruitful. And very difficult to reread. If you like his approach, you might try his book-length argument: "Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste," Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.

Thomas Pearson

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill tpearson@email.unc.edu

Date: 27 Mar 96 15:34:16 PST

From: William Peck <William.Peck@directory.Reed.EDU>

Eric Tsao wrote:

The conservative reaction to avant-garde art can be seen as an expression of a certain type of middle-class disgust.

end of quoted material ---

>From a generation (and more) ago I like Cesar Grana (tilda on the n), "Bohemian vs. Bourgeois", reprinted as "Modernity and its Discontents". It's about 19th century France; and writers, not painters.

Bill Peck

Reed C

Date: Thu, 28 Mar 1996 18:56:50 -0500 (EST) From: John G Stocke <r2jgs@dax.cc.uakron.edu>

I think that the flap caused by the punk-rock(?) band Negativland in 1987 and 1988 is relevant. Late in 1987 the band cancelled a tour b/c it was going to be a financial disaster. But then they blamed the cancellation on a fictitious federal official, claiming that the government had linked their music (the song "Christianity is stupid") to a murder in Minnesota. A teenaged boy killed his family after supposedly quarreling with them about rock music. The media bought the band's little joke, and a media feeding frenzy resulted.

The band released a CD in 1988 about the incident. It is called *Helter Stupid*, and was released by SST records. Bowling Green State University and finer records stores everywhere have it in stock. The *Periodic Guide* for 1987-88 and San Francisco newspapers should provide some information.

This whole affair is a piece of brilliant, hilarious postmodern art, and it revolves around murder and middle class-notions of propriety.

Greg Stocke
Department of History
The University of Akron

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