

Nathan Janes

Contribution to "Art is Dead" by Ted Mikulski

There is a reason for the absence of visual arts in the mainstream society of today. Our society is dominated by huge corporations who not only control what we see on television, in newspapers, and in magazines, but also have enormous power on the actions of our lawmakers and government officials. Because of this, corporations have great influence over what the culture of our country has become. The appreciation of fine art and other cultural traditions is being replaced with the mainstream consumer culture where having more and better things are what is valued most. Fine art is something that is created by individuals or groups of artists working together to convey a message or encourage thinking that reaches outside of the consumer culture. Although fine art too can be used as a symbol of status, the intentions of most fine artists are to create something that is unique and inspires critical thinking. These goals and intentions do not align with the goals of the corporations wielding such strong influence on our culture today and so the fine arts are mostly absent from the mainstream. What little art that can be found is created to encourage consumption; it is advertising art.

Outside of the mainstream culture, however, fine art continues to exist and many great fine artists continue to produce work that is appreciated and enjoyed by a small subset of our society. Yet the fine art world is not insulated from the goals and objectives of corporations and the consumerist culture has affected the way that some artists create and produce their work. Many of the more well-known and financially successful artists today do not create much of their own artwork. Instead some have factory-style production lines, where the entire process uses mechanized labor from the inspiration of the work through the production of the art to the mass marketing and sale. Popular artists of today who may only be capable of completing 20-30 original pieces of art a year are suddenly producing over 100 and selling them for upwards of \$80,000 a piece and no one seems to notice or care. Art celebrity Andy Warhol who called his studio "The Factory," and used assistants to produce silk screens of his work perhaps first popularized this process, which goes largely unaddressed in the art world today. Whether this phenomenon is further degrading the fine art culture goes undebated as the subculture becomes further homogenized into the consumerist culture of the mainstream.

How do you know about real concerns in the world if you are stuck within the matrix of mainstream society? Many people accept the world as it is presented to them, in our culture it is presented to us by corporations and is massaged and filtered by their goals and objectives. Fine art can play an important role in disseminating information that is relevant to the world today but goes uncommunicated because it does not fit within the goals of our consumerist culture. However, if selling out to corporations and creating art that only aligns with corporate objectives continues to be the trend then if art is not dead already it is certainly on its deathbed.