

# Letters from our readers

11 August 2011

*On “16,000 police deployed in London to put down youth revolt”*

These tactics are now being employed during the biggest financial crisis since the 1930s. This is the future under capitalism; the barbaric measures employed by the state to control the masses will only intensify. Calls for the army are inevitable if the situation becomes uncontrollable by the police force.

Individual acts of violence can never substitute for the full force of the working class—it is up to the working class alone that the necessary break with all bourgeois parties including the union bureaucrats and their pseudo-left apologists who seek to tie the working class to these corrupted organizations.

The austerity measures are only intensifying the situation. Young people don't need more police, they need a future which capitalism cannot provide.

Only by building the Socialist Equality Party can we begin the fight back that is necessary to provide jobs for the large swaths of unemployed.

Julian H  
Queensland, Australia  
10 August 2011

*On “Fatal police shooting sparks riot in north London”*

Here on Australian TV we have had a spectacle of MET spokesmen sanctimoniously justifying police actions, an interview with a shopkeeper whose shop was burned down, a vignette of charge by a mounted police down a near-empty street, and a shot of a young man with a shopping cart, the implication being that there was looting going on. I'm not really surprised, what with the level of poverty and police repression present. Missing in all this coverage was any attempt to interview any of the “rioters”, or to point to any

causes of the sudden violence. Towards the end of the coverage, it appears that rioting has spread to other impoverished quarters around Tottenham.

Of note is the swift government response with massive police forces, including the feared Territorials and riot police. Clearly, as the vicious austerity measures are being enacted, the ruling class is prepared not to ease the burden of injustice, but to escalate it; as demanded by the financial elite, more repression of the police apparatus will follow, along with official propaganda through mainstream media, and staged provocations, no doubt. Watch this space!

Mirosław  
NSW, Australia  
8 August 2011

*On “Political lessons of the battle of Wisconsin”*

Now that the Wisconsin election debacle is over, I thought it worthwhile to remind ourselves of what the WSWWS said about the shameful performance of the union leadership and the Democratic Party months ago. The March statement of the WSWWS correctly noted that the electoral strategy, which has proven itself to be a total failure for working people, was intended to deflect popular energy into a useless effort to elect a few Democrats to the state legislature. This squandered the rare opportunity to create a true workers' movement in the state, and it moved the site of struggle to favorable ground for the Republicans. Governor Walker can now claim a mandate for his reactionary policies. Thanks to the WSWWS for its incisive and accurate assessment of the situation as events were breaking.

John B  
Texas, USA  
10 August 2011

*On “Protests over social conditions continue in Israel”*

Thank you so much for your sensitivity to my people, the Jewish people, who have become, as we all have, lost and confused. You have Juan Cole's feet to the fire right now, but I get angry when similar web sites—I am talking “Angry Arab”—forget our common bond and laugh at my people's

suffering, remember their own, and get caught in nationalist-Stalinist dead ends. Wake up, kids. We are all in the same boat, Jew or Arab.

AL

Toronto, Canada

10 August 2011

On “Robert Motherwell and the Abstract Expressionists”

Thank you for the excellent review! It both appreciates the strengths and brings insight to bear on the limitations of Abstract Expressionism. It is also a fine example of how a dialectical approach that places artistic trends within their historical context can break the Gordian knot that continues to be posed as an either/or choice between abstraction or figuration, a kind of “either for us or against us” hangover from the Cold War period. Only as artists and viewers grasp the deeper connections between art and social life in revolutionary times will the impasse that has held art in check for the latter half of the 20th century be overcome. Thanks again!

Anne L

8 August 2011

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Dear WSWS,

I was pleased to read Lee Parsons’ article on the Art Gallery of Ontario exhibitions “Abstract Expressionist New York” and “Painting on Paper.” The WSWS still has a way to go with coverage and analysis of visual art, visual art history, visual art movements, and abstract expressionism. The said article, however, indicates promise, and I hope there will be more pieces on pictorial art in the future.

Parsons is thoughtful, though I admit my surprise that “Europe” was mentioned *only* once in passing and that *only* “existentialism” was noted as a philosophical influence on the post-WWII abstract expressionists. Abstract expressionism, contrary to legend, is not a peculiarly North American phenomenon, but also European and Russian, being born with the pre-WWI paintings of Vasily Kandinsky.

As for existentialism, it was one of *several influences* on the post-WWII abstract expressionists specifically. Other influences included gestalt therapy, process philosophy, Jungian psychoanalysis, and Zen Buddhism. Future WSWS articles on abstract expressionism will need to address these schools of thought, while noting that artists process ideas more *intuitively* and *synthetically* than philosophers.

That said, while Parsons is appreciative of the “beauty and depth of commitment” of abstract expressionism, it is not accurate to describe abstract expressionist art as an “impasse.” Abstract expressionism does things with *feeling* and *form* that realism, particularly figurative realism, cannot. Abstract expressionism, as with other artistic innovations, also challenges and broadens aesthetic sensibility.

One such challenge is seen in the old misconception, repeated in the article, that abstract expressionist art depicts “nonrepresentational imagery.” This is incorrect, and Parsons himself goes on to say that overwhelming emotion and trauma is “palpably expressed” in the work. Aestheticians make the distinction between *resemblance* and *representation*. Representation is clearly manifested in abstraction.

If objectively sourced emotional and traumatic response to “fascism and war” are “palpably expressed” (i.e., represented) by the abstract expressionists, how can it be said that the artists were “cutting themselves off from the source of important artistic work, the aesthetic confrontation with the objective world of nature, society and human relationships?” The proposition is ontologically untenable.

Next, I am not at all that sure why the article says, “It may be tempting to speculate as to whether the art of this school will live on in the future as a living force or primarily a historical curiosity[.]” Historically, abstract expressionism is *not* exhausted. Contemporary artists still do abstract and abstract expressionist art, and there are still countries where abstractionism is banned, for example, North Korea.

Modern late-nineteenth-century techniques of realism, impressionism, and post-impressionism—which revolted against conventions of resemblance and representation—continue to be part of the repertoire of serious artists in the twenty-first century, as are the abstract techniques that began with Kandinsky in 1910. History also shows that where abstract art is banned, artists will eventually take it up.

Regards,

AD

9 August 2011



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