

# On Arts, Entertainment, and Internet



The perfection of art is to conceal art.

—*Quintilian*, ~95 AD

The highest condition of art is artlessness.

—*Henry David Thoreau*, 1854

I myself do nothing. The Holy Spirit accomplishes all through me.

—*William Blake*<sup>1</sup>

Art is a collaboration between God and the artist, and the less the artist does the better.

—*André Gide*, 1950

The position of the artist is humble. He is essentially a channel.

—*Piet Mondrian*, 1942

I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free.

—*Anonymous*<sup>2</sup>

It is the artist's business to create sunshine when the sun fails.

—*Romain Rolland*, 1908

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A great artist is always before his time or behind it.

—*George Moore*, 1929

Imitation is suicide.

—*Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 1841

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<sup>1</sup>As quoted, without a date, in several generally reliable sources, starting not later than 1997.

<sup>2</sup>Broadly attributed to Michelangelo. Indeed his Sonnet 15 (circa 1550) carries a similar idea, but in a longer form.

In art, there are only two types of people: revolutionaries or plagiarists.

—*Paul Gauguin*, 1895

Art is vice. You don't marry it legitimately, you rape it.

—*Edgar Degas*, 1918

Art is a communication of ecstasy.

—*Minor White*, 1950<sup>3</sup>

Art is a form of catharsis.

—*Dorothy Parker*, 1944

Art is a revolt against fate.

—*André Malraux*, 1951

Art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize truth, at least the truth that is given to us to understand.

—*Pablo Picasso*, 1972

Art has nothing to do with taste.

—*Max Ernst*<sup>4</sup>

Art is anything you can get away with.

—*Marshall McLuhan*, 1964

Art is making something out of nothing and selling it.

—*Frank Zappa*, 2003

Any fool can paint a picture, but it takes a wise man to sell it.

—*Samuel Butler*, 1950<sup>5</sup>

[Abstract art is] a product of the untalented, sold by the unprincipled to the utterly bewildered.

—*Al Capp*, 1963

How many people become abstract in order to appear profound!

—*Joseph Jourbert*<sup>6</sup>

One reassuring thing about modern art is that things can't be as bad as they are painted.

—*Anonymous*<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Sometimes misattributed to P. D. Ouspensky.

<sup>4</sup>As quoted, without a date, by Jürgen Pech in 1996.

<sup>5</sup>I am not confident that this quip had not been published earlier.

<sup>6</sup>As quoted, without a date, by M. Paul de Raynal in 1862.

<sup>7</sup>I have seen this observation attributed to some M. Walthall Jackson, but was unable to confirm this authorship.

There is only one admirable form of the imagination: the imagination that is so intense that it creates a new reality, that it makes things happen, whether it be a political thing or a social thing or a work of art.

—*Sean Ó Faolain*<sup>8</sup>

Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire; you will what you imagine; and at last you create what you will.

—*George Bernard Shaw*, 1921

In the war against Reality man has one weapon - Imagination.

—*Jules de Gaultier*<sup>9</sup>

There is nothing more dreadful than imagination without taste.

—*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*, 1819

Ah, good taste! What a dreadful thing! Taste is the enemy of creativeness.

—*Pablo Picasso*, 1957

Skill without imagination is craftsmanship and gives us many useful objects such as wickerwork picnic baskets. Imagination without skill gives us modern art.

—*Tom Stoppard*, 1972

Only a fool is scornful of the commonplace.

—*W. Somerset Maugham*, 1939

Without the aid of prejudice and custom, I should not be able to find my way across the room.

—*William Hazlitt*, 1852

No one is so keen to gather ever new impressions as those who do not know how to process the old ones.

—*Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach*, 1893

In painting as in eloquence, the greater your strength, the quieter will be your manner.

—*John Ruskin*, 1860

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Aesthetic value is often the by-product of the artist striving to do something else.

—*Evelyn Waugh*, 1976

There are two kinds of art: (1) decorative, nonobjective, wallpaper art; and (2) art with a moral purpose.

—*Edward Abbey*, 1990

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<sup>8</sup>As quoted, without a date, in several reputable sources, starting not later than 1978, i.e. during author's lifetime.

<sup>9</sup>As quoted, without a date, in many sources, starting not later than 1935, i.e. during author's lifetime.

All art is propaganda.

—*Upton Sinclair*, 1925

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Architecture, of all the arts, is the one which acts the most slowly, but the most surely, on the soul.

—*Ernest Dimnet*, 1932

An arch never sleeps.

—*James Fergusson*, 1910<sup>10</sup>

Architecture is frozen music.

—*Friedrich Schelling*, 1803<sup>11</sup>

Gothic cathedrals and Doric temples are mathematics in stone.

—*Oswald Spengler*, 1923

The physician can bury his mistakes, but the architect can only advise his client to plant vines.

—*Frank Lloyd Wright*, 1953

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After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music.

—*Aldous Huxley*, 1931

Music expresses that which cannot be put into words and that which cannot remain silent.

—*Victor Hugo*, 1864

Without music, life would be a mistake.<sup>12</sup>

—*Friedrich Nietzsche*, 1888

If there is a Kingdom of Heaven, it lies in music.

—*Edward Abbey*, 1989

The function of music is to release us from the tyranny of conscious thought.

—*Thomas Beecham*<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>The author acknowledged a similar Hindu proverb.

<sup>11</sup>A similar aphorism is frequently attributed to Goethe, but the first publication of his version dates somewhat later (1829).

<sup>12</sup>This line evidently refers to the music known in author's times, nowadays called the "classical music".

<sup>13</sup>As quoted in his biography by H. Atkins and A. Newman (1978).

'Tis good; though music oft hath such a charm  
To make bad good, and good provoke to harm.

—*William Shakespeare*, 1604

Extraordinary how potent cheap music is.

—*Noël Coward*, 1930

I occasionally play works by contemporary composers and for two reasons. First to discourage the composer from writing any more and secondly to remind myself how much I appreciate Beethoven.

—*Jascha Heifetz*, 1961

'Rock': music to hummer out fenders by.

—*Edward Abbey*, 1990

The worst wheel makes the most noise.

—*European proverb*

What looked like it might have been some kind of counterculture is, in reality, just the plain old chaos of undifferentiated weirdness.

—*Jerry Garcia*<sup>14</sup>

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Let us go singing as far as we go: the road will be less tedious.

—*Virgil*, 37 BC

He who sings drives away the sorrow.

—*Italian proverb*

It is the best of all trades to make songs, and the second best is to sing them.

—*Hilaire Belloc*, 1909

Nowadays what isn't worth saying is sung.

—*Pierre Beaumarchais*, 1775

Opera is when a guy gets stabbed in the back and, instead of bleeding, he sings.

—*Ed Gardner*<sup>15</sup>

I don't mind what language an opera is sung in so long as it is a language I don't understand.

—*Edward Appleton*, 1955

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<sup>14</sup>Note that he was not some old curmudgeon, but one of rock music's pillars.

<sup>15</sup>From his *Duffy's Tavern* radio program series (1941-1951).

Writing about music is like dancing about architecture.

—*Martin Mull*, 1979<sup>16</sup>

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The little foolery that wise men have makes a great show.

—*William Shakespeare*, 1600

Good taste is the enemy of comedy.

—*Mel Brooks*<sup>17</sup>

Good taste is the worst vice ever invented.

—*Edith Sitwell*, 1967

Drama is life with dull bits cut out.

—*Alfred Hitchcock*, 1960

I write plays because writing dialogue is the only respectable way of contradicting yourself. [...] I put a position, rebut it, refute the rebuttal, and rebut the refutation.

—*Tom Stoppard*, 1977

If you want to see your plays performed the way you wrote them, become President.

—*Václav Havel*, 1990<sup>18</sup>

Theater supposes lives that are poor and agitated, a people searching in dreams a refuge from thought.

—*Romain Rolland*, 1903

If the play is good, there is no need to bother actors: reading it is sufficient to get the proper impression. And if the play is bad, no acting can make it good.

—*Anton Chekhov*, 1889

Actors are a necessary evil.

—*Alfred Hitchcock*, 1943

If you want to help the American Theater, don't be an actress, darling. Be an audience.

—*Tallulah Bankhead*, 1952

Don't put your daughter on the stage, Mrs Worthington,  
Don't put your daughter on the stage.

—*Noël Coward*, 1935

We're actors – we're the opposite of people.

—*Tom Stoppard*, 1967

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<sup>16</sup>Frequently misattributed to Elvis Costello.

<sup>17</sup>As quoted, without a date, in several generally reliable collections, starting not later than 1991.

<sup>18</sup>Before becoming the President of Czechoslovakia in 1989 (and then the first President of the Czech Republic in 1993), he was a prominent playwright.

Acting is merely the art of keeping a large group of people from coughing.

—*Ralph Richardson*, 1946

Acting is the most minor of gifts and not a very high-class way to earn a living. Shirley Temple could do it at the age of four.

—*Katharine Hepburn*<sup>19</sup>

Acting is not being emotional, but being able to express emotion.<sup>20</sup>

—*Kate Reid*, 1988

Acting is a form of deception, and actors can mesmerize themselves as easily as an audience.

—*Leo Calvin Rosten*, 1941

Honesty. That's the main thing in the theater today. Honesty... and just as soon as I can learn how to fake it, I'll have it made.

—*Celeste Holm*, 1962<sup>21</sup>

Even supposing a young man of appreciable mental powers to be lured upon the stage, [...] his mind would be inevitably and almost immediately destroyed by the gaudy nonsense issuing from his mouth every night.

—*H. L. Mencken*, 1920

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You can take all the sincerity in Hollywood, place it in the navel of a firefly and still have room enough for three caraway seeds and a producer's heart.

—*Fred Allen*, 1959

The modern film [...] requires no contribution from the audience but a mouthful of popcorn.

—*Raymond Chandler*, 1962

While our people is still illiterate, the most important arts for us are cinema and circus.

—*Vladimir Lenin*, 1921

There is only one thing that can kill the Movies, and that is education.

—*Will Rogers*, 1949

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<sup>19</sup>As quoted, without a date, in several generally reliable collections, starting not later than 1993.

<sup>20</sup>“To express” or “to fake”?—see also the next two quotes.

<sup>21</sup>A similar line is attributed to Daniel Schorr, but its first record is only circa 1992. Later, these quips were twisted by many, including George Burns.

The radio and television [...] have succeeded in lifting the manufacture of banality out of the sphere of handicraft and placed it in that of a major industry.

—*Nathalie Sarraute*, 1960

All television is children's television.

—*Anonymous*<sup>22</sup>

Television is not the truth! Television is the goddamned amusement park!

—*Paddy Chayefsky*, 1976

Television: a medium. So called because it is neither rare nor well done.

—*Ernie Kovacs*, 1996

Television is a rat race, and remember this, even if you win you are still a rat.

—*Jackie Gleason*, 1956<sup>23</sup>

Television is for appearing on – not for looking at.<sup>24</sup>

—*Noël Coward*, 1956

I find television very educational. Every time somebody switches it on, I go into another room and read a good book.

—*Groucho Marx*<sup>25</sup>

Television is the first truly democratic culture – the first culture available to everybody and entirely governed by what the people want. The most terrifying thing is what people do want.

—*Clive Barnes*, 1969<sup>26</sup>

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We've heard that a million monkeys at a million keyboards could produce the complete works of Shakespeare; now, thanks to the Internet, we know that is not true.

—*Robert Wilensky*, 1996

Internet is so big, so powerful and pointless that for some people it is a complete substitute for life.

—*Andrew Brown*<sup>27</sup>

Information on the Internet is subject to the same rules and regulations as conversation at a bar.

—*George D. Lundberg*, 1997

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<sup>22</sup>I have seen this wisdom attributed to Richard Adler, but could not find a reliable confirmation of his authorship.

<sup>23</sup>Later paraphrased/generalized by many, most famously by Lily Tomlin.

<sup>24</sup>This reminds me of prestigious scientific journals like *Science* and *Nature* that are, similarly, for being published in—not for reading of.

<sup>25</sup>As quoted, without a date, in many sources, possibly starting from Leslie Halliwell in 1984.

<sup>26</sup>I believe that this evaluation is even more applicable to the Internet—read on.

<sup>27</sup>As quoted, without a date, in several generally reliable sources, starting not later than 1996.



Doing research on the Web is like using a library assembled piecemeal by pack rats and vandalized nightly.

—Roger Ebert, 1998

Caution: Do not mistake the Internet for an encyclopedia, and the search engine for a table of contents. The Internet is a sprawling databank that's about one-quarter wheat and three-quarters chaff.

—*The Associated Press* (Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law), 2007<sup>28</sup>

Anyone can post messages to the net. Practically everyone does. The resulting cacophony drowns out serious discussion.

—Clifford Stoll, 1995

Most of us employ the Internet not to seek the best information, but rather to select information that confirms our prejudices.

—Nicholas Kristof, 2009

If the Internet has given us anything, it's some idea how much psychosis goes undiagnosed.

—Jan Burke, 2012

The Internet is like a big circus tent full of scary, boring creatures and pornography.

—Richard Kyanka, 2005

My favorite thing about the Internet is that you get to go into the private world of real creeps without having to smell them.

—Penn Jillette, 2007

It was now impossible to distinguish a roomful of people working diligently from a roomful of people taking the *What-Kind-of-Dog-Am-I?* online personality quiz.

—Rainbow Rowell, 2011

On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog.

—Peter Steiner, 1993

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<sup>28</sup>Note the date. As time goes on, proportions change fast.