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Translated by Charles W. Haxthausen

What the European world lacks in immediate art can be measured inversely by the surplus of those who exploit art, above all the scribes and painters of paraphrases: indirect, secondhand people who live off the dividends of tradition, in short, mediate Europeans.

European art is tangled up with the processes of sophisticated capitalism. The era of formalist fictions about art is over. And now with the decline of Europe's economy, its art is also collapsing.

In the face of such human and economic misery, one has to ask what an art made for property owners by tentative petit bourgeois can still accomplish, and how much of it should be salvaged in a purposeful society? For the great majority of people the current society has undoubtedly proved purposeless—assuming that one does not equate human purpose with the attainment of honors deriving from the deification of the state.

A work of art is no more than a piece of reactionary, prehistoric snobbism if it does not join in social reconstruction. That alone can give it meaning.

Of what value to us is a capitalist art tradition from which producers and consumers derive their dividends, even if only in the form of purposeless, snobbish excitement? The European art work serves even now to provide a sense of inner security and strength to the propertied class. It offers the bourgeois a fiction of aestheticized revolt, in which every desire for change can find a harmless “spiritual” outlet.

We need a collective art. Only a social revolution offers the possibility of a transformation of art, only revolution gives art a premise; it alone determines the value of artistic change and provides the artist with a task.

Primitive art: that means the rejection of the capitalistic art tradition. European mediateness and tradition must be destroyed; there must be an end to formalist fictions. If we explode the ideology of capitalism, we will find beneath it the sole valuable remnant of this shattered continent, the precondition for everything new, the masses of simple people, today still burdened by suffering. It is they who are the artist.