



Is The Renaissance Here Yet?

Culture wars, Hito Steyerl, London Gallery Weekend and more.



Reena Devi

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You're reading Reena Makes Lists, a weekly newsletter by [arts journalist Reena Devi](#). This post will go out every Thursday, unless said writer is swamped with commissioned assignments or life in general. If you like this, subscribe [here](#).

In this fifteenth issue

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Me arriving at the so-called new (art) world. (All gifs via giphy.com)

Author Arundhati Roy called the pandemic a portal, explaining that historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine the world anew. So is the upcoming new world a mirage intended to accelerate old world mindsets and toxic practices or will it be a true-blue renaissance?

- In the midst of impassioned arguments for societal transformation following the plague, there are disruptive culture wars happening from the US to UK.
- There are also bigoted vitriol, attacks, ethnocentric conflicts and genocides taking place around the world.



Totally on point, Bernie.

- All this is set against the backdrop of accelerating socioeconomic inequity, even as it becomes increasingly obvious poverty is a policy choice.
- On the other hand, the visible push for in-depth inclusion and the growing demand for diversity and accountability, even in the art world, does indicate the zeitgeist could be awakening to the possibilities of meaningful change.



I'm assuming this is what the zeitgeist awakening looks like.

- However, right now, we seem to be doing so mostly within the context of mediocrity and commodification, albeit with a digital veneer.
- Young people are stepping up to take on leading roles in the art world. Typically, such moves signal the advent of new and different.
- But thanks to diminishing social mobility, nepotism still holds away, ensuring power and wealth stay within the same insular circles.



Young people stepping up. Probably.

- If you're looking at emerging technology as catalysts for the new world, acclaimed artist and writer Hito Steyerl begs to differ:

...this implementation of new infrastructure with the same kind of sloganeering and propaganda. “It will be more democratic. It will be more accessible. There will be equal opportunity. Everyone will get information. The middlemen will be taken out.” I mean, how often am I going to hear it? How often are people going to fall for it?

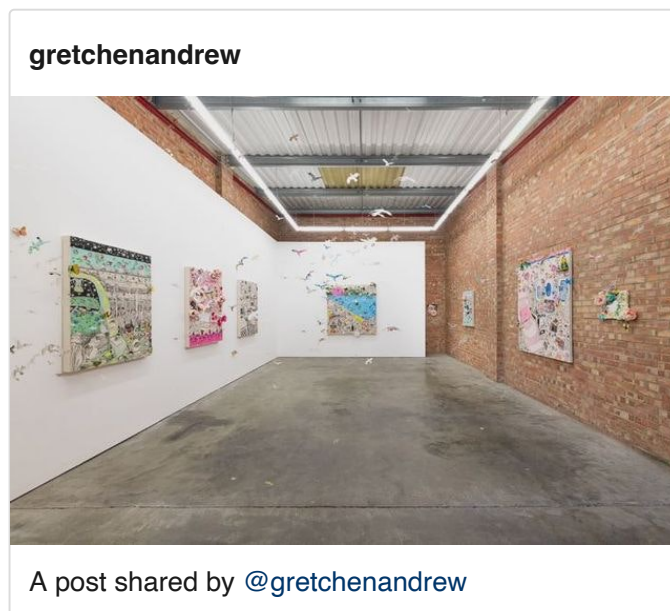
The first time I heard it was during the first so-called “internet revolution,” in Serbia. You can look at Serbia now, 20 years later, and see whether all of this has come true. Then it was the beginning of social media, the Arab Spring, Iran. With N.F.T.s, it is basically the same. The only difference is that now we’re hearing it from Paris Hilton.



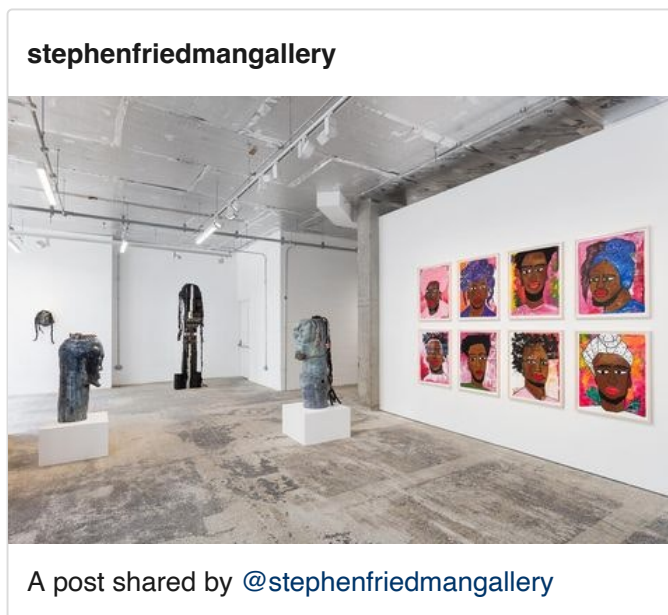
I agree, Loki.

Curious: Art in the Long Now

- Major FOMO about the highly buzzy **London Gallery Weekend** aside, former Google employee Gretchen Andrew seemed to be one of the most intriguing artists on show.



- Another fascinating artist who exhibited during **London Gallery Weekend**, Uganda born New York based sculptor Leilah Babirye.



- In the digital sphere, there is artist-run virtual experiment **Epoch** and their recent shows such as Substrata. I wrote more about this and other immersive art trends in my latest article for Hong Kong art media **CoBo Social**.



- As a fan of ancient sites and shrines, I have been looking into the relatively recent discovery of the mysterious Gobeckli Tepe in Turkey, enthralled by the intricate stone carvings done around 10,000 B.C.



Limestone statue of animal head, Gobekli Tepe Credit: DICK OSSEMAN

Articles worth reading for their prescience in describing contemporary issues and developments beyond the insularity of the art world (media edition):

- The recently launched newsletters of veteran journalists [Teddy Schleifer](#) and [Julia Ioffe](#), with their highly informed and nuanced observations on billionaires and geopolitical power play, make you feel immediately in-the-know or utterly [jealous](#).
- Another reason to keep an eye on Ioffe and Schleifer - they are part of a founding team of journalists building a [new Vanity Fair type](#) media venture at the intersection of money and power in Washington, Wall Street, Silicon Valley, and Hollywood.
- And if **Buzzfeed's** first **Pulitzer win** has taught us anything, never [underestimate](#) new and innovative forms of well-sourced, rigorous, fact-based journalism. (More on the tech behind the award winning article [here](#).)
- This [deep dive](#) into one of the most controversial media personalities engendered by **Twitter** is a masterclass in investigative profiling.
- I leave you with this thought provoking, contentious [quote](#) from author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie on the state of discourse today:

"I have spoken to young people who tell me they are terrified to tweet anything, that they read and reread their tweets because they fear they will be attacked by their own. The assumption of good faith is dead. What matters is not goodness but the appearance of goodness. We are no longer human beings. We are now angels jostling to out-angel one another. God help us. It is obscene."

Note: The latest newsletter hiatus saw the publication of my quick-read [analysis](#) on social media in the art world and an [article](#) on immersive art trends. Last week, I also [covered](#) the

Phillips Hong Kong auction sales. Please take some time to read, share these pieces and follow my work on [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#).

Thank you for reading the newsletter. Please share and subscribe. Feedback is always appreciated. You can hit reply and email me with any tips, leads and typos.

ICYMI: [Who Runs The Art World Today?](#)

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