

Foreign Cultural Policy in Europe

The Artist as a Secret Agent. Liberalism Against Populism

by Manfred J. Holler*

Abstract

This paper discusses the contest between the conflicting principles of liberalism and populism with respect to the Cold War cultural policy. The policy was jointly designed by the cultural Ivy League elite represented by Nelson Rockefeller's Museum of Modern Art and the CIA and succeeded in making Abstract Expressionist painting the dominating Western aesthetic culture despite substantial resistance by US politicians and unfriendly comments from behind the Iron Curtain. In this project, government policy was secondary because of successful private initiative, secret action, and obfuscation.

1. Introduction

Art is the laboratory of great emotions, deep thoughts, intense beliefs, and new ideas. If this is so, it would seem appropriate to look for the effects and impacts of rational obfuscation and transparency in art when it meets politics. The Cold War period provides ample material on this issue. In order to illustrate the interplay of rational obfuscation and transparency in politics, I have propose that during the Cold War the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) supported art, more specifically, Abstract Expressionist painting in becoming the dominating Western aesthetic culture. 'In the world of art, Abstract Expressionism constituted the ideal style for these propaganda activities. I was the perfect contrast to 'the regimented, traditional, and narrow' nature of 'socialist realism'" (Cockroft, 1974, p.40).

This example seems appropriate to discuss the issue of obfuscation in politics because it is not at all obvious that the CIA's secret cultural policy was a 'bad thing' while its more or less transparent counterpart at the government level was the better alternative. For example, 'America's pre-eminent liberal historian,' Arthur Schlesinger, maintained that the CIA's influence was not 'always, or often, reactionary and sinister.'" Schlesinger saw its leadership as politically enlightened and sophisticated. In his study of The Cultural Cold War, Frances Saunders (2000, p.3) concludes that 'this view of the CIA as a haven of liberalism acted as a powerful inducement to collaborate with it, or, if not this, at least to acquiesce to the myth that it was well motivated'.

As we shall see, the CIA gave, directly and indirectly, financial and logistic support to modern art. Abstract Expressionism became the vehicle for America's imperial burden and this vehicle needed fuel. However, why did support of modern art and, more generally, cultural policy depend on covert fuel? President Harry Truman did not think much of modern art and even less of the artists who produced it. This evaluation was shared by many politicians, at least, when they talked in public. George Dondero, a Republican Congressman

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¹See Saunders (2000, p.3).

from Michigan,² attacked modern art as an instrument of Communist subversion and declared that ‘modernism to be quite simply part of a worldwide conspiracy to weaken American resolve’ (Saunders, 2000, p.253). Modern art became emblematic of ‘un-Americanism’ – ‘in short, cultural heresy’ (de Hart Matthews, 1976, p.763).

George Dondero succeeded to force the withdrawal of a State Department exhibition called ‘Advancing American Art’. It was shown with great success at Paris and Prague. In the Congress, however, it was denounced as subversive and ‘un-American’. The State Department issued a directive ordering that in the future no American artist with Communist or fellow-traveling associations be exhibited at government expense. In the period of McCarthy witch-hunts this meant that politicians who, in principle, looked benevolently at modern art hesitated to become officially involved.³ It was the rich, well-educated, venturesome, liberal east-coast elite who had (a) the insight that Abstract Expressionism could be excellent weapon in the Cold War, (b) they had the financial means and the social connections to do this on their own account, and (c) some of them, Nelson Rockefeller for instance, had strong personal connections to the CIA, partly as a result of earlier wartime intelligence work. In addition this group had the conviction that they had to fight oppressive Russian communism in order to defend freedom – and that Abstract Expressionism is a most exiting art project, adequate to their liberal taste.

This sets the stage. On the one hand, we had the politicians, constrained by their desire for majority support and popular assistance; and the other, we had the East-Coast elite, determined to use modern art to defend American liberalism against the Russian communist threat, and, to some degree, also against the corruption of the political establishment and ‘red-neck’ art theories advocated by Republicans from Michigan.

The scene very much looked like a contest of ‘liberalism against populism.’⁴ However, what looked like a fundamental conflict was solved through recourse to obfuscation and secrecy – private political action under public umbrella and state interventions in the costume of private organizations. Major players of this game were the CIA, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Congress of Cultural Freedom. In the next section, we will give a more detailed account of these institutions to clarify this relationship. Section 3 looks at the pawns of cultural warfare, the artists. It contains a brief introduction into Abstract Expressionism and its message of individualism and universalism which simultaneously enthused liberal Cold War strategists, alienated the American public, and discriminated against artists which were not part of the canon, i.e., non-white, female, homo-sexual and non-American artists. In Section 4, I will try to evaluate the result of the ‘undercover cultural policy’. The question here is not whether it was good or bad, but how it affected politics and cultural life. Section 5 contains an evolutionary model which discusses the effects of obfuscation policy to the implementation of social standards and dominating aesthetic culture. Section 6 applies the model of optimal obfuscation, proposed in Magee et al. (1989) to clarify political implications in terms of votes gained from campaign contributions and votes lost from distortion effects. This expanded to incorporate the experience

² Eva Cockroft (1974, p.41) and Jane de Hart Mathews (1976) relate George Dondero with Michigan while Frances Saunders relates him with Missouri.

³See Hauptman (1973) for details on cultural policy during the McCarthy Decade.

⁴This reflects the title of Riker (1982). Although Riker’s book has been motivated by theoretical results of social choice theory, it refers to the same basic dilemma which was already discussed in Alexis de Tocqueville’s ‘Democracy in America’ (1956 [1835 and 1940]).

of covert policymaking and privatization of the public domain. Optimal obfuscation turns into a radical obfuscation as cultural politics is no longer identified with politicians and democratic control. An afterward concludes the paper.

2. Major Players

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship of the intermediate agents in the ‘American battle against Russian communism’: the CIA, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Congress of Cultural Freedom. The relationship was the result of historical ties, personal links, and ongoing collaboration.⁵

The CIA was created by the National Security Act of 26 July 1947 in order to coordinate military and diplomatic intelligence. Although the Agency was not explicitly authorized to collect intelligence or intervene secretly in the affairs of other nations, the Act mentioned ‘services of common concern’ which was used to move it into espionage, covert action, paramilitary operations, and technical intelligence collection. Frances Saunders (2000, p.32f) points out that ‘the terms under which the Agency was established institutionalized the concepts of ‘the necessary lie’ and ‘plausible deniability’ as legitimate peacetime strategies’. The CIA’s officers were dedicated to the mission to save ‘western freedom from Communist darkness.’ This was the result of a training in solid Christian morality, the principles of a robust intellect which most of them enjoyed at some Ivy League school, and a spirit of the Declaration of Independence which they had inhaled in their social environment. Some of them had already experienced intelligence work for the Office of Strategic Service (OSS) during wartime. OSS collected family members of the Vanderbilt, DuPont, Archbold, Weil and Whitney in its ranks. A son of Ernest Hemingway and the two sons of J.P. Morgan worked for the OSS. To some OSS members, the Service was an exciting adventure. In any case, it offered a possibility to enhance reputation and another network to combine with the old school tie. Some of OSS and most of its spirit carried over to the newly created CIA. Young Ivy Leaguers flocked in the Agency to fight the threat of communism and to enjoy the privileges of power and secret brotherhood.

The CIA had substantial finances at its disposal to be spent with minimum of bureaucratic control; and it used various institutions to make it difficult to trace its transactions and the financial support it gave to other organizations and cooperating individuals through private donations. In 1967, for instance, Whitney’s charity trust was exposed as a CIA conduit (see Cockroft, 1974.) In 1949, the US Congress passed an Act which allowed the Director of the CIA to spend funds without having to account for disbursement. Some of this money was spent to support the Congress of Cultural Freedom.

At end June 1950, more than 4000 intellectuals of the ‘free world’ gathered in Berlin. They all were invited to stand up and to be counted. The invitation committee included Berlin’s Mayer Ernst Reuter and several prominent German academics. Reuter delivered an opening speech in which the word ‘freedom’ appeared with high frequency. During four days, participants moved from one panel session to the next and discussed issues such as ‘good’ and ‘bad’ atom bombs. The actor Robert Montgomery declared that ‘there is no neutral corner in the Freedom’s room!’

⁵The following ‘portrait’ of the three organization is a summarizes the corresponding material in Saunders (2000). In parts, the description is very close to Saunders’s text and quotation marks could be adequate.

Not everyone subscribed to this rhetorical crusade against neutrality or a the option of a middle way between Russia and America. Some wondered about the independence of the meeting and about the substantial financial resources that made the event and their participation possible. Others received covert benefaction via the Information Research Department of the Foreign Office.. In an interview in 1994, Tom Braden, OSS officer in his youth and former head of the IOD⁶, the greatest single concentration of covert political and propaganda activities of the CIA, reflected on the financing of the event at Berlin: 'We've got to remember that when we're speaking of those years that Europe was broke ... There wasn't any money. So they naturally looked to the United States for money'⁷ Simple common sense was enough to find out who was behind the Berlin Congress. Delegates who speculated about who was footing the bill concluded that this was not quite the spontaneous event its organizers claimed.

Despite some irritations, the Berlin Congress was a celebrated by US government officials and the CIA as a success. The Congress of Cultural Freedom (CCF) became institutionalized. It became a precious instrument of the CIA tool box. Its principle task was: the winning over the waivers. 'It was not to be a centre of agitation, but a beachhead in western Europe from which the advance of Communist ideas could be halted. It was to engage in a widespread and cohesive campaign of peer pressure to persuade intellectuals to dissociate themselves from Communist fronts or fellow traveling organizations. It was to encourage the intelligentsia to develop theories and arguments which were directed not at a mass audience, but at the small elite of pressure groups and statesmen who in turn determined government policy. It was not an intelligence-gathering source, and agents in the other CIA divisions were warned not to attempt to use it as such' (Saunders, 2000, p.98ff).

The CCF managers were answerable to Tom Braden, then head of the CIA's International Organizations Divisions (IOD). Its activities were either directly financed by CIA's Farfield Foundation or, indirectly, by one of the many foundations that were more than willing to transfer CIA money to CCF officials or to contributors to CCF projects, e.g., museum directors, gallery owners, art critics, journalists or artists.⁸

Some contributors were supported by their own foundation, and thus did not depend on CIA money. This did not hinder them in closely cooperating with the CCF. Most of the 1940s and 1950s, Nelson Rockefeller was the president of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). His mother was one of the museum's five founders in 1929. MoMA represented the 'enlightened rich,' the future of American culture.

During World War II, Nelson Rockefeller was in charge of all intelligence in Latin America. His organization sponsored touring exhibitions of 'contemporary American painting' of which nineteen were contracted to MoMA. Rockefeller was not involved in OSS but his close friendship with Allen Dulles, who was in charge of OSS wartimes operations in Europe, younger brother to secretary of state John Foster Dulles and CIA's director in the

⁶The IOD, the International Organizations Division of the CIA, aimed at uniting the intellectuals of the 'free world' against what was being offered in the Soviet Union.

⁷Quoted after Saunders (2000, p.82).

⁸The CIA undercover activities were generously subsidies by Marshall Plan money. Recipient countries were ask to deposit an amount equal to the US contribution in its central bank. 95 percent of the currency funds remained the legal property of the recipient country's government, while 5 per cent became the property of the US government – and were made available as a war chest for the CIA (Saunders, 2000, p.1005f.).

period 1953-61, compensated for this shortcoming. Allen Dulles and Tom Braden delivered briefings on covert activities of the CIA on a regular basis and, in 1954, Nelson Rockefeller was appointed to Eisenhower's special advisor on Cold War strategy. He was also chairman of the Planning Coordination Group which controlled the National Security Council and CIA's covert operations.

The various engagements of William Burden,⁹ a great-great-grandson of Commodore Vanderbilt, illustrates the connection between CIA, CCF and MoMA. During the war, he worked for Nelson Rockefeller's intelligence service. After the war, he became director of CIA's Farfield Foundation and thus decided on the financial support to CCF, sat as chairman of an advisory committee of the MoMA, and became MoMA's president in 1956. Frances Saunders introduces several other high ranking officials to us who held similar links to at least two of these institutions. There are however also actions in which these institutions repeatedly collaborated. However, in the case of MoMA's activities, 'unlike those of CIA, it was not necessary to use subterfuge. Similar aims as those of CIA's cultural operations could be pursued openly with the support of Nelson Rockefeller's millions' (Cockroft, 1974, p.41).

By 1956, the International Program of MoMA had organized 33 exhibitions, including the US participation in the Venice Biennale. 'The State Department refused to take the responsibility for U.S. representation at the Venice Biennale, perhaps the most important international-cultural-political art event, where all European countries including the Soviet Union competed for cultural honors. MoMA bought the U.S. pavilion in Venice and took the sole responsibility for the exhibitions from 1954 to 1962. This was the only case of privately owned (instead of government-owned) pavilion at the Venice Biennale.' (Cockroft, 1974, p.40). The Government's difficulties in handling the delicate issues of free speech and free artistic expression, generated by the McCarthy hysteria of the early 1950s, made it necessary and convenient for MoMA to assume this role of international representation of the United States. This was consistent with the neo-liberal principle that there is nothing to prevent an individual from exerting as much influence through his work in a private foundation as he could through work in the government (Saunders, 2000, p.139). Moreover, it is a hallmark of the 'artistic free enterprise' strategy identified with Abstract Expressionism.

When MoMA contracted to supply the art material for CCF's 1952 Masterpieces festival in Paris, 'it did so under the auspices of trustees who were fully cognizant of the CIA's role in that organization' (Saunders, 2000, p.268) and of its propaganda value. On the other hand, the collaboration with the CCF brought MoMA and its favored Abstract Expressionism access to many of the most prestigious art institutions in Europe whose directors were sitting on the Arts Committee of the CCF.

During 1953-54, MoMA organized a tour of Europe, dedicated exclusively to Abstract Expressionism. The show, entitled 'Twelve Contemporary American Painters and Sculptures', had its opening at the Musée National d'Art Moderne at Paris. This was achieved with the help of the American Embassy at Paris (which acted as a quiet liaison between MoMA and its French hosts) and with the financial support of the Nelson Rockefeller Fund which was

⁹See Saunders (2000, p.137) for this short portrait and further details illustrating William Burden's political and cultural role.

partly conducted through the Association Francaise d'Action Artistique. This association was a donor to the CCF and its director, Philippe Erlanger, was a designated CIA contact at the French Foreign Office (Saunders, 2000, p.270).

In a 1974 piece, Eva Cockroft discussed the relationship of CIA's cultural apparatus and MoMA's international program. The functions of both institutions were similar and 'mutually supportive'. Frances Saunders (2000, p.264) concludes that 'there is no prima facie evidence for any formal agreement between the CIA and the Museum of Modern Art. The fact is, it simply wasn't necessary.' The motivations of both institutions, being at least functionally divergent, converged in the support for the Abstract Expressionism and its advance throughout the 'free world' and to some dissident circles behind the Iron Curtain. Why Abstract Expressionism? Was it not that precisely the form of expression that had been rejected by America's silent majority and by some of its very out-spoken politicians?

3. Individualism and Universalism

If the CIA, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Congress of Cultural Freedom were major players in the cultural warfare game, then the Abstract Expressionist artists were the pawns. In fact, the major players did not really care about the individual artists but focused on their work and the ideology behind their work. This was, in a sense, paradoxical because individualism was one of the cornerstones of Abstract Expressionism and a major reason why this art was supported as an alternative to the 'collectivistic art of socialism'. The art works showed substantial variety, but the variation among the artists seemed even larger and 'most of them were people who had very little respect for the government in particular and certainly not for the CIA', said Donald Jameson in an interview in Washington in June 1994.¹⁰ Jackson Pollock was a drunk and was killed in a car crash. Mark Rothko and Adolph Gottlieb were committed anti-Communists. Barnett Newman was painting for America¹¹ while Robert Motherwell and Willem de Kooning, born Dutch, did not think highly of a national context for their work. Ad Reinhardt participated in the March on Washington for black rights in August 1963. It seems that nothing remarkable has been said about Clyfford Still's life and political orientation. There were times when he refused to be co-opted by the museums and the critical establishment, directed by a Clement Greenberg,¹² but he still wished to be perceived as a spiritual leader of the Abstract Expressionist movement. To some extent, he was the mentor of color-field painters such as Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko and, different from Pollock, Motherwell and de Kooning, rejected Freud and Surrealism and 'all cultural opiates, past and present' (Cox, 1083, p.51).

These artists formed the 'essential eight' of Abstract Expressionism. Others who were added to this group are William Baziotes, Arshil Gorky (who hanged himself), Philip Guston, Hans Hofmann, Fritz Kline, Richard Pousette-Dart, Mark Tobey, and Bradley Walker Tomlin (see Gibson, 1997, p.xx). However, instead of going deeper into the individual history and

¹⁰Reproduced in Saunders (2000, p. 260).

¹¹However, he '...clung throughout his life to the independent anarchistic views he had formulated in youth' and even '...wrote a foreword to a new edition of Kropotkin's memoirs' (Golding, 2003, p.32).

¹²March 1948, art critic Clement Greenberg was the first to declare that New York had achieved international status as a cultural centre and even replaced Paris as the cultural symbol of the Western world: American art was the foremost in the world.

political beliefs of these people, I will follow the strategy of the three major players and focus on the ideology of art which made Abstract Expressionism.

Danto (1999, p.75) summarizes the essence of Abstract Expressionism, 'with its celebration of the self, of the inner states that painting allegedly made objective, and of paint itself as the medium par excellence through which this inner states were externally transcribed. In a certain sense, abstract expressionist painting was a kind of private pictorial language, a turning away from the public and the political in the interest of producing an art that was, in the words of Robert Motherwell, 'plastic, mysterious, and sublime'. The focus on color instead of form or narrative expressions represented the abstract dimension. The discovery of the Unconscious with the help of color contained the expressionist dimension. The two dimensions met in automatic drawing and painting, doodling, gesture and action painting, and Jackson Pollock' dripping method. The 'fluid space, lack of closed shapes, a deliberately unfinished quality, and an 'overall' composition that diffused any notion of focus' of Abstract Expressionist work – complex, cosmopolitan, and ever-changing – 'was intrinsically at odds with the need for certitude and control' (de Hart Mathews, 1976, p. 785) strongly looked for by many Americans in the times of Cold War.

'Marxism gave way to psychiatry' (Guilbaut, 1983, p.165). Several Abstract Expressionist artists had political roots in the Marxism of the 1930s, and their analysis of the new political situation and their own position in it bore the imprint of the Marxist tradition. However, in the 1940s, there was an important shift away from critical studies of the social and political environment, alienation in the capitalist society, etc. Gottlieb and Rothko were dedicated readers of Freud and Jung. This concurred with the focus on creativity (or originality) as one of the core principles of Abstract Expressionism. 'Originality, like abstraction, was an important way predicated on the denial of politics' (Gibson, 1997, p. xxviii). Alienation became a purely individualistic (psychological) phenomenon which, according to Clement Greenberg, self-appointed prophet and spokesman of Abstract Expressionism, made the American artist the 'most modern' of all artists and enabled him to express the modern age. However, Abstract Expressionists rejected machine imagery and industrial and urban landscape, they 'entered into a pastoral word that was primitive and elemental' (Cox, 1983, p.48). On the other hand, abstraction made it possible to lead into an active dialogue with the age and private material could be treated as a public declaration. However, to art historian Serge Guilbaut (1983, p.197), 'the freedom of expression and existential violence that leap to the eye in the work of abstract expressionists were in fact products of fear and the impossibility of representation, of the need to avoid the literary expression...' 'The American problem,' Robert Motherwell emphasized, 'was to find a creative principle that was not a style, not stylistic, not an imposed aesthetic.'¹³ Many Abstract Expressionist artists were followers of Carl Jung. As Jungians they believed that the collective unconscious was universal and 'self-identical' in all human beings (Gibson, 1997, p.48). The function of art was considered as the invention of codes to transpose universal, rather than local, meaning into visual form. 'Turning ... to private visions, insights, and most especially the subconscious, the abstract expressionists plumbed the depths of their own experience for metaphors and symbols that would somehow possess universal meaning' (de Hart Mathews, 1976, p.783). This was the spiritual-intellectual basis for the claim on universal-

¹³Quotation taken from Danto (1999, p.23).

ism and the discharge of the isolationist spirit of pre-war America – a pre-condition for applying art to cultural warfare.

Paradoxically, to some extent Abstract Expressionism contained a turning away from the market. Before it was discovered as an instrument of Cold War its main representatives were not very much of a success on the art market. By the simple fact that this art often used immense formats – different from its European predecessors – it necessitated museums and other public spaces which was only made available in the course of Cold War cultural policy. In principle, this conflicted with the private pictorial language of Abstract Expressionism, its ‘artistic free enterprise’ strategy and non-political attitude, and made its dissemination dependent on semi-public (political) entrepreneurship as developed by the CIA, MoMA, and CCF.

There are many paradoxes embedded in Abstract Expressionism; some are embedded to the inconsistency of its claim of individualism and freedom, on the one hand, and its policy effects which focus on dominance of ideas, ideology, and power on the other. Eva Cockroft (1974, p.41) concludes that ‘attempts to claim that styles of art are politically neutral when there is no overt political subject matter are as simplistic as Dondero-ish attacks on all abstract art as ‘subversive’.

Paradoxically, the discriminatory edge of Abstract Expressionism was its claim for universalism. And it was this claim, together with its individualistic ideology that made this style and the artists a canon of interest to Cold War strategists. Does not Communism also make a universalist claim?

To Eva Cockroft (1974, p.41), it is evident that ‘rich and powerful patrons of the art, men like Rockefeller and Whitney, who control the museums and help oversee foreign policy, also recognize the value of culture in the political arena. The artist creates freely. But his work is promoted and used by others for their own purposes. Rockefeller, through Barr and others at the Museum his mother founded and the family controlled, consciously used Abstract Expressionism, ‘the symbol of political freedom,’ for political ends.’

4. Basic Questions

Frances Saunders (2000, p.5) raised a number of questions which could serve as a starting point for evaluating the CIA’s engagement in the cultural warfare. The first question addresses the issue of freedom. ‘Clearly, by camouflaging its investment, the CIA acted on the supposition that its blandishments would be refused if offered openly. What kind of freedom can be advanced by such deception?’ Of course, this question was relevant for the Free World and its frontier states towards the Soviet Empire. However, it was also of interest to the political, economic and social life within the borders of the USA. A preliminary answer to this question is: a liberal freedom controlled by an elite and the elite’s principle. For instance, with respect to the contribution of MoMA and the various private foundations which supported the cultural warfare, Liberalism implies that there is nothing to prevent an individual from exerting as much influence through his work in a private foundation as he could through work in the government.

The Founding Fathers, and more specifically James Madison, wanted to refine the voice of people in government, not replicate it. They proposed various restraints to majority voting which were thought to shelter the governing elite from direct popular impact. Voting was considered a method of controlling officials by subjecting their tenure to periodic electoral

tests, but not a method for citizens to participate directly in making law, supposedly the 'Will of the People.' To create and to use a policy frame which is independent of parliamentary support is a natural consequence of this principle of American liberalism as soon as the elite finds the elected representatives too narrow-minded, and too close to popular values, to collaborate in the pursuit of the grand scheme.

More specifically, Frances Saunders (2000, p.5) asks: 'Did financial aid distort the process by which intellectuals and artists were advanced? – Were reputations secured or enhanced by membership of the CIA's cultural consortium?' Ex-post one can conclude that most of the writers, film makers and artists selected by the CIA sponsorship were of extremely high quality. The Abstract Expressionists such as Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, and Mark Rothko have defined the world art of their period and are still prominent contributors to museums of modern art around the globe. (See Marc Rothko's room at Tate Modern.) But it seems impossible to answer whether they could have done this without the support which they derived, directly or indirectly, from the resources which the CIA invested in the secret cultural warfare.¹⁴ We have to see that Abstract Expressionism entails a high degree of exclusiveness and of cartelization so that its support had a substantial discriminating effect on American art – with precarious consequences for those who were not members of the cartel. Abstract Expressionism 'was sealed inside a belljar and protected from infection by any unwanted Germs, from intrusion by any outsider who might disturb the cherished harmony' (Guilbaut, 1983, p.10). There was no (gallery) space left for Byron Browne, Carl Holty, Karl Knath, and Charles Seliger, painters who were successful before the Abstract Expressionists conquered the stage: their works were too European, too close to Paris, and too un-American – to become enlisted by governmental agencies and private organizations in the fight against the expansion of Communism¹⁵. Ann Eden Gibson (1997, p. xxxi) summarizes: 'To the extent that the work of an artist who is not in the canon looks like that of one who is, the noncanonical artist's work is derivative. To the extent that the noncanonical work does not resemble that in the canon, the contending work is not Abstract Expressionist'. Paradoxically, the discriminating effect resulted from the focus on universality. This excluded artists whose identity did not generalize 'in a postwar society whose standards were racist, misogynist, and homophobic' (Gibson, 1997, xxii). The mechanism of this society functioned to reinforce the power of European, male and heterosexual identity and discriminated against artists who did not fit in this pattern. The CIA was grateful for this pre-selection of artists and their work; it made it less cumbersome to transfer Western values to the rest of the world. The standards of the postwar society were racist, misogynist, and homophobic not only in America. However, 'was there any real justification for assuming that the principles of western democracy couldn't be revived in post-war Europe according to some internal mechanism? Or for not assuming that democracy could be more complex than was implied by the lauding of American liberalism?' (Saunders, 2000, p.5) Indeed, democracy is a complex concept. Left to the internal mechanism it is not obvious that a democratic equilibrium evolves. From a theoretical point of view, coordination on a democratic equilibrium seems to be

¹⁴However, 'there isincontrovertible evidence that the CIA was an active component in the machinery which promoted Abstract Expressionism' (Saunders, 2000, p.273).

¹⁵On February 25, 1948, Czechoslovakia went over to the Soviet bloc after the Czech Communist succeeded in out-manoeuvring the divided Social Democratic Party.

easily solvable by the implementation of American liberalism – and the American way of life as the focal point. However, when it comes to modern art as a vehicle to disseminate American liberalism, it faced, as we have seen, popular resistance from inside. Undercover operations was a way to circumvent this problem. This violates the majority principle of democracy but not necessarily the liberal perspective of it. As Gordon Wood, author of *The American Revolution: A History* writes ‘What really counts in maintaining democracy are the liberties protected by the Bill of Rights and the underlying conditions of the country – its culture, its social arrangements, its economic well-being, and the political experience of its citizens and their leaders’ (Wood, 2002, p.21).

If the financing were done openly, the liberal elite would see itself in conflict with the political sector which (a) relies on majorities and thus depends on popularity, and (b) whose members are, in general, not as well equipped to enjoy modern art as the members of the elite. Moreover, it seems that some participants of the Berlin Congress and affiliates to the CCF did not know that they were, directly or indirectly, financed by the CIA. Had they known they would left the projects it supported or publicly distanced themselves from their donor. In both cases the effect would have probably been negative.

Other participants claimed that they did not know that they were financed by the CIA. They needed this umbrella to (a) keep up social respect, (b) be acceptable for the cultural or political community, and (c) avoid political or social resistance and concomitant backlashes about their work. Secrecy was helpful and, to some extent, necessary for the conquest of the Western art community through sponsored exhibitions and gallery work. Were the shows which finally installed Abstract Expressionism in Western Europe during the post-war period openly financed by the US government, their impact is likely to have been much reduced: the success of America’s Cold War program depended on its ability to appear independent from government, to seem to represent the spontaneous convictions of freedom loving individuals. This was the credo of Allen Dulles, younger brother to secretary of state John Foster Dulles, close friend of Nelson Rockefeller and director of CIA in the period 1953-61, who was already in charge of covert operations in Europe during World War II (Saunders, 2000, p.130).

5. The Model Analysis

Georges Duby claims that ‘the most startling discoveries that remain to be made, I think, will come from the attempt to find out what was left out of the discourse, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, to determine what was hidden, consciously or unconsciously.’¹⁶

Naturally, a lot is left out when politics makes use of obfuscation and secrecy. Duby concludes ‘What we need are new scholarly tools, tools better adapted than those we now have to bringing out the negative in what we are shown, to laying bare the things that men deliberately cover up. At times these suddenly reveal themselves quite by accident, but most of the time they must be carefully deciphered between the lines of what is actually said.’¹⁷

¹⁶Quotation taken from Guilbaut (1983, p.6).

¹⁷Quotation taken from Guilbaut (1983, p.6).

6. Afterword

In 1966, a series of articles was published in the New York times on the CIA's covert operations. Amidst reports on political assassinations and ruthless political intervention came details about the support which the CIA gave to the cultural sector. The upshot was that the moral authority which the intellectuals enjoyed during the height of the Cold War was 'seriously undermined and frequently mocked' (Saunders, 200, p.6). Was this intended? Or, was it just the consequence of a change in art style: from Jackson Pollock's drippings to Andy Warhols Brillo Box and his Campbell's Soup Cans, the latter perhaps more appropriate to reflect the consumerism of capitalism than the worship of color and celebration of the lonely hero of the former.

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