

William Prettie's Response

Thank-you for this opportunity to share a bit about my own analysis of systems of oppression and the results of their manipulations in our world. Everything here is my personal opinion and I consider myself privileged to be able to express that opinion freely.

I suppose, the majority of the populace might think, the only possible answers to your questions are directly connected to what any individual thinks that Art is. I have a personal opinion about that question but do not necessarily connect it to the current aggressive stances of governments corporations and militaries all around the world.

That 1500 artists have decided that the world should boycott Manifesta 10 in St. Petersburg Russia, says more I think about their well warranted desires for peace in the world but also their flawed analysis about the root causes of the current troubles in Ukraine. Unfortunately, from my position their analysis is heavily flavoured by the fact of the rise of the right wing revolution that has been inflicted on the world since the ascendance of Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and assorted minor troublemakers like Brian Mulroney.

Of course our own fatuous Prime Minister Harper and his Baird in a China shop are now rushing about the world implementing policies instantly identified as hostile by those at the other end of our guns and our banking, diplomatic and corporate attacks; but apparently not visible to the incredibly indoctrinated populace here in the “democracies”. We do not of course simply blame the artists or anyone else who has bought in to the incessant drumbeats of propaganda washing in waves over those who are struggling to make sense of the world. How for example do we evaluate the idea that perpetual war will make us safe? Or that perpetual growth on a finite planet is not causing climate collapse? They and we live in this human soup and are in fact a part of it.

Let me point out that Russia does not have 1000 military bases around the world; the United States does. It is the United States that spends more on “defense” than all the other countries of the world combined. Russia is currently ruled by people who are certainly deserving of despicable labels yet they are not conducting drone warfare and sending out Special Operations assassins that murder thousands of innocents on the direct orders of President Obama. Canada by the way also has a semi-secret force of special ops., called JTF2. I am sure that the Russians; like all state actors are spying on the rest of the world yet I do not know of bulk spying by anyone else on the scale of the “Five eyes” U.S U.K. Can., Aust., & Nz.

When Gorbachev began the dismantling of the soviet empire and withdrew from the colonized states he did so with the express promise from the United States that Nato would not advance into those states. Let’s consider the recent history of Russia itself, that has been continuously, severely attacked through the countries to their west and south. Russia lost over 20 Million citizens in world war II alone and for it’s own security asked for that Nato promise. The western democracies led by the U.S. gave and then almost immediately broke that promise. The Americans are now meddling to the tune of at least 75 million dollars that we

know about in 2013 to create a government in Ukraine that will become another NATO state on Russia's border. This will be just one more on top of all the new bases in Turkey, Afghanistan and other former Soviet states. That Russia sees this as threatening is patently obvious. Anyone who has not shut down their capacity to observe and analyze despite the main stream media rush to prove their subservience to power should see this. Imagine militarily advanced hostile states in Newfoundland and on Vancouver Island to get a sense of their worries.

The Black Sea it should be noted is the only warm water access to the world's oceans that Russia has for both military and civilian operations. This is the equivalent to Canada of the St. Lawrence seaway. This should give some idea of the reasons that the dominant military/industrial/capitalists of the world wish to deny that access to Russia. That Russia has moved to protect their military assets in the Black sea is not surprising to anyone. This also says I think, something about a mindset that is willing to risk global war in its pursuit of competitively insane "growth". Let's also remember that it was the intervention of the Americans which prevented the Russian proposal for the Ukraine to trade equitably with both Russia and the European Union.

The overthrow of the Yanukovich Kleptocracy was accomplished by a wide variety of forces inside Ukraine with our overt and covert assistance. It has been reliably documented that a significant portion of those forces (up to one third) and in fact of the parliament itself are avowed fascists and neo-nazis. What do we think about assisting the rise of fascism in Europe? What do we think of this when we remember that Zbigniew Brzezinski brags that we assisted the Taliban to power? What about remembering that Al-Qaeda was a creation of the CIA and NSA? Let us remember the consequences suffered as a result. What ever happened to the idea that countries get to sort out for themselves who they are without the interference of powerful outside state actors? ANY outside state forces.

So with that background how do I address the operative question regarding Art. The people who have been capable of creating the deaths of millions upon millions in the last 30 years are not going to stop doing what they do on either side because a group of artists does or does not do anything at all. In fact to acknowledge that artists should consider the twisted manipulations of either side may be simply acknowledging our own complicit insanity. We are all colluding with the systems we live within and in a moral universe we would hold ourselves responsible for the systems that we can directly affect. So perhaps the question for those of us in the west might be: If we do not attend the Manifesta 10 in St Petersburg are we encouraging expansionist warmongering by the west? As well, if we do not attend will we be assisting in the growth of Russia's defensive xenophobic paranoia? Their sadistic homophobia would seem to be created to justify themselves as superior in some way to what they perceive as foreign antagonists? Make no mistake! These vicious attacks on civil liberties are new and are created and imposed from the top in order for an already authoritarian system to regress to totalitarian consolidation and control. A vision and a direction I must add that is all too evident in our own home grown incipient dictatorship. (suppression of science based investigation, The "Fair elections act", electoral fraud, militarization of the Police and so on!) That the methods now being used in Russia have been recently historically commonplace in the west and only painfully

and partially overcome should give us all pause. In the end isolation whether imposed from within or without leads to the ability of elites to hide from their criminality.

Would I personally travel to Russia's St. Petersburg for Manifesta 10 and/or to visit the Hermitage? Should any of us?

In a heartbeat !!!

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