



7-15-1992

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### Recommended Citation

Kezer, Claude D. (1992) "Artistic Statements from the Fringe," *Westview*: Vol. 11 : Iss. 4 , Article 5.  
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol11/iss4/5>

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## Artistic Statements from the Fringe

by *Claude D. Kezer*

"Hey! OK. Play like you're the bad guy, an' I'm one of the Ninja Turtles, an' you're the girl that the bad guy kidnapped, an' I come an' rescue you an' tie up the bad guy for the cops."

"Now ya'll are the Indians, an' we're the calvery [sic], an' you're attackin' the wagon, an' we come an' kill ya'll, an' we're the heroes."

Does either example sound familiar? Children of all ages pretend, play like, fantasize, or imagine. Many people make their living "playing like"—people in all elements of the performing arts, inventors, computer programers, etc. etc.

Creativity, imagination, invention, and wonder are all integral parts of the "mind of a child," and unfortunately many adults/parents strive heartily to inhibit these aspects in their children. At times the public antics of children embarrass their parents.

True, mature individuals should be wise enough to know when they may not let the child in them come out to play; however, a person should never seek to put "childishness" away permanently.

Strange, isn't it, that many people denigrate performers, inventors—in general, people who are creative—as being weird, strange, antisocial, or peculiar; yet they would complain bitterly if they didn't have movies, TV, or live entertainment to enjoy.

The Romans' ancient tradition of killing the messenger who brought bad news is at play here, except now the public kills the ones who bring them joy, relaxation, empathetic fulfillment, and vicarious experiences.

We may vaguely understand such an approach in that people who are in the public eye, who maintain high profiles, are certainly more vulnerable to attack than those who aren't necessarily newsworthy. Such an understanding of the situation, however, still doesn't in any way justify it.

If adults, who internally keep the child alive, wish to alter the public's concept of them, they must recognize their responsibilities to the creative arts—thus the reason for this article.

Shakespeare suggests, in Hamlet's speech to the players, that the Arts hold a mirror up to nature "to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of time his form and pressure." Or, the Arts reflect life as an illusion of reality. I propose that the Arts are not just a mirror, that they have more than mere power to reflect. The Arts also mold, push, affect, and effect, in active ways, those who experience them.

From the play OMEGA, I excerpt the following:

Why is it that good literature isn't commercial and strictly base writing is quickly bought? Why is it that so many writers/philosophers take the easy route of addressing topics of the highly unusual and call them usual, when the real challenge lies in addressing the commonality of the world and making it appear unique?

The Arts have been many things to many people.

In the beginning, the Arts were an important part of the ritual and adoration of

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the gods. This aspect of the Arts has continued into the present time. The changes we perceive in the history of the Arts becomes evidently not a change in the Arts but a change in the gods.

From the Greek and Roman gods, through the Judeo-Christian God, to the reflective nature of humankind, into the gods of national propaganda, and finally the gods of finance, the Arts have been used and/or abused.

Some factions of the Arts and artists have struggled and strived for qualified recognition, and the hue and cry "Arts for Art's sake" has been the explanation for battle.

Sadly, every movement by any group, no matter how worthy the cause, attracts members of the "idiot fringe." They jump on the moving wagon and attract a great deal of attention. They pull the movement down toward the appealing mundane. Thus, pseudo Art and pseudo artists become the rage of the masses who understand little and desire not to learn appreciation through nuance. The wish to be "entertained" only by the blatant and strident appeals to their base instincts, never to have cause for use of an intellect which is outside their scope.

How sad that mediums which may be used to raise the consciousness of humankind are used rather to bring them to the bottom of the human scale. It's not enough for Art to reflect life as it is. Art and artists have a responsibility also to project life as it should be in an ideal world—a world where love, peace, understanding, forgiveness, and beneficence are the primary goals of humankind. ■

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