

Art & Anarchy

Allan Antliff*

When Duane Rousselle and Süreyya Evren invited me to edit a special issue of *ADCS* devoted to art, I resolved to mix the past with the contemporary and ensure it would be expansive: hence we have articles and works of art that encompass music, virtual architecture and urban design, film, poetics, prose, dance/performance, the visual arts (sculpture, painting, photography, installation, graphics), the economics of art production, and aesthetics.

The cover of this issue features Kika Thorne's *Octave* (2009), an elegant sculpture which I first encountered on exhibit at the Vancouver Art Gallery. If, while viewing the work, you gaze into *Octave*'s suspended mirror (which casts an array of reflections and shadows traversing the gallery wall and flooring), you will discover the multi-coloured cords that give *Octave* sculptural form expand outward, creating a dizzying 'parallel world' delimited by pristine geometrics reminiscent of anarchist sculptor Naum Gabo's (1890–1977) crystalline representations of organic structures in nature. *Octave* demonstrates abstract art's ability to move beyond self-referential concerns, infusing sensate experience with aesthetic qualities that approach the sublime. And it also encapsulates the interplay between past and present configurations of artistic anarchy, in this instance developing a sculptural tradition which Gabo's friend and collaborator, British anarchist art critic Herbert Read (1893–1968), is most closely associated with.¹

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“Art & Anarchy” returns to a perennial concern — how our capacity for imaginative prefiguration and/or social intervention and/or self-actualization figures in the tensions that arise between the realities we seek to transform and our aspirations as anarchists. Artists bring unique perspectives and capacities to bear on this issue. They address the revolutionary dimensions of our being while foregrounding creativity, reminding us that we, too, are creators.

¹ See my discussion of Read’s organicist aesthetic as it relates to the work of Gabo, Thorne, and others in “Open Form and the Abstract Imperative: Herbert Read and Contemporary Anarchist Art,” *Anarchist Studies* 16 no. 1 (2007): 6–19 reprinted in *Re-Reading Read: New Views on Herbert Read*, Michael Paraskos, ed. (London: Freedom Press, 2007), 34–43; 223–224.

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