

# LEFT ART REVIEW

## call for contributors

*LEFT ART REVIEW* focuses on the tsunami of recent publications, exhibitions, films, posts, projects and events devoted to the question of art's relationship to politics. We seek short reviews written from a left realist perspective that critically assess the political promise or limitations of that relationship.

### ART AND POLITICS AFTER THE DEFEAT OF THE CULTURAL TURN

Because its mission is “crassly political and programmatic,” *Jacobin*'s founding editor Bhaskar Sunkara has said, “we generally try to avoid cultural content,” particularly “avant-garde culture.” *LAR* aspires to a similar programmatic mission but it does so knowing that culture—even avant-garde culture—materially affects political outcomes. For better or for worse.

An early *New Left Review* editorial summed up the emergent new left's critical direction with the slogan “Too much ‘Old Left’; too little ‘culture’.” The epoch-changing redistribution of wealth and power over the last 50 years tells us that this inversion of priorities has failed. The new left's “cultural politics” bypasses the institution-building steps between culture and politics that allows their relation to be progressive. Culture has become a pose of the professional managerial class that enables the right by serving as its loyal opposition. Long in the tooth, the cultural turn is now a vulnerability for the left, leaving it outflanked by cultural warriors and their funders on the right.

This defeat invites a sober reconsideration of art's relationship to institutions with the power to make change. What did art once do for unions, movements, parties and fledgling revolutionary states? What did it do for labor and civil rights organizers? How might those contributions be redirected and retooled to address the needs of teacher, museum and university unionizers? What about *Jacobin* readers, DSA members and Berniebros? Starbucks, REI, Trader Joe's and Amazon organizers? Green New Dealers and Gen Z “socialists”? What about the workers leaving the Democratic party in droves? What about similar emergent forces outside the U.S.?

### GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Contributors are invited to review recent publications, exhibitions, films, posts, projects and events in light of any or all of the following questions:

- What are the real or plausible, short-term or long-term, overt or otherwise, social consequences of this publication, exhibition, post, project or event?
- How does it enable or disable the organized political activity that is essential for progressive social change?
- How does it compare with past examples of effective or ineffective political art or art writing, and what was key to these past successes or failures?
- What is it about its political aim that makes it something more than virtue signaling, tokenism or political posturing?
- If the political contribution claimed in response to one of the questions above is “critique,” what makes it something other than the right's loyal opposition?

Reviews typically run 500 to 2000 words. We also welcome pitches for longer essays and interviews as well as visual, audio and video contributions: [editorial@leftartreview.org](mailto:editorial@leftartreview.org).