



RESTARTIST MANIFESTO

At the onset of the twentieth-century, many groups of artists launched avant-garde movements whose intentions were outlined through a manifesto. Those artists were typically fed-up with the status quo and expressed their ideals by listing an inventory of the various objects of their love and/or hate.

Today, a century later, right when we are supposed to be enjoying the Triumph of the Avant-garde, art movements have been snatched away by bureaucrats. They tour galleries and schools in search of “emerging artists” whose work exemplifies what should be considered a genuine artistic novelty. Artists themselves are no longer taken into consideration. We have moved from being those who protested and forged revolutions to becoming mere spectators at somebody else’s banquet.

It has been many years since the art movements of the Establishment transpired from needs embraced by the artists themselves. And for years now, artistic manifestos have been considered anachronistic. But it is today, more than ever before, that artists need to raise our voice and—why not?—publish our manifestos.

We are, as were our forefathers in the past, fed-up with the absurdity of the current situation. The art world has made this status quo seem normal and acceptable. We are fed-up with the fact that painting, drawing, and sculpting, in spite of the great importance they still have, are ignored in the State-sanctioned venues of our time. They are declared non-existent, dead. We are fed-up with the fact that money and media attention are going entirely to a kind of art that is hardly representative of the profession at large. We are fed-up with art having become a spectacle only millionaires can afford to attend. We are fed-up with elitism and hypocrisy. We are fed-up with the art of the Establishment.

This is why we founded this artistic movement, Restartism [in Spanish, Hartismo, from estar harto: to be fed-up]. Everyone is fed-up with the current state of Art. Some—a few— are quick to proclaim its demise, while we—the populous rest of us—continue to nurture it diligently and with daily, hard work. Art is not dead, but we have observed its glow dim and its spark wane. Perhaps Art has been resting, and the time has come for us to awaken it, look around, and learn from our mistakes.

It is time to restart the engines of our craft. We are doing it by cultivating our practice with serious and sincere commitment. And, like others have done in the past, we now wish to introduce ourselves to the world via this Restartist Manifesto.



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Against the anti-art, Conceptualism, pretentiousness, and the cult of the egomaniacal artist.
Art belongs to all.

1. We must restART. We are fed-up with the artists of the Establishment and their environment, who have become selfish and vain. They place themselves above the rest of the world, and choose to spend their time staring at their belly buttons while engaging in arguments about the gender of angels and whatnot. Down here, in the real world, restartists work with our hands, producing art daily while procuring a living. Restartism advocates humility, honesty and simplicity. Restartists view Art as a profession that is neither divine nor special. As with every other métier, excellence in art is only achieved through years of serious, continued practice.
2. We must restART. We are fed-up with elitism, and with art being the province of a few privileged ones. We want art to be handed back to the public, and to return to the streets. We want art to leave its confinement and again permeate daily life, embellishing cornices, lamps and street signs... We despise the seldom-visited galleries and museums where the art of the Establishment is shown; we reject their empty, aseptic halls that seem like temples erected to worship an inaccessible god. We want inviting rooms with comfortable chairs where one can see art up-close while chatting leisurely with friends and sharing a cup of coffee.
3. We must restART. We are fed-up with the fact that only gurus and “experts” are entitled to air an opinion. Restartism encourages people to talk freely and sincerely about art—current art, since it belongs to all, especially to those whose tax payments make it possible in the first place. Most people enjoy a private laugh at the expense of the outrageous displays that the Establishment delivers to us as Art. We say: Why limit our laughter to private quarters? Let us openly mock the art of the Establishment and the pretentious, ridiculous and empty things shown to us as Art—with a capital “A”—by the pretentious, ridiculous and empty minds of curators, mock-artists and politicians!
4. We must restART. We are fed-up with listening again and again to proclamations about the death of Art, or the demise of painting. There is plenty of evidence to the contrary. Painting is alive, despite the hurdles it encounters and the neglect it suffers. On the other hand, it is the “modern” manifestations of Establishment art that require a constant influx of public money. Restartists are sick of public funds being used to support extravagant, embarrassing acts that nobody likes and give a bad name to the craft otherwise cultivated with dedication by many others.
5. We must restART. We are fed-up with anti-art. Duchamp’s amusing ideas were coined when it was historically relevant for such things to exist. Duchamp himself objected to his ready-made artifacts being labeled as “art”. However, anti-art has now become the new academicism, the new Establishment art. We, therefore, prefer to listen to Duchamp, not to his exegetes.

We would hold no grudge against anti-art if it weren’t for one small detail: anti-art refuses to co-exist with art. The purpose of anti-art is to negate and exterminate art in order to replace it. Anti-artists know that when art is available, anti-art is neglected: given the choice of a good painting or a bucket of shit, most sensible people will prefer the painting. That is why anti-artists must at all cost strive to convince us that painting is no longer a valid medium, that we must reject it, that it should be thrown to a remote corner, so that whatever it is that they “do” can somehow be valued. That is why they

spend so much ink and saliva on speeches, and produce long and convoluted lectures on a variety of topics: The Death of Art, The Anachronism of Painting, The Irrelevance of Beauty...

Almost a century after it emerged, anti-art has monopolized all media attention; it has seized art schools and steered in its direction a sizeable amount of public money. Little by little, anti-art is accomplishing its task, cornering and replacing true art. Artists, artworks, galleries, and critics: there are anti-art versions of each of them. *Restartists* are fed-up with the parasitic replacement of art with anti-art, and denounce the tolerance and encouragement of this practice from the Establishment. *Restartism* is an *anti-anti-art* movement! It is impossible to co-exist harmoniously with an aggressive cancer that erodes art from within, so we find it necessary to locate, isolate, and remove anti-art before it kills us. *Restartism* is, however, a movement steered by goodwill, and we thus welcome with open arms all the anti-artists who wish to re-invent themselves as real artists, learning the craft, acquiring technique and trying to be sincere—perhaps for the first time...

6. We must restART. We are fed-up with conceptual art. Everybody can come up with ideas—some undoubtedly genial—on a daily basis. Having ideas is nothing out of the ordinary. What distinguishes an artist is his ability to turn an idea into an intrinsically valuable object of art. Works of art grant ideas a reason to exist, not the other way around.
7. We must restART. We are fed-up with the fact that anything nowadays can be presented as a work of art. If an object must be shown in an art gallery with the support of an elaborate story in order to be understood and deemed a piece of art, then it is not art. It is a scam. A bucket full of shit is a bucket full of shit, regardless of how much philosophical baloney goes into embellishing it.
We reject endowing the *process* with a value higher than the work itself, and refuse to grant the “performative” aspect of a work a status equal to the actual artistic object. We recognize that all artworks entail a process—a ritual, even. But when a cook decides to make an omelet and engages in what can be a fascinating—perhaps ritualistic—process, the procedure and the ritual are only meaningful if they reach a tangible result. People don’t eat fascinating processes. People eat omelets.
8. We must restART. We are fed-up with people using originality, novelty or “modernity” as the measure of value for works of art and their creators. Originality, novelty and modernity are perversely misunderstood concepts whose worth, far from being absolute, is entirely cultural. Paradoxically, in spite of its obsession with “the new”, the art of the Establishment has, like all fashions, arrived at a state whose forms, ways and ideas are grotesquely repetitive, and an insult to our intelligence. Avant-garde art is akin to a *lingua morta*. It invents itself according to rules that no longer possess the vital impulse of those who created them. It is an avant-garde produced in a laboratory, reconstructed by experts according to desiccated images preserved in books and museums. The great gurus of Establishment art certify as “innovative”, “daring”, “transgressive”, or “rupturist” only that which follows an old formula and respects the canons of the avant-garde orthodoxy.
9. We must restART. We are fed-up with the importance given to styles and “isms”. Painting is a personal act, and each individual is unique. Labels are but the way in which art historians construct a catalogue of artistic knowledge, and artists should not be concerned with them. We believe in the importance of painting not *in a style* but *with style*, that is to say, painting *well*.
10. We must restART. We are fed-up with those who do not use their hands and still call themselves artists. An artist paints, sculpts, or draws—thinking is not enough. We are tired of quacks that become artists overnight through God’s (or the latest art guru’s) grace. Art belongs to the working artist!

11. We must restART. We are fed-up with transcendentalism. *Restartists* paint because painting is what matters. Painting needs no brainy justifications. It is a necessity, and a pleasure. It is only by drawing and painting each day that we become artists. We would like to invite those who may have doubts about this particular issue to go ahead and, simply, find some other *métier*. Charlatans are in great demand in the political arena, for example...
12. We must restART. We are fed-up with those who look contemptuously at Tradition. Human beings build upon that which is known. Discarding our artistic tradition amounts to rejecting the possibility of being innovative, to eliminating all references and foundations.
Our movement is not *avant-garde*, but it is not counter-*avant-garde* either. The contribution of the historic *avant-garde* movements has already been incorporated into our pictorial tradition by a number of talented artists. Tradition, enriched by the historic *avant-garde*, is the foundation of both our common culture and our current technical repertoire.
13. We must restART. We are fed-up with the current, distorted view of twentieth and twenty-first-century art history. It is necessary—for art’s sake and to preserve the dignity of art historians—to revisit critically the tenets upon which rests the current narrative of the history of art. We believe that art criticism has subjugated both artists and art historians through its flashy and biased views. Audiences continue to over-value the importance of the *avant-garde* movements of the twentieth-century, ignoring the fact that they were exhausted soon after their emergence and, yet, have been artificially resuscitated again and again. In response to the overwhelming documental evidence there is, it is necessary that historians take on the task of accounting for the hundreds of notable masters who have continued to work and nurture subsequent generations of artists without subscribing to any *avant-garde* movement.
The official line in art history courses that describes the twentieth century as a vertiginous succession of ever-more extreme *avant-garde* movements is forced and artificial. Its basis favors ideology (*avant-gardism*) over an objective narrative. The abundance of artists who were “out of their time” renders this theoretical model rather precarious: Ben Shahn, Hopper, Balthus, Guttuso, Hockney, Freud, Kitaj were all undoubtedly influential figures, but they hardly fit into a story told as a permanent sequence of *avant-garde* movements, each more radical than the previous one!
14. We must restART. We are fed-up with the fact that beauty is disdained and removed from every purportedly artistic discourse. For *restartists*, beauty is the ultimate goal of art. We reject the formal deficiency of Establishment art, as well as the reverse-aestheticism that turns infinite ugliness into art’s maximum aspiration. This hardly means that our art is based on old, gaudy, or namby-pamby aesthetic stands. Crude or disagreeable themes also fit into the *restartist* repertoire, but the search for beauty is, to *restartists*, focused on our concern with creating harmonious and well-constructed forms.
15. We must restART. We are fed-up with the role that has been assigned to today’s artists. The pompous, empty glory, the lavishly printed catalogues, and the resulting adulation are the vital objective of the Establishment artist: A person with no vocation; no craft; a life centered on social acts, far from the pleasure of drawing, the mystery of painting, and the discovery of new internal realms. A person who is far, in sum, from the smell and touch of the materials.
On the other hand, for the *restartist*, success translates into being able to get up every morning and paint.
16. We must restART. We are fed-up with the current teaching systems of many official art schools. The apprentice needs more practice and less theory, yet our young artists receive a heavy dose of useless rhetoric at the expense of technique and craft. We cannot

understand how students can be thus denied the right to develop their skills. We reclaim the value of drawing—specifically figure drawing—as the pedagogical basis for all visual arts.

17. We must restART. We are fed-up with the current infatuation with new technologies. New materials and techniques, as well as computer-based and audio-visual technology neither overwhelm, nor amaze us. They are part of our current repertoire of natural resources, and we use them casually, like any other tool. More than a century has passed since the creation of the first motion picture, and more than forty years since the arrival of the first computer, so it is simply stupid to continue drooling over the discovery of video or computer science. We are fed-up with how the silly fascination with the media or technique used blinds everyone's critical sense, forcing us to swallow indigestible filth in the name of novelty or cleverness.
18. We must restART. We are fed-up with painting having become like a tailor's drawer that can store just about anything. We constantly encounter theatre plays, photographs, and films that, as long as they are of questionable merit, are all classified as plastic arts. Under the pretense of "expanding art's boundaries", our field—and our name—have been sequestered: how many PAINTING contests and exhibitions have given awards to installation and performance art, photographs and videos? Let us reclaim the venues and uses that belong naturally to Painting.
19. We must restART. We are fed-up with the emphasis on "new approaches". We will always welcome the birth of new art forms, but there is no objective reason to multiply the number of existing categories, creating blurry entities such as "performance art", "installation art", or "video art" that can hardly claim any independence from traditional plastic arts. When truly new forms arrive, as was the case with comic books or cinema in the twentieth-century, they alone forge their onward path with their overpowering strength. They need no nebulous classification. Most of the supposedly new art forms are nothing but refuges for bad theatre, bad cinema or, definitely, bad painting.
20. We must restART. We are fed-up with our being considered a minority. While the founders of Restartism are Galician, our movement is universal by vocation. We are not four isolated madmen hiding in the peninsular Northwest, fighting the widespread trends of the modern world. We are convinced that, in actuality, the majority of people think just as we do.
Our movement is affiliated with the Stuckist Movement, which has been contesting Establishment art since 1999 and has a presence in forty countries, with more than 180 branches all over the world. While originating as a painters' revolt, Restartism includes all the arts and all aspects of culture.

Restartism is a point of departure, but it is also a destination. We want to regain our profession's normalcy, sincerity and simplicity. We want painting to be just that: painting, without the extravagant clothing that turns art into what it isn't.

We aspire to embody the child in the story "The Emperor's New Clothes", announcing to society that which everyone thinks but no one dares to say.