

John Wilcock, columnist

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1967

Web Archive note: John Wilcock's usual column heading is "Other Scenes".

Every time somebody steals a masterpiece from a museum or fakes a Renoir or mutilates a Rubens the cause of art is served. Because we are reminded that art, like us, is mortal.

But the screams that arise from the culture vultures remind us of something else, too; that art today has less of an aesthetic value than an economic one.

The substance of the complaints—reflected by the viciously retributive sentences passed on the "criminals"—is that property "worth millions of dollars" was tampered with. But how did this value come about? Because of (a) the painting's age; (b) the fact that the painter is dead; and (c) because the painting has become a speculative commodity that continues to make money for everyone connected with it, except the painter.

The more famous a painting is the less need there is to keep it around because thousands of reproductions of it exist, many of them more attractive than the original (except, of course, for the value of age as a commodity in itself). In fact, if all the famous paintings in all the world's museums were replaced with fakes and the originals sold to private collectors there'd be enough dough to buy art direct from LIVING painters—which would be at least as good for the economy.

Who, if anybody, should control the licensing of topless clubs? According to "Topless U.S.A. Guide & Directory," a sort of house magazine for and about topless clubs, LA's Board of Supervisors recently gave "Almost dictatorial powers" to the Public Welfare Commission. Comments editor Don Aronson: "I can't for the life of me figure what the hell the Commission has to do or should be allowed to have to do with topless.

"I am interested in seeing how long it is going to take citizens who care about their personal freedom of choice to see and read what they wish, who do not find something dirty, immoral, evil and sinful in everything around them to raise their tidal wave of dissention and let the ruling clan know who does the voting, the seating and unseating."

Topless, a monthly, costs 50 cents from P.O. Box 609, Garden Grove, Calif. 92643.

DeGaulle won't let Bertrand Russell hold his War Crimes Trial in Paris so the trial—to decide "officially" whether LBJ is guilty of Vietnam atrocities—has been postponed indefinitely...

"The Establishment, locally in defense of prejudice and economic exploitation, nationally in defense of political and military considerations, has fought the nonviolent movement harder than it ever has the Mafia. The FBI will pick up and imprison any idealistic boy who burns his draft card and yet is powerless to control the heroin market which in New York City alone produces a profit of a million dollars a day." (Dick Gregory)...

Esquire has a piece about cops who take graft (which, they imply, is the rule rather than the exception)...

Frank Zappa's recording a symphony...

The *Canadian Free Press* (25 cents from 53 Argyle Ave., Ottawa, Ont.) is an attractive new member of the Underground Press Syndicate, which now has 30 members in three countries...

How to tell a non-head: she hates incense...

Save the seed, save the seed. And replant it. Here's a thing for those dreamy hours—Sanford Cohen's *Psychedelic Coloring Book* (\$1 from 326 Seventh Ave., NYC 10011)...

I don't even know what probate means but a book on how to avoid it has sold 640,000 in the past year making it the biggest hardcover bestseller and almost 100,000 copies of the second-place "Games People Play."

Money, big money, comes from specialization, exploitation, working the same vein until its exhausted. Just the kind of talents most useful for survival. Good artists rarely make a fortune because they move ever onwards, being too explorative to stay with something that already bores them.

"I'm wondering whether this isn't a moribund period of art. Aesthetics have gone into things like space and science—those beautiful airships, utility at its height. No artist could compete with that." (Charlie Chaplin interviewed in London by Francis Wyndham)...

Publisher's Weekly quotes a 12-year old boy, "A book is a hunk of bull. It is a bunch of instant trouble. A book is a thing that opens your mind to sex. Book can get you into so much trouble that at times it isn't worth having."

In England a bunch of civil rights types are trying to change the law that lets a kid join the army at 15-1/2 years old and keeps him there for the full length of his contract (9-12 years) even if he changes his mind as he gets wiser.

"Hipness is a way of competing for status without doing anything" (Tom Wolfe)...

It's fashionable to think of peace-loving Switzerland as "a brave little neutral" but it's nearer the point to explain that it is the official Supra-Establishment hideout for dodgers of every kind, as long as they have plenty of money. A necessary haven for all sides, with guarantees of non-disturbance and, as the recent fuss over Stalin's daughter showed, actual expulsion of newsmen who ask too many questions...

William Critchley, 20, an English law student, just won a fellowship to go to Africa and study gorillas "at close quarters." (Nobody has actually lived amongst them since 1890)...

What may be the prettiest commercial catalog ever is the one done by Tom Woodward for Colortone House (8071 Beverly Blvd., L.A.)...

This week's book title: *Warm Against My Pussy*.

From NYC: "legal beagles here could find no law against toplessness so they ordered one! Lawyers predict the past & blight the future"...

KILL A COMMIE FOR CHRIST on a button sold by London's Badge Boutique brought a cop to the store last month on the complaint of a private citizen that it was "obscene"

And talking of obscenity (on the Susskind show) brought a cut-off for *EVO*'s Walter Bowart (in LA this week) when he described LBJ as obscene...

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