




Does Art Represent Matriarchy?

The *Art Basel* from June 13 to 18, 2023 was a celebration. A festival, especially for those who could buy and sell the high-priced art that was on display. The yellow, ocher and orange Rothko painting in the *Acquavella Gallery*, offered for \$60 million, remained unsold. The auctions — over the last few weeks at least ten were held in the German-speaking countries alone — achieved respectable outcomes. However, not all the works submitted attained good or very good hammer prices. The number of unsold works, whether in the modern art category, particularly German Expressionism, or contemporary art, visibly increased. Meanwhile, despite numerous successful sales, galleries at the magnificent Basel fair had to cope with unprecedented charges of rent for the exhibition booths. In the auction houses, it was noticeable at the same time that the estimates for second- or third-tier works were significantly lower than before. While there was an increase of glamor in the art world once again, there was also a sharp rise in costs. **As we reported in our last newsletter, the boom in the art sector is temporarily over. The increase in interest rates is having an effect on the financial markets, giving rise to careful reflection and noticeable hesitation in buying. Art as an asset class is not fading into the background, but what is not yet recognized everywhere is the emergence of a buyer's market due to increasing volatilities.** On a purely cultural level, we are also noting a strong rise in curiosity. Anxious “watching and waiting” is now passé; works that have been left behind tend to be overlooked with a shrug. In the face of these risks, *Art Basel* is advertising with the world-renowned art advisor Amy Cappellazzo, who, after her unprecedented fee of \$30 million for several years as Chairwoman at *Sotheby's*, is returning with a new company, *Art Intelligence Global*. ***Art Basel* was interested in knowing which galleries and, to some extent, which artists Cappellazzo recommends. However, in the end, she, a blend of Amazon and Sphinx, stated, “Nobody wants to be predicted or read that closely or accurately.”** She awaits surprises. We, too, are directing our attention toward new horizons whenever possible, while also occasionally delving into particularly ancient ones. For example, climate problems have existed for thousands of years. The southeastern Sahara was densely populated around 5,000 years ago. Lake Chad appeared to the local population as vast as a sea. It provided immense amounts of water, enabling not only continuous agriculture but also supporting large herds of grazing animals and abundant fishing.



Mark Rothko:
*Untitled (Yellow, Orange,
Yellow, Light Orange)*
1955, oil on canvas
81 ½ × 60", 207 × 152.5 cm
(detail)

Rising heat and the consequent unstoppable drying of the land 5,000 years ago initially sparked unexpected violence, leading to the flight and displacement of the majority of the population. In the end, that entire vast region became uninhabitable for humans and animals. In the 19th century, French researchers discovered not only the skeletons of various animals but also, among them, remnants of many hippos in the ground, revealing to both Europeans and Africans the paradise that the historical actors and their networks had lost in that area. What remained were their languages, which spread and evolved from Lake Chad to several West African countries. A field of linguistic research has emerged in Eastern Africa, extending from Egypt to the northern part of Nigeria. **The art world of today, in the advancing 21st century, is a biotope that is beginning to sense a few dangers. Perhaps it will eventually die out. We preach diversity, wokeness, LGBTQIA+, we use gender-neutral language, love people of color, and feel, in the presence of our children, that when faced with climate activists who glue themselves to the streets, we should not honk or curse but show understanding and leniency.** In our private planes and yachts, we have long since given up consuming industrially produced food for breakfast. The grand, increasingly luxurious art biotope loves contradiction and ambiguity. We participate in a ruthless economy while preaching infinite tolerance, because and as long as substantial amounts of money are needed to nurture and cultivate art as a special form of civilization. In 1861, the Basel anthropologist Johann Jakob Bachofen published his book titled “Das Mutterrecht” (Mother Right). In his pioneering research, Bachofen sought to understand why history and the system of “paternity,” which we emphatically criticize today, adhered to a view that regarded the rule of a “gynaecocratic age,” presumed to be older than the patriarchy, as an enigma. According to Bachofen, Dionysus was somewhat to blame for the fact that ancient societies waged battles against unmarried Amazons, that for millenia women were obligated to marry, reduced to the role of motherhood and saddled with a host of dark principles: night, darkness, earth, death, and mourning. Meanwhile, since ancient Athens, the phallic glory of man had risen in the symbolic terms of daylight, brightness, life, and joy. Paternity sought to prevail over maternity. Milk and honey, Bachofen wrote, belonged to the realm of the mothers, while wine was the potion of the Dionysian cult. **In the Old Testament, it was women who first experienced the revelation, but then men saw themselves in a radiant light that was inaccessible to the second sex. Religion, Bachofen writes, is “the only lever of all civilization.” And thus, we come back to the belief in art. Who would want to live without it? Who would want to dispense with it, or even condemn it, merely because it could not exist without money and a good deal of leisure?** *Bergos Art Consult* wishes all readers a wonderful summer. We'll be back in September 2023.

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