

AR

**ACTIVE RESISTANCE TO
PROPAGANDA**

Vivienne Westwood

I make the great claim for my manifesto, that it penetrates to the root of the human predicament and offers the underlying solution. We have a choice: to become more cultivated, and therefore more human; – or by not choosing, to be the destructive and self-destroying animal, the victim of our own cleverness (To be or not to be).

We shall begin with a search for art, show that art gives culture and that culture is the antidote to propaganda.

AR Dear Friends, We all love art and some of you claim to be artists. Without judges there is no art. She only exists when we know her. Does she exist? The answer to this question is of vital importance because if Art is alive the world will change. No Art, no progress.

We must find out; go in search of her. – But wait! Who is this with fire-cracking smouldering pigtails, gold teeth and a brace of flintlocks in his belt? He is a pirate. – And what does his t-shirt say? – I love crap. (*Pirate hands Vivienne Westwood a Hawaiian garland of plastic flowers.*)

Pirate: ‘Leave everything to me. I plunder for you. Stick with me and you might get a share of the bounty. My name is Progress.’

AR: But you have stolen imagination. There is hardly anyone left now who believes in a better world. What is the future of unlimited profit in a finite world?

Pirate Progress: ‘I like you artistic lot. But, trust me or not, – I’ll take you with me if I go down. We’ll all burn together.’ (*Film clip, close up: the pigtails burst into flames and with a “Ha-haagh!” the pirate disappears in a pall of smoke followed by black night*)

(Still dark)

AR: He is not Progress. He must have stolen the name. (*The defiant face of Pirate Progress appears and disappears like the Cheshire Cat. Light returns*). True progress, as the Greeks thought of it is without limit. How can things get better and better if there is a limit?

Beautiful slavegirl: ‘Everything must have an end. And to progress or advance in any way you must know where you are going. An end cannot be something you choose for the sake of something else. For example, money is not an end but a means to an end. And for this reason, I shall be set free.

I am so happy! I am the famous Rhodopis (Rosycheeks). My master made a fortune from selling my body but now my lover will pay a vast ransom, – even more than my future earnings could be. Oh, Liberty! I thought you were my end, but now, I see you are just a beginning. Can I be happy when the other slaves don’t have a beginning? The only true End must be Happiness – but not just for one person. I see now that progress can be an end without limit for there is always a better way of living. And though we may progress towards greater happiness, as an end it will always escape us and a good thing too, because if we ever reach Paradise we’ll all be dead’.

AR: Happiness is the true end of human existence. In practice this means to realise individual potentialities to their limits and in the best way possible. I think we would all agree.

Child slaveboy: ‘A slave is not a person but *a thing*. – A thing can be something like a car, or a hammer, as well as a slave. – Soul-destroying, to

put it in a nutshell. But my mother told me how to survive. – I must try to understand the world and that way I don't lose my soul, I know who I am. When she said, goodbye, she said, 'Love Liberty, but forget the key, for the key turns only once. I love you.'

Alice: 'She was your mirror. Her love showed you Yourself. She believed in you.'

AR: A work of art may show us our self – who we are and our place in the world. It is a mirror which imitates life.

Alice: 'Those round convex mirrors are very good; – you see a lot, but concentrated down; – you see big and small at the same time: – you need to fit all the things into a microcosm but it has to reflect as well' and turning to the art lovers,
'I was just explaining this to Pinocchio'.

Pinocchio: 'Now that I have become a boy, I want to be a freedom-fighter.'

AR: Action! Nothing is possible without art. Come with us. – To find if Art is alive, we must first know who she is. To the Lyceum!

Alice – to Pinocchio: 'We are going to see Aristotle. His analysis of Greek tragedy is such an objective break-down that it serves to define art in general and in all its forms – what it is and what it isn't,' then finding themselves alone, 'We must go back and find the others'.

Pinocchio: 'There's a bloke here who lives in a barrel.'

Diogenes: ‘I shit and wank in front of people in the street like a dog: I am the Cynic. The Great Alexander made a point of coming to see me and asked if he could do me a favour. Nobody’s better than me. – I told him to step out of my light. I am famous because I’ve got the balls to do what I want.’

Alice: ‘He doesn’t want much.’

Pinocchio: ‘Cool, I’ve found art! I could be *Diogenes II*. I’ll call myself a piss artist and make lots of money.’

AR: Come back children. Alice we’re waiting for you to introduce us to Aristotle. And Pinocchio, you’re just being silly. Though Diogenes is obsessed by himself he doesn’t believe in anything, let alone himself. That’s why he’s a cynic. This self-promotion and doing what you want is a sham philosophy of life. No, no, it’s not self-indulgence but self-discipline that makes the individual. And you, especially, need self-discipline if you’re going to be a freedom-fighter.’

Pinocchio: ‘You are right. Diogenes seemed kind of happy, but he’s a poser. – Too boring, I couldn’t keep it up. Ha, ha, keep it up! I could sell canned sperm. Great marketing opportunities.’

Alice (sarcastic): ‘Oh how lewd!’

Aristotle, a Greek gentleman, impeccably dressed, – in contrast to Diogenes – stands centre stage. Alice moves to his side.

Alice: ‘Aristotle refers to the writer of tragedy as “the poet”. Greek tragedy was expressed in verse but this is not the important thing. What defines the poet is that he is an *imitator* – just like a painter or any other maker of images. If a historian were to write up his whole history in verse this would not make him a poet; for he tells of things that *have* happened in real life and this is not imitation. Imitation is the work of the imagination. The poet’s role is to tell of things that *might* happen, things that are *possible*. Aristotle adds that the poet may imitate life not as it is, but as it *ought* to be.

The way Aristotle describes tragedy is very much the idea of taking the microcosm and fitting things into it: – ’

Aristotle: ‘For tragedy is not an imitation of men but of actions and of life. It is in action that happiness and unhappiness are found, and the end we aim at is a kind of activity, not a quality; in accordance with their characters men are of such and such a quality, in accordance with their actions they are fortunate or the reverse. Consequently, it is not for the purpose of presenting their characters that the agents engage in action, but rather it is for the sake of their actions that they take on the characters they have. Thus, what happens – that is, the plot – is the end for which a tragedy exists, and the end or purpose is the most important thing of all.’

Alice: “‘Dear Aristotle thank you for stating the links between character, action and fortune. I remember you once said that character is a person’s habit of moral choice. But please now tell us what you mean when you describe a work of imitation – in this case tragedy – as “the Whole””.

Aristotle: ‘The events which are the parts of the plot must be so organized that if any of them is displaced or taken away, the whole will be shaken and put out of joint; for if the presence or absence of a thing makes no discernable difference, that thing is not part of the whole.’ (*Aristotle retires*)

Alice: ‘That’s how I feel about Velasquez. That exhibition was the most powerful thing I’ve ever seen; yet his work is so minimal and reduced. The people in the paintings were so real that I sometime thought they weren’t there, especially in the split second before you turned to look again. – The paint was so thin! I was so stunned, I just wanted to melt into a pool on the floor.’

AR: One can begin to grasp something of the obsession people have had with the idea of the circle as a perfect form. A work of art then, is *an imitation reduced to its essentials, thereby forming a whole* – as in a microcosm.

Thus art gives objectivity – a perspective, an overview. We define objectivity *as seeing things as they are*.

Real life is not objective – we can never get the complete picture. It is chaotic and continuous – a jumble of particulars in which events are engulfed in the flux of circumstance. How can the artist be objective when he, himself is part of the change? He needs a fixed fact to stand on – a standard, a measure, a model.

Alice: ‘Tell me all about it! If there is nothing fixed in the world then you find yourself in Wonderland where everything changes – *including yourself*. – And you try to play a game of croquet

with a flamingo for a mallet and the ball is a hedgehog who runs away.’

AR: A hedgehog must understand the world from a hedgehog point of view, and we must understand it from a human point of view.

We do have a fixed standard – timeless, universal, recognisable. We refer to it as Representative Human Nature (RHN). It is the key to this manifesto: –

You or I – as individuals – we change. But there is something typical about us which does not change. When we say, “Man is the measure of all things”, we mean the unchanging part: Man, both in his *general nature and according to his various types*: this is RHN.

Aristotle takes this for granted when he says, “In accordance with their character men are of such and such a quality..... it is for the sake of their actions that the actors take on the characters they have.” He also says that the best characters in a play are people with whom we can empathise – “someone like ourselves”.

For example, Chaucer’s characters are as alive to us today as when he first invented them: Timeless – outside of time, they speak to us of the *human genius*, –what it is to be human. Each detail illuminates the type and is what we call the *universal in the particular* – “someone like ourselves”. When we recognize this we are being objective – through putting ourselves in the place of another – we leave our ego behind.

We are not saying that art has to be confined to the direct portrayal of human beings: we do say that art must be representational – for it is in imitation that objectivity lies. In practice, through his medium of RHN the artist gains direct

imaginative insight into the general nature of things; his view extends from the model.

Consider the Chinese master, the painter of bamboo: – we have a shared object – the non-ego, RHN. And from this fact he reaches out and grasps the very cipher and nature of bamboo. And we see through his eyes, his own particular poem of life: Perfect as it *ought* to be.

Consider the divine music of Bach: Bach is pure objectivity, the most representative of men because the least egotistical in front of his talent.

Music has not yet been conceptualised by the art mafia, though they are trying. We do not accept a symphony composed on the remaining three keys of a broken piano, accompanied by the random throwing of marbles at a urinal. Yet its equivalent is the latest thing in the visual arts. (Aren'tya OD'd on the latest thing?) Indeed the visual artist has gone further. He has set up the urinal as art, claimed the broken piano as his production. Why? Because he chose it. Relying now on presentation skills and self-promotion – behold the artist! As long as we believe him.

And abstract art which is supposed to be symbolic and expressive of events in the mind? – Unfortunately these canvases offer us no help in becoming mind-readers. We do have such things as abstract symbols e.g. 10 (X to the Romans) but the artist must *explain* his personal marks. If the artist fails the test of objectivity where does that leave us?

Alice: “Oh hello, Mr. White Rabbit! Please stop a moment! The artist has just produced a giant hole in the air. Perhaps he thought it was a “Whole”. I'm sure you have an interesting observation on holes”.

White Rabbit: ‘Negative,’ (*rushing off*).

Artist’s Agent: ‘Superb intellectual irony. – Right on!’

Mad Hatter: ‘What do you mean, we’re not mind readers? We’ve all got a hole in the head and we can fill it with whatever “Whole” we want’ (*changes price-tag on hat from 10/6d to £10m*)

Pinocchio: ‘I’m going to be a real painter and a freedom fighter. I’ve been drawing in secret. To see the world as it ought to be – that can’t be bad for a freedom-fighter. – hard work though.’

Talking Cricket: ‘Pinocchio, you know that there are two sides to people, the donkey and the boy, – the self who wants to live in Toyland versus the self who wants to grow up. It is the inner struggle between doing what you want and being true to your Best Self, that humanizes a puppet.’

Pinocchio: ‘Dear little Cricket, I still get around, – have a laugh! But, yeah this inner voice is always having a go, “Pinocchio, don’t be an arsehole! I am your human genius. Listen to me!”’

AR: Pinocchio, the whole future of art is at stake and depends on you and others controlling your imagination and listening to your best self, – your human genius.

Imagination is the driving force in human nature. But it is likely to run wild and escape into the chaos of endless desire, unfulfilled longing and alienation.

Pinocchio: ‘Alienation! Hell! Those donkey’s ears. – What a terrible price to pay. Poor Candlewick!’

Alice: ‘Candlewick was Pinocchio’s friend in Toyland, who became a donkey and was worked to death by a cruel master.’

AR: The way we control the imagination is through the imagination itself – or rather, through its “best self” – the ethical part.

The Ethical Imagination is a *power of control*, an *inner check*, which prefers to see things as they are. It questions art: is it probable? – is it true to life? – could it be otherwise?

– Critics in the seventeenth century objected to Corneille’s play, “Le Cid”, that it was not probable – because not normal or true to human nature, that the heroine might be allowed to marry her father’s murderer, – that this was bizarre, extreme and therefore unethical. Others disagreed and there was a battle of opinion. -

There are no rules – each person must decide. Yet we are not completely at sea, if we refer to RHN.

To the great artist the ethical imagination is absolute, he never ceases to explore and cultivate it. – To the art lover, we possess it in differing degrees, all may cultivate it. It is intuitive, you get at the truth through insight and you get better at it with practice, through comparison – between works of art and with real life. You need the stamina of a life time.

In general: the true artist is always true to his art; the impostor is self-conscious, demonstrating his idea, projecting his theory, his ego, and e.g. the figures of the painter are not borrowed ideas who demonstrate themselves talking, dying, dreaming –

they do it. They are of themselves and they LIVE! – and the flowers are not showing us how pretty they are, or how weird – they are what they are – Etc.! No invention for the sake of invention! Invention must serve the purpose of art.

Art is the only objectivity available to human beings; real life, including science, cannot do this: *art is objectivity.*

To recapitulate, the artist, taking RHN as his model presents an imitation of life; the imitation is a completed view, a whole, as in a microcosm – albeit an illusion of reality. The illusion captures our imagination and the ethical imagination tests it out as to it's truth. We see our human face and we ask, – could it be otherwise?

Without judges there is no art. We, the art lovers respond to the truths of art and spread the ideas which give culture.

Thus RHN is the authority on which culture rests. Culture must rest on something abiding, an authority, a belief. But our authority is not dogma (no need for God to supply social cement or fill the spiritual vacuum) but the authority of a consensus, – the facts of shared experience.

Culture is a unifying experience. We are moving towards a centre which is infinite. Our guide is RHN, universal, timeless and recognizable even to the point where we recognize something we've never seen before – as true to life. In this sense RHN is a dynamic force, alive and open to improvement because it depends on the inner check – the ethical imagination – of every one of us. We become more human which in turn gives culture its rejuvenating power.

We define culture as: *The exploration and cultivation of humanity through art.*

Art lover: 'Very good, - *I* recognize art: Therefore art exists! No matter how great the artist, if no-one appreciates his work then he goes unrecognised: Therefore no culture! It's up to us as judges.

AR: But – the artist has no responsibility to culture or to us: He serves art, alone.

This is the true meaning of the *L'art pour l'art* movement, mistakenly translated as "Art for art's sake". But then, the English have never understood it. The painter, Whistler is a protagonist of the creed and we must seek his opinion before we can safely say that we have found art.'

Whistler: 'Art happens – no hovel is safe from it, no Prince may depend upon it, the vastest intelligence cannot bring it about, and puny efforts to make it universal end in quaint comedy, and coarse farce.

This is as it should be. Why after centuries of freedom from it and indifference to it should the people have Art thrust upon them. She has no desire to teach, no purpose to better others.

Art seeks the Artist alone. Where he is, there she appears, and remains with him – loving and fruitful... And when he dies she sadly takes her flight.

With the man, then, and not with the multitude, are her intimacies; and in the book of her life the names inscribed are few – scant, indeed, the list of those who have helped to write her story of love and beauty.'

Art lover: '*We* also have our part in all true art! – for, remember RHN that makes the whole world kin.'

Whistler: ‘True indeed. But let not the unwary jauntily suppose that Shakespeare herewith hands him his passport to Paradise, and thus permits him speech among the chosen. Rather learn that in this very phrase (Representative Human Nature), he is condemned to remain without – to continue with the common.’

Art lover: ‘You mean that what is popular is also vulgar. And is the artist, then, a freak of nature? We small band of art lovers expect no favours from art. But from you, the artist, we hope to see the world through your eyes – in this way we serve art.’

Pinocchio: ‘*You get out what you put in* – that’s my motto from now on. As a painter, perhaps Art will visit me some day, – just like the fairy with blue hair.’

Lady art lover: ‘Mr. Whistler, I fear for these young people! In your field, painting – which has had such an impact on our lives – there is nothing happening nowadays. What are they to do? All their friends run around trying to catch the latest thing. When you’re young you like to think something is happening.’

Alice: ‘Running around? I don’t waste time, I make time – to see the “latest thing” – the Rokeby Venus! – Manet’s Olympia! There is so much happening outside Time.’

Whistler: ‘If Art be rare today, it was seldom heretofore. It is false, this teaching of decay. The master stands in no relation to the moment at which

he occurs – a monument of isolation – hinting at sadness – having no part in the progress of his fellow-men.

He is also no more the product of civilization than is the scientific wisdom of a period. The assertion itself requires the man to make it. The truth was from the beginning.

So Art is limited to the infinite, and beginning there cannot progress.

We have then but to wait – until, with the mark of the Gods upon him – there come among us again the chosen – who shall continue what has gone before. Satisfied that, even were he never to appear, the story of the beautiful is already complete – hewn in the marbles of the Parthenon – and broidered, with the birds, upon the fan of Hokusai – at the foot of Fujiyama.’

Pinocchio: ‘Mr. Whistler, are you the only American genius?’

Art lover: ‘Progress in art – Picasso! What would he not have given to capture the “mana” of those bulls from the cave paintings of twenty thousand B.C.? If art progressed then today’s painter would be greater than Picasso.’

Lady art lover: ‘It’s true we don’t have to wait for Art. She exists. But time is running out for the art lovers. I’m talking about the planet. It’s all very well to say that we can become more human through art – human enough to save the planet! Meanwhile, all we can do is believe in Alice and Pinocchio. At least they will have the advantage of a sane outlook on life.’

(Giant projection of Hitler's face – in relation to which Hitler standing on the podium in front seems to be about the size of a garden gnome.)

Hitler: 'All effective propaganda has to limit itself only to a very few points and to use them like slogans.'

AR: Alice and Pinocchio, We have come to the end of our journey and you have passed the test. In the pursuit of art you became automatically impervious to Propaganda. Indeed, each of you quite forgot to take your daily NINSDOL pill. You are no longer addicted to Nationalistic Idolatry, Non-Stop Distraction and Organized Lying – the three constituents of Propaganda. The art lovers now invite you to become members of our movement, AR. Let us progress to the inauguration ceremony.

On the way we could look in at a Conference on Culture which is attended by those very same art lovers who from the beginning had no interest in our journey. Here it is in Paris. Pinocchio, I know you're dying to go to the Louvre but Alice, you could just pop back in your book and I'll put it in my pocket and take you in.'

Opening speaker, French professor of anthropology: "And Man came out of Africa 180 thousand years ago (*talk lasts ¾ hr.* AR: – He's scared of seeming Eurocentric) – and the good thing is he ended up in Paris. (AR: Quite right too. France was the greatest flowering of western culture for the three centuries up until the First World War – interrupted by the Revolution of course).

AR: Pinocchio, you certainly had the chance to immerse yourself in the Louvre. The conference was a continuous drone of complacency for three days. – I thought, I will stay – to know if it is this bad. I managed to get my word in early on – saying that you can't have culture without justice before the law and cited the withdrawal of Habeus Corpus which has happened in England.

There were other points made from the floor, squeezed in between the long speeches of the art gurus – and the banquets: –

Philosopher: 'We need more festivals.'

Top cultural advisor: 'We need a common vision of the importance of television and cinema for the cohesion of society.'

Choreographer: 'Dance is the only international language. It should be at the top of every agenda.'

Rapper: 'I need the state to sponsor my music. The internet only helps established artists.'

Composer: 'Young people should know that culture is not entertainment.'

Director of state art gallery: 'We have not once mentioned American culture!'

AR: I think the purpose of the conference was to say that European culture has value– how do we retain it and also promote it? The problem was that each assumed himself so cultivated that none bothered to define culture – the more he appreciated *everything*, the more cultivated he thought he was.

They mix up culture with anthropology, the science that treats of the traditional crafts and customs of groups of people who are different from our groups. Well, “something different” is not always art, and culture is not local and peripheral but a universal and centralising power.

Art lover: ‘Yes, true culture occurs in another way: The artist is alive to difference and that is what makes his work original. He sees the common element in things that are apparently different and discriminates between things that are apparently similar. The Chinese say that the painter finds likeness in unlikeness and unlikeness in likeness.’

AR: Anyway, contrary to what *we* understand by culture, the conference reiterated – endlessly! – the mantra of “Cultural diversity”.

Unesco is promoting this concept in a “Universal Declaration”. This is the kind of thing they say – I made a note, “Since cultural goods and services arise from human creativity, it follows that cultural diversity will be enhanced in conditions conducive to creative activity and to the production and distribution of a wide range of cultural products”. – A global bazaar to promote tolerance and awareness!

The delegates then wondered how we could prevent tradition being swallowed up in a global soup– along with vanilla ice cream topped with onion sauce, magic mushroom Cornish pasties and

–

Pinocchio: ‘Ratshit!’

Lady art lover: ‘And Pinocchio, I think Alice has pinched some of your cheek. As we were leaving she jumped out and yelled –’

Alice: ‘You’re all a pack of cards!’

AR: Children, You are expensive – crap is not good enough for you. Time is your luxury. You like to be alone because you like to think. As art lovers and readers you will converse with the highest forms of intelligence. You will form your own opinions and your ideas will be the avant-garde. Ideas will give you power and you will fire the imagination of your friends.

– You see through propaganda. Therefore engage in politics. It is time for you to receive your badges from the noble warrior, Leonard Peltier.

Alice: ‘But Leonard is innocently serving Time.’

Leonard Peltier: ‘It is the spirit of Leonard which now speaks: Art is an imaginative illusion which captures the imagination. State your vows.’

Alice: ‘Every time I read a book instead of looking at a magazine, go to the art gallery instead of watching TV, go to the theatre instead of the cinema, I fight for Active Resistance to Propaganda.’

Pinocchio: ‘The freedom fighter’s motto is: You get out what you put in.’

(Leonard pins on their AR badges)

Leonard Peltier: ‘Alice and Pinocchio, you are now in the presence of a great secret. Your journey has revealed to you that human beings have a choice: – we can cultivate the human genius and build a great civilization on earth. Through art we

see the future. It holds up a mirror of our human potential; – or, as victims of our mere cleverness we will remain the destructive animal. Our innovations can contribute to progress, but our humanity is a scientific fact, and must be taken into account for advance to happen, otherwise we have partial science which will kill us.

Indians have not made this mistake; they see the world in its entirety. Our first duty is to love our mother, Earth. Indians know the importance of living in harmony with creation: men – not gods. The Greeks called human arrogance *hubris*.

Voice of Icarus: ‘Remember the myth of Icarus. Do not fly too near the sun. Your wings are made of wax.’

(Light radiates through the patterns in a mandala composed of concentric circles alternating with diminishing squares. The squares represent the organization and knowledge of man and the circles represent the truth and chaos of nature.)

Leonard Peltier: ‘Progress lies in the centre of the mandala. Step forward. *(In his hand he holds a small convex mirror from which the light is coming.)* This is the mirror of true progress.’

Alice and Pinocchio look at themselves in the mirror.

The most important thing about the manifesto is that it is a practice. If you follow it your life will change. In the pursuit of culture you will start to think. If you change your life, you change the world.

Vivienne
Westwood.