

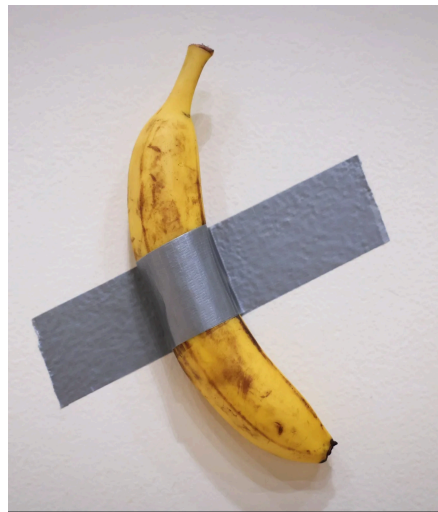
## Conservatives Want You to Hate Modern Art.

Politicians straying closer and closer to far right ideologies harms the art world more than the average person would think. Through the suppression of creativity, governments gain surprising control over the masses and are able to openly critique art they deem 'unacceptable,' as well as devaluing artists and art itself. The recent rise in anti-modernist ideology directly ties into how conservative politicians are becoming, and directly reflects the political state on a global scale.

The rapid changes of the Industrial Revolution allowed for art to expand its horizons far past the confines of commissioned portraits, one of the main forms of income for painters before the 19th century. [MOMA \(2025\)](#). Artists were looking for a new way to express themselves in the wake of the widespread invention of the camera. The reason for this shift in focus has been subject to hundreds of academic papers, but can mostly be attributed to the surging popularity of photography. [The MET \(2013\)](#). This resulted in the birth of the Impressionist movement, shifting the focus onto loose brushstrokes that aimed to capture the feelings and emotions in a moment as opposed to lifelike portraits and landscapes replaced by the camera. [Cedric Chambers \(2021\)](#). Art critics gave the name 'Impressionism' to painters such as Van Gough, Claude Monet, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir as an insult, implying that their paintings are unfinished and shunning them for their rejection of traditional techniques in favour of fast and bold brushstrokes. [Minneapolis Institute of Art \(2024\)](#). This negative reaction to new ideas and techniques in art has been carried throughout history, but most noticeably into the 21st century with the transition into contemporary art. This conservative society meant that any 'new' art would be met with backlash, and unfortunately this pattern of conservatism and anti self expression can be traced throughout history.

The link between rises in conservatism, fascism, and the hatred for 'new' art can be traced namely back to 1937's *Degenerate Art* exhibit. Entartete Kunst, or *Degenerate Art* was an exhibition collated and displayed by the Nazi regime in Munich, Germany. 20th Century Germany was home to a booming arts community, consisting of artists such as Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Paul Klee, and Max Beckmann. [Werner Haftmann Et Al. \(1957\)](#). These artists pushed the boundaries of what was considered art and attracted a wide international audience. Existing museums curated exhibitions of these new artists, shining a spotlight on emerging movements like Dadaism, Surrealism, and Cubism. Hitler's ideal art pieces consisted of blonde nude statues and paintings of brave soldiers at war. Hitler even utilised the way these 'degenerate' pieces were exhibited to mould the public's opinion into holding contempt for any art deemed 'out of the ordinary'. Paintings were hung skewed and insulting graffiti was splashed across the walls. During Hitler's rise to power over 20,000 modern works from these museums were seized. These pieces were collected and displayed in the *Degenerate Art* exhibit as a warning to artists in Germany that their title of artist could be stripped and their work shown as examples of 'anti German' propaganda. [Museum of Modern Art \(2020\)](#). Hitler's obsession with policing what and what didn't count as art was rooted deeply in white supremacism and antisemitism and was an attempt to keep German art 'pure,' and mirrors the current rise in conservatism (as well as an increase in aversions to contemporary art). Pieces such as Cattelan's *Comedian* and Serrano's *Piss Christ* received a flurry of backlash during

their initial showings in 2019 and 1987 respectively, by audiences who refused to consider something so simple as art.



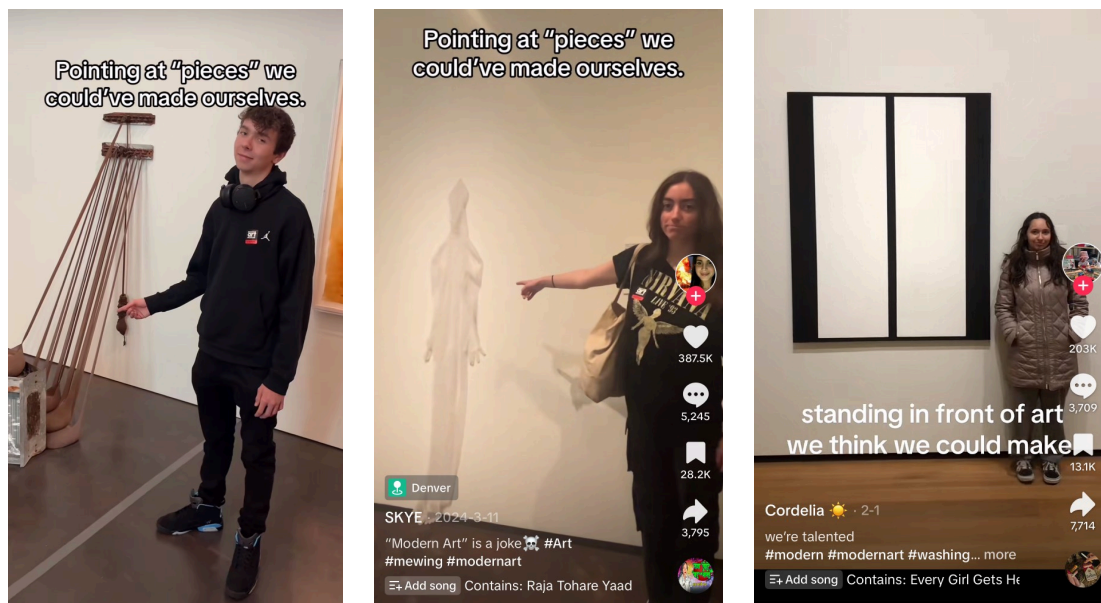
Serrano faced backlash for *Piss Christ* from Christians who believed the piece was blasphemous in nature; even going so far as to vandalise the piece with hammers. *Piss Christ* (2025). To link back to Hitler's extermination of any art he deemed 'Anti-German,' Serrano's 2007 show was ransacked by neo-nazis armed with crowbars and axes. *New York Magazine* (2007). Serrano managed to turn this attack around and continued to show the slashed prints, "because the damaged works make a statement in and of themselves. It's a different statement than the original intent of the work, but now the work has been transformed and politicized, and it's important for people to be able to see the works that they've been reading about in the paper." *New York Magazine* (2007). These vandalised attacks on contemporary art pieces show that history is a flat circle and will always repeat itself if not taught. Another example of a contemporary piece vandalised by someone who believed it to be 'Anti German' is Barrett Newman's '*Whose Afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue?*' Which was slashed by a Berlin student who claimed the painting offended them, as they believed it was a 'perversion of the German flag.'

In today's social media oriented artistic influences, the mirror of nazi rejection of unconventional art can be seen similarly in Gen Z falling into the



conservative trap. *TikTok* was recently flooded with videos of people paying to get into the

Tate



Modern only to gawk at art they don't understand and post it for likes, exposing these pieces to a like minded audience of people who also want to be able to police what should and shouldn't be allowed to be considered 'art.'

The common denominator in all of these videos is the poor education about art and art movements, as well as the idea that art is only worthy of exhibition if it is visually appealing. The misidentification of these contemporary pieces as modern as well as the refusal to read placards that usually accompany these pieces shows Gen Z's ignorance towards educating themselves on things that seem 'new,' as well as the compliance in what is 'usual' or traditional. Gen Z has also been observed falling further and further down a dangerous political path, [Newsweek \(2025\)](#), with influencers like *Andrew Tate* and political parties like Reform UK making it cool to be conservative. BBC News (2025). These massive figureheads in online and real world spaces mean conservatism spreads like wildfire, and can be seen through memetic campaigns like the images above that strive to devalue art on a large scale. Devaluing art also means that people will be less inclined to even try becoming artists in the first place, especially with how unemployable the field currently is. [Prospects Luminate \(2024\)](#).

As well as this, Generative AI has its roots in Gen Z, whether it's ChatGPT writing college essays or people with no interest in art claiming image generation has finally made art 'accessible,' Ai generated images cheapen and commodify art and degrades artists by ripping their hard work and poorly replicating it for someone who doesn't care about art enough to learn how to do it in the first place. [The New Yorker \(2023\)](#). Donald Trump and Elon Musk are two hugely influential people who peddle AI to the gullible masses, and it's no surprise. [The White House \(2025\)](#) states 'The Trump Administration is committed to strengthening American leadership in artificial intelligence.' Showing just how deeply rooted AI is in society. In almost every conservative political party manifesto is a section about improving AI or introducing AI into every part of our lives, including art. [Mishcon \(2024\)](#). As well as generative AI producing ugly, soulless images, it also scalps the art made by real people.

Most notably, a recent trend on *X*, formerly *Twitter*, shows hundreds of people generating themselves into *Studio Ghibli* inspired paintings. *Forbes* (2025). This has become a trend despite Hayao Miyazaki's strong anti-AI stance, claiming 'I strongly believe that this is an insult to life itself.' The AI tools have collected millions of frames from these films and referenced them so it can spit out the closest thing to Hayao Miyazaki's timeless, recognisable style. This increase in people wanting to save time has caused AI to skyrocket, and has suppressed people's opinions and ability to think for themselves with whatever biased sources ChatGPT spits out at them.

To conclude, conservatism crowds creativity into tiny, digestible boxes for the benefit of the people in charge. It stifles true artistic freedom by stripping away any reason people would consider it 'art,' in favour of plain, easy-to-understand commodities or AI generated nonsense. As well as this, conservatism goads the public into seeing artists as their enemy as opposed to themselves, which ostracises artists and makes people less likely to bother creating in the first place. This ostracisation paired with the ease of generative AI means the idea of a true creative is in freefall. However, if Impressionists can withstand the hate and vitriol spewed by the Parisian art elites, postmodernists and contemporary artists can certainly withstand a robot masquerading as a creative.

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