American Dream, American Nightmare

Capitalist Realism and the Image of Ideology

“The Spectacle is capital…accumulated to the point where it becomes image.”

Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*



Annie Leibovitz - Donald and Melania Trump (Vogue, 2006)

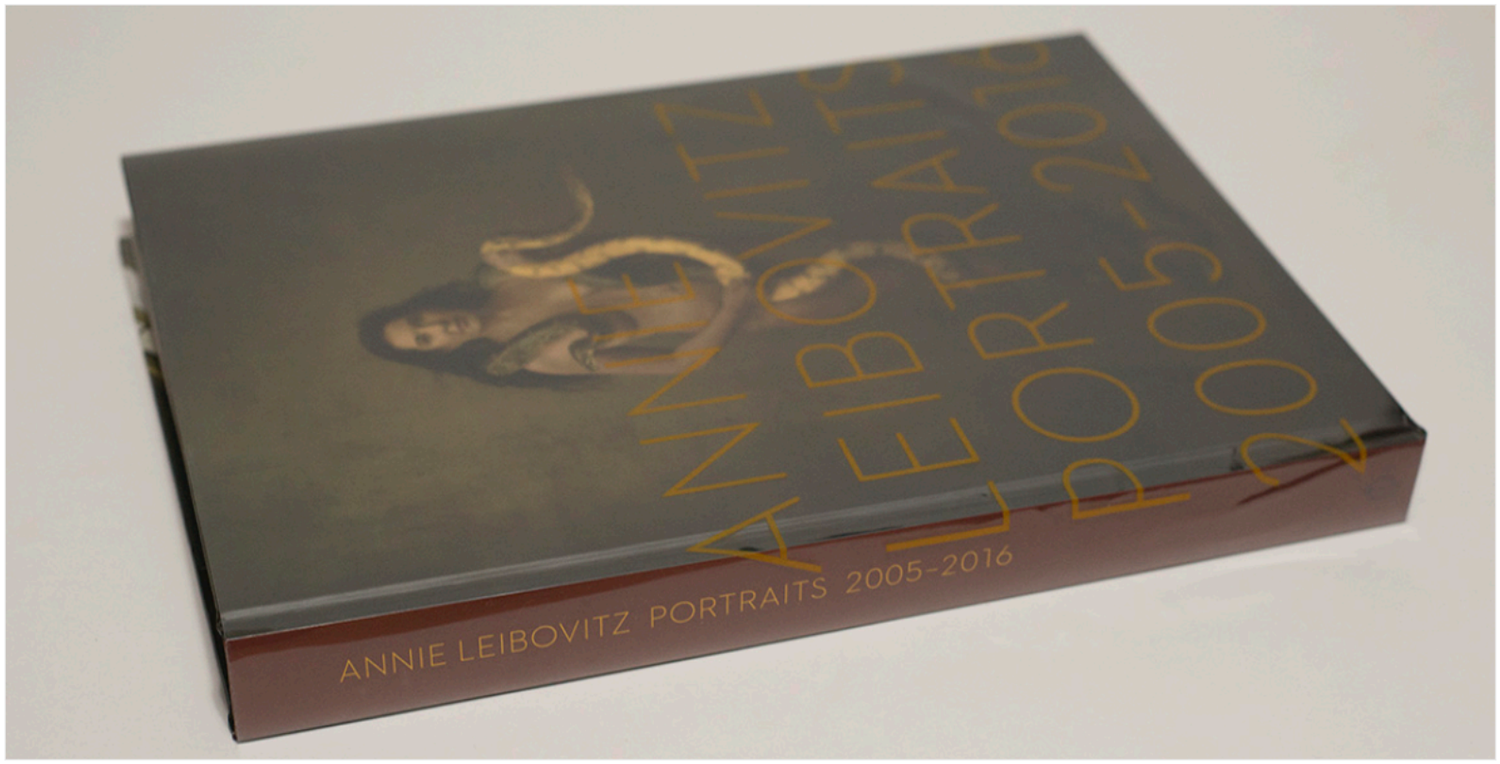
“The Chances of factual truth surviving the onslaught of power are very slim indeed …. Facts and events are infinitely more fragile things than axioms, discoveries, theories - even the most widely speculative ones - produced by the human mind”.

Hannah Arendt, 1967

“If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. The lie can be maintained only For such time as the state can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the state to use all its power to repress dissent, for the truth is the total enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the state.”

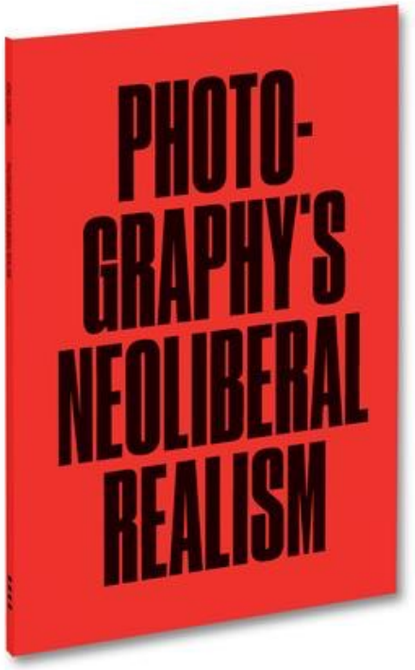
Attributed to Joseph Goebbels (Reich Minister for Propaganda, 1933-45)

Annie Leibovitz's Capitalist Realism



Jorg Colberg's review of Annie Leibovitz Portraits 2006 - 2016

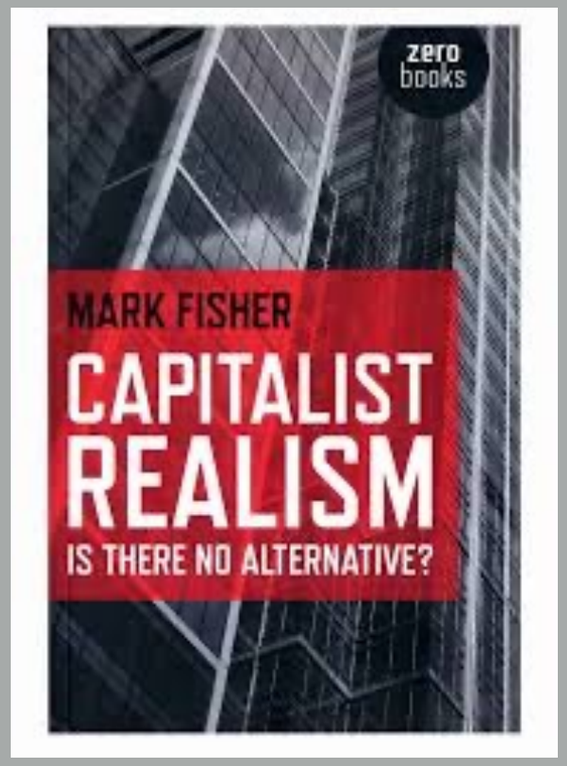
Jorg Colberg's Book, 2020
(Published by Mack)



THERE
IS
NO
ALTERNATIVE

“Watching *Children of Men,* we are inevitably reminded of the phrase attributed to Fredric Jameson and Slavoj Žižek, that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism. That slogan captures precisely what I mean by 'capitalist realism': the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to *imagine* a coherent alternative to it.”

Mark Fisher, 2009



“The entire life of societies in which modern conditions of production prevail, announces itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles.”

Guy Debord - *The Society of the Spectacle*

“The entire life of societies in which modern conditions of production prevail, announces itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles.”

Guy Debord - *The Society of the Spectacle,* (1967)

“The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as ‘an immense accumulation of commodities’…”

Karl Marx - *Das Kapital* (1867)



Annie Leibovitz



Annie Leibovitz

Mark Zuckerberg





Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937)

Cultural

Hegemony

Predominance Obtained by Consent

Nissan Workers in Sunderland





Crispin Odey





Breaking Point poster - Leave EU, 2016



Nigel Farage and Jeremy Clarkson, Farmers' Protest, November 2024





Socialist Realism

“Market Stalinism”

Mark Fisher







Socialist Realism

The 1934 Soviet Congress outlined these as the prescribed elements of Socialist realism. The Principles are thought to have been sanctioned directly by Josef Stalin himself:

1. Proletarian: art relevant to the workers and understandable to them.

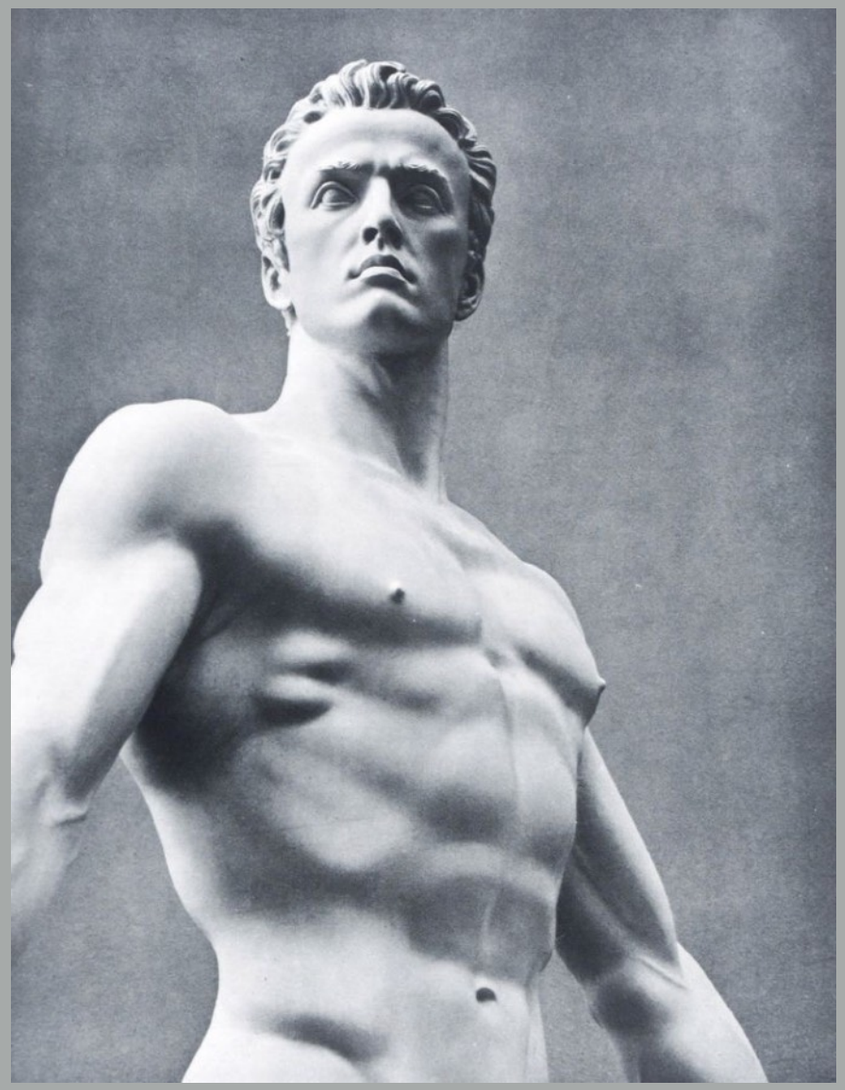
2. Typical: scenes of everyday life of the people.

3. Realistic: in the representational sense.

4. Partisan: supportive of the aims of the State and the Party.



Paul Duerinckx - Memento Park, Budapest









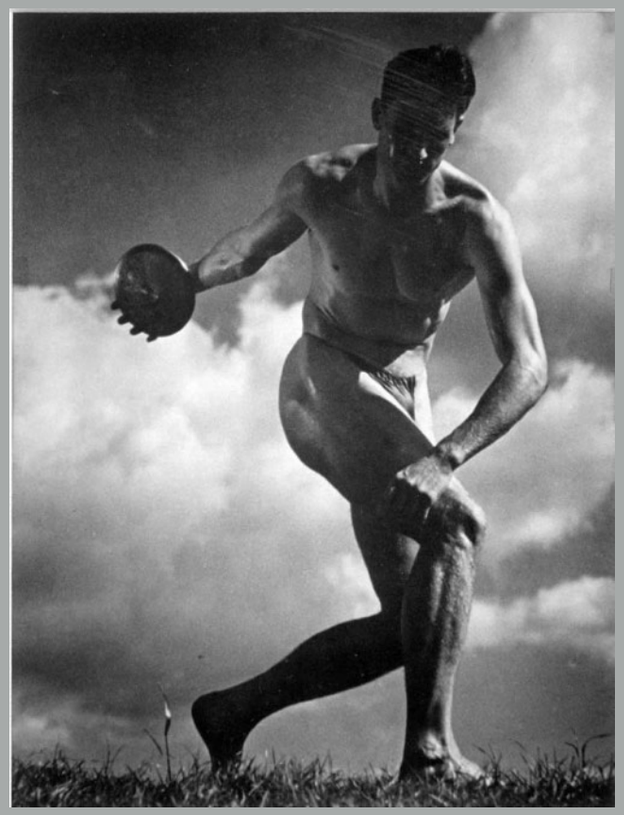
Arno Breker



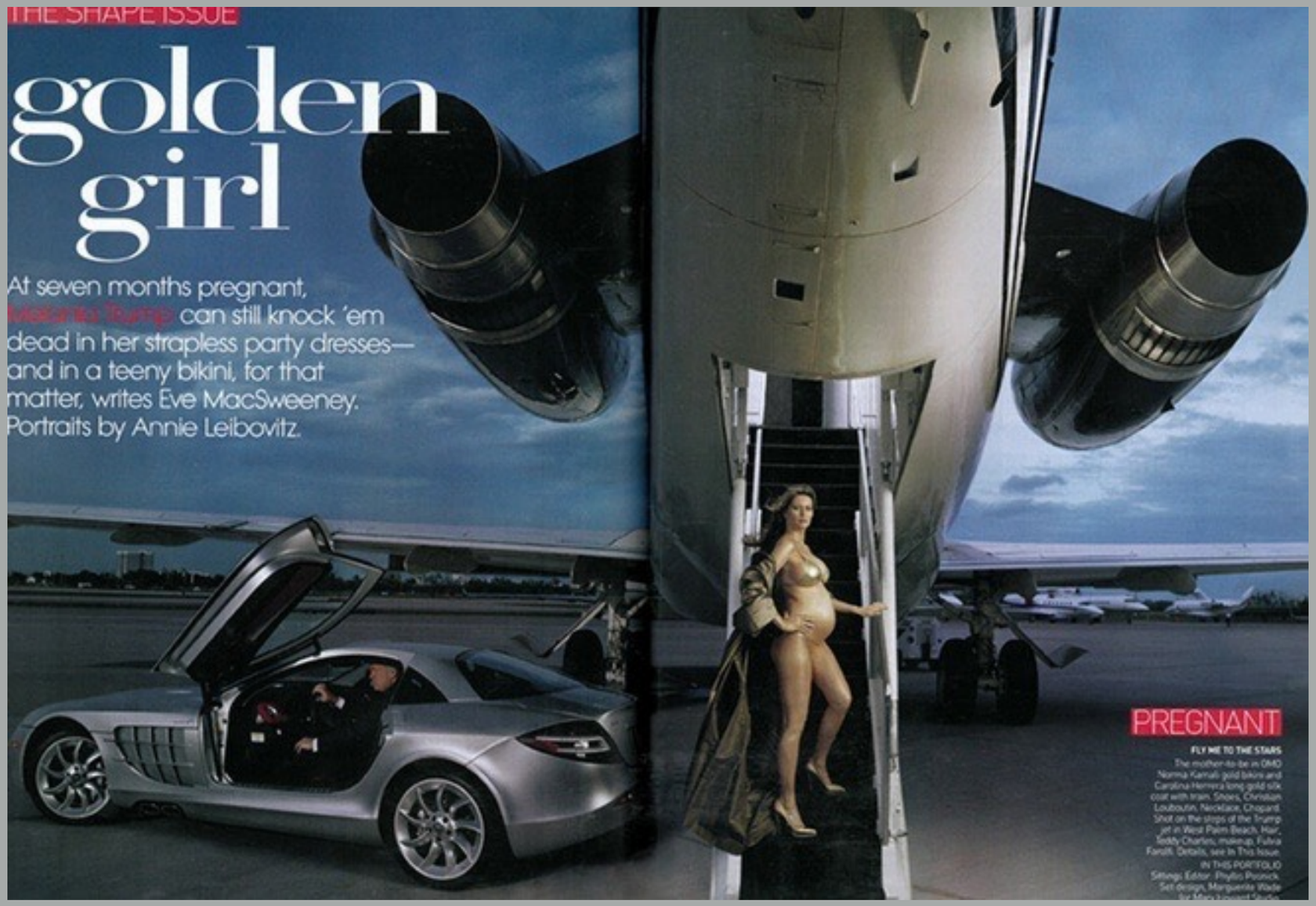
Annie Leibovitz







Leni Reifenstahl - *Olympia*



Annie Leibovitz





Lenin - Speech to Soviet troops in Sverdlov Square, with and without Leon Trotsky and Lev Kamenov, 1920.



Stalin at the Moscow Canal with and without Naval Commissar, Nikolai Yezhov



Annie Leibovitz, Vanity Fair Cover without James Franco

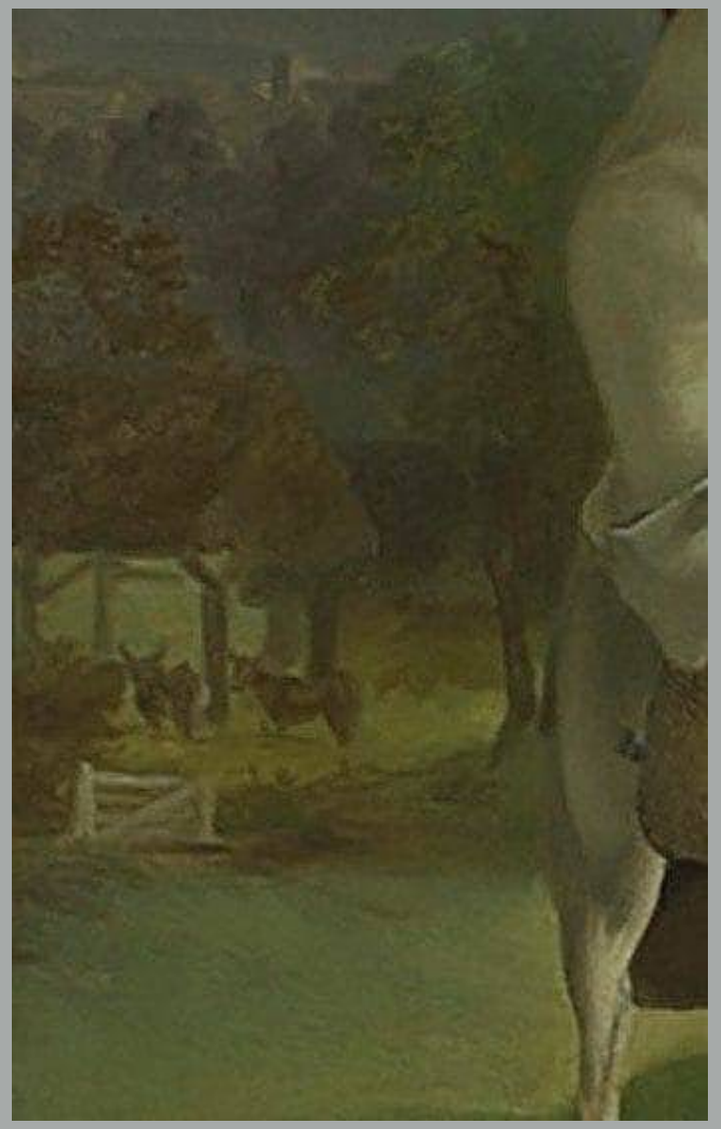


Thomas Gainsborough - *Mr and Mrs Andrews* (circa 1750)









Gainsborough - *Mr and Mrs Andrews* (details)



Jan van Eyck - *The Arnolfini Portrait*, 1434



Jeffrey Epstein: Andrew Mountbatten Windsor, Virginia Giuffre, Ghislaine Maxwell - London, 2001









Donald Trump’s Trump Tower Apartment

“The Spectacle is capital…accumulated to the point where it becomes image.”

Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*



Apple Macintosh Advert (Dir. Ridley Scott)



Apple Macintosh Advert - ‘I’m a Mac, I’m a PC’



Recuperation

(Co-option)

The commodification of radical ideas or images



The Che Guevara 'T-Shirt' image (original photograph: Alberto Korda)


DOLLAR


Communism killed
100 million people
and all I got was this
lousy shirt.



Shawn Corey Carter, AKA Jay Z



Prince Harry



Che Guevara


1986







Gregory Crewdson - from *Twilight*



Annie Leibovitz - Queen Latifah as Ursula



Gregory Crewdson - set



Annie Leibovitz - set



Sigmar Polke - Capitalist Realism

See Also: Gerhard Richter, Manfred Kuttner and Konrad Lueg.



Sigmar Polke - Capitalist Realism



Gerhard Richter, *Party* (1963)

Jackson Pollock -
Number One (1949)







Mark Rothko - *Black on Maroon* (1958)

Willem de Kooning - *Police Gazette* (1955)


Campbell's
CONDENSED
ONION
SOUP
CREAM OF
MUSHROOM
SOUP
BEEF
SOUP
CONSOMMÉ
SOUP
GREEN PEA
SOUP
PEPPER POT
SOUP
VEGETABLE
SOUP
CHICKEN
NOODLE
SOUP
TOMATO
SOUP
BLACK BEAN
SOUP

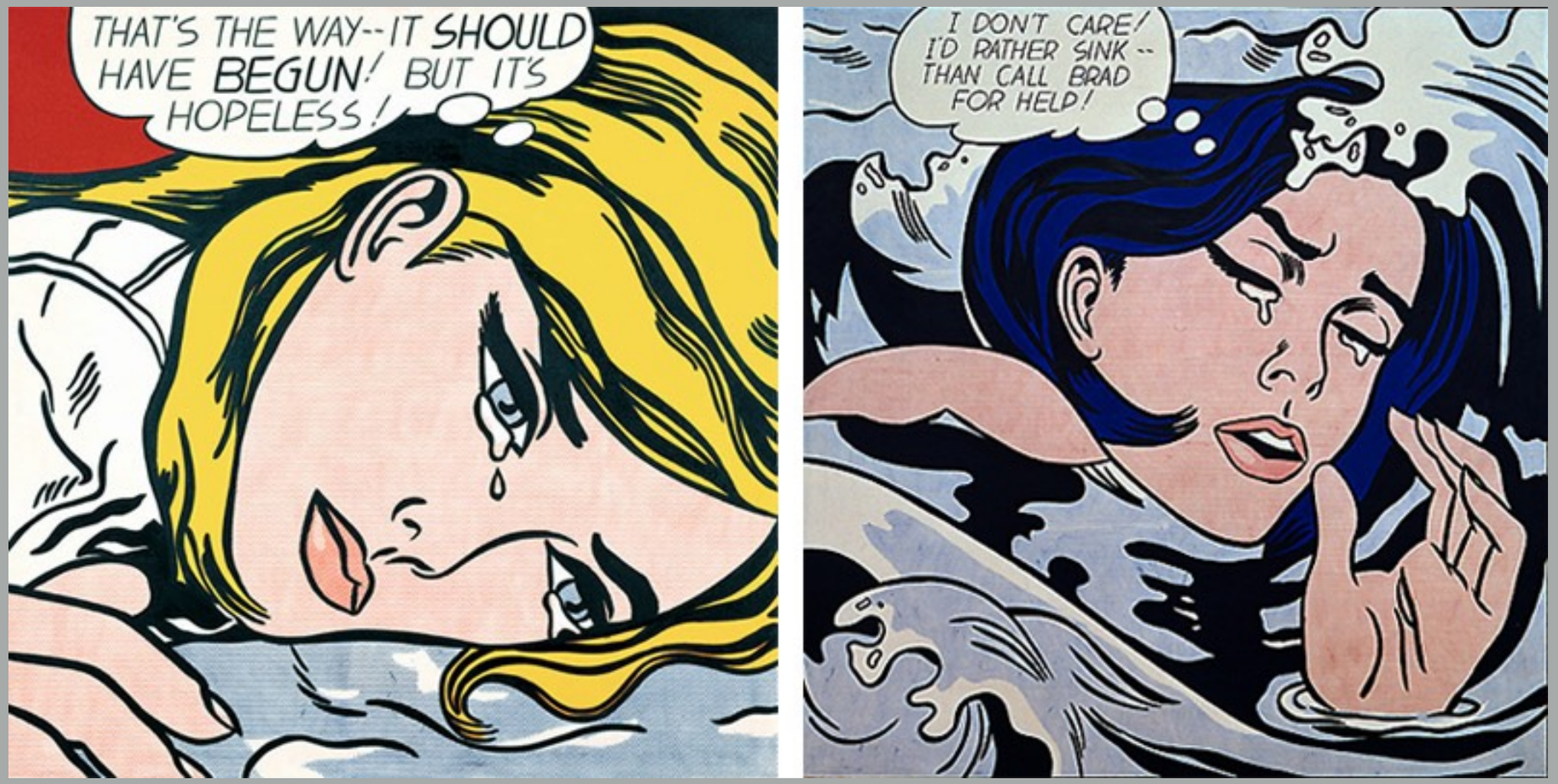


Andy Warhol





Ed Ruscha



Roy Lichtenstein

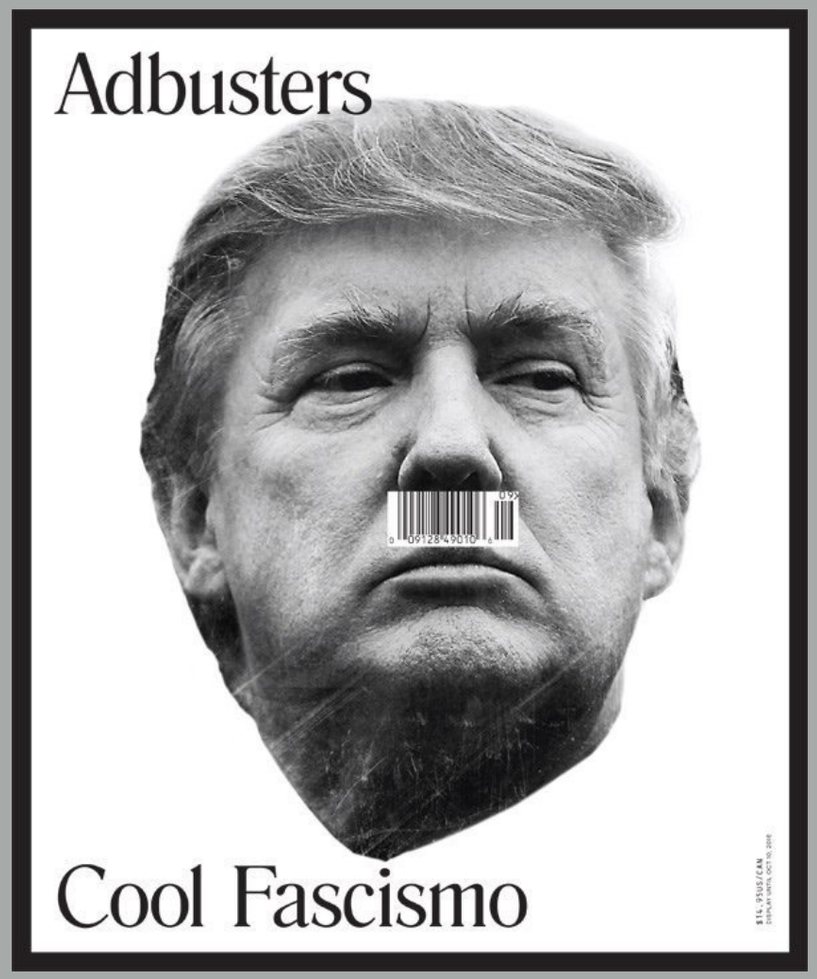


Richard Prince - Untitled (Cowboy)

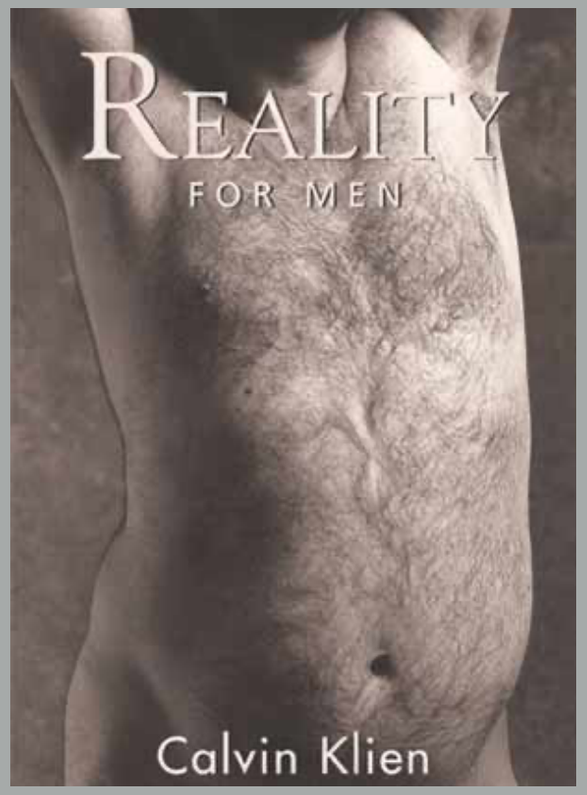
Détournement

To turn expressions and apparatuses of capitalism against themselves.





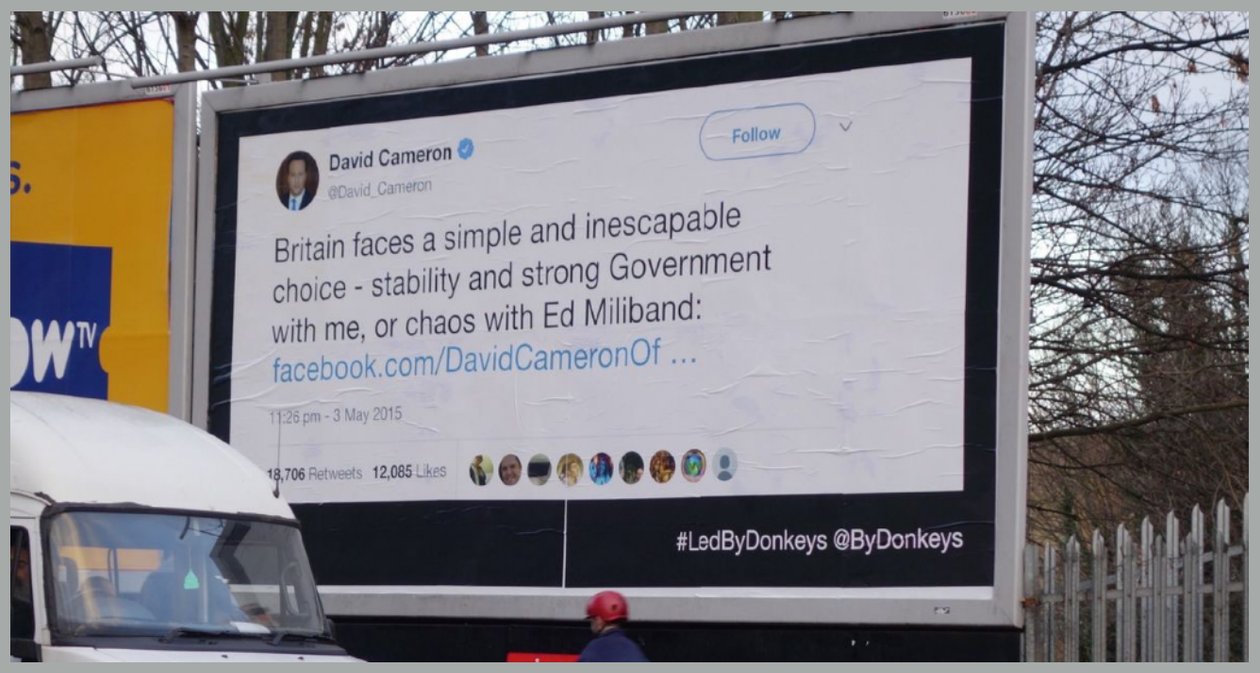




Adbusters; Subvertisments; Culture Jamming









Led by Donkeys







Barbara Kruger





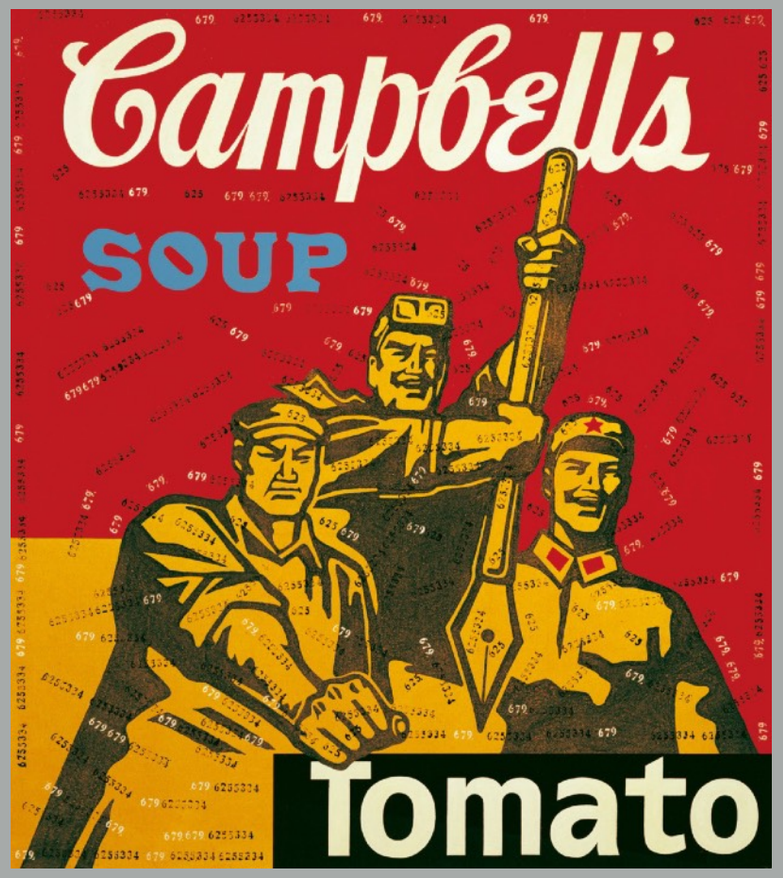


Jeff Coons



Wang Guangyi









Wang Guangyi



Gregory Crewdson - *Beneath the Roses*



Gregory Crewdson - *Beneath the Roses*





Gregory Crewdson - *Beneath the Roses; Twilight*



Gregory Crewdson - from *Cathedral of the Pines*

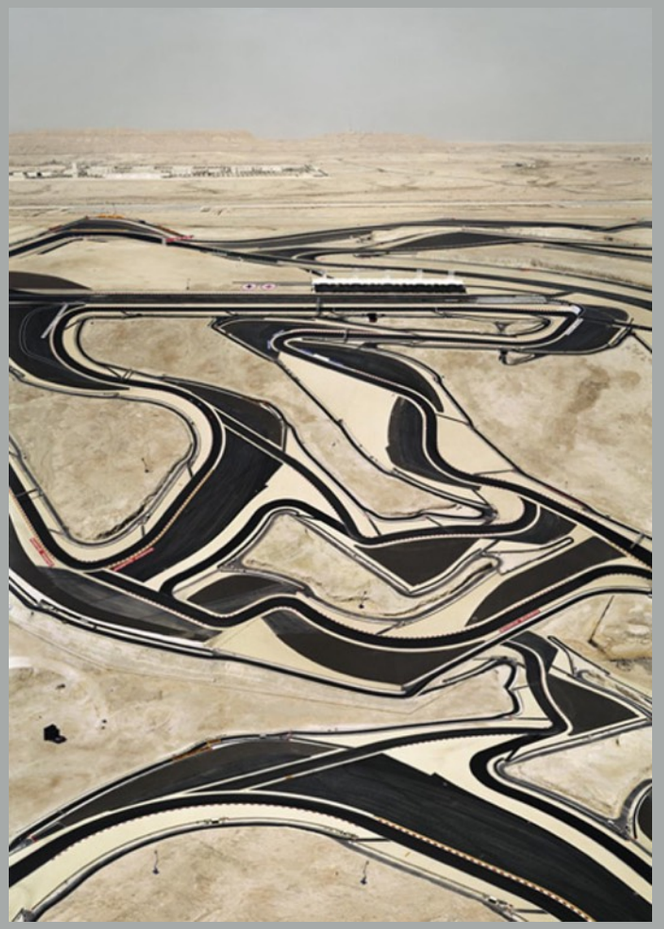


Gregory Crewdson - from *Cathedral of the Pines*



Andreas Gursky - Salerno (1990)

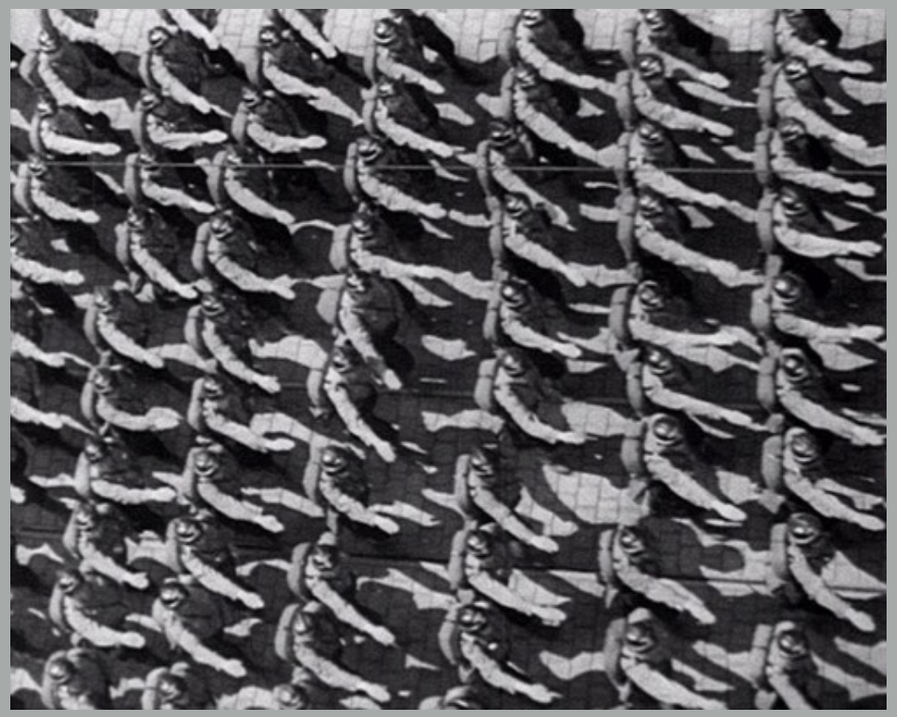


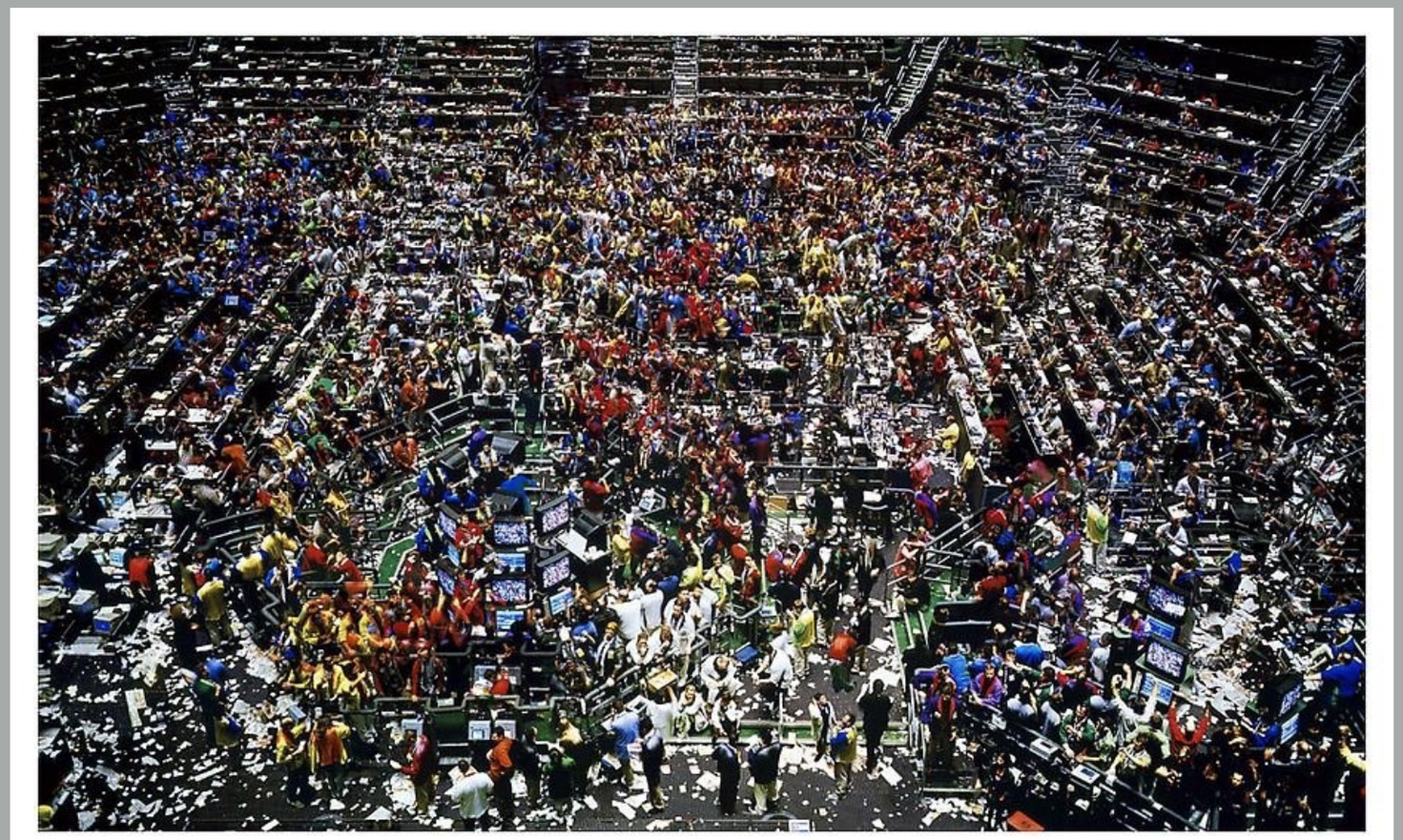




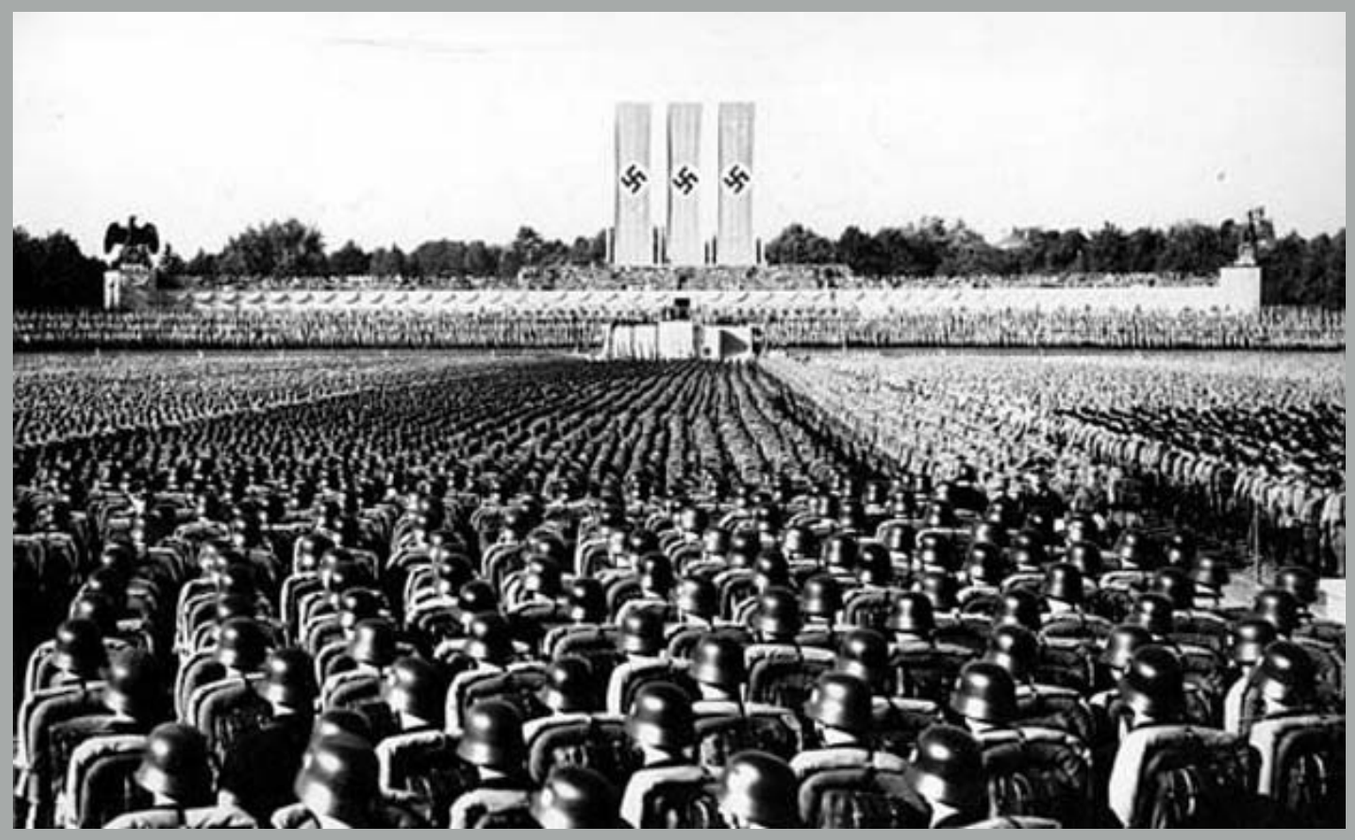


Andreas Gursky - (clockwise from left) Grand Prix Boxstop 1; Bahrain I (2005); Chicago Mercantile Exchange (1997); Hyatt Regency, Atlanta (1996)





Andreas Gursky - *Chicago Board of Trade II* (1999)



Leni Reifenstahl - *Triumph of the Will*

The Accumulation of Spectacles

Mass Objects



Gregory Crewdson - from *Cathedral of the Pines*

American Dream …



…American Nightmare



"Some day we shall no longer need pictures: we shall just be happy."

Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter, 1966

(Founders of the Capitalist Realism movement)

Key Thinkers:
Antonio Gramsci
Mark Fisher
The Frankfurt School
Guy Debord

Capitalism and Culture
Hegemony
Capitalist Realism
Detournment
Recuperation
Image and ideology

Macintosh Ads

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtvjbmoDx-I

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqKHiNF2c7M