qui prépare le public à une rencontre avec la défunte reine. On y retrouve exposés la chemise que Marie-Antoinette portait lors de sa détention à la Conciergerie, un médaillon contenant une mèche de ses cheveux, puis, il fallait s'y attendre, le symbole ultime de sa mise à mort, la lame de guillotine provenant du musée de Madame Tussaud. Finalement, dans le haut de la porte menant à la salle suivante, trône la célèbre citation, ici inscrite en anglais, « Nothing can hurt me now [Rien ne me fait plus mal, maintenant] », que Marie-Antoinette aurait prononcée en franchissant le seuil de la prison vers son exécution. La citation est un rappel touchant de la mémoire collective qui porte les ultimes témoignages de la dernière reine de France. Cette pièce historique est la charnière vers les années à suivre, au-delà de la vie de Marie-Antoinette, qui continueront à enrichir son style.

La deuxième et plus courte partie de l'exposition comprend trois thèmes qui magnifient la postérité du style Marie-Antoinette : les bals du XIXe siècle, l'imprimé, puis la mode et le costume contemporains. Les deux premiers thèmes, *Marie Antoinette: Memorialised 1800-1840* et *Enchantment and Illusion*, servent de zone tampon avant la grande finale. L'espace est, de ce fait, plus sobre et, bien que les robes du XIXe siècle et les dessins de George Barbier pour les *Liaisons dangereuses* de Choderlos de Laclos démontrent avec justesse l'adaptation du style Marie-Antoinette, il y manque l'énergie des thèmes précédents. Les robes sont exubérantes, chatoyantes et colorées, et reprennent les couleurs et les formes des robes que le public a vues auparavant, mais sans le dispositif de miroirs derrière les mannequins qui a disparu. Reprendre ce dispositif en fin d'exposition aurait permis de dynamiser l'espace et de multiplier les lectures et les mises en application du style dans l'ensemble des vêtements exposés. L'intention du commissariat était peut-être d'offrir au public un espace plus serein, peint en vert profond, avant qu'il ne replonge dans l'exubérance de la mode et des costumes de films.

À travers les couleurs, les motifs et les silhouettes, le dernier thème, *Marie Antoinette: Restyled*, est la démonstration en grande pompe du sujet de l'exposition. Ici, rien n'est historiquement juste, mais c'est exactement le propos de Grant : le « style Marie-Antoinette » a une portée universelle, tant dans l'attrait que dans l'usage. Partout où se pose le regard dans cette dernière section, sur les deux étages d'un escalier digne du cinéma hollywoodien, des costumes de films et des robes haute couture sont rétroéclairés dans un amalgame de blanc, de rose, de bleu et de vert sauge, des couleurs coordonnées aux motifs de fleurs et de toiles de Jouy. La mise en scène de cette salle conclusive est sublime. L'exposition réussit le pari complexe de la synthèse : elle transforme un personnage historique polarisant en une marque esthétique globale et parfaitement reconnaissable. Malgré quelques essoufflements dans le parcours chronologique, la scénographie spectaculaire de *Marie Antoinette Style* consacre définitivement la reine comme la première véritable influenceuse de l'histoire, dont le lexique – fait de roses poudrés et de subversion – continue de nourrir la haute couture du XXIe siècle.

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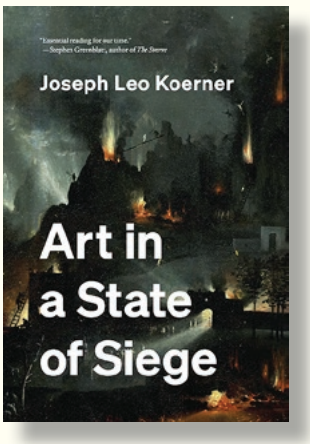

Joseph Leo Koerner
Art in a State of Siege

Princeton University Press, 2025
408 pp., 32 colour & 103 b/w illus.
$US 37.00/£30.00 (hardcover)
ISBN 9780691267210

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Joseph Leo Koerner's publications are well known and much acclaimed by art historians in many sub-specialities of the field. A reader's research interests might guide what they know of his many publications in, for example, Northern Renaissance art, history, and

literature; on Caspar David Friedrich or William Kentridge; or thematically, on European iconoclasm or the notion of enmity in the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch.[1] Koerner is a polymath who excels in precise and focused studies. His ideas reach a wider audience through his documentary television programs for the BBC and his many curated exhibitions.[2] A powerful thinker and skilled writer, a new book by Koerner is noteworthy for those thinking about visual culture, its past and present.

Koerner explains in his Acknowledgements that the book's "triptych structure preserves the three-lecture format of the E.H. Gombrich Lectures on the Classical Tradition" that he delivered in 2016 (n.p.). The tripartite focus on the artists Hieronymus Bosch, Max Beckmann, and William Kentridge—and the authoritarian regimes under which they worked and into which their work subsequently fell—announces the importance of structure in *Art in a State of Siege*. Even the Acknowledgements are an example of Koerner's architectonic, though their placement at the end of this long and complex book is an advantage, as one isn't primed by them at the outset. Koerner's themes of siege, enmity, and the many details found in his close readings of works instead unfold and accumulate as we read. It is a book that requires and rewards a reader's patience.

Koerner makes it clear that his interest in art under siege is more than historical. He writes from and is keenly sensitive to recent political and social machinations in the US. Adding important nuance to his central theme—and forestalling the objection that much art and many artists are or have been under siege—Koerner writes that "'art in a state of siege' is not primarily the work produced during, or addressing, the dangerous moment. It is rather a perspective on art arising in that moment—what Bosch's triptych [*The Garden of Earthly Delights,* ca. 1500] looked like to the Duke of Alba subduing rebellion in the Netherlands, or to Carl Schmitt in prison in Nuremberg, or to Erwin Panofsky lecturing at Harvard" (19). This all-important perspective is intricately teased out in the afterlives of works by Koerner's three artists.

The book proceeds chronologically from the sixteenth century to the present, though with many flashbacks. To extend Koerner's structural metaphor of the triptych, the "wings" (Bosch and Kentridge) frame a shorter but pivotal hinge in the centre (Beckmann). Each artist section is substantial and largely sufficient in itself, but anticipations and echoes reverberate around the theme of siege. Again, Koerner's arguments accumulate gradually. For example, after a detailed examination of Erwin Panofsky's practice of iconography—one of several lessons in art historiography in the book—Koerner settles on his predecessor's keen sense of how conventional symbols or memes circulate in a visual culture. Thinking with Panofsky's examination of the "friendly greeting" in society, Koerner surprisingly brings us to our volatile present to apply the message: "Today's greeting gets its iconography from a state of siege," he writes (30). Past cultures may be interpreted as friendly in an iconographical reading, as seeking communication in art. But under totalitarianism and its variants, difference is construed to mark them as enemies. Enmity and iconoclasm follow: "Iconoclasm is a polemic in the root sense of *polemos*, Greek for 'war.' Not only do iconoclasts break images they deem inimical; they also distinguish as enemies those who use such images" (117).

Koerner explains that his book's title is a quotation from South African artist William Kentridge (b. 1955), who has documented the moral stains of apartheid and totalitarianism in his homeland and beyond. Kentridge in turn borrowed the phrase from the 1972 Costa-Gavras film *State of Siege*. We can best understand Koerner's sense of siege through Kentridge, who noted in one of his signature lectures that art as a diversion, as Matisse's "comfortable armchair," perhaps, is a "state of grace…inadmissible to me" (225). "Kentridge's phrase 'art in a state of siege,'" Koerner elaborates, "named what was the case for South African artists working under apartheid. Siege also described how past art was perceived in emergencies. Beckmann's art looked different in Johannesburg in 1986 than it had previously, just as it looked different in Germany in 1927 than it did in 1933 under Hitler" (19). In itself and for viewers, such art should yield a perspective on grim and grimy realities, but for Kentridge and Koerner, artists are at best witnesses and mourners. Koerner claims persuasively that, "This is perhaps the best strategy for art in a state of siege. Kentridge is the homecomer who has seen the body in the veld and returned to give evidence in artful forms" (328). "This position," Kentridge has written, "neither active participant nor disinterested observer—is the starting point and the area

of my work. It is not necessarily the subject of it" (228).

Art as witness to and evidence of siege is the fundamental theme in this book, one that is worked out (like much of Koerner's writing here) in ways both eminently scholarly and notably personal, even autobiographical. It is in this way that Koerner's thinking is especially close to Kentridge's. The artist is the son of famous South African lawyer Sydney Kentridge, who bravely fought against apartheid in the courts. William Kentridge is frank about the import of "evidence" in his family. Koerner is the son of painter Henry Koerner, whose lessons in on-the-spot observation during family excursions in Austria and frank renderings of post-WWII Europe were formative for the scholar son, as was the fact that most of Koerner Sr.'s immediate family was murdered in the Holocaust. These father-son relationships develop into a method in which Koerner provides a genealogy of responses to siege states. Whether through autobiography, the many details about William Kentridge's life, or (less so) about the lives of Beckmann, Bosch, and many others, Koerner constantly weaves personal circumstances and psychoanalytic interpretations into his analyses of images and their cultural contexts. The upshot is that any state of siege is inevitably also understood as a psychic condition to which art is a response.

Without questioning the accuracy or validity of Koerner's use of biography, its deployment is not a method that all art historians will seek (or have the ability) to emulate. Perhaps, however, we should plumb our own motivations and inspirations in this way. Why do we write about or make art? *Art in a State of Siege* is an extended answer. Through his selected artists and ultimately in his own life, Koerner construes art (and writing about it) as difficult but necessary acts of witnessing. In a dazzling section on Plato's allegory of the cave embedded in a discussion of Kentridge's film *Shadow Procession* (1999), Koerner explicates perhaps the *locus classicus* of the profound connections between seeing, picturing, and witnessing. In Book VII of the *Republic* (which Koerner suggests is better translated as "regime"), Plato's famous attempt to liberate the prisoners from their metaphysical servitude by leading them out of the cave questions and critiques the status and source of all imagery and representation. The impulse to escape from the cavern establishes a hegemonic hierarchy of the mental (the Forms) over the visual and material (the shadows or Appearances), of putatively direct experience over representation. The cave thus operates at once as a source for, and as a reflexive interrogation of, the process of image-making in general.

In Plato's dialogue, an escaped prisoner—having seen the forms instead of degraded shadows—returns to impart the truth to his former compatriots. The "homecomer" is not well received. While other artists not mentioned by Koerner have also explored this allegory visually—Ana Mendieta in caves in Cuba and Robert Smithson in mines, for example—Koerner's innovation is his claim that Kentridge is not so much interested in revelation as with the prisoners: i.e., all of us living in a state of siege. "In revisiting Plato's cave, Kentridge wants us to forget the liberator and work with the situation of the prisoners, which—the artist implies—resembles the life of the oppressed, for whom the state of siege is the norm" (304). Alongside the many subjects of this book, Koerner is always asking existential questions. The salutary effect of *Art in a State of Siege* is that he gives art and writing the ability to frame answers.

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1 Koerner's many monographs include *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape* (Reaktion Books, 1990); *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (University of Chicago Press, 1993); *The Reformation of the Image* (University of Chicago Press, 2004); *Bosch & Bruegel: From Enemy Painting to Everyday Life* (Princeton University Press, 2016).

2 Koerner's television programs for the BBC include *Northern Renaissance* (2006) and *Vienna: City of Dreams* (2007). His curated exhibitions include *The Printed World of Pieter Bruegel the Elder*, co-curated with Barbara Butts (The St. Louis Museum of Art, 1995); *Unheimliche Heimat—Henry Koerner 1915–1988* (Vienna: Österreichische Galerie, 1997); and *Looking Back: The Western Tradition in Retrospect*, co-curated with Jeffrey Hamburger (Harvard Art Museums, 2018).