

Letter From the Editor

“Stupidity is the ultimate escape from responsibility,” writes Joshua Decter in his 1994 essay “Stupidity as Destiny: American Idiot Culture as Radical Chic.” He goes on to describe stupidity “as a new fantasy for the intellectual class.” While written almost 25 years ago in reference to shows like *Baywatch* and *Beavis and Butt-Head*, today we stream bad Netflix shows with a cool remove. In order to keep our sense of intellectual prowess intact, we keep all that is less-mentally-stimulating at arm’s length: “Stupidity has become a designer behavioral mode, the costume we most comfortably fit into after a long day of purposive rationality and goal oriented labor.”¹

Unfortunately, with Trump handing out Fake News Awards for Twitter posts and op-ed pieces, stupidity as an instrumental tactic and useful reprieve takes a darker turn, away from Decter’s utopian vision. Though what is ultimately problematic among the “intellectual class” is that very idea that we might engage in stupidity as fantasy—almost as if we are playing dress up, we can check in on stupidity while still maintaining a clear exit.

It’s easy for those of us within the art world to aggrandize our efforts with self-congratulatory aplomb, yet it’s no mystery that the art world, and the larger category of the “intellectual class,” continues to silo itself through insular, self-reflexive discourse and heightened specificity. Though we talk about ideas—political, social, cultural,

or otherwise—the language we use and the outlets we rely on are perceived (understandably) as exclusive to the non-art-world initiated. We end up talking about the outside world, but only to each other.

In this issue, Catherine Wagley proposes that art writing can appeal to a larger audience if a writer works to make it do so. Matt Stromberg contrasts selfie-centered trends in museums (both in art institutions and new pop-ups like The Museum of Ice Cream). How might art institutions bridge this gap that Wagley suggests language can bridge?

Accessibility becomes paramount to connecting these dots. Those of us within the art world can venture out of our bubble to go jump in a pool of sprinkles and take a selfie, but the general public would not feel as welcome venturing into, say, an unmarked artist-run space or engaging in a conversation about a given artwork. In this magazine, we often talk about alternative platforms that are necessary within the art world in order to adapt to our changing world and provide support for under-recognized artists. Might we need to consider how we can continue to create connections with non-artists? How can we break down the intellectual barriers that continue to keep our community more or less isolated from a general public?

—Lindsay Preston Zappas
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1. Joshua Decter, *Art is a Problem* (Zurich: JRP | Ringer, 2013), 132.