

THE NIGHTINGALE'S BUTCHER MANIFESTO

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1. The art of *Fighting Cock* is the art of those still alive. This cry will silence all voices mourning at the tomb of the art of the past.
2. In the name of a new era in art, we wage our merciless attack on all art traditions and regulations of the past.
3. New artists are children of their time and the right to live is exclusive to the avant-gardes.
4. The first step in any new movement results in breaking old idols.
5. We condemn to annihilation all the admirers of the past with all its artistic manifestations such as theater, painting, the novel, music, and sculpture, and break the ancient idols and their scavenger followers.
6. The new art considers sincerity to the inner self a gateway to artistic creation. It embodies all life forces and is inseparable from them.
7. New art walks on the graves of idols and of their sinister imitators, toward the annihilation of the chains of tradition and establishment of freedom of emotional expression.

8. New art cancels all conventions of the past and announces newness as the home for beauties.
9. Art's existence is in motion and progress. Only those artists are alive whose thought is based on new knowledge.¹
10. New art is in contrast with all the claims of the proponents of art for society's sake, art for art's sake, art for whatever's sake.
11. In order for new art to progress, all old art associations should be destroyed.
12. All creators of artworks! Be aware that the artists of the Fighting Cock group shall fight most strenuously with the distribution of old and vulgar artworks.
13. Down with imbeciles.

FIGHTING COCK ART GROUP

Gharib, Shirvani, Irani

TRANSLATED BY BAVAND BEHPOOR

1 Translator's note: The term *science* could be used in place of *knowledge* here, as the same word is used in Farsi for both concepts.

VOLUME AND ENVIRONMENT II

AZAD GROUP

FIFTH EXHIBITION OF AZAD GROUP

“VOLUME AND ENVIRONMENT 2”

Guest Artists:

Hanibal Alkhas, Behzad Hatam, Mohammad Saleh Ala

17–28 Oct. 1976

Saman Gallery

Saman II Building, Elizabeth Boulevard [Tehran]

They accuse us of the following:

- The works of the artists of Azad Group are an imitation of current art movements in the US and Europe.
- The artworks of Azad Group are irrelevant to our environment.
- Anyone can easily create similar artworks.

We reply:

How can an artwork be original or imitative?

Who can make such a distinction? According to what criterion and knowledge?

Can everybody claim to have the knowledge needed for making

[aesthetic] judgments or is it the professional critic familiar [with the technical aspects of contemporary art production who should do it?

The judgment of any viewer is interesting to us, for such public judgments would reveal different aspects of artworks in relation to the viewer.

Yet, all artists have been waiting for years for the illuminating words of professional critics, since all that is said in the name of criticism is not critics' words, but rather the superficial understanding of enunciators who accuse us of imitation, and their work appears substantial simply because it is published in journals. . . .

If we look at much of our cultural activities, or those of other nations, from such a superficial perspective, we will come up with disastrous results:

For instance, according to such a superficial outlook, all art, from the miniatures of the past to Kamal al Molk's paintings to the work of modern artists today, are imitations of either Chinese art, the classical art of Europe, or the new art movements of the recent decades in Europe.

Or for instance, many of the American contemporary art movements are imitations of Dadaists' experiences or those of some other European artists.

Or the works of Picasso, the great artist, are imitations of African art.

Or the artworks of Modigliani or Matisse, two of the most distinguished artists of the current century, are copies of our miniatures.

As such, there remains no master at all, since one can trace in the work of any master his master, and according to such a viewpoint, the world of art is imitating itself in a chain [of imitations].

Relying on a superficial understanding, such judgments would inevitably end up in such conclusions because all sorts of "influence" mean [nothing but] "imitation" to the one who judges.

Imitation is an interpretation with no intellectual subtlety, and in every movement numerous imitators step forward. But history does not recall imitators who lasted long. The influenced remains at the bottom of the gutter.

We must not dismiss a new movement and ridicule its simplicity as a result of fearing the appearance of imitators. Yet being influenced is not a voluntary action that can be avoided. Those who are sensitive are influenced by their living environment, and the living environment



Morteza Mornayez. Presentation of knives installation in *Volume and Environment II* exhibition catalog, 1975. Saman Gallery, Tehran. Image courtesy of Dariush Kiaras.

in its turn is under the influence of communication and economic systems.

Which of us has a nonenvironmental behavior and is therefore able to condemn influence? What deceives an ignorant observer is that he chooses criteria for his empty hands, criteria that lie in the hands of others, the same way that he recognizes his worth only when it comes out of the mouth of the other.

A need has brought together the members of Azad Group despite all the differences of their artistic methods. The environmental influence has created this need in us.

The need for an intellectual play, for an investigation and for experiencing a route different from their main path, for opening a window into a different air, for smelling, tasting, digesting, and being born anew in the same main path.

The need for self-destruction to test our criteria anew.

The need for avoiding repetition.

The need for simplicity and for approaching and approximating whatever is in our lives—things we do not see in our intellectual solitude and the value of which we ignore.

The need for hailing other horizons.

TRANSLATED BY BAVAND BEHPOOR