

again, he attempted to get his work as a painter taken seriously. The Salon was frosty, the public uninterested.”

Daumier, who had little formal education, excelled at caricature—and “became its slave,” Kimball says. His work for Charles Philipon’s *Le Charivari* and other satirical magazines “paid the bills, though barely.” It also earned him, on one occasion, a six-month prison term. The king was not amused by Daumier’s famous lithograph *Gargantua*, showing a pear-headed Louis-Philippe perched on a commode, taking in the country’s treasure from its starving citizens, while excreting writs, honors, and ribbons for royal ministers and favorites.

“There is plenty to admire in Daumier’s caricatures,” says Kimball. “But his paintings . . . exist in an entirely different spiritual and aesthetic register.” They have, as novelist Henry James commented, a “strange seriousness.” A few have religious

themes, Kimball notes, but “his best paintings—some family scenes, *Third-Class Carriage* (1862–64), *The Uprising* (1852–58), *The Fugitives* (1865–70), and several paintings of Don Quixote—are secular. Nevertheless, they possess rare depths of solitude and melancholy tenderness.”

In 1878, when Daumier was blind and one year from death, several friends organized a large retrospective at a gallery in Paris. By then, his oeuvre included nearly 300 paintings, along with thousands of caricatures. Although Daumier could not attend, the exhibition—“carefully designed,” Kimball says, “to highlight Daumier’s achievements as a serious painter”—was “a great moment” for him. At long last his paintings were being recognized. “The show was a rousing critical success,” writes Kimball. But “the masses whom Daumier had pleased, goaded, and amused for decades stayed away *en masse*.”

Shocking Exhibition

“The Business of Art” by András Szánto, in *The American Prospect* (Feb. 28, 2000),
Five Broad St., Boston, Mass. 02109.

The controversy last fall over the *Sensation* exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum of Art left many besides New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani aghast. More disturbing to some than the elephant-dung Virgin Mary and other dubious works on display were the museum’s cozy financial relations with art patrons and dealers. The collection’s owner, Charles Saatchi, for instance, whose works were likely to fetch higher prices thanks to the prestige-enhancing exhibition, paid \$160,000 of the museum’s costs. Did commerce affect curatorial judgment in Brooklyn? *Of course* it did—as it does at most museums of contemporary art, argues Szánto, associate director of the National Arts Journalism Program at Columbia University.

“The art world isn’t an unscrupulous racket,” he says. “But only the most naïve could assume that money and influence do not play a role in deciding what kind of art gets to be exhibited in museums.” *Of course* “art-works placed in exhibitions and published in catalogues increase in monetary value”; *of course* “corporate sponsors are allowed to

wine and dine clients in museums”; *of course* “lenders to exhibitions are also asked to write checks.” The sorts of deals made in Brooklyn are pretty much SOP these days, says Szánto. “How could they not be? Over the past several decades, the art world has been hurled at the mercy of market forces.”

Between 1982 and 1998, according to a recent Alliance for the Arts report, funding from all governmental sources for New York arts organizations dropped from 28.9 percent of their income to 11.1 percent, with federal funding alone plummeting by 88 percent, to a negligible 1.2 percent. “Corporate funding, which comes with more and more strings attached,” Szánto says, “is also on the wane,” down to 3.9 percent. “Foundation support has been easier to come by in these flush times, but it is a hit-or-miss affair.” As for gift shop sales and other profit-making enterprises, no museum makes more than 10 percent of revenues that way. All this leaves private donors to take up the slack. Meanwhile, Szánto notes, art prices have skyrocketed. Works by Damien Hirst, whose

sliced barnyard animals appeared in *Sensation*, now fetch hundreds of thousands of dollars.

More *Sensation*-type deals are inevitable, says Szánto. The best way for museums to keep from becoming “galleries in disguise, mere means to augment the value of private

collections,” he believes, is to give up any “anachronistic belief in the purity of the [museum] project,” openly acknowledge the “business side” of their operations, as newspapers and other publishing companies do, and develop ethical guidelines to keep it from becoming dominant.

Follow the Pattern

“Architecture is a vernacular art,” asserts Roger Scruton, editor of *The Salisbury Review* (Spring 2000).

Although there are the great projects, and the great architects who succeed in them, both are exceptions. We build because we need to, and for a purpose. Most people who build have no special talent, and no high artistic ideals. For them, the aesthetic is important not because they have something special or entrancing to communicate, but merely because, being decent and alert to their neighbors, they want to do what is right. Hence modesty, repeatability and rule-guidedness are vital architectural resources. Style must be so defined that anyone, however uninspired, can make good use of it, and add thereby to the public dwelling space that is our common possession. That is why the most successful period of Western architecture—the period in which real and lasting towns of great size were envisaged and developed—was the period of the classical vernacular, when pattern books guided people who had not fallen prey to the illusion of their own genius.

This does not mean that creativity and imagination have no place in architecture. On the contrary. We depend upon the stylistic breakthroughs, the innovations and discoveries that create the repeatable vocabulary of forms. Palladian windows, Vignolesque cornices, the classical orders, the Gothic mouldings—these great artistic triumphs become types and patterns for lesser mortals. Our best bet in architecture is that the artistic geniuses should invest their energy as Palladio did, in patterns that can be reproduced at will by the rest of us.

Publishing’s E-Savior

“The Rattle of Pebbles” by Jason Epstein, in *The New York Review of Books* (Apr. 27, 2000), 1755 Broadway, Fifth floor, New York, N.Y. 10019–3780.

Thanks to the World Wide Web and other new technologies, book publishing is on the brink of “a vast transformation”—and none too soon, argues Epstein, an industry veteran who recently stepped down as editorial director of Random House. Providentially, he writes, “these technologies have emerged just as the publishing industry has fallen into terminal collapse.”

Bertelsmann, a German-based media conglomerate, and four other corporate empires now

dominate book publishing in the United States, he notes. Bertelsmann, for example, owns such well-known imprints as Random House, Knopf, Doubleday, Bantam, Pantheon, Dell, Crown, and Ballantine. “By liquidating redundant overheads,” says Epstein, “these corporate owners hope to improve the low profit margins typical of the industry.” But they are likely to be disappointed.

Publishers have committed themselves, he says, to “an impossible goal”: turning out “a