

**RESIST**

**THE**

**MONO**

**CULTURE**

**OF**

**CULTURE**

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Agriculturally, monoculture describes the dominance of a single species over a large area. The homogenous, centralized forces of the dominant species do destructive damage to local systems, especially due to its erasure of diversity and homogenization of species. This violent force of monoculture is masked as a progressive system, partly due to the fact that it has beneficial traits at times. However, we must recognize the oligarchical objectives and the fundamental dangers of dismissing alternatives.

Our society is gradually surrendering itself to the monoculture of culture. Cultural aspects which were once signs of individuality, self-expression and freedom have been co-opted and commercialized by major corporations. With capitalism as the driving force, these corporations have swallowed cultural aspects and transformed them into agents of monoculture. For example, the creative venues of art, music, and fashion have become homogenous, impersonal forms of expression, controlled by capitalist corporations. Art has come to be legitimized only with the approval of an elitist critic or curator. The music industry is controlled by businessmen who are not only primarily focused on increasing the balance in their bank accounts but will also do so at the expense of the musicians and their fans. Subversive fashion statements that once protested consumer-culture and the commodification of clothing (ripped jeans) have ironically been co-opted by commercial companies to increase profit and perpetuate consumer-culture (because the fashion industry renders any new trend as another commodity, store-bought ripped jeans are often more expensive than unripped jeans). Venues for self-expression and



individuality have been seized by corporate powers who determine what items will return the greatest profit, sell a commodified product of culture to the public, and attempt to erase all other alternatives. This system creates a monoculture of culture dominated by major corporations who are thereby able to direct mainstream culture and suppress countercultures, or simply co-opt the successful ones. Remember when the hipster was the embodiment of counterculture sentiments rather than a self-obsessed consumer whore? Probably not.

With the rise of technological advancements, globalization has emerged as both an oligarchy/monoculture-perpetuating and democratizing agent. While globalization facilitates the overturning of control to small elite groups, it has also allowed for everyone (from your grandmother to your little brother!) to participate in a global cultural exchange. The internet has connected activists and artists from disparate places to form otherwise impossible global communities to combat monoculture. American culture reflects both optimism and anxiety about the prevalence of globalization in our world.

Monoculture is especially powerful due to its invisibility; it is so deeply embedded in the social fabric of our lives that we have become blind to its destructive influences. Once we recognize the prevalence of monoculture in our culture, we can then combat the system. We can only be victim to this violent system of monoculture in our society if we accept and remain ignorant.

Open your eyes and observe the extent of monoculture in your life!  
Resist the monoculture of culture!

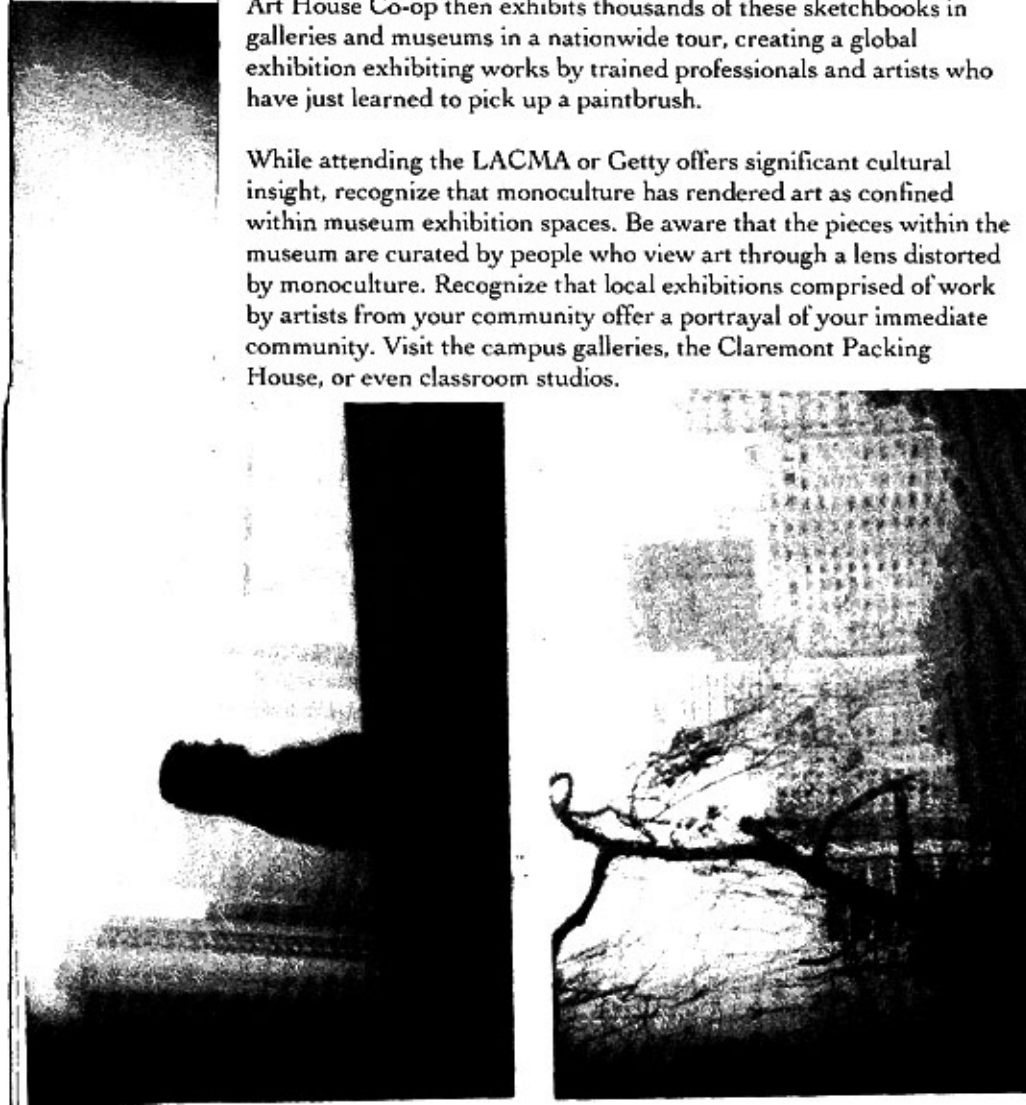
# ART

Historically, art has provided creative representations of a societal state, embodying the social, political and economic aspects of a specific time and place. These elements color works of art, creating insightful portrayals of a distinct culture, specific to a historical period and region. However, with the growing increase of globalization, the art world is showing signs of a gradual homogenization of artistic standards. Furthermore, the direction in which the art world is moving towards reflects the tastes and interests of dominant forces and tends to dismiss local cultures. Globalization has also facilitated the exportation of artists and their works. On one hand, the international network of artists allows for a more fluid cultural exchange. But often times when one visits major architectural structures or museum exhibitions of a metropolitan city, the tourist is not necessarily admiring the culture of that specific region. Rather, globalization has rendered the modern city and its artistic venues global arenas in which dominant cultural forces overpower the local culture and community.

The Guggenheim Museum of Bilbao serves as a prime example of the limiting and homogenizing effects of globalization of the art world. The Guggenheim, like any corporation, developed a "global brand" by opening branches of museums throughout the world. This proliferation of Guggenheim spaces allowed for some positive effects, including new exhibition space (previously with limited exhibition space it could only exhibit a fraction of its collection) and the global spread of cultural influence. On the other hand, the expansion was partially due to the desire for an increase in new opportunities for revenue, and the new museums inadvertently became a cultural colonizing force. Frank Gehry, a Canadian-American architect based in Los Angeles, was commissioned to design the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, located in Basque Country, Spain. This intersection of cultures ultimately results in the dominance of the Anglo-American culture over the local Bilbao culture. The architecture reflects the dominant cultural forces dismissing local styles, and the exhibited artwork further reflects the colonization of the Bilbao local culture by major art world capitals (Bilbao artists are not provided exhibition opportunities).

The art world is defined by a small, centralized and elite group that defines artistic success. With globalization, they have homogenized art to fall under what they regard worthy of museum exhibition space. However, technological mediums have provided a new alternative space for artistic exhibition. The internet now provides platforms for any user to exhibit his/her artwork accessible to anyone anywhere in the world, provided both parties have access to a computer with internet. Websites including DeviantArt and Flickr allow artists to participate in a global art community separate from the corporate art world. One project integrating both of globalization is Art House Co-op's "The Sketchbook Project." The collaborative has designed a project in which anyone from anywhere in the world designs his/her own sketchbook which is sent back to the collective. Art House Co-op then exhibits thousands of these sketchbooks in galleries and museums in a nationwide tour, creating a global exhibition exhibiting works by trained professionals and artists who have just learned to pick up a paintbrush.

While attending the LACMA or Getty offers significant cultural insight, recognize that monoculture has rendered art as confined within museum exhibition spaces. Be aware that the pieces within the museum are curated by people who view art through a lens distorted by monoculture. Recognize that local exhibitions comprised of work by artists from your community offer a portrayal of your immediate community. Visit the campus galleries, the Claremont Packing House, or even classroom studios.



# MUSIC

*Ever heard of the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA)?*

The RIAA is a consolidated group of major commercial record labels that has monopolized the record industry for decades. They sponsor the majority of the bands played on commercial radio stations, transmitting monoculture through your car stereo. The group has essentially created a system in which the principal way listeners get access to music is through a means--primarily via commercial radio--monopolized by them, so that the majority of listeners in turn exclusively consume their products. In addition, they make an effort to render any alternative means of acquiring music illegitimate and illegal, so that their products are most publicized and acquire the majority of the revenue. Their artist-cultivating behavior and biased focus on marketing, promotion and airplay of pop and hip-hop is another prominent feature.

Their crimes are innumerable, but highlights include price-fixing, blaming its poor financial state on unfounded digital piracy claims, blaming and suing its consumers based off these illegitimate claims, lobbying for changes that hinder technological innovation and change fundamental copyright laws, underpaying their represented artists, invading personal privacy to enforce copyrights, and dismantling entire computer networks to prohibit their users to share copyrighted files. In 1999, the unpublicized, successful classification of music recordings as "works made for hire" even stripped artists of their copyright interests and transferred those interests to their record labels.

The RIAA has also spent a majority of their time and effort combatting piracy and online dissemination of music. However, these methods in reality provide musicians with more exposure and expand their fan base. While the RIAA addresses the issue of piracy as an illegal infringement of copyright laws, their capitalist motivations reveal their main objective to be acquiring a higher revenue by deeming alternative methods as theft. Have they noticed that an increase in piracy in fact parallels an increase in revenue for bands, as greater exposure increases show attendances and merchandise purchases?

The RIAA has fought to monopolize the record industry, but musicians and fans have fought side by side for decades as cultural soldiers of freedom, relentlessly combatting the RIAA. Music has historically served as a instrument of protest, and so the scene inherently has an enormous built-in following dedicated to combatting the RIAA. While major record labels try to squeeze every last penny out of the consumers and artists themselves, independent labels have emerged to create a music scene catering to the listeners' and artists' interests. Independent music as an alternative to major commercial record labels resists monoculture and allows artists to introduce their music to a great audience outside of the standard system. Self-produced and self-released albums are another popular alternative to the services of major record labels. The Recording Artists Coalition (RAC), an American music industry organization, represents artists and attempts to defend artists' rights and interests, in contrast to the RIAA who represents the recording industry.



*But how do you boycott the RIAA without starving the musicians you idolize?*

Do everything you can to support musicians, other than buying their records (if they're released by the RIAA). Don't purchase their music, download it for free on a filesharing network. Then send the artists what you want to give, without the greedy middleman. Support musicians through the means through which they receive the majority of their revenue: attend their live shows and buy their merchandise. Listen to non-commercial radio stations that support independent labels and bands (tune into the 5C student run station KSPC 88.7!). Resist the RIAA's attempt to monopolize and homogenize culture!



Thought you were supporting an indie band? Think again. Visit [www.riaradar.com](http://www.riaradar.com) to check if the record you're buying supports the RIAA and monoculture. Continue supporting these artists, but refrain from purchasing RIAA albums!

**BANDS SIGNED BY A MEMBER OF THE RIAA:**

**Columbia:** The Go! Team, Black Kids, MGMT

**Interscope:** Them Crooked Vultures, Blink 182, La Roux, M.I.A., Noah and the Whale, Queens of the Stone Age, TV on the Radio, Wale, Weezer, Wolfmother, Yeah Yeah Yeahs.

**Virgin Records:** Daft Punk, Gorillaz, The Kooks, Elliot Smith,

**Warner:** Devendra Banhart, E-40, The Flaming Lips, Glassjaw, Jack's Mannequin, Mika, The Mars Volta, Muse, Radiohead, Rilo Kiley



# THE INTERNET

AN INSTRUMENT TO DISMANTLE MONOCULTURE

As a network between disparate and once entirely disconnected places, the internet has transformed the world through its allowance of instantaneous global communication and its democratic aspects. The internet facilitates globalization, in both beneficial ways and harmful ones. Commercial groups have attempted to limit access to information. However, cyberspace concepts, specifically social networking, file sharing and cyber activism, have the potential to be liberating and can be used as tools to combat monoculture of certain knowledge systems.

The internet has given rise to many different social networking websites. Familiar sites such as Facebook and Myspace are probably more often understood as public exhibitions of egotism and narcissism, but they can also be important tools to create communities. Globalization has expanded the influence of these websites and created an enormous global community that would have been otherwise impossible. Social networking has had many beneficial political effects such as informing the world about breaking news before major news sites can publish, or have publicized political unrest from the civilian's perspective. For example, during the 2009 Iran Election Crisis, the Iranian government began clamping down on information and increasing censorship. But social media sites including Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and Youtube emerged as critical mediums for bringing information out of the repressed

nation and creating a community space for dissidents to connect and organize. These social media tools are capable of disseminating information and creating a level of awareness that would have been impossible without the prevalence of the internet.

Other file sharing and wiki software technology have revolutionized the dissemination of information through decentralization. For example, the free, online encyclopedia Wikipedia is built collaboratively, meaning anyone can contribute information to a free, public resource. Wikipedia moves towards decentralization, but is still moderately controlled by a centralized source which ensures the information is accurate. On the other hand, BitTorrent is a free, open source file-sharing application that allows for peer-to-peer file sharing. As opposed to downloading software programs or other media from a corporate source, torrent file sharing allows for a decentralized source of acquiring information. These file sharing networks have been publicly slandered as illegal sources (remember the Napster scandal?). However, they have been painted as illegitimate by major corporations simply because they aim to destroy the monopoly of these corporations and bring power back to the community through publicly accessible information.

Along these lines, the rapid expansion of the internet has provided political activists with a new medium for protest. Hackers are often, though not always, activists who aim to decentralize technological resources and create a platform for collaboration. Hacking for a

political purpose, or "hacktivism," has emerged as a method to promote political ideology, including expressive politics, free speech, human rights, or information ethics. For example, in 1998, the Electronic Disturbance Theater group aimed to bring the world's attention to the plight of Indian rights in the Mexican state of Chiapas. They conducted "virtual sit-ins" on the Web sites of the Pentagon and the Mexican government, overwhelming the site with so much traffic that it became inaccessible to other users. Another Mexican hacking group took over Mexico's finance department website in support of the same cause. The internet has served as an effective tool in combatting powers of monoculture due to the powers provided by technological advancement and globalization.

The internet can be a virtual space of both oppression and liberation. Major commercial corporations use it as another instrument to perpetuate monoculture, but it has also emerged as a powerful tool to combat monoculture. Its decentralizing abilities and inherent democratic aspects have connected once isolated voices to create a global community with the means to create effective alternatives to monoculture.

