

The New Criterion

Features March 1985

T. J. Clark and the Marxist critique of modern painting

by Hilton Kramer

On The Painting of Modern Life by Professor T. J. Clark.

The question is, finally: how could there be an effective political art? Is not the whole thing a chimaera, a dream, incompatible with the basic conditions of artistic production in the nineteenth century—easel painting, privacy, isolation, the art market, the ideology of individualism? Could there be any such thing as revolutionary art until the means existed—briefly, abortively—to change those basic conditions: till 1919, when El Lissitzky puts up his propaganda poster outside a factory in Vitebsk; or 1918, in Berlin, when Richard Huelsenbeck has the opportunity, at last, to “make poetry with a gun in his hand”?

—T. J. Clark, in *The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France 1848-1851*.

“It turns out we are part of the superstructure,” M. said to me in 1922, after our return from Georgia. Not long before, M. had written about the separation of culture from the State, but the Civil War...

The rest of this article is locked. Please make sure you are logged in to view the full article.

Hilton Kramer (1928–2012) was the founding editor of *The New Criterion*, which he started with the late Samuel Lipman in 1982.

This article originally appeared in *The New Criterion*, Volume 3 Number 7, on page 1

Copyright © 2024 The New Criterion | www.newcriterion.com

<https://newcriterion.com/issues/1985/3/tj-clark-and-the-marxist-critique-of-modern-painting>