

MoMA

Tender Is the Night

What begins as negation ends in negation. In the hands of the inspired and the obedient, the desire to create art always expresses itself as the desire to destroy art; the need to make oneself into an artist can only lead to an undoing of the self. The devotee of non-being ends by destroying his or her being. There is no sailing beyond this horizon: it is the last temptation of the avant-garde.

Put differently, avant-garde must always advance; therefore, eventually, the avant-garde can only live by turning against itself and dying. Suicide, whether bodily or artistic or both, becomes an avant-garde project because the structure of the art is suicidal. The greatest—or, more exactly, the purest—artists have always known this, and turned to gun-running and urination, to emptiness and silence, to the night.

Let the young Nietzsche speak for them, and for us:

The daemon stood silent, stiff and motionless, until at last, forced by the king, he gave a shrill laugh and spoke these words: 'Miserable, ephemeral race, children of hazard and hardship, why do you force me to say what it would be much more fruitful for you not to hear? The best of all things is something entirely outside your grasp: not to be born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. But the second-best thing for you—is to die soon.'

—David Lewis and Gerald Murphy

...

Yves Klein, *Leap into the Void* (1960)

Frank Stella, *Moby Dick: The Pequod Meets the Jeroboam: Her Story* (1993)

Nicholas Poussin, *Echo and Narcissus* (ca. 1630)

Louis Aragon, *Suicide* (1924)

Wyndham Lewis, *Portrait of an English Woman* (1914)

Marcel Duchamp, *Wanted: \$2000 Reward* (1923)

Coin from Naxos with Image of Silenus (ca. 460 BC)

Piero Manzoni, *Achrome* (1958)

Arthur Cravan (attributed), *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*

Francis Picabia, *Composition [les points]* (1949)

Dash Snow, *Untitled* (2006)

Henri Fantin-Latour, *Un Coin de table* [sic] (1872)

Giorgio de Chirico, *Self-portrait in Black Costume* (1948)

Ara Dymond, *The Palace at 4 A.M.* (2007)

Louis Sullivan, *Auditorium Building*, Chicago (1889)

The Sea of Fertility (*Mare Fecunditatis*) on the moon

Chris Wool, *Apocalypse Now* (1988)

Andy Warhol, *The Disquieting Muses (After de Chirico)* (1982)

Marcel Broodthaers, *Pense-Bête* (1964)

Francesco Borromini, Spire of Sant Ivo alla Sapienza, Rome (1642 -1660)

Gustave Courbet, *Chateau de Chillon* (1874)

N.Mantchenko and Una before Kasimir Malevich's tomb in Nemtchinovka (1935)