

GUIDE TO THE ART ORACLES

The Art Oracle cards offer advice drawn from three key elements in the artists' lives. Choose a card to consult the art oracles and change your:



LIFE

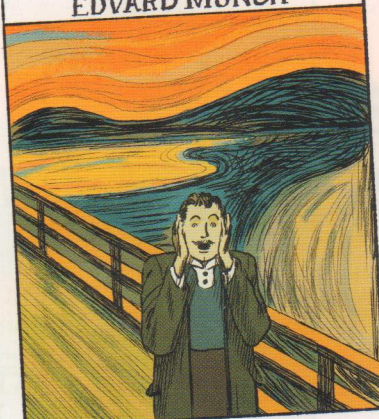


WORK



INSPIRATION

EDVARD MUNCH



☉ A composed soul is not necessarily a calm one. ✎ Scream into a canvas, not a pillow. 👁 Ask anxiety to pose for you.

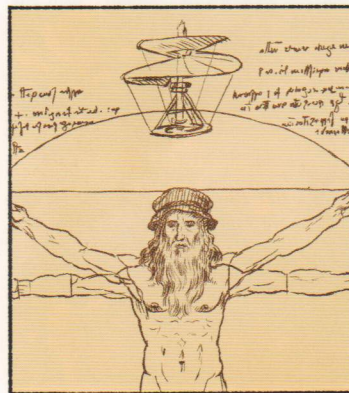
YAYOI KUSAMA



sed of the same
Distinguish yourself
? 👁 Show them

Written by Katya Tylevich
Illustrated by Mikkell Sommer

MEET THE ORACLES



LEONARDO DA VINCI

b. Italy, 1452 – 1519

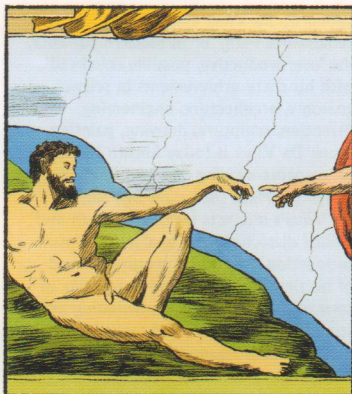
Leonardo Da Vinci epitomized the 'Renaissance Man,' or in modern parlance, the 'overproductive, possible cokehead' with his crazy achievements in science, anatomy, architecture, engineering, invention, sculpture, drawing, painting and more. Da Vinci is today known by every cargo-pants-wearing dad-bod lining up to see the *Mona Lisa* or *The Last Supper*. Da Vinci's interests included human and animal dissection, and analyzing human proportion. Said to be centuries ahead of his time, he left behind notebooks of forward-looking research, including alpha studies of helicopters and tanks, and near-perfect anatomical drawings, give or take a reproductive detail.



ALBRECHT DÜRER

b. Germany, 1471 – 1528

The painter and engraver Albrecht Dürer, who awoke German Renaissance art, was foremost a printmaker, whose woodcut illustrations of feel-good religious subjects, such as *The Apocalypse*, accumulated a mainstream following previously unknown in the print biz. Dürer ran with cool intellectuals and royals in his hometown of Nürnberg, but during a plague outbreak, he allegedly peaced out to Venice, which he considered his spiritual homeland. An Italophile, Dürer was so inspired and motivated by his southern colleagues that, in later works, he forced emotion and (geometric) perspective down the throats of his cold Deutsch countrymen.



MICHELANGELO

b. Italy, 1475 – 1564

Two well-known sculptors had already given up chiseling *David*, claiming the provided marble was too blemished for the requisite sexiness of the final product. Michelangelo took over the project and dropped his proverbial mic by crafting a vision of heaven by way of defined male abs. Showing how it's done was a reprise throughout Michelangelo's life. A depressive perfectionist with a diehard work ethic, he fired the staff helping him paint the Sistine Chapel ceiling because they weren't him, and finished the damn thing himself. Although it cost him his health, the Sistine Chapel, including *The Last Judgement*, is but one example of Michelangelo's unparalleled genius.



TITIAN

b. Italy, approx. 1490 – 1576

The exact birthdate of Tiziano Vecellio – AKA Titian – is unknown, but historians agree he was a classic Scorpio: Cosmopolitan and passionate, this Venetian went 16th-century viral with an international career. Characterized by expressive form, scale and colour, as well as tasteful sexiness, his paintings drove demand in the Vatican and the great courts of Europe, where Titian painted large flattering portraits of VIPs. Well into his senior years, Titian continued experimenting, particularly with his mythological paintings, which he compared to poetry. He remained competitive in style and production until he went from viral to bacterial, dying of plague complications.



CARAVAGGIO

b. Italy, 1571 – 1610

By today's standards, Caravaggio would have a medical diagnosis. A genius, he was also belligerent and homicidal. His frequent travels were due to law evasion, not wanderlust. Plague left him a young orphan; immense talent won him high society's patronage. Like his life, his paintings are passionate and bloody contrasts: light and dark, innocence and brutality, with lots of severed heads – e.g. *David with the Head of Goliath*. While killing it professionally, Caravaggio literally killed a pimp. He then made his final masterpieces as a fugitive, and died shortly after being jumped by vengeful assailants who busted his face and eyesight. Classic Caravaggio.



ARTEMISIA GENTILESCHI

b. Italy, 1593 – 1656

Artemisia Gentileschi put a crack in the Baroque ceiling by painting one, in collaboration with her artist father. Though denied important artistic education and experience on account of being female, she still pursued figure painting, inspired by works of family friend (!) Caravaggio. Her dramatic, sometimes violent works saw immediate recognition, but were then neglected until 1970s feminists stepped in. As a teenager, Gentileschi took her art instructor to trial in a high-profile rape case – she won, but not without going through hell. Some read her biography into her subsequent paintings, which often depict biblical heroines kicking ass and taking heads.



FRANCISCO GOYA

b. Spain, 1746 – 1828

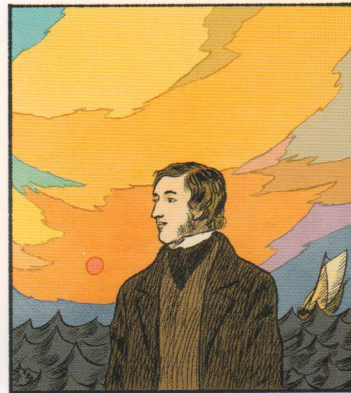
Early on, Goya played nice with the establishment, raking in commissions under two monarchs. With 'painter to the king' on his nametag, he took liberties portraying his royal clients looking less-than-airbrushed – and they liked it. But after the catastrophic years of Napoleon's invasion, and the subsequent rise to power of an Inquisition-friendly court in 1814, Goya found himself at odds with his royal employers. During this time, a serious illness also left him largely deaf. Goya's work became grotesque and misanthropic. His startling 80+ prints called *The Disasters of War*, completed between 1810 and 1820, are violent documents of human atrocities. The dark frescoes he painted in his home mirror his dejected spirit. Sick and tired of feeling sick and tired, Goya went into voluntary exile in 1824 and lived out his misery in France.



WILLIAM BLAKE

b. United Kingdom, 1757 – 1827

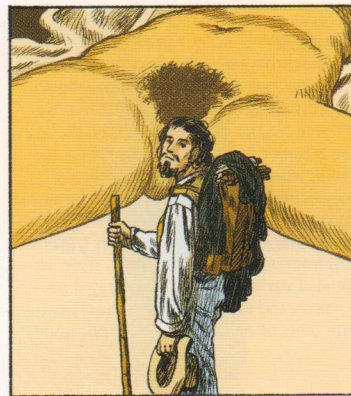
When young William Blake saw visions of angels and biblical figures, loved ones suggested he unsee them – damn weirdo. But those visions were Blake's inspiration: religious, historical and imaginary spirits posed for him, he said. Today this committed naturist would have his own fashion line, but in his own time Blake was considered a nut-job – even as he led the Romantics with his poetry, illustrations and engravings, commenting on the dichotomy of want vs. action, knowledge vs. ignorance. A religious man, Blake hated bible-waving killjoy hypocrites and believed in human equality and sexual liberation. Keep fighting the good fight, ghost of William Blake!



J.M.W. TURNER

b. United Kingdom, 1789 – 1862

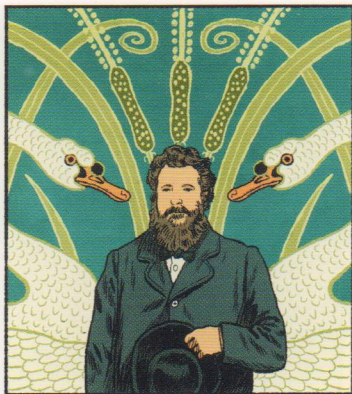
Prone to his own mood swings, William Turner painted the ups and downs of nature with staggering insight. Contemporary critics consider Turner a proto-Impressionist for his ability to direct light and animate landscapes. Through oil and watercolour, Turner found divinity in the details. He hoarded knowledge and experience from his European travels, but was a recluse back in London, where he hung out mostly with his Dad, and purportedly went into a funk every time his paintings sold. At his death, Turner bequeathed much of his extensive oeuvre to his country, both as an act of largesse and safe storage.



GUSTAVE COURBET

b. France, 1819 – 1877

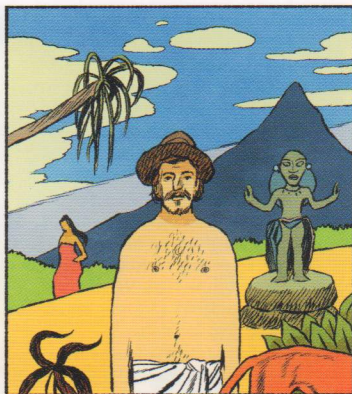
Gustave Courbet shocked the bourgeois by keeping things real. Instead of idealized or historical versions of life, he painted what was in front of him, namely everyday people (including prostitutes) and their everyday bits (including an intimate close-up of where we all come from). Famous Courbet, known for the immediacy of his aesthetic, earned himself the reputation of founding Realism and menacing society with his annoying beliefs about liberty. Held responsible for rioting Parisians' destruction of the Column in the Place Vendôme (celebrating Napoleon's career as conqueror), Courbet was jailed for six months and then fled to Switzerland to avoid more legal fees. He died prematurely, justified in his distrust of authority.



WILLIAM MORRIS

b. United Kingdom, 1834 – 1896

Director of a successful decorative arts firm, William Morris sexed up prudish Victorian interiors with his enlightened stained glass, wallpaper, furniture and tapestry designs. A trained architect, furniture designer, textile master, painter and poet, Morris also pioneered the fantasy genre in literature, fostering the development of a new strain of nerd. In his free time, Morris contemplated Marxist revolution and Socialist action; he changed his own mode of production to be more socially and environmentally just. Rightwing governments everywhere probably keep a file on him, in case of a Socialist undead uprising.



PAUL GAUGUIN

b. France, 1848 – 1903

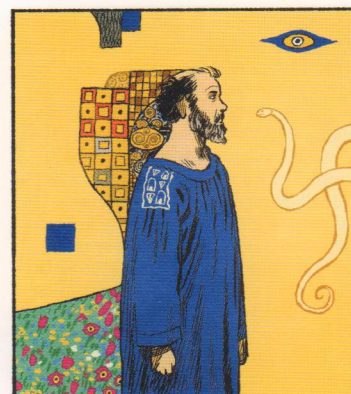
Notorious carouser Paul Gauguin once roomed with Vincent van Gogh, but after a competitive game of 'who's more intolerable?' the two broke up forever. Gauguin then threw caution (and his wife and five children) to the wind. In search of exoticism and a career makeover, he left France for Tahiti, where he settled with the native population, took young lovers for inspiration and generously spread syphilis. In the south seas, Gauguin upgraded his trademark Post-Impressionistic, 'Primitivist' style. He blended daring colours, exaggerated proportions and indulged in steamy suggestions with hints of romanticized outsider status.



VINCENT VAN GOGH

b. The Netherlands, 1853 – 1890

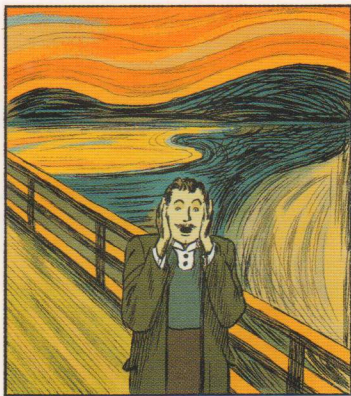
Aimless and weird, Vincent van Gogh drifted, job-hopped, found/lost God and fell in love a few times (usually unrequited) before finally devoting himself to painting. His brother Theo had the uneasy task of being Vincent's confidant, benefactor and art dealer; a complex and moving relationship captured in their exchange of letters. Battling lifelong mental despair, Vincent created some of his greatest works, such as *The Starry Night*, while institutionalized. Vincent's famous ear-related self-harm incident distracts from his emotional, enormously influential Post-Impressionism. The fact that he died a poor unknown but is among the world's most renowned artists today has inspired generations of talentless art students to keep at it.



GUSTAV KLIMT

b. Austria, 1862 – 1918

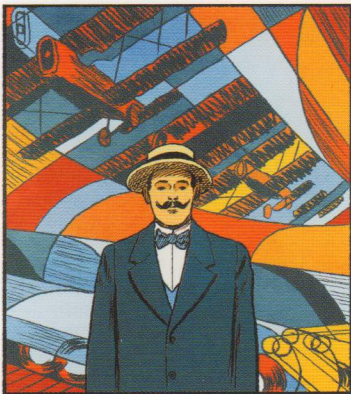
Gustav Klimt lived in glamorous Belle Epoque Vienna, but felt most at home in a loose-fitting smock and little else. A passionate man, Klimt fathered many children with many lovers, but his real babies were his astonishingly detailed and delicate paintings and murals, often of female nudes, some with incorporated gold leaf. A founder of the Vienna Secession, Klimt championed young modern artists and a break with academic conservatism. After scandals around the so-called 'pornographic' nature of his sensual works, Klimt further withdrew into productive (and reproductive) privacy, stating that to know him, one need only know his work.



EDVARD MUNCH

b. Norway, 1863 – 1944

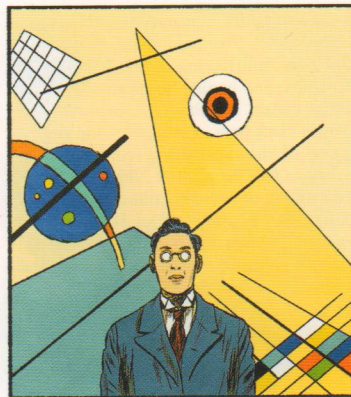
Haunted by the premature deaths of his mother and sister from tuberculosis, the religious obsessions of his father and reoccurring brushes with madness and disease, Edvard Munch poured personal pain and anxiety into his singular style of Expressionism. Munch's famous painting, *The Scream*, is available as a popular emoji today, suggesting that personal terror and stifled cries for help have never had wider circulation, despite the invention of Xanax. Ditto for Munch's other renowned works, such as *Anxiety*, *Jealousy* and *Melancholy*.



FILIPPO MARINETTI

b. Egypt, 1876 – 1944

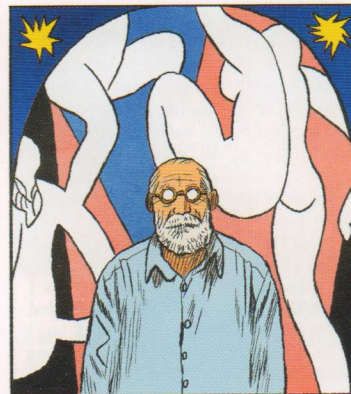
What Filippo Emilio Marinetti lacked in moral consistency, he made up for in talent. Born in Egypt to Italian parents, educated in France and Switzerland, socialized in Italy, he was a cosmopolitan who embraced rabid Nationalism and was enamoured with Mussolini's Fascism. Marinetti founded Futurism with a manifesto published in 1909, fetishizing progress, machinery, violence and warfare. He worked primarily in poetry and drama – mutinying against syntax, revolutionizing typography. In classic Marinetti style, he lambasted Hitler's inclusion of Futurism on the roster of degenerate art, responding with supposed good intentions and definite antisemitism. He was, as ever, both victim and aggressor of his muddled convictions.



WASSILY KANDINSKY

b. Russia, 1866 – 1944

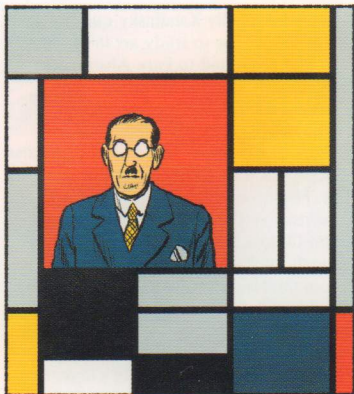
At age 30, Wassily Kandinsky quit his legal career in Moscow to study art in Munich, where he converted to Pure Abstraction – his form of spiritual liberation – and became a key member of Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider). A trained musician, Kandinsky felt colour could be as expressive as notes; his own life sounding like a sad tune. Fleeing WWI in western Europe, Kandinsky returned to Moscow at Revolution O'clock. Oops! Back to Germany to teach for Bauhaus for about a decade before the Nazis started breaking windows. Kandinsky became a French citizen on the eve of WWII, as Nazis confiscated his works and called it degenerate art. He died in Paris within months of the city's liberation from Nazi occupation.



HENRI MATISSE

b. France, 1869 – 1954

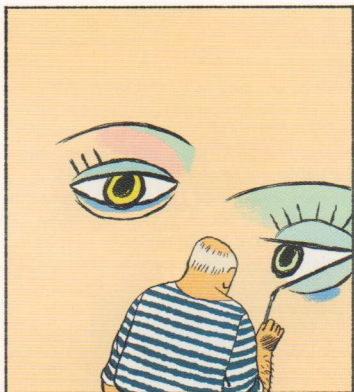
Henri Matisse's paintings and paper cutouts are distinguished by vivid colours, simple forms and bold, fluid movements – professionally, he could be a 'wild beast,' or Fauvist. Personally, however, Matisse was quite rigid. Adhering to strict working schedules, he told his fiancée (later wife) that his love for her would never match his love for art. He kept his promise. Later in life, his health weakened, but not his artistic obsession: Matisse worked in bed and slept with his materials. The artist appears in photographs and self-portraits in his signature working pajamas, sometimes painting large-scale pieces with a brush placed at the end of a very long stick.



PIET MONDRIAN

b. The Netherlands, 1872 – 1944

While waiting for humanity to advance to a higher level of consciousness, Mondrian kept busy contributing to the *De Stijl* movement and honing his technique of Neoplasticism, identified by horizontal and vertical black lines, and squares and rectangles of blue, yellow and red. Mondrian sought to free his painted subjects from the confines of representational art, and to illustrate life's basic energies. His dazzling competence in architecture and geometry, belief in the harmony of a straight line and exacting anal retentiveness, render inimitable his so-called aesthetic simplicity.



PABLO PICASSO

b. Spain, 1881 – 1973

Mr 20th Century Art himself, Pablo Picasso had his Blue and Rose Periods in turn-of-the-century Paris, then changed modern art forever by popularizing Cubism through geometric, crystalized, deconstructed paintings of friends, lovers, prostitutes and the calamities of war. With Gertrude Stein's support, he also experimented with Neoclassicism, Surrealism and sculpture. Picasso's many styles and superhuman prolificness stemmed from his belief that he'd live only as long as he worked. This belief must have had a clause about frequent adultery, as evidenced by Picasso's many tragic affairs. Today, Picasso is shorthand for what you'll see in a Modern Art Museum's permanent collection.



SONIA DELAUNAY

b. Ukraine, 1885 – 1979

Sonia Delaunay was raised in St Petersburg by educated money-bags relatives, who supported her art education in Germany and Paris. Wooed by the Parisian avant-garde, Sonia stayed in the City of Light, as revolution loomed over the Country of Potato. In Paris, Sonia married Robert Delaunay. Together, they helped develop Orphism, a Cubism offshoot defined by vivid colors and geometric shapes. The Russian Revolution left Sonia without cash-flow from her family, so she supported herself with textile, costume and fashion design in Madrid, no less experimental than her paintings. Sonia deftly showed that the applied arts are damn fine, too!



MIES VAN DER ROHE

b. Germany, 1886 – 1969

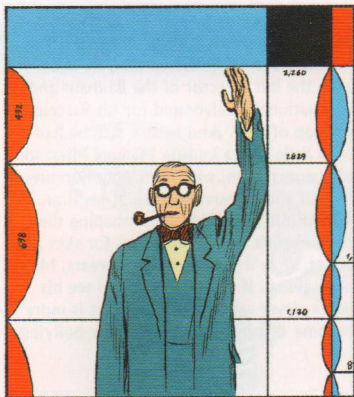
Fleeing garden-variety Third Reich intimidation, Mies van der Rohe escaped Germany for the US in 1938. Before that, he had been the last director of the Bauhaus and internationally celebrated for his Barcelona Pavilion of 1929. And before *that*, he had been little Maria Ludwig Michael Mies, son of a stonemason, wishing to totally reinvent himself and the architecture of his time. He did just so in Chicago, reshaping the city's skyline in steel and glass (or skin and bones, as he'd say). In his later years, Mies' went global. If only he'd lived to see his many clever aphorisms – i.e. 'Less is more' – become #hashtags used for cyber-bullying.



MARCEL DUCHAMP

b. France, 1887 – 1968

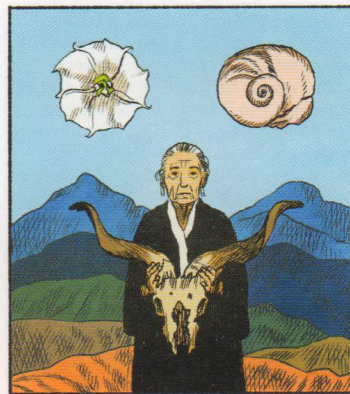
The Granddaddy of Dada, and precursor to Pop, Marcel Duchamp wrote the fuzzy blueprint for conceptual art and gifted art history the 'readymade': a mass-produced object elevated to art status by the baptizing artist. An example is his famous *Fountain*, née a common urinal. Wordplay and irony were God to Duchamp, who caused consternation early in his career with *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*, a mechanical painting of the eponymous action, with nary a nude bit distinguishable! Recognition only found Duchamp in his twilight years, but his posthumous legacy is having a heyday.



LE CORBUSIER

b. Switzerland, 1887 – 1965

Young Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris rebranded himself Le Corbusier, or Corbu, and boasted that his architecture could stave off class revolution. With pioneering use of concrete, Corbu created high-density complexes designed as micro-cities for inhabitants, such as *Cité radieuse* (Radiant City) in Marseille, with public facilities integrated among residences. In his lifetime, Corbu realized masterful private villas and churches, but what he proselytized and extensively wrote about was a New Urbanism. Today, some consider Corbu a genius; others, an ideologue dabbling in fascism. Corbu's rebelliousness is underscored by his death: the result of going skinny-dipping with a bad heart, against his doctor's orders.



GEORGIA O'KEEFFE

b. United States, 1887 – 1986

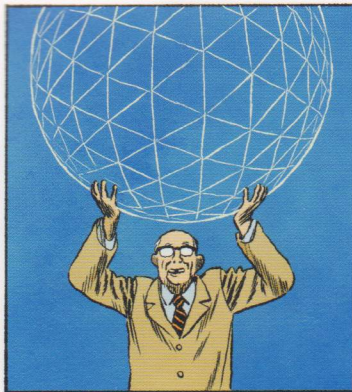
Georgia O'Keeffe's contemporaries, influenced by Freud, viewed her flower paintings through a gynaecological lens. O'Keeffe still rolls in her grave when you compare her orchid to a vagina, disregarding her aesthetic range. The first woman to have a solo retrospective at New York's Museum of Modern Art, O'Keeffe remains one of 20th-century art's most significant artists, especially for her paintings of magnified desert vegetation. Her turbulent relationship with photographer Alfred Stieglitz resulted in archives of photos of the introverted O'Keeffe, who moved to New Mexico in the second half of her life with the presumed motto of 'painting – not people'.



JEAN COCTEAU

b. France, 1889 – 1963

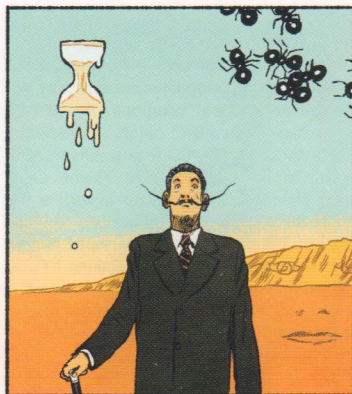
Avant-garde playwright, poet and director Jean Cocteau loitered with the creative elites of early 20th-century Paris, earning a reputation of being fabulous company. He collaborated with composers and artists, and self-medicated with opium as needed. Throughout his life, Cocteau was haunted by his father's suicide in 1898. Themes on a sad childhood appear in works such as his novel *Les Enfants Terribles*, about two troubled siblings. His play, *La Voix humaine* (the human voice), involves one woman speaking by phone to her soon-to-be ex, who is never heard. Along with Picasso, loneliness and miscommunication were also Cocteau's lifelong friends.



BUCKMINSTER FULLER

b. United States, 1895 – 1983

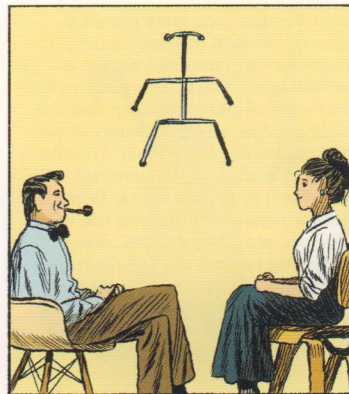
One biography isn't enough for Bucky Fuller: the great thinker and inventor lived many lives under many titles. Fuller described hitting rock-bottom and landing on an epiphany to help better humanity. At his death, he had over 2,000 patents to his name, most notably the Geodesic Dome – a sustainable housing solution for growing populations. His famous Fullerisms include *Synergetics*, the study of transforming systems, and *Spaceship Earth*, the idea that as crew members aboard Earth, we must collaborate harmoniously to protect our finite resources. Fuller's theory that frequent timed napping could replace traditional sleeping did not take into account peoples' preference for sleep over productivity.



SALVADOR DALÍ

b. Spain, 1904 – 1989

Salvador Dali was a technical wunderkind and relentless bombast who lead the European Surrealist movement moustache-first. Dali scavenged his innermost hallucinations to create his frighteningly detailed paintings of subconscious imagery and wild experimentation in film. He was deeply inspired by discoveries made in his lifetime, from Freud to quantum mechanics. When not working, Dali was either apologizing for his publicity stunts, apologizing for apologizing or refusing to apologize. *The Persistence of Memory*, Dali's most cited painting, depicts a desert of melting clocks all telling a different time. Government officials use this painting to train Undercover Narcs to chill during a bad trip.



CHARLES & RAY EAMES

United States, 1907 – 1978 & 1912 – 1988

Charles and Ray were the power-couple of midcentury architecture, furniture and industrial design. In the 1940s, they put experimentation toward the war effort, supplying soldiers with groundbreaking items such as moulded plywood leg splints. They later applied such new technology toward their now-legendary furniture. The Eames' were joy-pushers, emphasizing the importance of play and colour in otherwise 'serious' modern design. Their experimental, very lived-in home and studio, now a California landmark, embodied their ethos of pleasure with a purpose.



FRIDA KAHLO

b. Mexico, 1907 – 1954

Central to Frida Kahlo's vibrant work is her dramatic physical appearance. With use of Mexican folklore and symbolism, many of her intimate paintings address intensely personal experience: her troubled relationship with artist Diego Rivera, her revolutionary politics and her wounded body – injured by polio in childhood, a traffic accident in young adulthood and multiple surgeries thereafter. Posthumously, Kahlo became a household name and a contested feminist icon. Her striking image lives on through biopics, Internet homages, embarrassing murals as well as rigorous museum programmes.



LOUISE BOURGEOIS

b. France, 1911 – 2010

Louise Bourgeois was lucky enough to experience enough childhood trauma to influence an art career that thrived well into her 98th year on earth. Bourgeois worked in a variety of media, including sculpture and illustration, exploring themes on personal history and shitty family dynamics. Bourgeois scrutinized and subverted domesticity. She is recognized for her large-scale public sculptures of spiders (an ode to her dexterous, protective mother), among other reoccurring symbols and sexually suggestive forms. Later in life, Bourgeois was generous with her time and brutal honesty. In her New York home, she held Sunday salons for young artists, to whom she personally served their own asses for making bad art.



JACKSON POLLOCK

b. United States, 1912 – 1956

Jackson 'Action Painter' Pollock danced around his canvasses – dripping paint from brushes, pouring it from cans. But much as he hit the canvas, so he hit the bottle. Early on, Pollock's wife, artist Lee Krasner, and his benefactor Peggy Guggenheim aided his sobriety and successes. When *Life* magazine called him the best living US painter in 1949, Pollock couldn't take a compliment. Beleaguered by both haters and self-hatred, he abandoned his drip method, went black and white, stopped titling his works and numbered them instead. With Krasner out of town, Pollock drove drunk – right into a tree – seriously injuring his girlfriend and killing himself and his girlfriend's friend.



JOSEPH BEUYS

b. Germany, 1921 – 1986

Joseph Beuys claimed that as a WWII fighter bomber he crashed in the Crimean Mountains, where nomadic Tartars covered his freezing body in animal fat and felt – what would become his trademark materials. Beuys made fabricating personal history into an art-form and believed that each person is an artist, contributing to humanity's Gesamtkunstwerk (Total work of art). By the 1970s, his unorthodox approach to academics and shamanistic overtures won him dismissal from his professorship and a punch in the face from a student. An ambulance was not called until 1974, however, when it took Beuys to inhabit a room with a wild coyote, for the performance work, *I Like America and America Likes Me*.



DIANE ARBUS

b. United States, 1923 – 1971

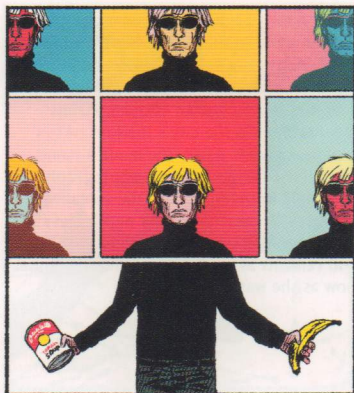
Diane Arbus began as a commercial and fashion photographer with her then-husband, Allan, but she was always more interested in the fringes. Wandering New York's morgues and forgotten corners, Arbus saw her light in the city's shadows. After separating from Allan, she made a name for herself taking head-on photographs of people in the margins – the so-called ordinary 'freaks', outsiders and society's castaways. She took her own life in 1972, and remains as controversial and influential now as she was in her lifetime.



YVES KLEIN

b. France, 1928 – 1962

Yves Klein saw depth in monochrome, and something in nothing, confronting emptiness in exhibitions such as 1958's *The Void* – a bare gallery painted white. Nude models sometimes served as Klein's paintbrushes; he'd cover bodies in paint and direct them in movements across canvasses. In 1960, Klein patented his own colour, International Klein Blue, satisfying his desire to capture the ambiguity between earth and sky. That same year, Klein did a *Leap into the Void*, a photograph of himself soaring over a quiet street, having just leapt from the top of a wall. To deal with the stress of nothing, he found his Zen through a lifelong study of judo.



ANDY WARHOL

b. United States, 1928 – 1987

For someone who believed that every person gets 15 minutes of fame, Andy Warhol took more than his share as an extraordinarily significant 20th Century Someone. What didn't of 'White Wig' do? He revolutionized use of silkscreen printing for his canvasses of Campbell's soup cans, Mao Zedongs and Marilyn Monroes. He founded The Factory, his studio and den of artistic debauchery. He briefly managed the seminal 1960s group The Velvet Underground, and even survived being shot. A sweet-tooth who ordered dessert before dinner, Warhol saturated art with Pop and fueled the love-to-hate contemporary market. Go ahead and blame Warhol for everything about present-day art. He would appreciate it.



YAYOI KUSAMA

b. Japan, 1929

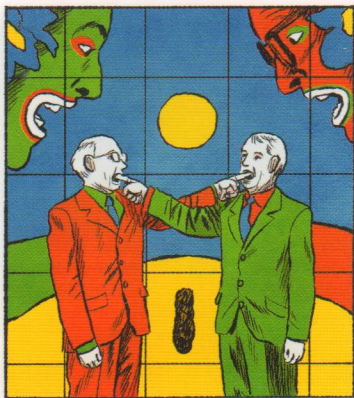
The now-octogenarian Yayoi Kusama voluntarily lives in a mental institution in Japan, where she draws upon her visions and hallucinations for inspiration. Among the reoccurring elements of Kusama's work are polka-dots, which she describes as the shape that makes us humans (composed of particles), and unites us with the Earth and Sun. Kusama's *Infinity Rooms* are mirrored artistic chambers that multiply bodies and alter perceptions. Over her long, prolific career, Kusama has led the avant-garde with bold happenings, big ideas and bright wigs.



ALIGHIERO BOETTI

b. Italy, 1940 – 1994

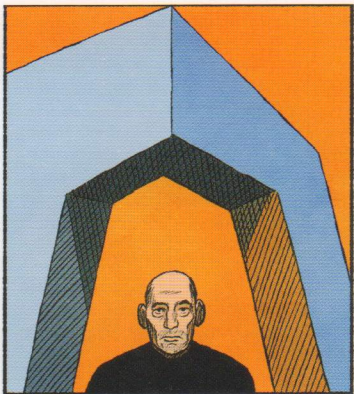
Whether stemming from intellectual scouring or simply low self-esteem, the conceptually driven work of Alighiero Boetti always questioned states of originality and wholeness. He signed many of his works Alighiero e Boetti (Alighiero AND Boetti), signaling his own duality. An ardent traveller, some of his most famous pieces are world maps that considered ever-changing geopolitics and the world's distribution of power. He collaborated with embroiderers in countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan and his art purposefully muddled the order of lazy assumptions – in language or geography – investigating new meaning and probing old habits.



GILBERT & GEORGE

b. Italy, 1943
and b. United Kingdom, 1942

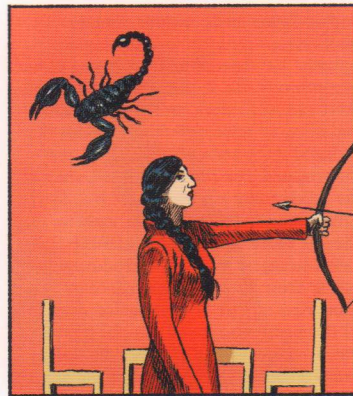
Gilbert Proesch and George Passmore have waved the banner of 'art for all!' since their collaborative debut in 1967, with works addressing sex, religion, politics and social taboos through an aesthetic of sometimes-hallucinatory Pop. Early works include 'Living Sculpture', in which Gilbert and George painted themselves metallic and walked London's streets. Today, they're known for large, grid-like paintings, and are identified both by their trademark tailored suits and their birthday suits (they're often the nude subjects of their works). Gilbert and George have described their influences as everything from humanity to universal suffering.



REM KOOLHAAS

b. The Netherlands, 1944

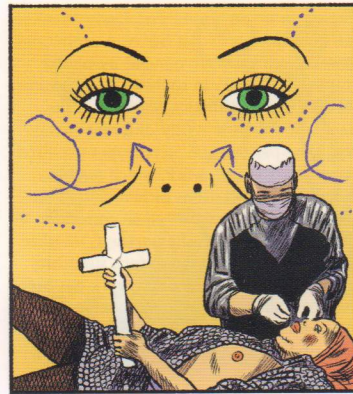
Before he was a Pritzker Prize-winning architect, Rem Koolhaas was a journalist and writer, hailed for his retroactive Manhattan manifesto, *Delirious New York* (1972). Founder of architecture firm OMA and its research branch, AMO, Rem mixes his practice with fashion, literature and media, and builds on big, controversial ideas about the modern world. With graphic designer, Bruce Mau, Koolhaas published *S,M,L,XL* in 1995, a landmark tome that blends literary genres to present OMA projects and philosophies. Koolhaas's office is like a fertility clinic for talent, having produced some of the most innovative, in-demand architects working today.



MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ

b. Yugoslavia, 1946

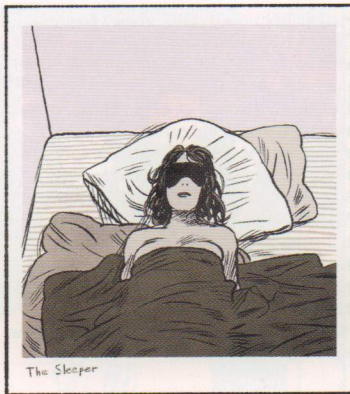
Marina Abramović, 1997 Venice Biennale Golden Lion winner, emerged in the 1970s with works in which she punished her mind and body, demonstrating composure and discipline in the face of whips, knives, flames, uppers, downers and carbon monoxide poisonings. Abramović considers energy in the absence of stimulation. For her record-breaking performance, *The Artist Is Present* at New York's MoMA, she dressed in a gown and sat for 3 months, staring deeply into the soul of each viewer who'd queued (for hours or days) for the honour. Incidentally, a man down the street from MoMA recreated the performance just now, but only the cops came.



ORLAN

b. France, 1947

Her art spans photography, sculpture and performance, but ORLAN's best known body of work is her body. ORLAN went under the knife three times in the 1990s to sculpt herself according to paragons of femininity – waking from anesthesia with the chin of Venus, for example, and the forehead of Mona Lisa. Facetiously, she appropriated the male construct of feminine beauty, and even stayed conscious for the first surgery. She later gave Madonna a spindle with some of her fat – the perks of being Madonna! Today, ORLAN is still her own test subject, but operates with digital technology rather than scalpels.



SOPHIE CALLE

b. France, 1953

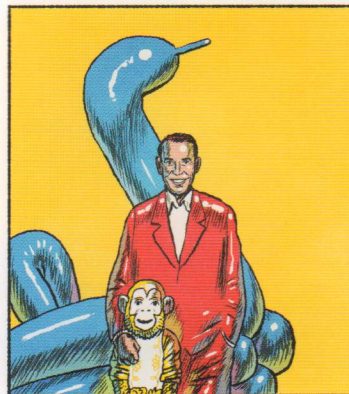
Sophie Calle's media include photography, text, video, voyeurism, oversharing and unlawful invasions of privacy. In one of her first projects, *The Sleepers*, she found twenty-three people to sleep continuously in her bed in consecutive eight-hour sessions that included them being photographed and interrogated. For *The Shadow* (1981), she had her mother hire a private detective, who surreptitiously followed Calle, unaware that she was aware. In *Address Book* (1983), Calle called strangers from a found address book, asking about its owner and publishing the transcripts as part of an imagined portrait of the man – who found out and freaked out. And for her 2007 Venice Biennale exhibition, *Take Care of Yourself*, Calle asked 107 women to interpret a break-up letter she received. The prosecution rests.



CINDY SHERMAN

b. United States, 1954

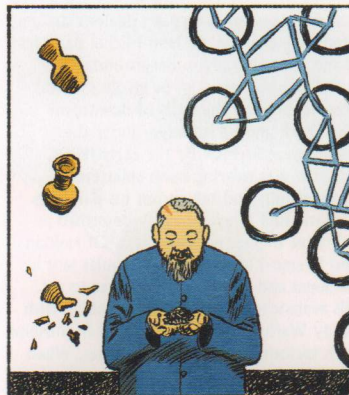
There's an urban legend that Cindy Sherman can go unrecognized at her own exhibitions, even though she's surrounded by photographs of 'herself'. In sophisticated costume, makeup and prosthetics, Sherman is the foundation for the wildly different characters, time-periods and stereotypes explored in her most known work, which tends to destabilize expectations of femininity and identity. Sherman shows equal conviction in all of the archetypes she portrays, whether the Hollywood actress, modern suburban family-woman or clown. Her work has been used to train law enforcement personnel in facial recognition in cases of clown impersonation.



JEFF KOONS

b. United States, 1955

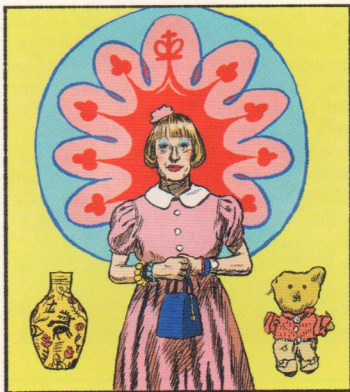
More divisive than a US presidential election, Jeff Koons is either a brilliant inquisitor of consumerist culture or, as certain critics call him, the King of Kitsch. Profoundly in tune with pop culture and commodity, Koons's work draws inspiration from Michael Jackson, balloon animals and porn, among other household topics. Like his subjects, his mixed-media output is likewise aggressively visible, whether large, inflated, colourful, shiny, X-rated or vigorously banal. With so much buzz about the enormous financial worth of his art and the position of his brow (low-, high- or medium-), Koons could be an honorary Kardashians.



AI WEIWEI

b. China, 1957

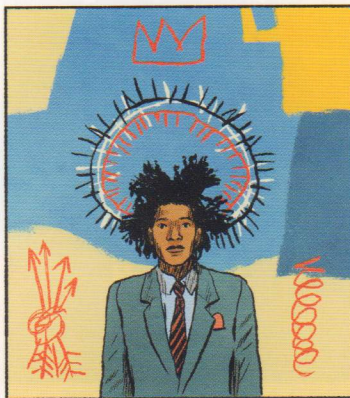
Despite big trouble with authorities, Ai Weiwei continues to work from Beijing, where his hobbies include political deviance and being interrogated. With deep roots in activism, Ai's conceptual work taps into art history, world events and occasional bouts of dark humour to address contemporary concerns about Chinese society. For his work *Fairytale*, he flew 1001 Chinese citizens to Germany's famous quinquennial *documenta* art exhibition. For *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn*, he did good on the title's promise in apparent protest against cultural repression. However, when a Florida man staged an homage protest of his own, purposefully dropping and shattering one of Ai's vases on display at a Miami museum, Ai was not flattered and offered the man no tips on resisting arrest.



GRAYSON PERRY

b. United Kingdom, 1960

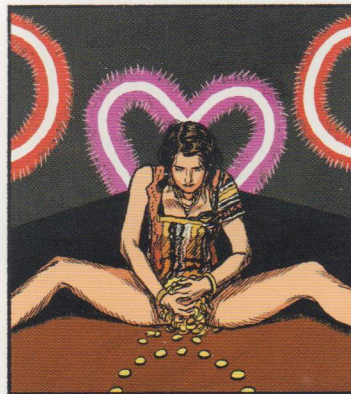
In 2003, Grayson Perry accepted the Turner Prize dressed as his female second self, Claire, and congratulated the electoral committee on finally recognizing, in his words, a 'transvestite potter'. The potter part is the tougher sell in the art world, where craft is often the backup dancer to concept. Working in deceptively traditional media such as ceramics and textiles, Perry uses techniques such as *sgraffito* and photographic transfers to address contemporary subjects, including global and domestic violence, environmental emergency, his own troubled childhood, ugly politics and all that sex stuff. His marriage to psychotherapist Philippa Perry is probably more boring than it sounds.



JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT

b. United States, 1960 – 1988

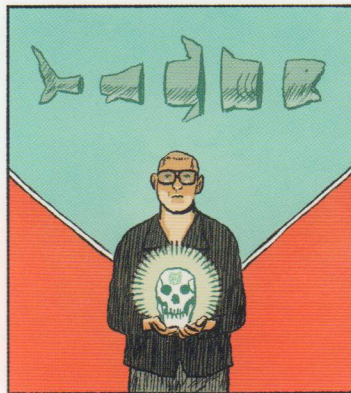
Before he became every art dealer's dream catch, the charismatic Jean-Michel Basquiat found fame literally underground. First with friends, then solo, he wrote satirical commentary on the walls of downtown New York and its subways, under the pseudonym SAMO. By the early 1980s, Basquiat was wearing paint-splattered Armani suits and selling out his paintings of distressed figures, largely described as Primitive or Neo-expressionist. Of Haitian and Puerto-Rican descent, Basquiat lent his personal and political experiences to art. His avalanche of stardom kept rolling with Andy Warhol collaborations and friendships with various Madonnas and Bowies. When Basquiat died of a heroin overdose at age 27, many argued it was actually the 1980s gallery scene that killed him.



TRACEY EMIN

b. United Kingdom, 1963

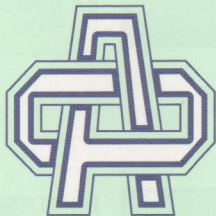
Like a good friend rolled in garbage, the work of Tracey Emin, British rep at the 2007 Venice Biennale, is both intimate and a potential biohazard. In *Everyone I've Ever Slept With 1963–95*, the viewer is welcomed into a small camping tent, in which Emin delivers on the title with those bedmates' names appliquéd to the interior walls. Her acclaimed and contested *My Bed* consists of Emin's mattress after a depressive episode, topped with stained sheets, stained panties, contraceptives, empty bottles, cigarette butts and the emotional compost that fertilized this mess. Emin's personal and confessional works are not only self-portraits, but reflections of societal taboos.



DAMIEN HIRST

b. United Kingdom, 1965

Damien 'More Money, More Problems' Hirst, adult enfant terrible, is among the most celebrated and lucrative artists of his generation, a winner of the Turner Prize and preoccupied with the subject of mortality. Aided by scientific and pharmaceutical advances, Hirst's artwork offers wry commentary on humanity's (ineffective) faith in tech and medicine to heal our existential wounds. Among Hirst's trademark flourishes are the suspension of sharks, calves, cow heads and dissected pigs in formaldehyde; the diamond encrustation of cast human skulls; and the display of so many pharmaceuticals in backlit cabinets. All roads lead to a psychological cul-de-sac.



THE ART ORACLES WERE WRITTEN BY KATYA TYLEVICH – a writer and essayist. She is Editor-at-Large for *Elephant* and a regular contributor to journals, books, monographs and exhibition catalogues on topics in art and architecture. With her brother Alexei, she founded Friend & Colleague, a platform for editions, fiction and special projects.

THE ART ORACLES WERE ILLUSTRATED BY MIKKEL SOMMER – born in 1987, Mikkel grew up in Copenhagen. He started freelancing in 2009, working in illustration, design for animation and comic books. He lives in Berlin with his wife and daughter.

None of the advice is directly quoted from the artists. But it has been inspired by them.
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