

# Art of Olive Green

## Towards Art, an Ethics & a Laugh

### Archives

#### All posts for the month August, 2011

## The Most Frightening Force Is...

Posted by *getraer* on *August 28, 2011*

Posted in: Art, Culture crit, Engaged art. Tagged: Brecht, Eric Cantor, Hurricane Irene, Mahagonny, President Obama. Leave a comment

**"It's Mahagonny again."** —FM Einheit, *Stein*

"MAHAGONNY" - ELLIOT PALAY - END OF ACT ONE HQ



8-27: 1520. As I prepare for Hurricane Irene's arrival in New York, rain alternates with a dull, sodden stillness teeming with mosquitoes. Neighbors inspect their properties and squirrel away loose backyard objects in garages and basements. We closed all the shutters in the office yesterday to keep broken glass from flying in, and at the funereal opening at the gallery last night, staff finished by lashing everything down on the roof and moving art away from the skylight and off the floor.

8-28: 100. The rain is no longer falling, but whipping against all parts of the house. Cynics on both social media and hard life (the existence equivalent of a "hard copy") think the news' storm coverage is fodder to distract folks from important issues, and to whip up consumer frenzy for staples. I'm the only person I know with 8 pounds of rice, 10 pounds of beans and 6 kinds of soup; at 2 surveyed supermarkets, the first products to disappear were beer and Entenmann's baked goods.

Seems clear who will survive, and have the energy to bail out the basement. The neighbors have been guffawing on their porch and plinking empties into a bin of bottles since midafternoon.

Thinking about disasters and human nature, I turn to art again, which lately has meant so much Bertolt Brecht. (Einstürzende



([https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/4031779\\_4920848\\_290.jpg](https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/4031779_4920848_290.jpg))  
"Best before..." you die.

Neubauten's former percussion engineer, FM Einheit, may reference this inevitability when he notes the above beside "Mr. Smith" on the Stein album.) I listened to *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* today while tying down or locking up everything in the yard today, and think how funny it is that Eric Cantor would insist that [federal emergency aid be offset by matching cuts](http://tpmdc.talkingpointsmemo.com/2011/08/cantor-spo-x-if-theres-hurricane-damage-costs-will-have-to-be-paid-for-with-spending-cuts.php) (<http://tpmdc.talkingpointsmemo.com/2011/08/cantor-spo-x-if-theres-hurricane-damage-costs-will-have-to-be-paid-for-with-spending-cuts.php>). Seeing that Ron Paul finished second behind Michele Bachmann in the Iowa Straw Poll, it really seems that we are in the land of Do As Thou Wilt; and Texas Governor Rick Perry has told residents that they should "pray (<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2011/04/23/texas-governor-asks-residents-pray-rain-amid-extreme-drought/>)" to relieve the state's drought.

In *Mahagonny*, at the end of Act One Scene 10-11, the Vegas-type gangster-founded funtown of Mahagonny is being threatened by a typhoon/hurricane. One of the "residents," Jimmy the lumberjack who made a fortune in Alaska chopping for years in the freezing wastelands, is annoyed with all the laws that make the town dull. Mahagonny's founders, themselves criminals on the lam, wanted to create a land of peace and contentment where there are niceties "a man can depend upon" (they also want it to be their predictable cash cow). These polar worldviews clash when Jimmy erupts in exasperation at the narcotizing tameness of the city, and just as he exhorts people to break the rules and think their own thoughts, a hurricane menaces Mahagonny. He explains:

*"We don't need help from hurricanes, let whirlwinds do what they can / For though they may cause their share of pain, the most frightening force is Man."*

Widow Begbick, founding grande-dame of Mahagonny, comes to see his point:

*"So do whatever you enjoy, or typhoons will do it for you / For when hurricanes start to destroy, there's nothing that we can do."*

What a parable for our times in the United States, occasionally [compared to those of Weimar Germany](http://aucontrarian.blogspot.com/2011/03/weimer-angst-and-united-states-today.html) (<http://aucontrarian.blogspot.com/2011/03/weimer-angst-and-united-states-today.html>). That was Brecht's era, one of postwar depression and reforms that did too little too slowly, resulting in a widespread discontent ripe for Nazi mining. He produced art that decried and satirized that dangerous vulnerability, which seems more a fundamental of human nature than an artifact of its time. Just juggle current U.S. politics and climate change (Hurricanes Irene and Katrina specifically) in your forethoughts as you consider the *Weltanschauungen* exhibited in the clip linked above.

## 10 (Olive) Green Tips

Posted by [getraer](#) on [August 17, 2011](#)

Posted in: Recycling, Self-Sufficiencies, Upcycling. Tagged: antibiotic resistant bacteria, cleaning, cleaning with white vinegar, coffee station, disinfectant, DIY, dryer fires, green, olive green, warm seasons. Leave a comment

Here are a 10 of the small (olive) green tips I live by. (NB: I hate the careworn word "tip" but there is no synonym!) No buying of greenwashed tomfoolery necessary.

1. If you must use **plastic sponges**, microwave them wet for 45 seconds once a week. Amazing how a thorough nuke-boil will extend their lives; even when falling apart, they'll be falling apart fresh. For extra kill, throw them in cold water while still scalding. [Sudden changes in temperature are the death of everything](https://startpage.com/do/metasearch.pl?query=%22sudden+changes+in+temperature%22+kill&cat=web&pl=chrome&language=english) (<https://startpage.com/do/metasearch.pl?query=%22sudden+changes+in+temperature%22+kill&cat=web&pl=chrome&language=english>). As they disintegrate, downgrade them by cutting off one corner (for wiping counters), then two (for wiping floors or yucky spots.) You'll forget the last time you bought sponges.
2. If you have a yard, **rinse your vegetables** outside over your plants instead of in the sink throughout the warm seasons. That's a lot of water, and you're even reusing pesticides!

3. Use **paper towels more than once**, especially if only used to dry clean hands. They dry easily in your pocket and no, they don't bleed through my clothes (at least). Don't forget them in your clothes and put them in the dryer though...dryer fires are not carbon neutral.



(<https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/imag0009.jpg>)

Matches most passenger plane interiors...and their baggage.

4. In the office, use hot water from the coffee machines and a sponge or hand-rubbing to **clean your mug/glass** whatever. Most dishes clean up great with 170 degree water. Detergents are principally surfactants, to float dirt off dishes; they don't sterilize, unless they're antibacterial. If you don't use a mug/glass/water bottle when you go to the cooler or coffee station, *why not?* Even the designs printed on paper water cups are from the 70s or 80s...that says something.

5. Don't use antibacterials like Triclosan. Everything persists in the environment, and an arms race with nature is longitudinally unwise ([http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/eid/vol7no3\\_supp/levy.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/eid/vol7no3_supp/levy.htm)). Besides, vinegar kills even antibiotic resistant bacteria (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/501694>).

6. So, you don't like cleaning with **white vinegar**. Next time you juice a lemon, dice the peel, throw it in the vinegar and let sit for a few days, then bottle for cleaning. Besides making the vinegar less acrid, citrus peel contains **d-limonene**, the active ingredient in Citra-Solv and similar cleaners (<http://www.organic-vida.com/citra-solv-natural-all-purpose-concentrate-cleanser-and-degreaser-valencia-orange-1-gallon.html>). D-limonene also kills bugs (<http://www.epa.gov/opp00001/ipm/schoolipm/chap-8.pdf>). Chop and throw in some other fragrant antibacterials from your yard, like rosemary (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17893831>).

7. **Don't leave your car idling more than 10 seconds** (<http://www.slate.com/id/2192187/>), if you must drive at all. You foul the air and feed Big Oil, and for what? Hardly a day goes by I don't see someone idling more than 10 seconds (usually the time it takes to walk by).

8. **Clean your fruit** with scalding water. This is especially easy if your workplace has a coffee machine: a quick dash of boiling water, a good rubdown, and a cold rinse to normalize temperature.

9. Someone on Seattle's AM 1090 said she drank her coffee out of **jars**, and used her socks for cozies. I've done that, but only drink espresso or Turkish coffee (better fluid/stimulus ratio): orphaned socks around a Goya olive jar hold just the right amount of that black gold. Warning: takes some self-confidence.

10. Don't throw your **apple core**, banana peel, orange rind etc. in the garbage if you're in public. It'll just go to a dump and get flattened under other waste, where the Great Disintegrators water and oxygen can't get to it. Be a future primitive and throw it in the landscaping where it will compost. Oi!

## To Give of Oneself

Posted by *getraer* on *August 9, 2011*

Posted in: Art, Engaged art, Studio, Work by Alex Féthière. Tagged: aluminum, art, charity, donate, NURTUREart, Trees for Life, Trevor Jones, volunteer. 2 Comments

I'm a bit late on this week's post because I've added another commitment to my slate: an internship at Brooklyn-based art nonprofit NURTUREart (<http://nurtureart.org/>). I first heard of them in an art magazine in a Barnes & Noble in the art desert that is Long Island, and immediately followed their Twitter feed, where I found the internship. I will be installing exhibits and editing their yearly catalogue, besides whatever else needs to be done.

Even though time is my most precious commodity, I don't feel encroached upon, which is what I feared in giving away what is essentially studio time. I have four jobs now, if you include my studio work (which I still insist gets at least four hours a day), but I'm too old to go without proper sleep and food. So I trundle my breakfast lunch and dinner around in a big Chrome bag on my Proller/Kickped, and while I watched from the fire escape today for a food delivery guy, I realized that this was a religious experience.





(<https://artoflivegreen.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/untitled-1small12.jpg>)

Just Deserts (2011)

Not in the sense of g0DD speaking to me from a burning bucket, but because I am giving my time for something I believe in; the abstract principle of Art and its redemptive/illustrative/revelatory powers. Neither is it charity. It's a literal sacrifice for a metaphorical end that I've only seen in Church or benevolent society contexts. I've done more of that this year than ever before, which is not to say a lot, but the bit I've done feels great. It makes me want to do more. I donated a dyed aluminum plate ("Just Deserts", above) to artist Trevor Jones' [Trees For Life](http://treesforlifeexhibition.blogspot.com/2011/08/alex-fethiere.html) charity exhibition (<http://treesforlifeexhibition.blogspot.com/2011/08/alex-fethiere.html>), the entire proceeds of which goes to help restore the [Caledonian Forests of Scotland](http://www.treesforlife.org.uk/) (<http://www.treesforlife.org.uk/>), and am giving my still more precious time to NURTUREart two days a week. I'm also mulling donating a piece for *their* [benefit event](http://nurtureart.org/?p=2482) (<http://nurtureart.org/?p=2482>) at the Chelsea Art Market.

In unemployment past, I've hidden in the studio and worked 16 hour days towards some process breakthrough, but unemployed friends are volunteering for [Big Brothers Big Sisters](http://www.bbbs.org/site/c.9iILI3NGKhK6F/b.5962335/k.BE16/Home.htm) (<http://www.bbbs.org/site/c.9iILI3NGKhK6F/b.5962335/k.BE16/Home.htm>) and the [Food Bank for NYC](http://foodbanknyc.org/) (<http://foodbanknyc.org/>). I wonder if I missed the point all this time, reaching my ripe-enough age without ever really having given the only value of worth to me: time. My work, too, is valuable to the extent that it is a crystallization

of my time and experiences. I've always thought giving money is too easy and almost insultingly impersonal, a casual palliative—so I've given nothing.

I'm excited to see what will come of this "volunteer" involvement, which seems especially Olive Green because the original connotation of the word, circa 1600, was "one who offers himself for military service." The only martial dimension here is the discipline it will take to make this schedule hang together.