

# Art of Olive Green

## Towards Art, an Ethics & a Laugh

### Archives

All posts for the month June, 2011

## The Rôle of Art in Chaos Pt. 3: Le Théâtre du Soleil @ Syntagma Square, Greece

Posted by *getraer* on *June 21, 2011*

Posted in: Culture crit, Engaged art. Tagged: crisis, debt, Eurozone, Greece, performance, public, Théâtre du Soleil. Leave a comment

LE THEATRE DU SOLEIL \_2 - SYNTAGMA 18 / 06 / 11



Western news media balks at honest talk about the economic catastrophe long surging and sloshing through world markets. When French theater company Le Théâtre du Soleil puts on a brief giant marionette-play about “Justice” and the economic crisis in Greece’s Syntagma Square during huge Indignados protests (<http://m.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/europe/greek-pm-vows-to-push-on-with-austerity-measures/article2066640/?service=mobile>) this past weekend, it receives no televised and little print attention in the States. It should, because in a globalized world crisis is contagious—Fukushima is another pan-national crisis being softpedaled in the U.S. (<http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/features/2011/06/201161664828302638.html>)

As a perfect modern example of art allegorizing in circumstances that stymie direct discussion, this 5-minute skit’s telegraphic brevity still channels some resonant themes:

Justice, dressed in white and uncannily bridelike, enters Greece’s Syntagma Square blinded in one eye and bloodstreaked in a way that strongly suggests stage portrayals of Oedipus Rex (witness Pasolini’s ([http://www.onaodito.com/wp-content/gallery/imagens/pasolini\\_oedipus.jpg](http://www.onaodito.com/wp-content/gallery/imagens/pasolini_oedipus.jpg)) and this 1896 theater photo (<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/69/Oedipus.jpg>)). Justice should be blind, but here is clearly blinded—but at her own hand, as Oedipus was?

Her expression is one of pain, surprise and rage; she dances briefly as introduction, and then is set upon by a horde of birds à la Hitchcock's "The Birds" (but these are black like carrion birds) while canned orchestral music rich in strings and woodwinds plays with live percussion accompaniment.

Two-sided banners in French are flourished: "Strength without Justice is tyranny—Pascal" and "Yes, I am Justice, let me speak." Behind her is a banner quoting Nobel laureate Romain Rolland: "When the law is unjust, disobedience is but the beginning of justice." She finds her footing after the bird attack with a rousing enfilade of rallying drums, and struts the square until curtain.

TdS had its genesis in the 11-million strong 1968 strike in France, which was both the largest general strike in history and the first wildcat general strike in history (<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/beginning.html>). The impetus of those revolutionary times persists because artists like TdS, and particularly founding director Ariane Mnouchkine, preserve it by connecting it to current events.

Her need to transcend the spatial and conceptual limitations of theatre architecture (<http://www.theatresatrisk.org/go/spip.php?article32>) has fostered her troupe and career development in an old ammunition factory (<http://www.hughpearman.com/articles4/theatres4.html>) (an apt metaphor in itself). Fitting, then, that she should bring performance to the public square of an embattled country and shoehorn it into the international media using cameras trained on protestors.

## Sod It.

Posted by *getraer* on *June 11, 2011*

Posted in: MadeInUSA, Self-Sufficiencies, Studio. Tagged: clogs, NAOI, Red Wing, repair, shoes, Wolverine. Leave a comment

Before you laugh thinking I'm at large with these franken-clogs on, I'm not. They're German-made NAOIs from my father, who bought them for some podiatry purpose, then tried to fob them off on me for two years. I finally accepted when I needed studio shoes after the spectacular failure of a pair of Wolverine work boots (another story), and clogs kick off so I don't track metal shavings and grease into the house. Perfect.



(<https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/imag0792.jpg>)

I think these screws held a VCR shell on.

Problem is, the exposed thread used to sew the leather upper to the rubber sole is unable to withstand molten aluminum. You can see the burnt off ends protruding vestigially. Every crouch or stub would further distend the thread. One day I found my toes ventilated, and with the tread barely worn on these clogs it would be decadent to bag them. I tried to repair some Red Wing bootsoles with a staple gun once; I'm sure you know that was silly. The glue on the soles had failed, and that was the last USA-made pair I bought—all bets are off since they've offshored.

So I tried screwing the four salvaged sheet-metal screws in, but they pulled loose after some workshop calisthenics. The point of this post is that I was oddly proud to have found a solution to this recalcitrant shoe-repair problem: a soldering iron, sometimes misdescribed as soddering (<http://ubuntuforums.org/showthread.php?t=1143624>).

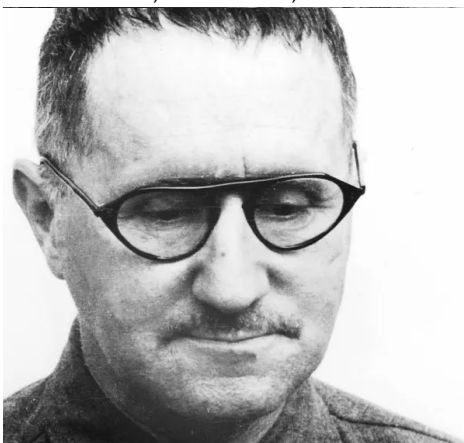
If your soles strip because of extreme use or defective manufacture (no one avoids both), drive screws into them. Don't use a drill or you'll just augur a hole into the rubber. While setting the screws, heat a soldering iron up. I used an 80 watt/900 degree one with a chisel tip, but you can probably use any model in that \$10-25 range. Lean on the screw with the hot tip for about 5-15 seconds depending on your unit; I did about 8 seconds with mine.

Not a day goes by without hunkering down and kicking things, and all four screws are still locked in. Necessity is sometimes the mother of invention, but in any event it's a mother.

## The Role of Art in Chaos Pt. 2: Brecht

Posted by [getraer](#) on [June 1, 2011](#)

Posted in: [Art](#), [Culture crit](#), [The Sides of Thoughts](#). Tagged: [art](#), [Brecht](#), [climate change](#), [Eisler](#), [engagement](#), [green](#). Leave a comment (<https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/13408837.jpg>) The work of Bertolt Brecht developed during an artistic dark age: the rise of Nazi Germany. His productions of *The Threepenny Opera* and *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* were disrupted by catcalling brownshirts, violently antagonistic to his proto-communist, Jewish, and American (especially Negro-) influences. He later described this period's work as "too bourgeois" and ultimately founded communist East Germany's Berliner Ensemble, which despite the brilliance of his work [continues to make enemies of critics](#) (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2008/may/26/dontbashbrecht>) who extrapolate some Stalinist apoloia where there is none.



Opponents of political art's positions often can't see the aesthetic merit of the work itself. Historians are not unbiased, so that politics can lead to one's near-total obliteration from the record (like Brecht's collaborator, composer Hanns Eisler). This cows artists, who make only allusive criticisms or tepid, obvious critiques.

We are once again living in hazardous times demanding more than lukewarm scolding. Where is an artistic discussion on ecopolitical remedies as dynamic as Brecht's stark sketches? Brecht was internationally persecuted for most of his career, but was never an apparatchik. Besides the ongoing revisionist assaults on his plays (continuing long after the "defeat" of communism), he was hauled before McCarthy's House Un-American Activities Committee and driven from the U.S., and Eisler was deported.

A similarly monolithic campaign against today's artists seems unnecessary because they haven't compromised Hollywood. Brecht's film adaptation of *The Threepenny Opera* was more pro-communist than the play, creating enormous studio friction. But the movie *Hangmen Also Die!* of Brecht, Eisler and Fritz Lang is irrelevant enough now to not even merit a critics' rating on [Rotten Tomatoes](#) ([http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/hangmen\\_also\\_die/](http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/hangmen_also_die/)), likely because its anti-Nazi propaganda doesn't set up communism as its opponent.

Climate change is not perceived by industry and government as the threat communism was, which itself required the Soviet Union's arsenal to lend it urgency. [Grist](#) ([grist.org](http://grist.org)) wrote an [artists' call to arms regarding climate change](#) (<http://www.grist.org/climate-change/2011-05-13-calling-all-artists-the-climate-movement-needs-you>): artists and (today) scientists are the harbingers of transformation, and their outcries unite here. We must tirelessly herald climate change until it reaches critical mass, so to speak.

Before lamenting futility, artists should remember that our work bears witness for posterity, as in this couplet from Brecht: "In the future, they won't say the times were dark! / Rather they will ask, why were their poets silent?"