

philosophy & art: a critique of culture

COMD 3504 Communication Design Theory

how does this make you feel? _____



introduction

This painting is called “ The Nihilist’s Stroke “ by Pablo Saborío. 2013.

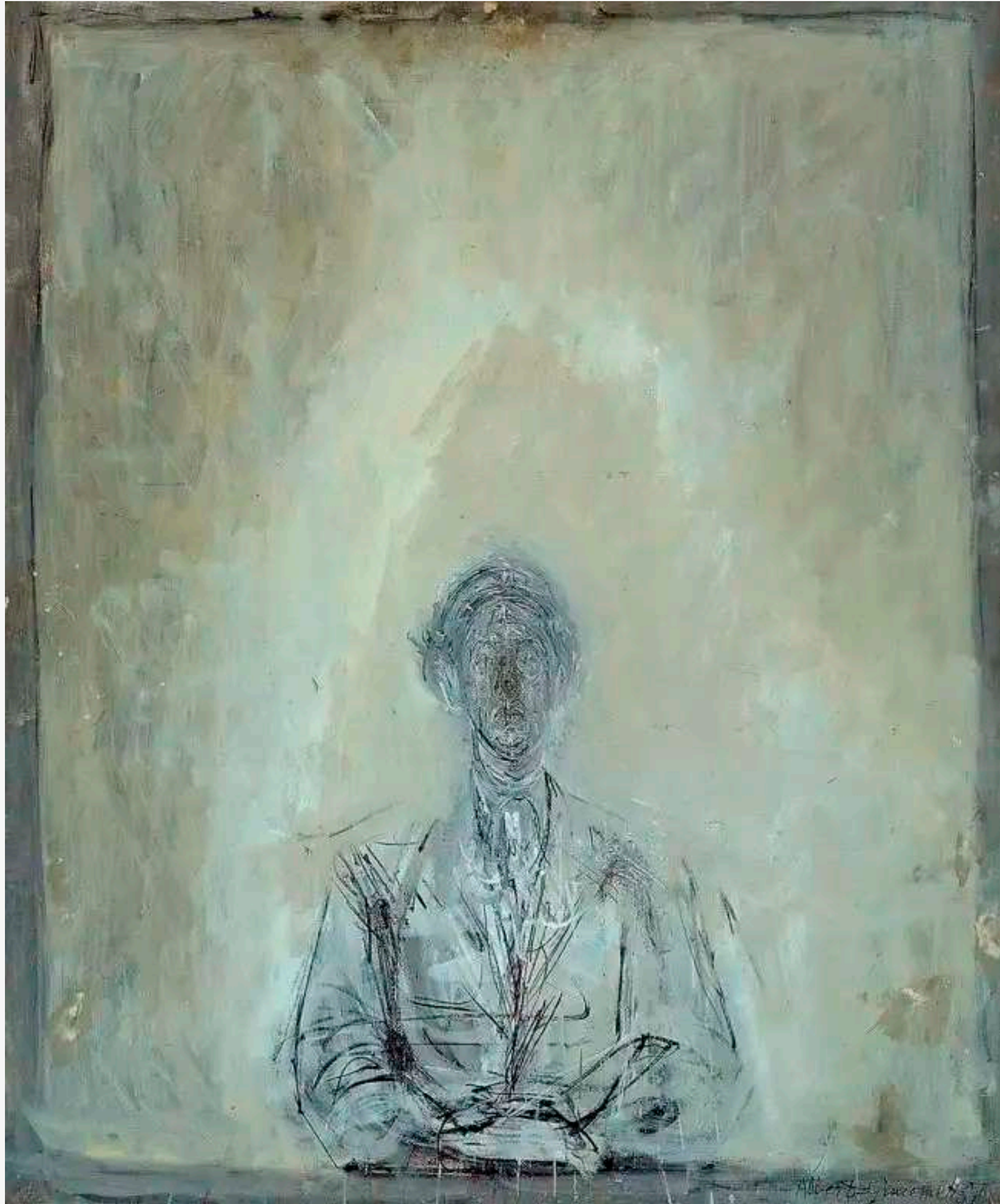
This work is part of an exhibition called “The Impossibility of Truth”.

Nihilism is a philosophical worldview that rejects meaning. It asserts that traditional values and beliefs are artificial, unfounded and that life is ultimately meaningless. It has become a pervasive and implicit sentiment felt within western society. Philosophers have always wrestled with the meaning of life. The thinkers of the Enlightenment sought to reform society solely through reason and build a system based upon indisputable, empirical evidence instead of faith. Which required the relentless interrogation of long held beliefs.

In the wake of modernity, consumerism and two world wars there has been a decline in traditional, religious values in the West, creating a generation that struggles to justify any great moral existence. “God is dead.” And without foundational and agreed upon values a society will become dispirited and vicious.

What type of art is born from a nihilistic culture?

example



Isaku Yanaihara by Alberto Giacometti. 1958. Oil on canvas.

“One of the strongest constants in Giacometti’s work is that an inability to uncover meaning is what drives him to act so insistently in deforming and reconstituting his subjects.... The artist’s failed attempts to grasp anything from a void of dread coincide with the futility of conjuring something tangible in painting.”
(Chambers)

Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966) was a Swiss sculptor and painter who’s work predominately focuses on loss. Like many artists after the atrocities of World War II, he struggled to comprehensively depict humanity.

example



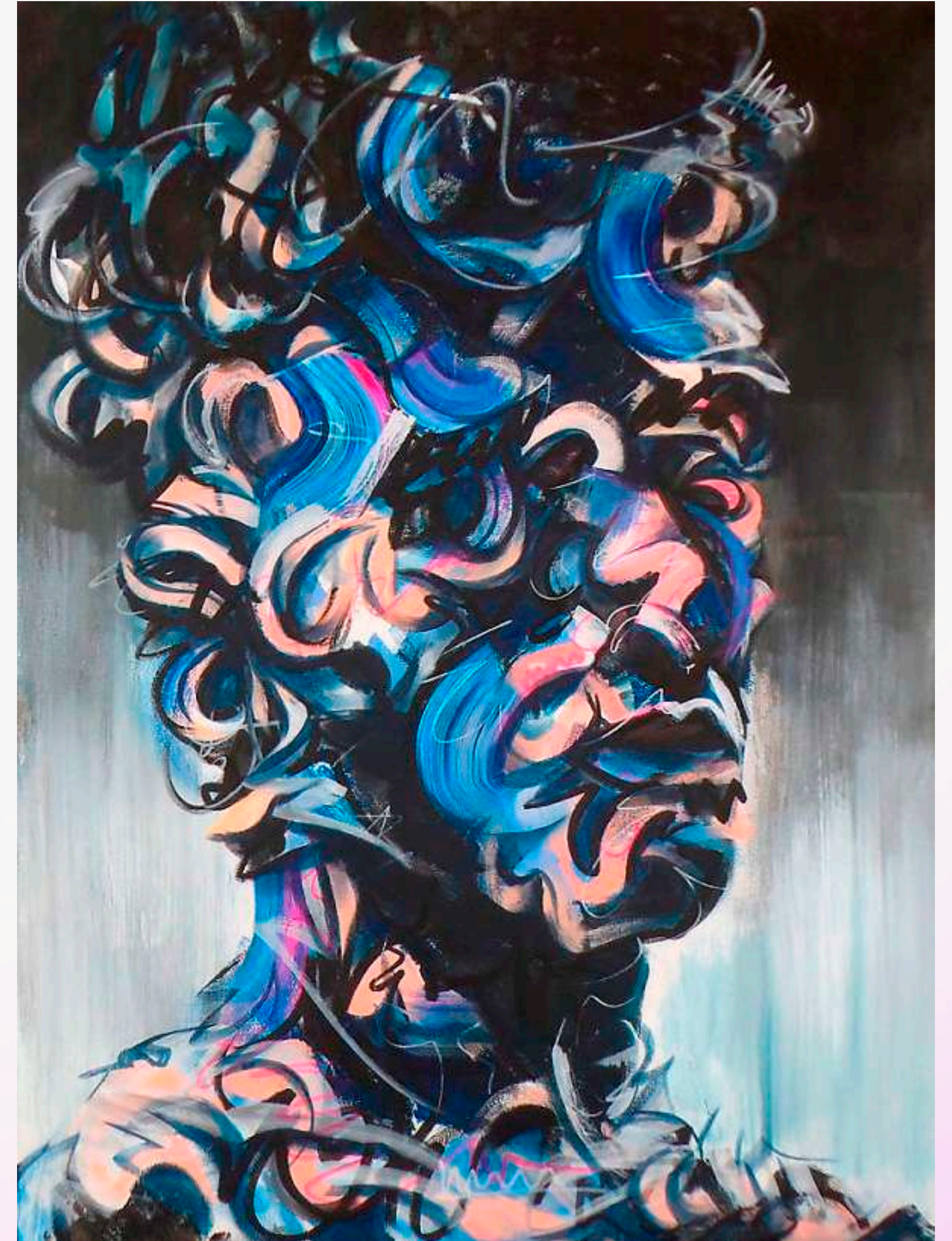
La cosa que contempla by Pablo Saborio. 2019. Acrylic on acrylic glass.



The thing that surrenders by Pablo Saborio. 2019. Acrylic on acrylic glass.

consequence

We live in an age of unprecedented access to information. Through television, the internet and social media we are constantly bombarded with information. The hashtag [#floatingrock](#) on TikTok encouraged users to express their concerns about life through a cosmic lens. Which makes them seem trivial and insignificant in the grand scheme. Why would it matter what I achieve in life if the Earth will crumble to dust and even the sun will die? Nothing matters. Some people take refuge in that.



Paintings About Overstimulation by Mathijs Vissers. 2017.

nah

I disagree with this mentality. It
abdicates a person from any
responsibility to them self or others.

cure?

“When the purpose of moral preaching and of improving man has been excluded from art, it still does not follow by any means that art is altogether purposeless, aimless, senseless — in short, l’art pour l’art, a worm chewing its own tail. ‘Rather no purpose at all than a moral purpose!’ — that is the talk of mere passion. A psychologist, on the other hand, asks: what does all art do? does it not praise? glorify?” -

~ Friedrich Nietzsche

“The role of art and artists during these turbulent times is to improve people’s character, to create better worlds, and to look at the one we know without fear. Whether or not people and the world will change for the better is a separate discussion...but if the potential is there, then we should still give it a try despite the discouraging words of our inner voices and others.” (Mei)

conclusion



The Good Samaritan by Aimé Morot. 1880. Oil on canvas.

Art has the incredible power to connect people and explore thoughts and feelings in a visceral way. I believe an artist has some responsibility onto them self to create uplifting work that celebrates life. For what else is art but the affirmation of life.

