



Written by [Benjamin Faulkner](#) on November 2, 2022

Totalitarians Versus Culture

On October 14, a pair of U.K. climate activists were arrested after throwing a can of soup on Vincent van Gogh's 1888 painting *Sunflowers*. The viral clip that emerged on social media shows the pair deface the painting, glue their hands to the wall, and break into a rehearsed rant in the style of NWO workhorse Greta Thunberg. What initially appears to be a naive act by impressionable youth in fact represents larger, more tactical aims: the organized assault on art in furtherance of totalitarianism.



Sunflowers by Vincent Willem van Gogh

Several videos appeared online depicting the attack on the artwork. One tweeted by Twitter user @FendeVilliers reveals a team of journalists kneeling in apparent foreknowledge of the act. It may not take a village to raise a child, but it apparently takes an army of middle-aged technocrats to trot out kids for a phony climate protest. Despite representing an obvious example of criminal conspiracy, the organization behind the vandalism, Just Stop Oil, functions in the open, and with minimal regard for potential repercussions.

Just Stop Oil and its teams of paid protesters are funded by the Climate Emergency Fund, a nonprofit co-founded by Aileen Getty in 2020. Getty, the granddaughter of oil tycoon Paul Getty (once held to be the world's richest man), is heavily invested in high-priced climate activism. Another co-founder, Trevor Neilson, has declared that the Climate Emergency Fund is designed to support "disruptive activists." Neilson is a prolific "green" energy entrepreneur whose relationship to alternative energy firms reveals a clear financial interest in public mobilization around the notion of a climate crisis.

Controversy arose on TikTok as users observed an elite hand at work while erroneously theorizing, "Big Oil is trying to make climate protesters look bad." What many leftist commentators miss is that the so-called "climate crisis" is itself an elite creation; temperatures may be changing incrementally (as they always have), but the push for green energy has less to do with environment, and much more with international energy hegemony, behemoth government contracts, and a guarantee that the serfdom of the future will be content to accept ever-smaller shares of the resource pie.

To achieve these ends, elites wage psychological warfare in the style of "color revolutions," a tactic the West has long used to effect regime change internationally, but that we increasingly see characteristics of in domestic social movements. Just Stop Oil is responsible for a long-running campaign of soft terror



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across the U.K., including other, less-noticed attacks on artworks, and was recently implicated in the death of two motorists, a minor news item compared to the van Gogh attack, perhaps, in an ironic twist, answering a question posed by the vandals themselves, “What is worth more: art or life?”

The inherent virality of artistic destruction is why the erasure of artwork is part of the full-spectrum culture terror that totalitarians visit upon societies they seek to dominate. Not a new phenomenon, the destruction of art by totalitarians has a long-running historical precedent, most notably in the legacy of the artistic destruction unleashed by the National Socialists in Europe. Other examples of public art destruction as a symbolic gesture were observed during the French Revolution and in the founding of the Soviet Union. More recent examples include the filmed destruction of cultural landmarks by the Islamic State and the frenzy to deface and remove landmarks in the United States following the death of George Floyd.

Not all totalitarian attacks on culture are noisy or done for propaganda purposes. Most occur in the shadows. On a recent episode of his nightly show, Tucker Carlson exposed Amazon.com pulling books they find objectionable, sometimes after counseling with the federal government. Unlike the fake narrative on the Left about “banned books,” which means removing a book from a school library — doubtless we wouldn’t want to have every book available at schools — removing a book from the largest vendor, at the behest of government no less, is in essence closer to a conventional ban.

Perhaps the arts that we lose most sneakily are those we never see in the first place — works never made, or never shown, discouraged from existing by a culture that accepts and enforces its own psychological imprisonment. The woke cancellation epidemic has most affected creative communities, resulting in the clearing out of idiosyncratic artists, and leaving in place those whose works and worldview align with that of the powerful. You will know when totalitarianism takes root by pernicious changes in a nation’s arts and letters. It is at that point that art ceases to be art, becoming merely another arm of ideological control and conquest, less about exploration and risk than couching government bromides in an art-like veneer.

Luckily, van Gogh’s masterpiece *Sunflowers* has survived. Protected beneath glass, only its frame was damaged by the soup vandals. Painted at the height of van Gogh’s spiritual anguish, the year in which he severed his own ear, *Sunflowers* represents the courage of the artist to confront demons and discover paths forward. *Sunflowers*, like all works of great beauty, represents the unbound soul, and the freedom of man transcending himself in the sublime act of creation, reaching toward the divine. They are soft targets in the attack on man’s soul by those who wish to see us afraid, weak, and uninspired.



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