

Should we
be scared of
Zuckerberg?

TALKING POINTS P21



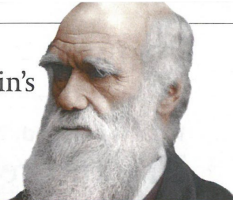
SAM CAM'S
FASHION
DISASTERS

PEOPLE P8



The secret
behind Darwin's
bushy beard

LAST WORD P52



MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

THE WEEK

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Page 4



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Exhibition of the week Revolution: Russian Art 1917-1932

Royal Academy, London W1 (020-7300 8090, www.royalacademy.org.uk). Until 17 April

The Royal Academy's survey of Russian art in the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution is an "epic" and "ambitious" undertaking, said Alastair Sooke in The Daily Telegraph. A century on from the storming of St Petersburg's Winter Palace and Lenin's seizure of power, the exhibition explores the brief period in which the Russian Revolution seemed to herald a "brave new world" for artists, ushering in a flowering of creativity that was crushed in 1932, when Stalin issued a decree imposing "Socialist Realism" – figurative propaganda – as the USSR's only acceptable



Isaak Brodsky's *V. I. Lenin and Manifestation* (1919)

artistic style. Heavy on "posters, photographs, film clips, food coupons, printed textiles and other artefacts", this show is "a history lesson first and foremost". Nevertheless, it features more than a few "mesmerising" paintings, including works by Marc Chagall, Wassily Kandinsky and Vladimir Tatlin, as well as a host of works by lesser-known artists. It's a "groundbreaking" exhibition that makes this most "tragic" and "turbulent" period of modern history feel "resonant and relevant".

The Russian avant-garde of the period included some of the most "innovative" artists of the 20th century, said Sarah Kent on TheArtsDesk.com. Figures including Kazimir Malevich and El Lissitzky "devoted their energies to promoting the Bolshevik

cause", turning their pioneering abstract styles to the service of the new regime. Unfortunately, the "incredible outpouring of creative genius" that initially followed the Revolution is "scarcely visible" amid the lesser talents on show: key works are missing, and "powerful images" by Kandinsky and Lyubov Popova seem to drown in the "sea of mediocrity" that surrounds them. Even a room devoted to Malevich is a disappointment. Elsewhere, there is a lot of "dreary" socialist realism, including portraits of Lenin and Stalin, as well as much propaganda "at

its most leaden". This may well be "the most depressing show I have ever seen".

True, the exhibition is "more intellectually fascinating than aesthetically gratifying," said Rachel Campbell-Johnston in The Times. Nevertheless, visitors will find much visual stimulation here. Highlights include Alexander Deineka's "haunting" painting, *The Defence of Petrograd* (1928), Tatlin's prototype for a glider – a "worker's flying bicycle", and a full-scale recreation of an apartment Lissitzky designed for communal living. Even "apparently insignificant" objects like a Trotsky coffee cup have an "evocative" pull. Revolution is "vivid and varied – and often viscerally moving".

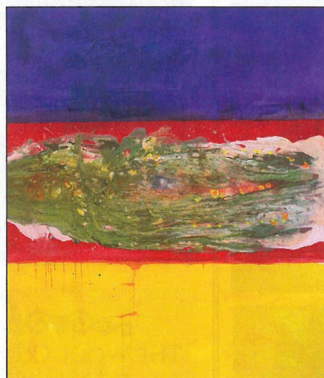
Where to buy...

The Week reviews an exhibition in a private gallery

Frank Bowling

at The Arts Club

It is one of the stranger twists of modern art history that the painter Frank Bowling has never truly become a household name. Bowling, a friend and art college contemporary of David Hockney in the 1960s, is arguably one of the best abstract painters of his generation. Yet where Hockney has a major retrospective at Tate Britain, Bowling fans must for the moment make do with this small but deeply satisfying show that covers work created throughout the last 50 years of his career. Bowling was born in Guyana, studied in London and moved to New York in 1966; the best of his paintings channel abstract expressionism, and the more serious American pop artists, to create pulsing collisions of colour that give the illusion of bottomless depth. The most



Gooding's choice (2014)
acrylic on canvas, 199.3cm x 189cm

impressive works here are a group of tall, rectangular canvases from the late 1970s, in which cascades of paint crash down into effervescent chaos at the foot of the images. Stare at them long enough, and they may appear to start vibrating. Prices on negotiation.

40 Dover Street, London W1 (020-7499 8581). Until 23 April.

Where the rainbow ends

The most striking feature of John Constable's masterpiece, *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows* (1831), is its rainbow. But according to research published last week by an art historian and a meteorologist, the feature may have



been added 15 months after the work (pictured) was first shown at the Royal Academy in May 1831, says The Sunday Times. As Amy Concannon, a curator at Tate Britain, points out, none of the reviews from 1831 mentions a rainbow, even though many dwelt on the way Constable had painted the sky. What's more, the rainbow ends just above the house of Constable's friend John Fisher, a canon of Salisbury Cathedral, who died on 25 August 1832. John Thorne, professor of meteorology at Birmingham University, speculates that in a posthumous tribute to his friend, Constable used his considerable meteorological knowledge to represent the solar geometry on the very afternoon of Fisher's death.

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