**Writing Project #3: Technology, Art & Democracy**

**Due: Friday November 4th, 2016**

**Purpose**

Writing Project 3 adds two new points of focus to our study of rhetoric and composition: paragraphs and self-directed academic research. We will become even more familiar with the function and feel of a college-level paragraph—as a single unit of argument, but also as it relates to other paragraphs as part of a sequence of argumentation. This assignment will also require you to support claims with self-directed academic research. You will have the opportunity to practice incorporating multiple sources—**at least three--**to buttress an argument about the impact of the digital revolution on contemporary art and design. Along with these new skills, we will continue to practice invention, critical reasoning, and the conceptual arrangement of ideas.

Topic

During this writing project cycle, we will consider the impact of the digital revolution on art and design over the past two decades. On the one hand, numerous innovations have made it possible for ordinary, amateur creative types to produce music, film, photography, video games, literature, etc. at unprecedented levels of both quality and quantity. But has this influx of participants crowded the field for bona fide professionals and the truly talented individuals who would have previously been more readily visible to audiences and cultural gatekeepers alike?

Together, we will explore this concern, as it has been raised in the documentary *Press Pause Play* and by various other commentators. Rosen and Price argue that technological advances have unleashed opportunities for democratizing fine art and music respectively. Rosen believes that techniques for creating high-quality replicas of noteworthy paintings should be used grant access to wider viewing publics, and Price maintains that with the decline of major record labels and traditional media outlets, “We, the masses, now have access to create, distribute, discover, promote, share and listen to any music” (1). Deresiewicz, on the other hand, raises concerns that an older, institutionally-supported model of art-making is being replaced by (self-employed) “creative entrepreneurship.” In an age where everyone can claim to be an artist, how does this affect the ways in which we make and consume art? Will a premium on creating work that succeeds as a popular commodity ultimately generate art that is more formulaic and risk-averse?

Texts to be read in class and/or for your own research as options for sources:

Benjamin, Walter. “The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproduction.”

Scott, A.O. “Better Living Through Criticism.”

Giraldi, William. (2015). “Creative Destruction: Is it Still Possible to Survive as an Artist in America?” *The New Republic.*

Timberg, Scott. *Culture Crash: The Killing of the Creative Class.*

Deresiewicz, William. (2014). “The Death of the Artist—and the Birth of the Creative Entrepreneur.” *The Atlantic*.

Price, Jeff. (2011). “The Democratization of the Music Industry.” *Huffington Post.*

Rawsthorn, Alice. (2011). “Can Anybody be a Designer?” *The New York Times*.

Rosen, Ben. (2013). “Democratizing Art.” *Huffington Post.*

House of Radon. (2012). *Press Pause Play*. <https://vimeo.com/34608191>

**Assignment**

After critically reflecting on the required texts, engaging in a process of creative invention, and conducting an independent search for additional relevant sources, answer the following in a conceptually unified, thesis-driven essay of 6-8 pages:

**To what extent does democratized culture produce “better” art?**

**And to what extent does “true talent” then suffer in this moment of cultural democratization?**

Approach this question by ***applying your reasoning to a specific case—a particular genre, scene, technique, artist/performer, or work/text.*** To avoid bland generalizations and superficial analyses, anchor your discussion in an extended and in-depth analysis of this case. As always, keep asking yourself, ***what can I add to the conversation***? Be sure to clearly articulate your distinct perspective.

**Some questions/points to consider when writing this essay:**

How are you defining art?

How are you defining “good” art vs. “bad” art?

Define the term “democratized culture.”

Consider the positives of this more accessible democratized artistic culture.

Consider the negatives.

In your essay, you need to argue how and why the positives outweigh the negatives, or vice versa. You might also consider the role of the consumer and/or audience in this argument—perhaps in this age of endless and infinite media consumption, the consumer must be more discerning to better determine what they identify as “real” or “authentic” art?