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Tolerating a No Fault Artistic Accountability

If Only Art Lovers Were as Diligent as Sports Fans

By RALPH NADER and LG WILLIAMS

Whenever I hear sports fans on talk radio or personally chat with people about sports both Spectator and participatory galleries the depth and breadth of the conversations are not surprising. As a teenager fan, I knew the batting averages of half the players in the American League. It is the American way.

This mental diligence does not carry over, by and large, into their role as Art Lovers. Compare the differences.

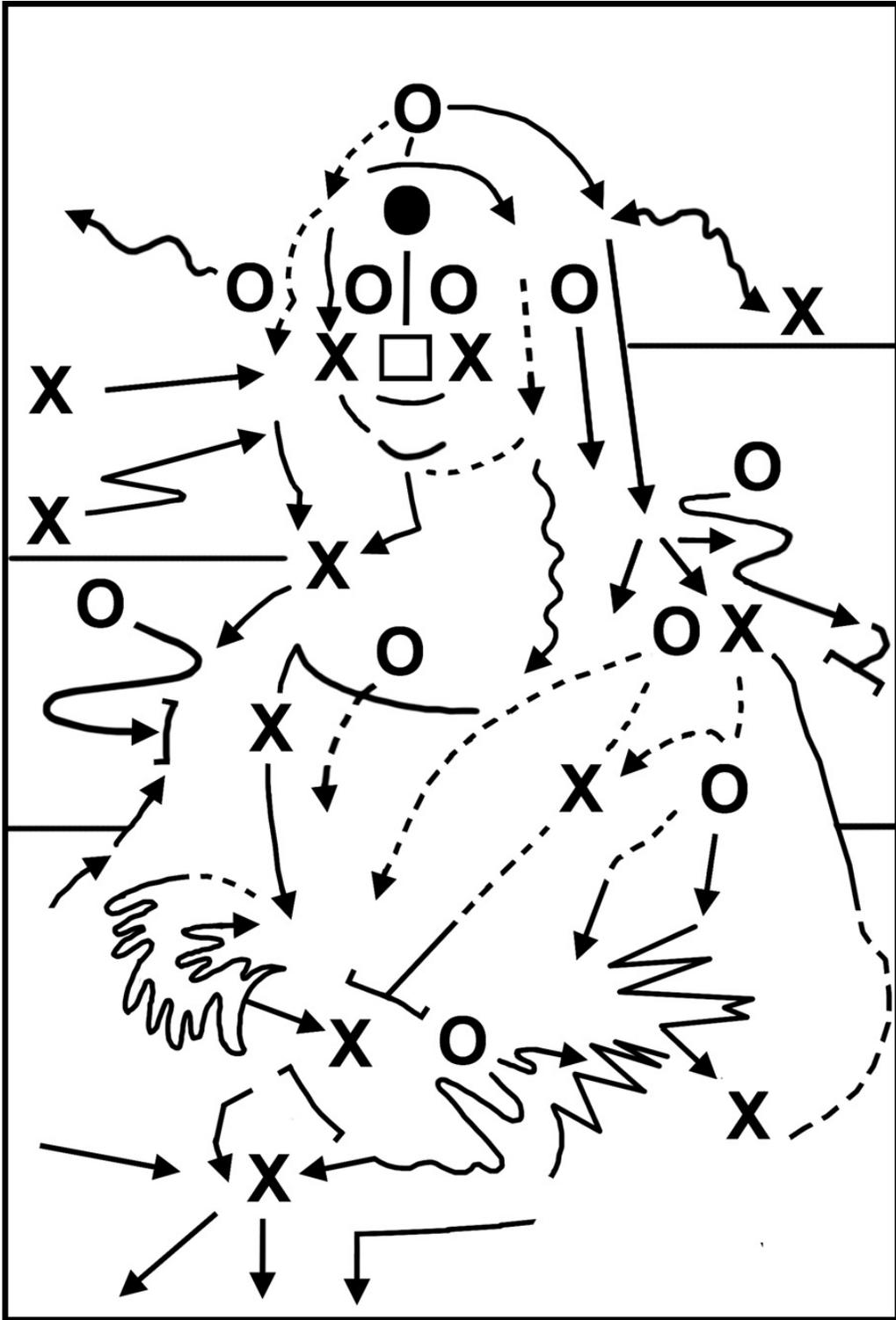
1. Sports fans do their homework. They know the statistics of the players and teams are deeply involved in analyzing strategies and tactics on the playing field. To them the playing field is a study not a hunch or knee jerk reaction. The looks, smiles, big salaries and rhetoric of the players mean nothing unless they are based on performance. Fans also look forward, thinking about foreseeing and forestalling their opposing team's adjustments and responses.

The same cannot be said about most Art Lovers. Half of them do not even know the name of their favorite artists. Half of them do not even come to the gallery on reception day to support the artist.

2. Fans hold the hierarchy responsible from the players to referees (umpires), to the coaches, managers and owners.

Art Lovers, on the other hand, have allowed top down forms of no-fault artistic accountability. This is true even when artists are not properly included or art biennials are rigged. Art Directors, Curators and Gallery Dealers are rarely held accountable for their most serious boondoggles, failures or wrongheaded art purchases. Smiles and rhetoric go a long way on the likeability index in contrast to studying their actual artistic accomplishments. Artistic accomplishment and records recede into the dark mists while the propaganda materials of the art dealers shine in the bright lights.

3. Fans analyze reasons for defeat or victory not just on what happened in the ninth inning or in the last two minutes of the final quarter. They understand that the seeds of winning or losing are planted throughout the year.



LG WILLIAMS

How To Explain Great Art in The Age of Sports (Mona Lisa)

2005, 30" x 50", Mixed Media on Canvas

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Art Lovers just look at the pictures and then move on to the next. As a result, they miss the dynamics and fail to understand what are the influential factors. Focusing on the latter has led some art lovers to conclude that Phillip Pearlstein is better than David Hollowell. What a joke!

4. Fans evaluate the dual performance of the teams offensive and defensive. They know that both who made it happen and who let it happen are keys to grasping the gallery. They know when a team beats itself.

Art Lovers almost always focus on the politics or gender of the artist -- or which art dealer proposed the purchase or exhibition. Rarely do they criticize their favorite dealer for not stopping bad artists show their bad art.

5. Fans understand that chronically losing teams need different players and managers. Beyond just booing loudly at their home team, they have many specific ideas about replacements and which positions need fresh talent.

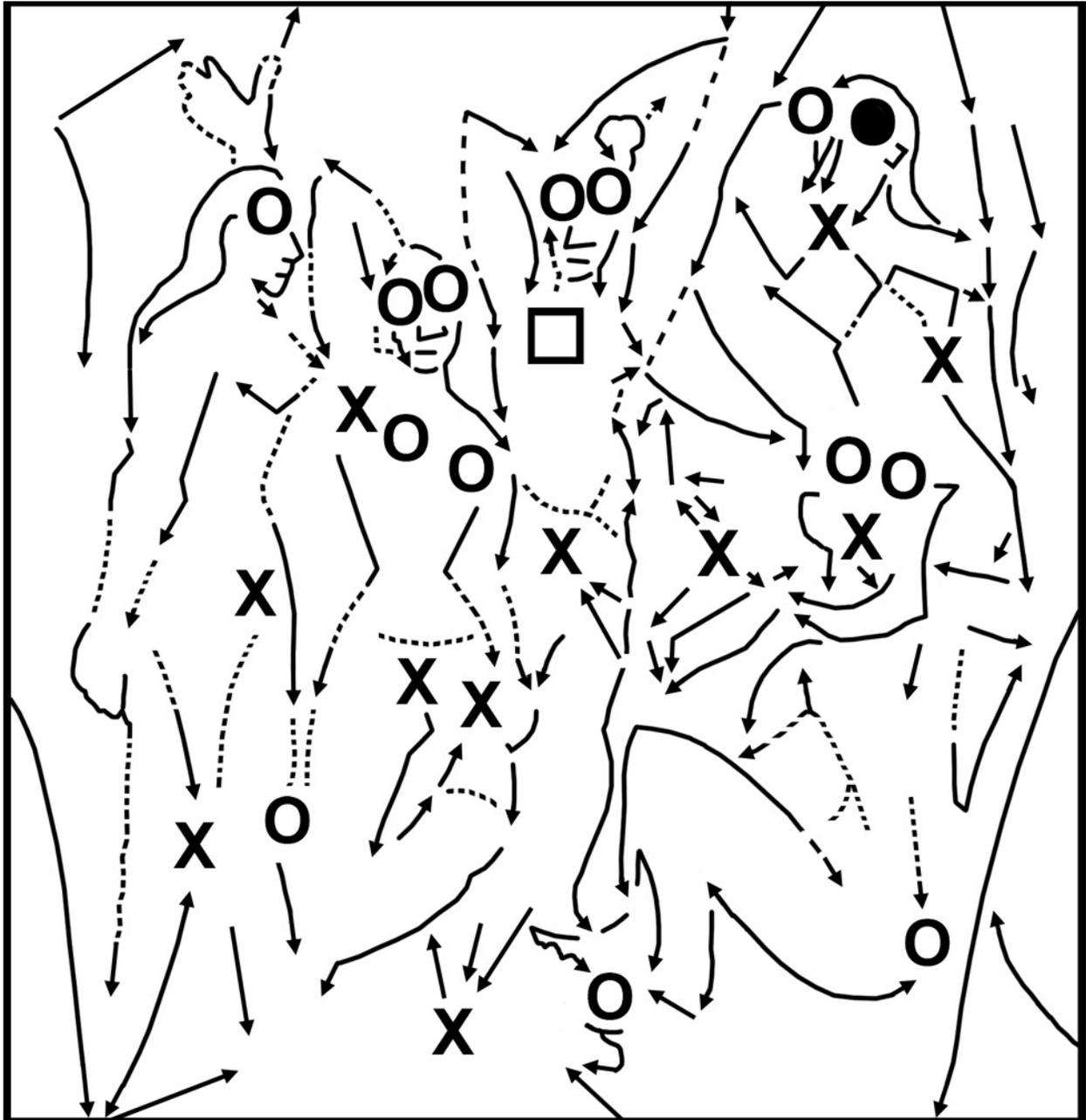
Art Lovers, many of whom are on automatic because they are hereditary Duchampian or hereditary Anti-Duchampian (Traditionalists), seem resigned to the same art year after year. After ten years of bad art Art Lovers still meekly go to the gallery's and museums sensing they are there to see the least worst choices. Instead of asking "why not the best?" Art Lovers too often appear resigned, not demanding new gallery curators, new artists and new artwork.

6. Sports fans complain loudly, and engage in robust arguments with opposing fans. They have a long memory. I know because my small Connecticut hometown was split down the middle Red Sox fans on one side and Yankee fans on the other. The Red Sox fans never let us forget that their team gave the Yankees their best early players, including Babe Ruth.

Except for one or two fervent issues, Art Lovers tend to give artists a free ride about art that may affect them adversely in their daily lives and dreams of a better art for their children. Single-issue Art Lovers are easily captured by artists who support them on some trendy issue and are allowed to escape accountability for dozens of other poor decisions.

7. Fans are never satisfied, observe Yankee fans for example, but Art Lovers settle for very little and let their expectation levels run down year by year. Their cynicism makes them say that they're not turned on by the same art year-after-year which is why art has been making them very disagreeable. And the golden rule of this brand of art becomes "he who has the gold rules."

One thing is for certain. If Art Lovers were as serious about art as they are about sports they, as taxpayers, would not be visiting museums and galleries that should be paid for by private capitalists and the wealthy art dealers.

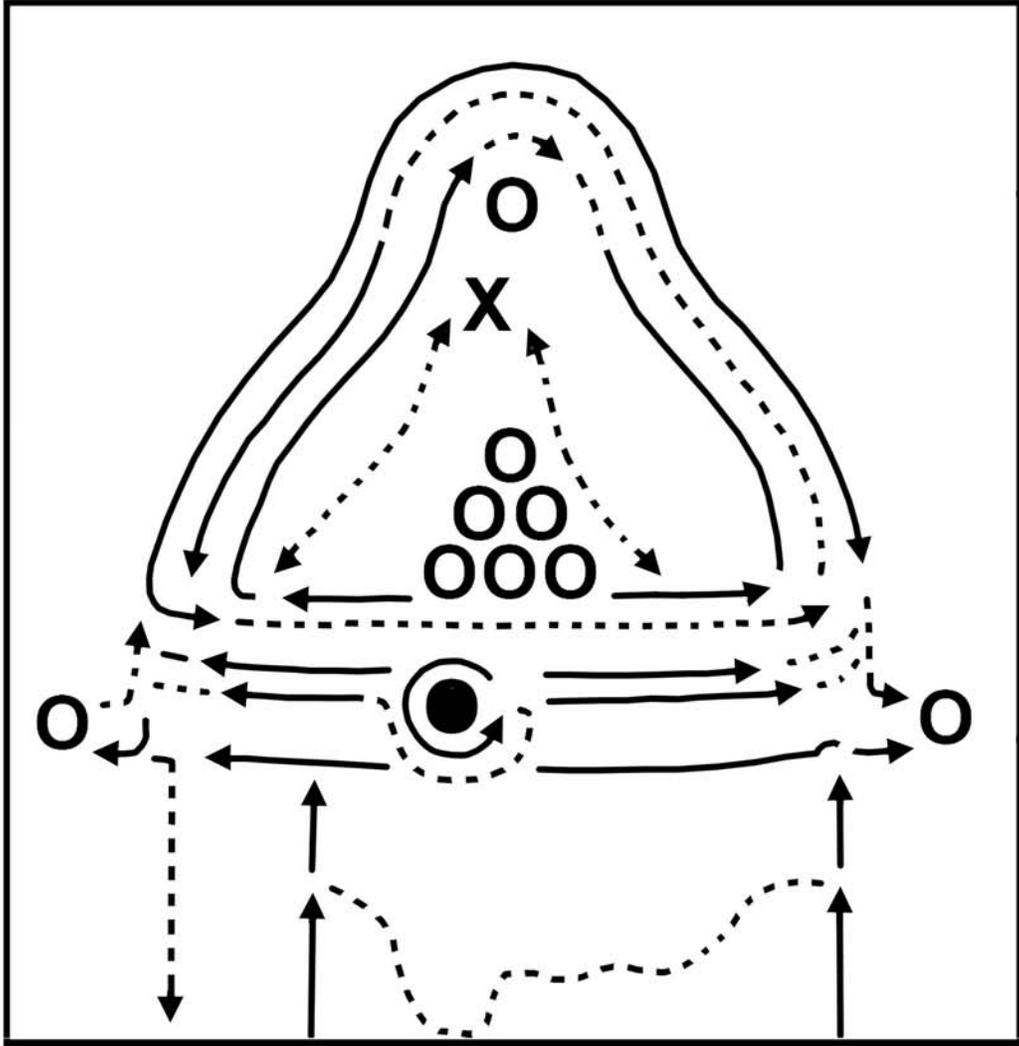


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How To Explain Great Art in The Age of Sports (Picasso)

2005, 48" x 48", Mixed Media on Canvas

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How To Explain Great Art in The Age of Sports (Duchamp)

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