

The Rules have Changed

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There is a time in our lives, usually in our twenties and thirties, when we feel in-tune with the *Zeitgeist*. A hard to define word that incorporates, style, mood, ideas, trends and attitudes of a period. We felt at one with the general assumptions of society; maybe about sexual and racial acceptance or about changing tastes in food.

Broadly, there are major shifts about once a decade as a new generation's mores and ideas become mainstream. The shift is often exemplified by changing artistic and intellectual trends taking place in a particular city.

Before WWI it was probably Vienna with Strauss waltzes and, at the other extreme, Schoenberg pioneering atonal composition, the innovative artistic styles of early expressionists such as Klimt and Egon Schiele, the modernist architecture of Adolph Loos and the philosophy of Wittgenstein. In this period Stalin, Hitler, Trotsky and Freud all spent time in Vienna.

In the twenties Paris predominated; Josephine Baker sang and the jazz age was born, cubists like Picasso, Braque rubbed shoulders with Hemingway and Gertrude Stein. Young Americans flocked to Paris to write novels, paint or just hang-out with the famous in the street cafes.

In the 1930s the heat of innovation moved to Berlin where the Bauhaus informed architecture and design. Cabaret and Dietrich led a decadent movement of sexual license until the Nazis spoil the fun. Then Leni Riefenstahl directed *The Triumph of the Will* and Albert Speer designed buildings for Hitler in the Fascist style.

The war wiped out the 1940s. The 1950s ushered in a post-war period of plain, utility design and the Vespa scooter exemplified modernism. Rome became the centre of culture, style and cinema with Cinecitta and the directors; Visconti, Bertolucci and Fellini who made such films as the iconic, *La Dolce Vita*.

The crown of the 1960s goes indisputably to London, the swinging city of The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Who, Pink Floyd and others. Carnaby Street, Twiggy, David Bailey and Mary Quant's mini skirt, dominated fashion - London was cool.

The accolade for the 1970s must go to New York, an edgy place before mayor Giuliani started his clean-up. A period when Pop Art came to the fore. The merging of fashion, celebrity and art personified by Warhol's Factory, Interview Magazine and ultimately by Studio 54 the nightclub with Halston and Bianca Jagger as its two queens.

The closer in time to the present, the more obscure the picture; the 1980s crown probably remained with New York as Wall Street, the Yuppi and greed took over with the motto, 'He who dies with the most toys wins'. Art comes to mean 'auction house' and value as much as original creation; creativity goes off-off Broadway into the Lofts of Soho and the Village.

From the 1990s onwards mass travel and the consequent rapid transmission of ideas has rendered culture worldwide; we have all become international and increasingly cast

ourselves adrift from any single country or city. Or perhaps we haven't - only time and the perspective of history will tell.

From 2,000 the internet and the smart phone have accelerated this trend.

Art has degenerated to the juvenile scribbles of Tracy Emin and the embarrassment of Damien Hist's recent mass manufactured exhibitions in Venice. Beauty in art has become a dirty word. The Zeitgeist in art is no more.
