



**Claims
Department**

This issue is a little different.

But then again, aren't they all?

I've got a trio of longer-form thoughts - one of a True Crime case that hits home for me, one of music and fashion and the reading I've been doing on those matters, and a thing about art. Well, AI art. It's weird.

I'm still drinking coffee, and whenever I finish a cup, I switch to the next one on the roster.

These are harder stories to tell short form, because they have some big ideas attached. In other words, I've been thinkin'.





Ruby Franke and Jodi Hildebrandt

This is a story that some folks knew was on the horizon.

YouTube has created several new categories of troubling people. One of those is the Mommy Vlogger. As an ideal, they're actually kind of cool. Women, and a few men, shoot videos of their every day life with their kids. Some folks follow for tips, some to remind themselves that they can get through this, and some for nefarious reasons I'll get into later. These were fed by, and in turn were fed off of, shows on channels like TLC. *John and Kate + 8* and the various Duggar family shows are all good examples.

By the way, there's really big money in doing the Mommy Vlogger thing. Like *REALLY* good money. Some of the most



subscribed to channels were Mommy Bloggers, and while their peak has passed, there's still some magic in that old YouTube they found.

So, it was about 2015 that a new fighter entered the arena - Ruby Franke.

Ruby and her husband Kevin started a channel called *8Passengers* that featured life with their seven kids. The family is of the Mormon variety, and while that alone is not a bad thing, I've known and loved many Mormons over the years (including the guy I count as the closest thing I've ever had to a hero) but there are limits. They're pretty strict member of the Latter-Day Saints, and that means they're very much into discipline and had whacky thoughts about things!

They got attention for the lifestyle they led...and for the extreme reactions they'd have towards normal things. One of the

daughters danced to Flo-Rida's *Low* at school, but the cleaned-up version. Ruby had a MASSIVE meltdown about how this was a big problem, a sign that the morals of the world had been abandoned.

Some of the more memorable stuff were the punishments they would dish out to their kids. The oldest son played a little prank on one of the youngest kids, and the response - they took away his own bed so he had to sleep on a beanbag chair. They took it away for seven months. Another was when they were having issues with their two youngest children, I believe 5 and 7. Now, these weren't really gotten into, but Franke claimed they were becoming too selfish, and had lost God in their hearts.

So they took away their Christmas. They gave their other kids presents, and the two of them had to sit by and watch.

These two kids are also a big part of the downfall of the Frankes.







The Sex Pistols, Vivienne Westwood and Some Guy Called Malcolm...

I was going to write about The Sex Pistols as my band this week.

That, it seems, got bumped for something bigger, but at the same time, completely of the same thought.

The first wave of British Punk Rock wasn't just music. It was largely a music scene, but it was an aesthetic movement as well.

When I think of 1970s Punk, I think of posters and handbills first. There's no question that the posters advertising shows in the 1970s and early 80s were absolutely iconic in their chaotic presentation. The SF scene had some of the most iconic posters, often for bands that were, sadly, terrible at the whole



music thing. CRIME was good example. They weren't a good band, but man could they put out a fantastic poster and they had a look that was easy to push out there. They played with the aesthetic really well, far better than most of the other bands at the time. The Avengers and The Nuns, SF's other great Punk bands at the time, were much better musicians, but never of the aesthetic power of CRIME.

See, I can't even spell CRIME today without capitalizing it like they did on their posters!

I'm not 100% sure whether it was the posters that influenced the zines or the zines that influenced the posters, but

there's a clear line between the two. There is no doubt when you're looking at a Punk Rock fanzines, especially those from the 1970s. Zines like *Sniffin' Glue* defined the look, and made good use of the look of the actual bands and the people who showed up at the show. These people were dressed in unique outfits, sometimes simply t-shirts that had large rips, sometimes held together by safety pins. Pierced eyebrows and noses were pretty common, and the leather jacket was the accessory that nearly everyone in the scene had. There was a higher-end concept, though, and it was through a single designer, and her mad cap husband, that the fashion impact of Punk was developed to be delivered by a band who were musically terrible (WAY worse than CRIME) but massively influential.

The designer was Vivienne Westwood.

The Mad Man? Malcolm McLaren.

The band, of course, was the Sex Pistols.







Art and The Machine

I've been going to museums again.

I've said this before, but this time, I mean it! I headed over to the Cantor Art Centre to get photos for work of an exhibit of the work of Morris Hirshfield. Afterwards, since it's just next door, I returned to view The Anderson Collection for what might be the hundredth time. It's still as fresh as it was the first time I walked up the stairs to be greeted by the massive Clyfford Still that emerged as you climbed to the top.

I remember that as one of the days that completely changed the way I viewed art presentation and collections in general.

As I've been using Midjourney to create art for this here zine, because what artist could keep up? I have learned exactly what it is about the various artists I find in the Anderson Collection and how they've affected me and my thoughts on what a painter's style is and represents, how to buckle that down into simple words, commands, directions.

There are, at minimum, nine pieces that I can point to and say they are influences on me beyond just what I appreciate about art. Three of them are in the Anderson Collection, four in SFMoMA, and the last two in MoMA...or at least on display there at the times I've visited.

The first is Wayne Thiebaud.

If Thomas Kinkaid is the Master of Light, Wayne Thiebaud is the master of Frosting.

Thiebaud died last year, he was 101.



The Grand Old Man of American Art used his paint thick, dressing the canvas like a cupcake, which is appropriate as he painted a lot of cupcakes. His painting was about the artistic within the everyday, how things like a simple bakery display were composed as thoroughly as any artist's still life set-up. This allowed him to bring the plain ol' world we see every day into the light of the gallery.

Thiebaud is texture, richness, lush. The paint is thick, and somehow still precise. There's so much control in his painting, and for ages, no AI generator could get close. Part of it is the absolute 2d nature of the systems. Part of it may be a lack of understanding of how a pile of Titanium White interacts with the light in the gallery. A while back I tried to discover a way to recreate a Thiebaud, and it never quite worked. It would get the subject matter right, the cupcakes and the candy, but it wasn't until I realized that Thiebaud's hand was only 1/2 of the equation.



The paint itself was the rest, and that's absolutely key.

My own painting uses no subject, unless one magically appears, and I let the paint do all of the work, but I always thought that it was my placing the paint and pressing it that made the piece, while it merely enabled the paint to do what paint does when placed on paper. Thiebaud got that, and while he was an incredible craftsman as well, whereas I have 0 ability, he knew that paint has built-in properties and allowed it to enact those properties to the fullest.

As AI Art generators have improved, the ways in which they are able to recreate artists of the past have improved. While

the limitations of things like faces in activity (trying to get a good action shot from most generators is difficult) it is improving. The main limitation that was holding back Thiebaud as seed for generation was the lustre and weight. For ages, nothing MidJourney (easily the most advanced public AI generator) could produce had any sort of on-canvas weight. That changed, likely about February of this year. There were, of course, other issues (and still are today) but that one allowed for Thiebaud's style to come through. While it can not, and I doubt ever will be able, to produce a convincing fake Thiebaud, the style is there.







Franke & Hildebrandt Part 2

There is a formula.

The first thing to know about MommyVlogging (or 'Family Vlogging, as some prefer) is that you must have kids. There are a few reasons for this, a couple of which are incredibly nefarious.

The first is that if it has kids, its automatically marked in the safe-for-kids area and that means maximum potential monetization. That's a well-known secret, and one that vloggers exploit constantly, and not just in the Family Vlogging space. In the Mommy Vlogging world, it's a natural, and one that allows for parents to monetize what some would call liabilities - children.

The problem here is one of consent, of course, and permanence. The things we did as kids, at least if you're GenX+ in generation, are often left behind in foggy memories and, maybe, grainy photos or films. When something goes onto YouTube, or the internet in general, it is more-or-less forever. Yes, things do disappear (I desperately want the Rabbit Quinn videos back!!!) but for the most part, they're sticky. That becomes a problem as a kid grows up and can not shake their pasts.

With Ruby Franke, that includes things like taking her daughter to buy her first bra, and teaching her to shave her legs.

Now, as topics, both of those could be instructive. Some folks need a little guidance in how to do those things most effectively, but that's not what Ruby Franke was doing. Instead, she was taking the videos as a way of monetizing what she might otherwise consider wasted moments.

Now, I hear some of you saying "isn't that what you do with your kids, Chris?"

The answer is no, and two-fold.

First, I video my kids and put them online as much for me as for others. There's little of me as a kid in the world; few photos survive and no video. I want that so much, and yeah, I take videos of my kids and put them on TikTok and once in a while on YouTube. I go back and watch these constantly, and I'm told a lot of friends and family do as well. My reach isn't that great (maybe a couple of hundred on TikTok, a little more than dozen on YouTube) and I don't feel like what I shoot will ever be embarrassing to them (and they also have fun seeing themselves online!)

Second - I'm not making a dime on social media, nor do I ever plan to.

The idea of using the kids is also meant not as aide de memoire, but as clickbait. These are the things that are usually meant to incite an individual to click, spend more time on the page, increasing the likelihood of getting paid from the interaction. That's an insidious part of the whole YouTube thing, and one that I think should be abolished. If we demonetized YouTube, this would cease to be a big deal, though we'd continue to be the product and they're reap the benefits.



We also have to admit that while there are rules for what can and can not be posted, there is no regulation, nor requirement for transparency with what the companies deal appropriate or not. That's a problem, and one that has allowed so much stuff to happen.

And part of it is a paedophile issue.

So, while you can not post child sexual content, you can post things that those beasts would appreciate. A bath time video (with the kids wearing swim suits or just shot over the rim of the tub) can get a lot of views from unsavory characters, and a lot of creators are away, perhaps not specifically, but in general, that those kinds of videos get attention that isn't normal. One accusation made against Franke is that she encouraged a practice

where a user would time stamp a moment in a video which paedos might find enticing. The stamps would then allow users to jump to that moment. Now, the owners of the channels would likely appreciate that these drove engagement, and might even think that they're so in control of their kids that they'd never be in any danger, and the money from the views would allow them better protections, right?

That, sadly, is their justification.

Ruby Franke is accused of allowing the comments to remain. There are many other vloggers in the space who did exactly the same, and there are some who also engaged in taking it a step further, actually providing imagery to those with nefarious purpose. There are accusations of children being provided in the flesh, though I'm not aware of any credible examples.

These are major issues, of course, but YouTube did deal with some of the issues. They turned off commenting on Children's videos specifically to combat the time-stamping trick. This hurt the bottom line, though few if any creators complained beyond a general cry of their income crashing because of YouTube's internal decisions. The wide-scale demonetization that happened a couple of years back hit every type of channel hard, and Family Vloggers were no exception.

There is another problem, and it is a problem in every form of content creation. There is an inherent power imbalance between the creator of the material and those that form the content, and that is especially pronounced when the creators are the parents of the talent. This can lead to abusive situations, and a few prominent creators have been accused of abusing the kids they featured. One channel, which focused on a couple who served as foster parents and regularly featured their kids doing skits and such, it turns out that the mom of the family, the driving force behind the channel, was abusing her foster kids, locking them in closets for days at a time, starving them, and even accusations of genital mutilation.

As time went by, Franke's 8passengers started worrying people. The video where Franke's son said he had been forced to sleep on the beanbag chair for seven months caused outrage. Another one that got people reporting to YouTube was when

Franke did a video reporting that her daughter's teacher called saying her daughter had forgotten her lunch. Franke said not to feed her, and that she hoped no one else shared their lunch with her, because if she went hungry, that would be what would teach her the lesson to not forget her lunch again.

These videos started to bring the wrong kind of heat, and eventually, Franke began looking for a new partner. She found one - Jodi Hildebrandt.

Several accusations of abuse were leveled against Ruby Franke. According to the neighbor, one of the kids showed up at a neighbors and looked awful. He was emaciated, had bruises, and tape on his legs. It appeared that he had been bound and not given food or water. Some reporting has that he was near-death. Authorities were contacted and found Ruby's young daughter with Hildebrandt, who had begun teaming with Franke on a new project, connecXion.

Hildebrandt had her own past and problems.







Vivienne Westwood & the Image of Punk

There are few fashion designers who are as much the definition of a sub-genre as Vivienne Westwood without actually selling a lot of the fashion stuff. It's also true that she didn't really have much to do with it, but then again, certainly did.

The fashion of Punk pretty much emerged from paying attention. Punk came about because poor kids were bored, and some kids with money were hanging out with poor kids who were bored. It wasn't unusual for a young man to rip his shirt, not have money to pay for a new one. This almost became a symbol.

These kids were bored, and one thing that wasn't too expensive was an electric guitar. The neighborhoods where these

kids tended to live were culturally blending with the increase of immigration from Jamaica. These new arrivals brought with them their music. Ska (and how often have I written about ska???) and reggae came into Britain with these immigrants, and that music started to filter through the neighborhood. Now, these weren't always easy integrations, but the music was certainly picked up by just about everyone. There is a definite influence of Reggae in particular on 1970s punk, but perhaps it was the anger and the violence, not to mention the unemployment, in these neighborhoods that helped define the music.

Malcolm McLaren tells the story of discovering the concept for what would become the British Punk fashion on his famed visit to New York to see the New York Dolls, who he would later manage. McLaren, 'haberdasher from the King's Road' in his own words, saw an early Richard Hell performance, specifically mentioning *Blank Generation*. That night, Hell had a t-shirt on, and it was torn into large pieces that he held together with safety pins. Malcolm got it, instantly he claimed, and when he returned to England, he told his wife and business partner all about it.

She was Vivienne Westwood.

Vivienne was one of the most interesting young designers working at the time. Vivienne and Malcolm had a shop, at that time called SEX. This was a fetish wear shop, lots of rubber and leather from traditional fetish wear manufacturers, but also Vivienne's own designs. She had an incredible eye. She would take Malcolm's designs and turn them into actual outfits. She also did her own designs, often of Teddy Boy style outfits. Those are the clothes that Malcolm usually wore.

Her outfits of the time were a combination of fetish and what we'd today consider Hot Topic clothing. They'd silkscreen quotes across a white button-up shirt (my fave - Be Reasonable: Demand The Impossible) and do t-shirts with quotes that would have been shocking in 1975.

She also could make the hell out of a rubber dress.

She had a clotheshorse, though. She went by Jordan, real name Pamela Rooke. She wore Vivienne's designs to shows, and worked at the shop. She became one of the most recognized people in the world of Punk, and it was her style, and the work of



Westwood's that she wore, that helped to spread the idea of what Punk fashion was. She even appeared on television with the Pistols in the famed interview where Johnny Rotten spent nearly the entire time swearing and driving censors nuts.

The Punk thing didn't last long, but Westwood was just getting started. She had her first proper collection show in 1981. It was called Pirates. It was a sensation, and today the outfits she designed influence the way that pirate-themed pop culture stuff is portrayed. The band Abney Park should probably cut her in for a few percent of their net.

Vivienne's collections over the decades got more and more impressive, and her shows featured an incredible array of expressive clothing. In a way, she was a return to the ideas of the past but with the material and cut of the present. She understood how to accentuate a body, but also how to present ideas through fashion. Some designers, Ralph Lauren and Jessica McClintock come immediately to mind, are not idea designers. They are impressive designers, but they're working not so much with the expression of idea but with the presentation of idea. They are saying that the wearer is presenting where they belong, but Vivienne Westwood's designs tend towards the concept of who the wearer is and not where they belong, but are a basis for building how they belong where they are at the moment. Her fashion parks itself and refuses to be moved. This is as much as expression of Punk Rock as you'll ever find.

Vivienne passed away in 2022 at the age of 81. Really, she had been a MainStage star for 40 years. Malcolm had died years before, but they had divorced in 1980, just before her first collection show. You might think those were connected...







Richard Diebenkorn

It took me a long time to figure out Diebenkorn.

Now I know. I wasn't smart enough.

Diebenkorn's art, especially the stuff that he did when he got back into figuration but before the Ocean Park series, always spoke of something that didn't make sense to me.

And then one day it did - he wasn't painting an image; he was creating an overlay.

I finally got it when I started digging into his figurative works and saw that many weren't just imprecise, they were far more indications of forms. They're beautiful, but they are meant as an add-on to the real world, but a display of the world itself. This

does harken back to the Impressionists, which might explain that Diebenkorn-Matisse exhibit a few years ago.

It shows in the *Ocean Park* series, which are really maps, those maps that colored the different cities slightly differently. Imagine that on top of a traditional landscape painting and you might get what I'm thinking.

AI Art gets Diebenkorn in a way that it does few other painters. You can't get a reasonable Diebenkorn, but you can get ones have the feeling that use the paint as an overlay. The one below is an excellent example. It doesn't feel like an *Ocean Park* painting, it feels like the through-clouded-glass version of Stinson Beach. That's exactly how Diebenkorn would have used his paint in this kind of work, and while they do a far less good job of his figurative pieces, it took me fiddling with Midjourney to understand all of this.





A woman with blonde, wavy hair and black-rimmed glasses is sitting at a wooden table, looking down at her smartphone. She is wearing a grey cardigan over a brown scarf. The background is a dimly lit room with framed pictures on the wall.

Franke & Hildebrandt Part 3

Jodi Hildebrandt is a piece of work.

She's been a counselor for a while, probably about 20 years, and had worked at a 'luxury addiction treatment facility', that costs at least 30,000 bucks for a month-long stay.

At least.

She worked there apparently after having been a private therapist, and at least once got her license suspended when she shared private info from her clients to Latter-Day Saint elders and folks at Brigham Young University. I can't seem to find when she was brought off of suspension, but the kerfuffle happened in 2013. She had been working as a counselor and therapists, for couples

and addiction, and had even started seeing one of the Franke kids, the oldest son who had been forced to sleep on the beanbag chair for seven months. She also saw Ruby and her husband, apparently before Ruby kicked him out (or at least that's what seems to have happened). Ruby's increasingly awful behavior basically drove everyone away, including the rest of her siblings, who were Family Vloggers themselves! Ruby was leaning pretty hard on Jodi, and joined up with her on a new YouTube channel - connecXion.

So, the channel was WAY cult-like (and when I do the full story on Teal Swan and her wretchedness, I'll point out how you get there) and used a lot of the ideas she'd picked up from addiction counseling...only ramped up.

Her main concept is distortion. She claims everyone is in distortion, and if you want to make a connection with another human being, you have to come to truth.

There's a site that covers Jodi's awfulness in-depth, but this is how they note what she considers distortion -

being addicted (spouse, work, shopping, electronic games, sleep, social media, driving, receiving compliments, exercise, eating, drugs or alcohol, sex, pornography, hobbies, entertainment. The things you can become addicted to are endless.)

- living in shame and denial
- knowing you are "not enough"
- being co-dependent in your relationships
- living in lust (being sexually attracted to your spouse)
- controlling and manipulating others

Jodi asserts everyone is in distortion and all experience the above but she can help you to overcome distortion and live in Truth.

Take a look at that list again. Those aren't normal LDS doctrinal points, though there are some certain ties. In fact, they go further and harder than any mainstream Mormon doctrine, of which there are many.

And, of course, she knows how to fix it.

Franke signed on in 2020, and they started releasing vids that brought these ideas to life.

Franke, it seems, started to spiral. People were fleeing her, though Hildebrandt was strong and true.

Its likely that the abuse got serious well before they teamed up, and the fact that Ruby's emaciated daughter was found at Jodi's house shows how deeply connected they were. It might have been the fact that Ruby had lost pretty much everyone else.

The two are being charged with aggravated child abuse. They had their first big court date postponed, there's a lot of discovery to be done on all sides and I believe the state requested more time.

I'm just gonna say it, regardless if their found guilty, the stuff we can confirm, and especially the ConneXion stuff, makes 'em a pair of dirtbags.







The Sex Pistols

You can count the number of rock acts as influential as The Sex Pistols on one hand.

Chuck Berry.

Elvis.

The Beatles.

Bob Dylan.

Madonna.

Yeah, that's about it.

Their impact-to-talent ratio is also like, wow.

They weren't good musicians.

Of course, that wasn't the point. The point was driving sales, making money, getting notice. They did. Brilliantly. They were the perfect combination of aesthetic and attitude and positioning and unabashedness. Malcolm McLaren was the brains behind the positioning of the band. Vivienne Westwood was the brains behind the aesthetic of the band. The band provided the attitude. They all kinda shared in the unabashedness.

In other words, Viv was Wozniak, Mal was Jobs, and the band was Apple.

That metaphor is pretty damned apt. Without Vivienne, you'd have the New York scene, which never broke through into the mainstream until they came up with New Wave, a softer, sleeker form that could play on the magazine racks. Without Malcolm, there would have been no outrage because no one would have seen it. Without the band, there's no one to make the most out of those great advantages.

Perfect storm.

The Sex Pistols were bad musicians, but were the perfect performers for the audiences of the time. John Lydon couldn't swing, but Johnny Rotten could perfectly scream, and in a way that would rile a crowd. Sid Vicious, whose time on the band wasn't as long as you'd think and who is so thoroughly tied to the image of the band.

But...what about the music?

Never Mind the Bollocks, here's the Sex Pistols is actually an interesting album. The music is OK, how could it be better with the musicians they had?, but the construction of the sound is perfect. The open, *Holidays in the Sun*, opens with the sound of marching, or at least something that could be interpreted as such. To me, this instantly calls to mind Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, but more importantly, the idea of military precision, conformity. Then they break into one of the most 1977 Punk songs you'll ever hear. It's likely my favorite song on the album.

What really shocked me when I re-listened to it for this piece, was how impressive the lyrics were for songs like *Bodies*. It's a song about abortion, and is usually interpreted as anti-abortion, though Lydon, as he often does, walked that back years later saying it was about pain and confusion surrounding abortions. It's an

evocative song either way, and there was certainly talented songwriting going on. The lyrics for *Liar* are also really strong. *Problems* is pretty slippery, and almost too easy to say is overly-simple, but the way that Rotten hits the lyrics out alongside the guitar really works.

There are two masterpieces on the album.
I do not say that lightly.

Anarchy in the UK is the best anthem you could write that that particular generation of English young people. It's got anger, it's got disillusionment, but most of all, it's got drive. It's also one of the most referenced bass lines in the history of Punk.

And then, there's *God Save the Queen*. The writing isn't deep, it's the typical angry punk song, but really, it could not be better performed by all involved. The guitar is great, there's a rough-hewn sort of progression that you can hear in punk songs to this day.



And you have Johnny Rotten at the absolute peak of his abilities. I'm a massive fan of Public Image Limited, but here, he gives every ounce of his ability to putting out something more than just anti-monarchist material at a scream; he's emphasizing the hopelessness of an England that holds the Queen as a godhead to make any sort of promise of a better world. It's a fascinating take, the lyrics are great, and it's the best the band performs as a band.

All in all, the Sex Pistols were a good band in every way but technical playing of their instruments. *Never Mind the Bollocks, here's the Sex Pistols* is a good album, but more importantly, it was an influential album, but that goes along with the concept of the Sex Pistols being an influential band. There are stories that every gig the Pistols played would plant the seeds for several more bands. The famed Manchester Free Trade Hall show, where the Pistols headlined, led to bands like New Order (who rose from the ashes of Joy Division, formerly Warsaw, prior to that Stiff Kittens) and the Buzzcocks, not to mention with later members of Simple Minds and Morrissey in the audience. A show in Brighton turned several local bands from rock bands to punk bands, and the entirety of French Punk Rock was kicked into high gear with a pair of Sex Pistols gigs, though the French scene actually pre-dated the British splash because bands like The Ramones had popular records over there.

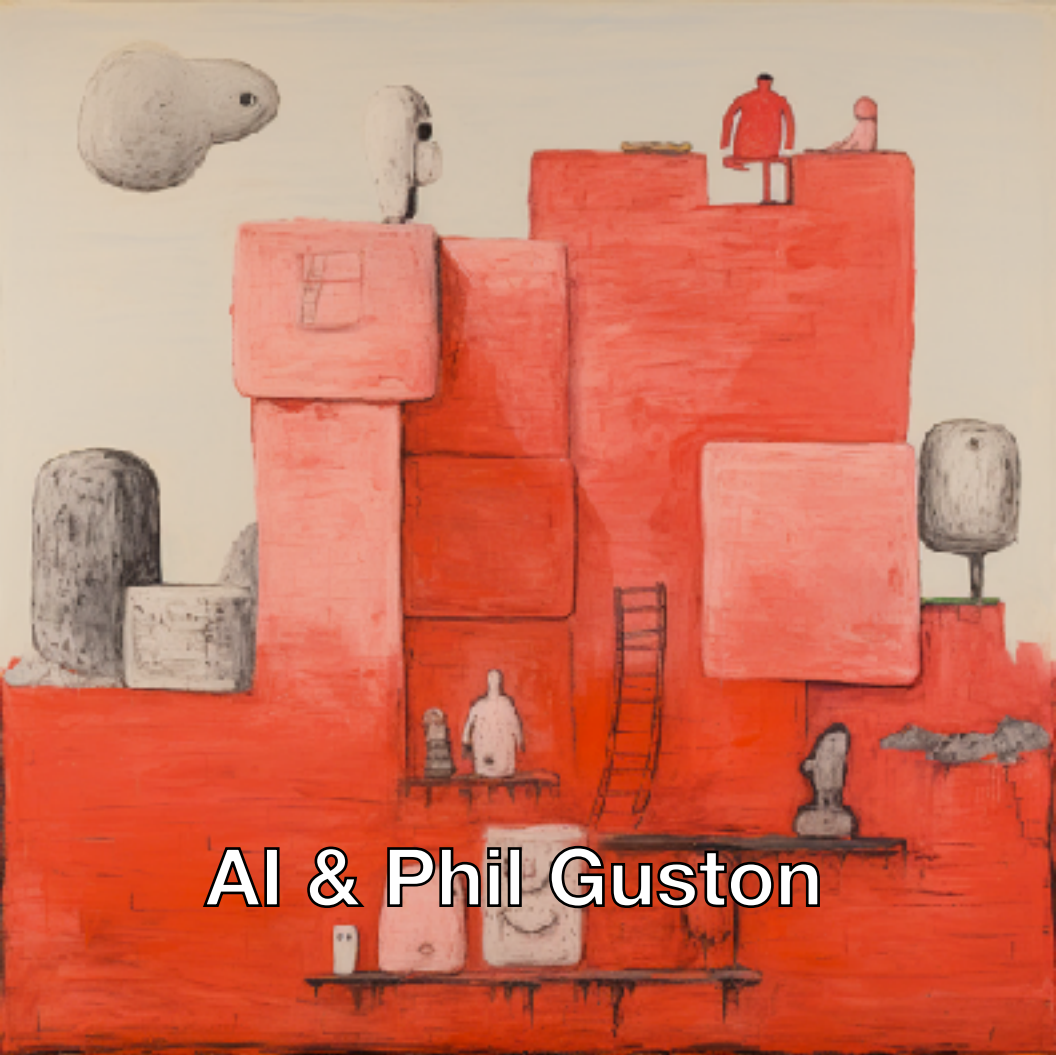
The Pistols were a bad band and an incredible happening. That made them exciting to watch. You can hear where bands like Green Day came from in some of the individual songs, and you can sure as hell hear how the lyrics inspired Rage Against the Machine and others. The Sex Pistols were a great moment, and their return as a touring band was less about the music and more about grabbing cash, and that's fine. John Lydon, contrarian ass that he is, hates everything, and what everything can be changes at every moment.

But it was the image that really lasted.

Vivienne Westwood's ideas for what a well-heeled punk might look like stuck, and you see it today both at the clubs for shows and on the runways. Malcolm showed how to sow anger and harvest attention, and we're still seeing how that plays out in the world around.

And the Sex Pistols music keeps on goin' and making kids form bands before they really understand how to play their instruments. As long as that tradition holds, we'll have the Sex Pistols to thank for the continuance of the Punk Rock species.





AI & Phil Guston

AI can not do Guston's most famous style.

After a pass through Abstract Expressionism, Guston went to a representational, and controversial, period of do cartoon-y images. While his things like jackets, meat machines, people smoking cigarettes, shoes, and ladders are often lauded, his most frequent image was a white-hooded figure reminiscent of a Ku Klux Klan member. That last one has led to questioning what he was saying, and certainly more negative attention over the last few years than positive.

He had passed through Abstract Expressionism in the 1950s before going all figurative, but looking at his AbEx stuff, I

always felt like it looked like he was doing cartoons of Abstract Expressionist paintings. Until I started playing with MidJourney, I was never quite sure if it was something I was imagining because I was so familiar with his later stuff, or if there was something really there. Once I started playing around with generating images in his style, I came to realize that it wasn't in my head, because the machine was capturing it, far better than his later figurative works, though it got all the hallmarks of the style he used, just none of the content which instantly makes you question the entire piece.

The thing is what's actually happening, and why MidJourney is so much better at doing the abstract pieces than the figurative



ones, is that Guston placed emphasis on content ALWAYS, but in the AbEx mode, that means giving clear signs of what he's doing. His brushstrokes are there, noticeable, and powerful. That aspect of a painting is easy to emulate for a machine, no more difficult than to come up with the rhythm in a generated song. The thing is Guston was working like a machine in pulling out all of the key elements of a painting and using the most simple elements of his technique to display them.

In other words, he was telling a story, and the story was always *how was this piece painted?*

Even the works that are more gestural, they are still about form, the defined fields of color that naturally coalesce become the themes, and when you're painting with an idea of telling a story, you're going to have that come through in your storytelling method of painting.

And that's what Phil Guston was doing, and it's why it all looks kinda cartoony.





Alrighty then!

That's it for this weird one. I like doing the longer form pieces in a weird way. Not sure why, but it's more fun.

And I love fun.

Next time, I know I'll be talking about wrestling, and about a couple of science fiction pieces I'm reading...well, listening to.

It's getting cooler out there now, which makes me happy. I'm doing fairly well health-wise, coming up on one year since I found out I had diabetes and my first-ever hospitalization. A few stomach problems have popped up, but as I write this, I'm waiting for a call that will get me a new program to help with getting meds and even potential housing assistance. That's helpful because money issues are always gonna make you sicker!



