Modern Art and the Death of a Culture, H. R. Rookmaaker (Inter-Varsity Press, paper, orig. 1970, reprint Crossway Books, 1994)

Professor Rookmaaker, who was chair of art history at the Free University of Amsterdam before his death in 1977, says his goal in writing this book is to "show the relationship between the great cultural revolution of our time and the general spirit of the age." (p. 9) Although he says the illustrations (mostly of paintings) are "essential to an understanding of the text" (p. 9), in this paperback they are not well reproduced and it is difficult to see the details that the author points out as meaningful.

He begins in chapter one with a few paintings from before the Enlightenment, from the later middle ages to the nineteenth century. Rookmaaker emphasizes that these paintings are not attempts to portray scenes realistically, as a camera would, but to convey a message or philosophy. For example, a painting in Roman Catholic countries, such as a Madonna, encourages Roman Catholics to revere and pray to Mary, whereas a painting in a Protestant area might teach a lesson from the Scriptures, such as a painting about the post-resurrection Walk to Emmaus.

One troublesome aspect of this book is what seems to me to be Rookmaaker's fanciful interpretation of some paintings, which he puts forth as if it is the only possible or reasonable interpretation. For example, a painting by Jan Steen entitled "St. Nicholas Eve" is a crowded indoor scene in which the central figures are a woman and a little girl. The woman is reaching out to the girl, who appears to be pulling away from her while holding what looks like an over-sized toy soldier to me. Here's what Rookmaaker says about it:

> ... [T]he mother is asking the little girl what she has got; a girl holds up a shoe with a brush her brother has been given, teasing him, while his younger brother calls his mother's attention. Near the fireplace we see an older boy holding a small child, singing a "thank-you" song together with another boy. Father or grandfather sits in the middle of the commotion enjoying the feast, while grandma in the background has something put aside for the boy that has been given the brush. Steen has understood life perfectly, the psychology of a grandmother, the commotion and differences in attitude of the members of the family. (pp. 23-25)

Well, maybe. Setting aside the possibility that the reproduction of this painting in the book obscures many details, Rookmaaker's interpretation still seems like a stretch to me. I think what he is doing is reading *into* the painting what his own imagination, based on his preconceived notions, is creating. After all, how can he possibly find in the painting the motivation of the grandmother, or what the older boy is singing, or whether he is singing at all and not just speaking?

In a later chapter, he makes a similarly fanciful interpretation of a painting by Marc entitled "Tierschicksale," about which he says, "almost the whole picture is made up of deer, running, standing, lying." (p. 136) I cannot find a single deer, or animal of any kind, in this painting and I would challenge anyone else to find the deer that Rookmaaker says are there. See also his interpretation of Picasso's "Bather," which looks to me like some kind of weird animal with two protruding tusks, but he says is a bathing girl on the beach, who is "made up of bones (for man is dead). But she still has sex. She is like a machine, a horrific machine (isn't man really a machine?). Yet she looks down on us in a superior sort of way ...." (p. 152)

However, Rookmaaker does a good job of explaining all those paintings of reclining nudes. They are not salacious pictures, but rather an allegorical vision of beauty in the figure of the mythological Venus. (See pp. 26-28) That was before the eighteenth century; after that, says Rookmaaker, the nudes were merely beautiful unclothed women. (See p. 53) Later he has an interesting and extensive discussion of nudity in art (see p. 240 et seq.), in which he comments that "though in our culture a woman is not expected to show her body without clothes, in other cultures this is quite possible without any immorality." (p. 240) I wonder if this is because he grew up in Indonesia where he might have been in contact with aboriginal cultures?

Chapter 2, "The Roots of Contemporary Culture," is for me both insightful and problematic. In the previous chapter Rookmaaker wrote, "Humanism, this basic force that emerged with the Renaissance, took its starting-point in man. It is man's insight, man's power, that would rebuild the world. At times it was non-Christian, even anti-Christian ...." (p. 27) This idea that humanism turned society in the wrong direction is much further developed in this chapter.

What I gather from Rookmaaker is that Christians themselves contributed to the rise of humanism through streams of mysticism that accompanied the Reformation and often depreciated everything outside the "spiritual." This led to a withdrawal of Christians from the arts, except from some forms of music like hymn-singing. He writes,

> We can only conclude that the Calvinistic and Puritan movement (at least from the seventeenth century on) had virtually no appreciation for the fine arts, due to a mystic influence that held that the arts were in themselves worldly, unholy and that a Christian should never participate in them. ... [T]he fact that most Christians did not take part in the arts and the general trends of culture to any extent allowed them [the arts] to become completely secular, and in the long run even contrary to Christianity. (pp. 37, 38)

As a consequence, mysticism "introduced a kind of spirituality that often kept Calvinism from realizing one of its main principles, that faith is not just a matter of 'religion', of the soul, with its salvation in heaven, but a salvation of the whole person, a way of life and thought affecting all aspects of human life." (p. 34)

Rookmaaker has a very interesting section on science, pointing out that understanding the biblical account of creation gave humans a freedom for research formerly unknown. This is because, to the heathen, whether Greek or Germanic, the gods gave order to reality, and you better not mess with it or the gods might be angry. But in coming to understand that there is one God who is not part of the cosmos but its creator, then everything is open for investigation. So Rookmaaker says "only on this basis is there freedom for science." (p. 42)

However, much of the rest of what he has to say about science seems problematic to me. He makes a distinction between "what was reasonable to what was rational." Basically, reason is compatible with Christianity; the Bible itself points to facts which, of course, are perceived by our senses and understood with our reason, or thinking-capacity. "But rationalism is something different: it means that there is nothing more in the world but what the senses can perceive and reason apprehend." (p.

44) So God is pushed out the door.

So far, so good. But Rookmaaker goes on to say, “The principle of the Enlightenment excludes the possibility of true norms or basic principles. So good and evil have to be put aside as part of real reality – they can at best be considered subjective human evaluations of behaviour.” (pp. 45-46) This leads to his conclusion that science becomes scientism, a philosophy, and scientific discoveries (at least some of them) are based on facts that are only assumed or provided by the basic assumption that all we can know is what we can perceive through our senses.

Following this line of thinking, Rookmaaker concludes that evolution is “more than just a scientific theory, but rather a philosophy with its own anti-Christian or at least non-Christian dogmas;” “love” is really only “sex;” life itself is “nothing more than biological life, the beating heart and sexual urges and quest for food and drink.” (pp. 46-47) My question is: On what basis can Christians reject the facts that do underlie modern science? Is the earth 6,000 years old, or billions of years old?

In Chapter 3, “The First Step to Modern Art,” Rookmaaker shows how God was pushed out of the picture. Humanism put the focus on man and his achievements and aspirations, not on God’s work. Rookmaaker sees the general downward trend of Christianity as taking a nose-dive in the Enlightenment, starting in the eighteenth century. To me that seems in accord with the teaching of Scripture, which certainly does not say that everything is going to just get better and better. However, I have a harder time correlating his comments about post-seventeenth century art with the Enlightenment. Probably part of that is my ignorance of art, but I still doubt some of what Rookmaaker has to say.

For example, he says that Goya, “whom many would call the first modern artist,” painted his mistress in two versions, a naked and a clothed Maya. Although she is lying on a couch, like the Venus paintings of the sixteenth century, Rookmaaker says she is not Venus, she is “simply a beautiful woman, portrayed from her head down to her feet. There can be no more Venuses, for the old ideas are dead, and Venus was killed in the eighteenth century. ... It may have been that Goya made these two companion pictures to show that Venus was dead.” (p. 53) Well, is that because Goya *said* he was painting his mistress, who had a name and a physical identity, or because Rookmaaker has imposed his judgment on the painting? In other words, does the painting itself show that it is only the representation of a particular woman and not the representation of the idea of beauty?

In a way, Rookmaaker raises this question himself. In connection with a painting entitled “Battle of the Romans and the Sabines” he says that one detail – of a Sabine woman trying to separate the two armies – showed that one aim of the painting was to express the strong contemporary desire for peace. But, says Rookmaaker, “we do not learn about this from the picture itself; we can only know about it from other sources, then see it in the picture.” (p. 58) Precisely! That comment, in my opinion, applies to many of Rookmaaker’s own pronouncements about various paintings.

Consider, for example, what he says about Manet’s famous painting of a picnic on the grass, with some men dressed and an undressed woman. Comparing this painting with Goya’s mistress paintings, Rookmaaker says “Manet *might have argued*: what man is going to paint his own mistress and so display her to the world?” (p. 61, emphasis added) So he concludes that Manet “painted a prostitute, looking at us out of the picture quite unabashed.” (p. 62) Did Manet think he was painting a

prostitute? Do those who view the painting conclude, from the painting itself, that the woman was a prostitute? Or is that a conclusion drawn from reading *into* the painting a lesson that fits a preconceived idea about that kind of painting?

Rookmaaker has a very interesting discussion of William Blake, a mystic who reacted against rationalism, but not from a Christian perspective. He was searching for spiritual and mystical freedom, but he saw it only in the full development of human impulses, without the restraint of law, religion or a moral code. (p. 63 et seq.)

As for "Christian art," Rookmaaker doesn't have much good to say about it in the aftermath of the Enlightenment. (p. 67 et seq.) He is highly critical of what Christian painters did produce, saying that they basically removed "Christ, or Mary, or other Christian themes from the picture itself; leaving them outside the picture-frame," which "is as if Christ Himself, and the reality of the things Christians believed in, were placed outside the world." (p. 70)

In fact, Rookmaaker criticizes just about everything that passes for "Christian art," the "Bible illustrations, or Sunday School pictures, or reproductions on the walls of church halls." He says Christians have not realized that they represent "so much idealization, so much of a sort of pseudo-devotional sentimentality ... that they are far from the reality the Bible talks about." And he wonders whether "the false ideas many people ... have of Christ as a sentimental, rather effeminate man, soft and 'loving', never really of this world, are the result of the preaching inherent in the pictures given to children or hanging on the wall." (p. 76) Good point.

One thing that really got my attention was Rookmaaker's statement that men in the nineteenth century "continued to look for truth, but the concept of truth itself had changed." (p. 72) This led to the following difficult-to-believe passage:

> For instance, the genealogy in Matthew 1 could never have been written by a modern historian. It would not seem to be wholly accurate historically when compared with the Old Testament. It looks wrong to modern man. But to Matthew and his contemporaries it was true – after all, he had written his Gospel to convince people of the truth of Christ! *Their truth was deeper and more comprehensive, and so more truly historical, including all the facts, than that of modern man with his limited understanding of factuality*. (p. 72, emphasis added)

So, if I believe that the earth is flat, and I write an essay supporting that view but ignoring facts showing that the earth is spherical, my truth about the earth is, or may be, deeper and more comprehensive than contrary views? That is nonsense, and could obviously undercut all Christian apologetics based on facts. How, for example, could Christians argue against the book of Mormon? It also embodies a non-sequitur. Matthew's motivation is irrelevant to the truth of his Gospel. The fact that he wrote his Gospel "to convince people of the truth of Christ" explains his objective, but the success of his objective depends on what his Gospel says, not why he wrote it.

One more rather remarkable point in this chapter. Rookmaaker has a lot to say about Christian attitudes toward sex. Essentially he says that Christians became Victorian prudes, and went overboard

with the idea of romantic love, "a love pure and beautiful and eternal, virgin-white and virtually sexless." How different from pre-Victorian times! He says that around 1600 people had many words for sexual intercourse, but today we can only say that "people go to bed with each other or else we have to use more scientific (and therefor neutral) words." (p. 77) Or vulgarities. This seems true to me, to some extent. This is his blunt conclusion: "Romantic love is a lie, and has proved a great deceiver. Biblical marriage is designed for men and women as they really are." (p. 77)

In Chapter 4, "The Second Step to Modern Art," Rookmaaker discusses the impressionists, like Monet and Renoir. He sees a lot more in their paintings than I do, and I believe that is mostly because he is much more knowledgeable. He says, for example, that Monet was consistent in his impressionist vision, right to the end of his days, but Renoir turned back and attempted a "pre-impressionist style" because he "did not want to lose hold of reality. Because he was too weak spiritually" (p. 87) And then Rookmaaker says this about Renoir:

> Yet we must understand that his weakness is his greatness. Surely it is greatness if a man stops short of the ultimate consequences of what he is doing when he sees that something of vital importance will be lost; if he takes the risk of losing the strength and consistency of his work in order not to lose something of such importance to man as reality itself? His weakness was his greatness, his greatness his weakness. (p. 87)

At first I thought, this makes no sense at all. But than I realized that the principle he is stating (regardless of whether this was true of Renoir) is sound. Cf. Lk. 9:25 "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?"

The next development was "expressionism," exemplified by Gauguin, Seurat, Degas and van Gogh, who were all quite different but whose goal, according to Rookmaaker, was "overcoming the crisis of the impressionists." (p. 92) Rookmaaker says that van Gogh was "longing to bring joy to ordinary people, for he was strongly attracted to the ideals of socialism, as were most of the impressionist and post-impressionist painters. In this their politics were consistent with the aims of their art: both left-wing socialism and their art were developing on the foundation of the basic ideas of the Enlightenment and, in the case of politics, from the ideas of the French Revolution." (p. 94)

In some ways, explains Rookmaaker, Cézanne was the greatest of the post-impressionists. He "wanted, as it were, two things at once: to paint only what the eye sees, and yet to paint the structure of reality as understood by human rationality." (p. 95) So he would paint a realistic scene, but felt free to move things around in order to make the structure clear.

Rookmaaker also discusses a "kind of mystic-romantic art" called art nouveau that developed in England. Stemming from the influence of Blake and epitomized by Rossetti, this kind of art featured wavy lines and emphasized imagination and poetic subject-matter. Ultimately, however, it affected posters, graphic design, fabric design and interior decoration more than gallery art. (pp. 97-101)

Chapter 5, "The Last Steps to Modern Art," traces what might be called the descent from meaning to absurdity. Expressionism, exemplified by Matisse and some German artists, had some things in common with art nouveau – the flat, non-naturalistic, decorative patterns, the concern for the 'spirit-

ual', the imaginative, and the move away from a naturalistic treatment of a simple subject." (p. 103) According to Rookmaaker, Matisse had the urge to create paintings that show "a subjective emotion in the face of reality rather than a naturalistic copy." (p. 105) In reaction to nineteenth-century art, they were looking for the universal rather than the sense-perceived specific.

It was all downhill from there, according to Rookmaaker. The next development was abstract art, "an art that was truly and solely art, and at the same time spiritual, conceptual and 'absolute'." (p. 111) But the abstract artists tried to do this by getting rid of all traditional ways of thinking, including, of course, "any possibility of a transcendental, truly living God." Rookmaaker says this was doomed to fail.

So it led to cubism, which in its early stages still reflected a bit of naturalism – that is, figures could be recognized as human even if they were rendered in a geometric, stylized way. But according to Rookmaaker, Picasso must have realized that in the quest for the universal, the general structure of things, he and the other cubists had lost the personal, the human, what was real. They moved toward the absurd, resulting in paintings that were in some ways more realistic, more recognizable, but the reality was more free and whimsical; i.e., it did not make sense. In Duchamp's famous "Nude Descending a Staircase," it is hard to see the woman at all.

Despite Rookmaaker's strong critique of what these painters were producing, he consistently recognizes and often praises their artistic achievements. For example, he says that Picasso's "Demoiselles d'Avignon" is

> ... an unsurpassed masterpiece, which can at the same time stand as a kind of symbol for all modern art. In this work, painted in 1907, the new era, the new world that even today has not yet been fully realized, was already defined, its world-view depicted, its idea of man represented in a way that still makes us hold our breath. (p. 114)

And he says that, to a certain extent, Picasso is "the man of our time," because he "brought about the end of a period, the time of the Enlightenment, by breaking through the reality barrier." (p. 156) However, Rookmaaker says that Picasso's answers to the great questions are not the only possible answers, and he points to Georges Rouault as an example. Rouault, of the same generation as Picasso, was a Catholic painter who showed that another kind of art was possible, art that was a "positive answer to absurdity and surrealism and existentialism" and showed "what it means to believe in God and to love man in this age." But, Rookmaaker asks, where is the Protestant counterpart of Rouault? Answering his own question, he says, "Most Protestant artists still worked along traditional lines, either Victorian or impressionistic or following a sweetly symbolistic line." (p. 157)

The final development is represented by the Dada movement, which "used all art forms and tried to break all taboos, all norms for art, all sacred or non-sacred traditions. Dada was a nihilistic creed of disintegration, showing the meaninglessness of all western thought, art, morals, traditions." (p. 130) Surrealism had its roots in the Dada movement. For the surrealists "fear, agony, despair and absurdity were the real realities. It was these they wanted to take up and express in their art." (p. 143) "They were looking for freedom, complete freedom. Yet their works, full of overt or concealed erotic symbolism, were also full of irrationality, absurdity, alienation, sadism, evil and hell, the hor-

rific, black humour." (pp. 144-45) Rookmaaker says that in their view of evil pervading the world, the surrealists were closer to the Bible than to optimistic humanism. But they did not see a way out, which the Bible sets forth in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Repeatedly Rookmaaker says, in these very words or similar words, "Modern art has won the battle." (See pp. 162 (3 times), 163, 164, 182) Although he goes on to discuss further developments in art, like abstract expressionism (exemplified by Jackson Pollock, who just dripped paint onto canvases), including sculpture (p. 166 et seq.), "pop art" and "op art" (p. 176 et seq), and "art nouveau" (p. 184), over and over again he pounds on this main thesis: modern art depicts the violence, absurdity, and unreality of human life as it is experienced today. Rookmaaker sees the hippies of the sixties as an outgrowth of this attitude.

Although his book focuses on visual art, Rookmaaker has an interesting discussion of the history of western music, which he says parallels the downward trend of modern art. (p. 185 et seq.) He obviously loves "Negro spirituals," which he calls "a development of the hymns of the Wesleyan type," and appreciates them as precursors to jazz and blues, which he also praises. (pp. 186-87) He says that in the twentieth century there were three, maybe four, kinds of music: "widely-revered classical music," "true modern music appreciated only by intellectual modernists," and "popular entertainment music, apparently of no quality and no cultural import." Then he adds a fourth kind, "the hymns sung in church and popular choral music." (p. 186) Further developments in music led to "rock and roll" and "beat" music (think Beatles), and to "Beat groups, protest singers, folk singers," who deliver a message that is "heard by millions, often on a subliminal leval and therefore unconsciously brainwashing." (p. 190) Professor Rookmaaker does not approve.

Toward the end of the book Rookmaaker discusses what the Christian response to modern art should be. He says:

> All this means that Christians must go through a period of study, thought and re-evaluation that will take much of our energy. ... It is not that the foundation has to change, or that basic doctrines have lost their meaning. But the expression and formulation of them sometimes needs rethinking as we listen afresh to God's Word, and seek to present it to the new world in which we are living. (p. 198)

His view is not to oppose everything in modern culture. He says we must "learn to react positively to the positive elements of the revolt and protest around us. For it, too, is against the evils of technocracy. We must rejoice in the fact that man is shown to be still human by his protest against the forces that would dehumanize him." (p. 198) Humans are trying to reach out beyond the material world, by looking to Zen and eastern religions, and by taking drugs, but there are no real answers there. And the answers of modern art tell us that "everything is rotten, nothingness, putrid, empty, senseless." (p. 209)

Then it seems to me that Rookmaaker gets a bit over-wrought about life in modern western culture. Despite what he says earlier about Christians being too prudish when it comes to sex, he now concludes that "moral standards are lower or have collapsed, there is more crime, more juvenile delinquency, more adultery, more homosexuality each year. ... Pornography sold openly, nudity in film,

stage and advertising, free love, experimental marriages and the like are no longer new." (pp. 216, 217) Of course, this was written during the "sexual revolution" of the 1960's. While moral standards have probably not improved since then, it is rare today (2019) to hear about "free love" and "experimental marriages." On the other hand, it's not hard to guess what Rookmaaker would say about "gay marriage."

Rookmaaker's main point, however, seems unassailable to me, even if it is not really a new development: humans have lost their way by falling into sin and they cannot redeem themselves (or find their way out of "the closed naturalistic box" as Rookmaaker might say). Only God can save them. This has been true ever since the events recorded in Genesis 3. It may or may not be worse today. Remember how bad it was in Genesis 6, when God destroyed all humans except Noah and his family.

This brings me to one of Rookmaaker's main points, which seems wrong or at least misleading to me. He blames just about everything wrong with modern society on the Enlightenment. For example, he writes that human beings have lost "the fullness of humanity" and continue not to find it "so long as they stick to the basic principles of the Enlightenment, of which the first and last is that man wants to be autonomous, and does not want to acknowledge God, the God of the Bible, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ." (p. 208) He mentions the "deep, dissolving effects of the enlightenment." (p. 186) He refers to "the anti-Christian or non-Christian forces let loose by the Age of Reason" (p. 67) and says the "inherent disharmony of our time" "all began when man wanted to be autonomous, when he lit the torch of his own reason and resolved to start only from his senses – with the 'enlightenment' of the Age of Reason." (p. 196)

But that's not really when it all began. Major changes, many of them good, came about during the Enlightenment. That period saw not only dramatic technological improvements (in roads and canals and methods of communication), but also political and economic developments that few people today would surrender. Without the Enlightenment we would still be living in a feudal society. Rookmaaker is correct in pointing out how man, instead of God, became the focal point. But the fundamental attitude of humans after the Enlightenment was not, in my opinion, any different from the attitude of the disobedient Israelites in the Old Testament (not to mention the pagan peoples of that time), or the Pharisees in the time of Jesus, or medieval warriors, or any number of other peoples down through the centuries.

Rookmaaker looks back to the seventeenth-century as the golden age of human development. He says the people of that time had a "traditionally Christian" outlook, because "the great culture of the seventeenth century" was given to humans "after European man returned to God." (p. 41) But then Rookmaaker himself admits that "seventeenth-century people were really no better than we are; they were sinful and often stupid. For instance, their attitude to 'witches' was the last thing we would want to defend, *though it was an attitude only possible within such a world view.*" (pp. 40,41, emphasis added)

I would also point out that the historical record of Christians as rulers, in charge of society, is not that wonderful. Could it be that God used the Enlightenment to, for example, create space between church and state, somewhat as he used King Cyrus of ancient Persia, as an instrument of his purposes to rebuild the Temple and deliver the Jews from exile in Babylon?

Rookmaaker raises the question whether the current sad state of affairs is, at least in part, due to Christians abandoning the world in a narrow pursuit of spirituality? He says:

> To look at modern art is to look at the fruit of the spirit of the avant-garde: it is they who are ahead in building a view of the world with no God, no norms. Yet is this so because Christians long since left the field to the world, condemned the arts as worldly, almost sinful? Indeed, nowhere is culture more "unsalted" than precisely in the field of the arts – and that in a time when the arts (in the widest sense) are gaining a stronger influence than ever through the mass communications. (p. 222)

His last chapter (which is strangely omitted from the table of contents) is entitled "Faith and Art," and it contains a lot of good insights and suggestions. First, he says that Christians have to live out their faith within "the given structures of reality." (p. 225) What he means by this is that we must recognize that God created this world and the whole cosmos, and while that gives us the freedom to explore everything within the created reality, we should not waste our time – like many modern artists – trying to go beyond this reality or to deny or destroy this reality. God's creation sets out boundaries.

But this is real freedom, because "to this reality belong imagination, fantasy, the discovery of things unheard of and undreamed of – because God gave man these things, and imagination is not outside creation's structures." (p. 225) What about Christian art? He says emphatically that "art must never be used to show the validity of Christianity. (Later he explains that what he means is that showing the validity of Christianity is not art's primary function. p. 230) Rather the validity of art should be shown through Christianity." (p. 226) That sounds good, but what does it really mean? In a somewhat nebulous paragraph he says, "Christian art is nothing special. It is sound, healthy, good art. It is art that is in line with the God-given structures of art, one which has a loving and free view on reality, one which is good and true. In a way there is no specifically Christian art." (p. 226) That's pretty subjective if you ask me.

Finally, under the heading "The Christian in a changing world" Rookmaaker says we must stand for freedom, including the freedom of those we do not like, even of movements we believe to be wrong, because "humanity is lost if freedom is gone ... love has no place in a world without freedom ... and in a world without freedom we shall not have the liberty to be Christians, to tell out the good news, to invite others to our meetings." (pp. 246, 247) He says we must also stand for humanity, against forces that try to take it away by making people conform or to behave like everybody else. He says "we shall do all we can to withhold the dehumanizing forces of today which would turn human beings into little wheels in the big machine, into numbers in the computer." (p. 248)

He also says – and this may surprise many evangelicals – that our calling is to be critical of our times, maybe even to protest:

> We must be constantly aware of any growing lack of freedom, of the authoritarianism of petty bureaucracy which treats people as things, of any forces which dehumanize. We should have protested, and protested in love, not in hate and anarchy, because we care for freedom and humanity, and hate all sin and all unrighteousness. (p. 249)

In fact, he says that protest in love is just another way of saying that we should always hunger and thirst for righteousness. And he finishes out the book with a stirring call for Christians to be truly Christian in all we say and do.

This is an amazing and challenging book, well worth reading. Rookmaaker is highly opinionated, but most of his opinions seem right to me, some I do not understand, and a few I think are wrong. I cannot remember reading another book that I both agreed with and disagreed with as much as this one.

My main take-away (although I may be wrong) from reading this book is that Rookmaaker is not criticizing modern art as such, because he says it's true in the sense that it accurately reflects modern culture, but he is primarily critiquing the culture itself as depicted in modern art. However, he also says that modern art was "one of the main agents" for spreading the ideas of modern culture. (See p. 131) Remember, too, that this book was written in the late 1960s, during a time of great social upheaval. Things have quieted down, a little, since then.