

In 1926, Prince Karl Anton von Rohan, a great admirer of Benito Mussolini, asked Max Beckmann to write on the social position of the artist for Rohan's journal, Europäische Revue. Beckmann replied that he had tried to respond 'seriously and positively'. However, the text he submitted was not published:

The social stance of the artist by the black tightrope walker

1. The talent for self-promotion is a prerequisite for those inclined to pursue the artistic calling.
2. The budding genius must learn above all else to respect money and power.
3. A reverence for critical authority must dominate his life. He must strictly adhere to his subservient standing, and never forget that art is merely an object whose purpose is to facilitate the critic's realisation of his critical potential.
4. The riskiest thing an artist can have is too strong a backbone. Woe betide that miserable creatively inclined creature not able to subdue his obdurate spinal column in the course of daily bowing and scraping.
5. Let him therefore take cognisance of the fact that he is a subservient member of society, nothing more in essence than a slightly better employee. His demands can, of course, be taken under consideration only when society's more essential needs for a family car and a holiday to the Pyramids have been satisfied.
6. The artist may take quiet pleasure in his craft. Let him not, however, forget that fashion changes every five years. He would therefore do well not to indulge in all that much 'quiet pleasure', and stay well informed of every new set of marching orders.
7. Aside from the talent for self-promotion, the most important asset an artist can have is a girlfriend or a beautiful wife. Her utility can be imagined in a variety of ways. Who other than the artist's beloved could better soothe the transaction riddled, multinational takeover scheme saturated, cosmic thunder stricken brain of the champagne manufacturer or leather dealer? With her gentle hand she can stroke the mighty one's chaotic brow and, resting him against her soft body, induct him into the mysteries of dreaming and art.
8. The artist can know nothing of religion, politics, and life. He must not forget that sylphlike presence that he is, his only purpose consisting in sprinkling the world with brightly coloured pollen. He must serve the amusement and delight of the mighty. The 'merry little artist folk' had best keep in mind their humble limitations. It is therefore advised that, should the unfortunate artist have been endowed by nature with a little sense and a modicum of critical faculty, he keep these qualities to himself. Only insofar as he maintains an aura of artlessness can the artist expect to be recognised by the public.
9. The best thing an artist can do, of course, is to die. Only when the last living vestige of this bothersome personality has disintegrated in his grave can his fellow men take pleasure in his work. Only then does the artist's work truly belong to his contemporaries, for if they buy it at the right time it is as good as if they had made it. The artist is therefore strongly advised to die at the right time. Only thereby can he put the finishing touches on his work.
10. The artist who follows these fundamental precepts will have a good life. His fellow men will gladly accord this well respected and untroublesome element in the fabric of the state all the love and recognition he deserves.

(Max Beckmann, 1 January 1927)