

BABA MANIFESTO: The Manifesto of Babaism

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Introduction

Babaism is an artistic movement devoted to glorifying modern nonsense. Comparable to New Age Dadaism and with similarities to Surrealism, it resonates with the unconscious mind. Babaism also represents the change in how we engage with the world and create content, evident in the rise of nonsense media, such as current artistic experiments in absurdity and sometimes memes. Its rise was motivated by multiple factors such as the collective trauma of the 2020 pandemic, rapid technological advancements, and political extremism. However, the causing factors will be accentuated in a later chapter.

An explicative manifesto on an art movement that focuses on the glorification of nonsense can be quite misleading, however, we will be focusing more on the reasons why it exists and matters. We will not concentrate on explaining the sometimes-speculative meaning of specific Babaistic artworks.

I will explain to the best of my abilities what Babaism is by comparing it to its historical artistic and philosophical inspirations, then by mentioning its relevance, relating its rise to a specific list of events and finally by explaining my personal connection to it.

Babaism and its art are for everyone, any age group, any profession, any artist is allowed to join. Babaism is sometimes best represented by younger generations, as growing up in turbulent socio-political times relevant to the movement may have had a stronger impact on their art, philosophy, and political ideals. With this statement I do not mean to suggest that older generations did not grow up in volatile socio-political times. Rather, the events tied to the rise of Babaism, such as the constant overstimulation of our phones, have likely had a stronger impact on younger generations, whose brains were still developing when such phenomena began to unfold.

Babaism and Dadaism

As the movement has a strong bond with Dadaism, and to signify that history does repeat itself, not in the exact way but in similar manners, the names sound quite similar. The use of the 'b' instead of the 'd' has no specific meaning. Much like what the movement celebrates and the creation of the original Dadaism name, it is a play with randomness; as the Dadaism name was created after one of its founders blindly pointed to a word in the dictionary.

An essential point in common between Dadaism and Babaism, is that both movements imply the idea of a revolt against societal changes or habits that have created a frustration in artists. The frustration resulted in a push toward absurdity and nonsense in art.

The main differences between Babaism and Dadaism, and in this case also the need for the movements to be distanced from each other, are the thoroughly different representations of nonsense and its glorification in art. One of the differences is purely technical as the outcomes of the artworks are different because of the use of digital tools, the use of artificial intelligence, modern techniques in sculpture making, 3D printing, laser cutting etc. Additionally, the emergence of memes had an influence on Babaism, creating a contrast with the ideals of the Dada movement. The other main difference is the reason behind the movement, as both movements are not only caused by specific events, it would be an incorrect approximation to state that Dadaism was solely caused by WWI, or that Babaism simply arose from the 2020 pandemic. Both movements were birthed by a conglomeration of factors, especially, social, political, psychological, and economic. However, since those forces shaped each era differently, the cultural and artistic outcomes also took different forms. Even so, certain formative events share striking parallels, for instance, World War I and the COVID-19 pandemic, when people were forced into isolation, doctors in a sense assumed the role of 'soldiers', and societies were marked by widespread loss of life.

Compared to Dadaism, Babaism gives the face a far more central role in its artistic expression. In many works, absurdity, especially in my personal work, is embodied through facial expression, distortion, and confusion, giving a "face" to what is otherwise faceless. Through this, Babaism channels a phenomenon that is also included in *brainrot media*, where overstimulation and nonsense are made tangible by attributing human features to the abstract or the inanimate. Here the movement aligns with Surrealism, channeling the subconscious and dream logic to produce outcomes that echo surrealist aesthetics.

Why is Babaism relevant

It is important to mention that in our current time nonsense media is being glorified. Examples include specific *Adult Swim* cartoons (experimental humor), *The Eric Andre Show*, 'Italian brainrot' memes whose merchandise is sold worldwide, and the growing recognition of contemporary artists such as *David Altmejd*, who explore absurdist themes. In a way, for a creator to be more relevant in a world where there is a constant overflow of media, such as someone's Instagram discovery page, an absurd, confusing, or off-putting creation might catch more people's attention compared to a clearer sustained artwork and can also be somewhat more relatable. A relevant reason for this relatability could be caused by the combination of contrasting emotions that appear through the constant use of scrolling, for example by looking at reels for multiple hours in a row in which the content can go from dopamine inducing to giving a feeling of sadness, creating confusion in the individual's brain. That confusion will sometimes translate into frustration but also admiration for irrational artworks.

I think it is extremely relevant to talk about Babaism now, also because through social media, I tend to see people complaining more than people celebrating the sometimes-positive outcome of negative societal events on people and art.

Art movements and the need to talk about them while giving them a name would often flourish in highly troubled socioeconomic and political times. For many years, you could even say since the 60s, the valorization of giving a name to what was currently happening in art became much smaller. As today we live in a highly socioeconomic and political time, it is majorly important to look at what is happening in art, give it a name, and to talk about it.

Causing factors for Babaism

I will subsequently mention a multitude of events that make up the conglomeration, not the sole causes, but powerful motivators in the emergence of Babaism, as the reason why the unconscious mind is motivated to operate artistically in a specific manner cannot be reduced to a handful of events, as it remains subjective to each artist and, more broadly, marked by ambiguity.

As in Freud's psychoanalytic theories, these approximations avoid grounding themselves in scientific studies, since the unconscious and art movements resist strict scientific treatment.

Some events mentioned are going to be more recent than others as the artistic representation of nonsense evolves and changes with the social-political climate. Nonsense representation can evolve through traumatic situations becoming amplified, or with the beginning of other hard-hitting happenings.

It is important to note that while I refer to political events as a driving force behind the rise of nonsense art; highly political, often absurd, and extreme right or left-wing memes are not expressions of Babaism. Babaism is not a form of campaigning, and memes in general are not considered part of the movement. Only a small subset that integrates meme culture with contemporary artistic expression could be regarded as belonging to it.

The evolution of an artist can also be represented by this sentence alluding to Dadaism *"The use of interdisciplinarity and a constant sense of 'becoming' has begun to posit the importance of ambiguity in Dada work and philosophy."* (Quote from Elizabeth Benjamin's book, *Dada and Existentialism: The Authenticity of Ambiguity*.)

Some relevant events for the rise of Babaism are:

- (1) The 2020 Pandemic,
- (2) The War between Russia and Ukraine,
- (3) Overstimulation from our phones,
- (4) The Mental health effects of social media,
- (5) Frustration arising from social media, fueled by the inauthenticity of influencers and media outlets,
- (6) The War between Israel and Palestine, the genocide of the Palestinians – a great amount of art was created as a reaction to or documentation of the war,
- (7) Political extremism in the United States, the JD Vance memes went down a nonsense route,
- (8) Political extremism in Europe, Africa, and Asia. The change of government in Italy from left/center wing to right wing, the rise of right-wing movements in Germany, the Netherlands, and many more countries, which influenced the division of crowds between migrants and locals,
- (9) New addictions related to social media such as: porn, specific apps such as Instagram, short form content, and niche types of content.

The combination of these events may appear to generalize the reasons why new expressions inspired by trauma emerge today. But it would not be prudent to ignore major events that have happened in the last few years when mentioning the unconscious or conscious reasons behind the creation of absurdist art by multiple artists, as all these occurrences, in their own way, have given rise to nonsense art.

I want to briefly clarify what I mean when I refer to trauma, as it has come up frequently. In this context, I am speaking specifically about psychological trauma, a wound of the mind rather than the body. What interests me most is not only the traumatic event itself, but the lasting imprint it leaves: how it continues to reverberate through a person's present life long after the original experience. Trauma reshapes perception, behavior, and emotional states, often surfacing when a person encounters triggers. This altered mental landscape, particularly today also in cases of digitally mediated or technology related traumas, can open new ways of thinking, new artistic concepts, and creative expressions.

Existentialism and Babaism

Even though we have highlighted many major events, some may have been overlooked, yet they could still be deeply relevant to the creative process of certain artists. Personal trauma can also often bring a lot of influence to the creation of Babaistic art, as for many it can also be an inspiration or coping source.

In a way, celebrating the nonsense of our current lives can serve as a coping mechanism or, as the existentialists suggest, a way of creating a new meaning by embracing the freedom that comes with recognizing the absurdity of existence.

Not taking yourself too seriously can be essential to the practice of a self-aware and genuine artist. Whimsical nonsense creations that stem from negative events are relevant to the times we are in and can also be considered to have a positive effect on the artist and consumer.

'Blending child's play with serious adult activity, performances could serve both as entertainment and as psychological ventilation' mentioned by Juliet Koss (*Bauhaus Theatre of Human dolls*, 2003). A playful and humoristic approach is essential sometimes it is not only illustrated by the techniques used that could feel childlike but also by the elements inside the drawings or digital collages for example. I am here alluding

to the general emotional benefit of being in touch with your inner child.

To mention the relevance of the psychological benefit of expressing irrationality in art in today's world I will use a quote from Elizabeth Benjamin's book, *'Dada and Existentialism: The Authenticity of Ambiguity'*, that has been important in the making of this manifesto: *"Furthermore, feigning madness was a strategic and inherently sensible means of staying alive in a wartime situation: in this respect, madness = sanity."*

Echoing Tison-Braun's view that Dada's revolt carries a positive vision of what life and humanity should be, and resonating with Sartre's notion of subjectivity *'in creating the person we wish to be, we at the same time create an image of the person as we believe they ought to be'* Babaism embraces creation as self-formation and the frustration of a subjectively non-idealistic society that is born by the, sometimes unconscious, ideal image the artist has of our society.

To justify the connection between Existentialism and Babaism, it is worth noting that Babaism, too, insists on authenticity, alluding to the existentialist call to embrace the responsibilities of freedom. In this sense, it aligns with Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of *'Bad Faith'* the denial of one's own freedom and responsibility through self-deception or conformity, by choosing the easier, less genuine path over the more complex one that is true to the self.

Another essential link between Babaism, Existentialism, and Dadaism, is the acceptance and use of the irrationality of life. Not only to be aware that life is absurd, but Babaism uses the absurdity to foster creation as every artist mirrors it in a personal way.

Existentialism, as a philosophy of self-reflection and self-awareness, finds its visual counterpart in Babaism through the recurring use of the face, a symbol that manifests the act of looking inward and confronting the self as both subject and creation.

One of the main reasons I draw on a philosophy from the last century to explain a contemporary art movement is that our sense of authenticity as humans has profoundly shifted with the rise of social media, for example media outlets lying for more clicks or influencers orchestrating their image and personality. Existentialism, by confronting the individual with the weight and responsibility of personal choice, encourages a return to genuine authenticity.

In a world where social media generates nonsense and absurdity, often reinforced by new forms of media-based addiction, it is unsurprising that in the pursuit of authenticity, the artist reflects this very nonsense in their work.

For an artist it is essential to be connected to their own nature; by nature, I mean the genuine and authentic side of their thoughts, roots, and personal ideas. In a sense, nature is synonymous with authenticity. Everything in the natural world grows in truth to itself, the tree rises naturally from the soil because the seed naturally has moved and rooted. Likewise, an artist builds a personal manifesto, a body of work, much like building a house. But a house needs land to stand on. That land is one's nature, one's roots, one's innermost authenticity. Without it, the structure collapses. Babaism connects deeply to human nature: it is the organic digestion of the artist's mind, a natural process whose outcome can be absurdity. To emphasize my point, as Nietzsche observed, man is only a part of nature, and every action he takes is, in fact, nature acting through him.

Personal connection to Babaism

Multiple years ago, or basically ever since I started creating, I had a heavy motivation to make non-sense, absurd artwork, and in a way, at the core, it felt like a rebellion against societal norms such as the lack of genuineness from the fashion industry and the covid related frustrations. The release of these inner frustrations was achieved primarily through the act of creating Babaistic art. I then made, as at the time I was pursuing a fashion degree, 'The Glorification of Non-Sense', my graduate collection.

At the beginning I was not questioning why I had a strong motivation to create absurd/nonsense art, but it started happening when I began questioning what my artist manifesto was. After this self and societal analysis, the motivation and the reason behind it are clearer and more conscious to me. I came to understand better the colors of the fire burning within me. As some ideas have and always will come from the unconscious mind like it is mentioned in the Surrealist manifesto, at the beginning of my career the reason why I was making what I was making was also unconscious.

A reason why I want to include my personal connection to the movement is also to understand how the movement can apply to a specific person and for a better understanding of it.

I take a multidisciplinary approach to creating Babaistic work, sometimes using simple techniques like felt-tip on paper, and at other times experimenting with screen printing, aquaforte, acrylic, 3D printing, film, and metal. The use of this blend of techniques represents the freedom that comes with a movement like Babaism, as there are no limits in the representation of absurdity there are no limits in the number of techniques you can use. The blend of historical, modern, digital, and handcrafted techniques is essential to my practice; by merging some of them within a single artwork, I can convey both the contemporary vitality of the movement and its deep historical roots.

I introduced Babaism during my exhibition in Rome named '*Circular Tragedy*' (2025) where in the multimedia works you could recognize a feeling of fun, absurdity, confusion, and humor. For me, '*Circular Tragedy*' does not signify sadness, but rather a way of releasing inner emotions that may be tied to specific traumas. The word *tragedy* is used not in a literal sense, but to emphasize the intensity and force of these emotional manifestations.

One of the main reasons I wanted to write this manifesto was that even if Babaism came from personal revelations and that every individual is unique, groups of people are still tied by common inspirations and, if generalized for useful purposes, common motivations.

Conclusion

"The absurdity of a thing is not a reason against its existence; it is a condition of it" mentioned Nietzsche.

In our modern world, even after huge societal changes, absurdity often gets rejected, however Babaism stands in defiance. It refuses the rejection of absurdity. Instead, it embraces it, seeing absurdity not as a flaw to escape, but as a truth to inhabit. Babaism becomes a return to the natural state of the human mind: raw, instinctive, and free from the illusions that disguise the absurd.

I hope that you have read the Baba manifesto with pleasure, felt heard or represented at times, and in a way have related to specific parts. The first ever to be written. My wish is that Babaism keeps on evolving and growing. The more recognition it gets the more people can join, get inspired or play with the concept of the movement. Babaism is a positive art movement with vibrant colors, metaphorically and literally speaking, that puts the existential anxiety to work. Let us celebrate, let us celebrate modern nonsense and absurdity as a peaceful revolt.