

ART AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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In times now vastly remote the human faculty of intuition was humanity's most highly differentiated tool which enabled people to be artists and seers long before they developed the conceptual skills necessary for written language. They were aware of the truth of their being in the environment for survival and growth. Paleolithic art is witness to the truth of this in fabulous works that have survived vast periods of time in cave sanctuaries around the world. When first discovered in the nineteenth century the works in the south of France were considered to be a hoax. Science proved their great age by dating the sinter which covered the images in places many inches thick. They are not the works of savage cavemen as once thought but the work of highly sophisticated fully human artists invoking the power of the animals the people relied on for their survival.

The evolution of Earth and vast changes in climate in much later Neolithic times reflect a totally different lifestyle created by the melting of the glaciers. Humans no longer followed the herds but settled around lakes and rivers, domesticated animals, tended crops and became proficient in pottery and weaving.

The visual realism of the Paleolithic animal portraits gave way to art of a very different character. The changed social organization developed an awareness of the seasons and the movement of the heavens and symbols and abstract signs better reflected the mystery of the hidden forces beyond the visible. Plant life and star patterns are mythologized developing into pictograms and abstract alphabetic codes and writing. The mastery of clay now abundantly available in settled river and lake environments is preserved in pottery and clay tablet writing. Hieratic doctrines are reflected in the treatment and presentation of the human figure speaking for religious collective practice as well as depicting the practical objects of daily life. Experience is more systematized and regulated.

The history of art shows the development of the conceptual skills needed for the mastery of stone structures appeared long before writing which seemed to first emerge as a practical tool for temple stocktaking. The immemorial arts of song, dance and storytelling were the vehicles that carried the history of past experience, and the echoes of this past

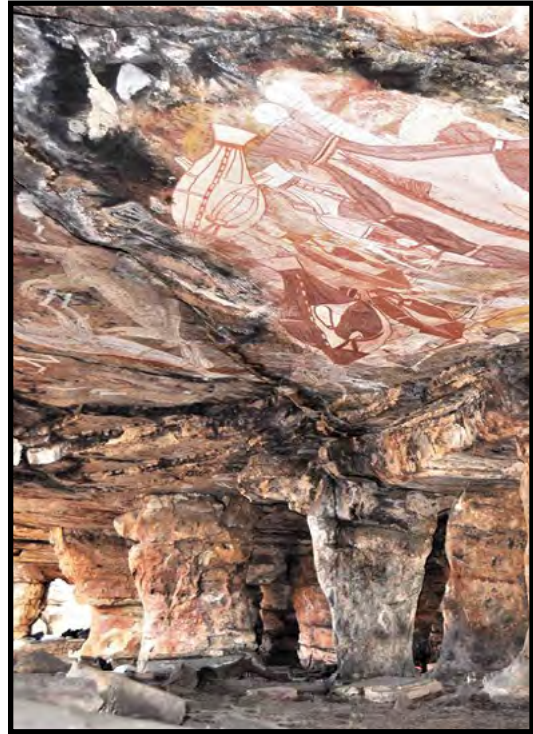


The Hall of Bulls in the Lascaux cave in Dordogne, in southwestern France. The paintings in this cave were created as early as 17,000 BCE.

remain yet in the deep wells of the hidden psyche.

The speed of change in the early ancient cultures seems glacial. Cultural forms survived for many thousands of years. The engine of those changes came mainly from natural climatic catastrophe. The invention of writing seems to have been, after the invention of tools, a prime man-made factor in speeding up human development. Art has always been the handmaiden of religious belief at the very center of the culture—its core of meaning. Truths about the human psyche, such as the polarity between the inner and the outer self became more differentiated. The tension between sight and feeling manifested in some cultures as a dominance of visual reality as opposed to a more abstract symbology or forms that expressed spiritual insights. The realism of Roman art and its dominance of secular forms gave way to the religious and iconoclastic forms of the Christian and Islamic theologies. It was not until the approach of the Renaissance that the next big shift in focus from the inner to the outer occurred when the natural world of sight was reclaimed: a movement which has brought us to recent times and the dominance of the intellect. It is of interest here to note that Leonardo da Vinci's notes on the comparison of the arts formed the beginning of art theory stressing the importance of the faculty of the eye.

The swing from Classical to Romantic expression in art movements speeded up from that time until these once opposing orientations toward the world now exist side by side as individual preference. The dominance of the collective has given way to the freedom of individual choice. The cultural and political upheavals since the eighteenth century have not abated.

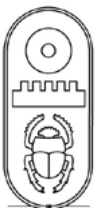


The Gabarnmung archaeological site in northern Australia that contains the oldest known aboriginal rock art, produced up to 28,000 years ago.

All the different aspects of human psychology are evident in and are the mainstay of modern art. These myriad forms are put to many uses as decoration, hobby, therapy, entertainment, social comment and deep insights into the natural world and the world of art itself. The art that survives time from whatever culture or period is the art that reflects a universal quality that springs from the center of the human psyche and expresses an experience of primal creative forces.

Four Faculties

Even today the practical use of language refined and powerful as it is cannot replace the language of art in its many forms. The wonderful tool of reason still cannot penetrate aspects of the primordial memory at the deepest levels of the psyche, which according to Dr. Carl Gustav Jung make up nine-tenths of our being and dominate us in many ways overriding reason in the





Tibetan monks working on a sand mandala.

important emotional and intuitive aspects of our life. Jung developed the concept of the fourfold psyche which is not new. People intuited the importance of the fourfold self for full spiritual growth many thousands of years ago, as a study of the Indo-Tibetan mandalas show. Jung deeply researched and promulgated this thesis in his first great treatise *Psychological Types* after forty years of clinical practice. The four basic faculties of thinking, feeling, intuition and sensation as differentiated and defined by Jung show how one function can develop and dominate the self at the expense of the others. The rational self can so dominate the development of individuals as to leave them emotionally or intuitively infantile. He categorized human beings on the differences of this uneven development and divided them again into extraverted and introverted types. We are all aware of those who are “one-eyed” in their approach to everything and how differently some people approach problems. There are those who insist that a problem can only be solved by thinking hard and finding the only one “right” solution by weighing and sifting all the pros and cons, while there are others who prefer to sleep on the problem or who lapse back

into a reverie and draw on faculties that are not readily accessible to rational analysis. Sharp conscious concepts can block the realization of hints and solutions offered up intuitively. Some highly emotional individuals allow every suggestion from within and without to affect them. They cannot differentiate between thinking and feeling and this acute imbalance can in extreme cases create a psychotic state. The Rosicrucian student is taught to petition consciously the higher aspects of the self when all rational methods have failed.

Universal Content

It would seem that truly creative art is possible only through the exercise of the whole psyche. The greater the penetration of all levels of the psyche on the part of the artist the more universal the work will be regardless of the limitations of a specific culture and the period in which it is produced. In retrospect we can discern this universality in all great works of genius. It is rarified art indeed, and perhaps it is only open to the comprehension of a few art lovers who are receptive enough to be able to share something of the artist’s experience and intention without having to rely on other interpreters.

Art clearly reflects the basic psychological types or combinations of them. The basic oppositions of thinking versus feeling, rational versus irrational, static versus dynamic and classical versus romantic are at the core of all art movements. To the person with a highly evolved emotional life intellectual concepts can be dry and unrewarding, even cold. The person with an active intuition and imagination could in some instances find emotionality cloying and overpowering. The extreme intellectual may not respond to art at all except perhaps as a status symbol or an investment unless they are able to bring their other functions into play. Although there are all forms of art to meet all requirements, they cannot all be classified as truly creative art or able to produce the cultural or catalytic effects in human beings that lead to further development of the psyche.

Throughout history art has paralleled all other human activities both imaginative and pragmatic. Very often artists have

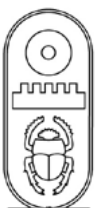
been ahead of their time being free of the restrictions placed upon them by other disciplines such as religion and science where visual perception dominates. Towards the twentieth century however art has freely absorbed ideas from all walks of life; scientific ideas particularly. The Impressionist painters took up the study of light and color breaking forms up into color qualities. Paul Cézanne, being the type of person he was, did not like the loss of form in the pursuit of color values and spent his life's work in trying to translate his visual sensations of form into terms of color constructions on the canvas. Few understood his intentions but in his old age and following his transition his work caused a revolution in painting that has inspired many movements since.

Experimenters

Other factors of the nineteenth century opened the path for the art of the following century. The discovery of photography made the mechanical copy of nature by the artist somewhat redundant.



Paul Cézanne, Montagne Saint-Victoire, ca. 1890.



The scientific analysis of color and optics was taken up by the neo impressionists and explored. Their opposites preferred to use color for its own expressive and emotive sake—*Les Fauves* (The Wild Beasts). The classical form-builders, epitomized by Cézanne, were followed by experimenters who broke form down and created a short influential movement called Cubism. The romantic expressionists and Fauves were followed by the German/Nordic expressionists who were more concerned with feeling, dynamic emotions, pure form or pure aesthetics. Abstraction once again became paramount in the search for inner and underlying realities, and in the need to restore visual art to plastic and painterly qualities in a retreat from an overloaded literary function. However, very few artists can dispense with visual stimuli for inspiration. Much seemingly totally abstract painting takes its conception from visual images, either directly or from memory. The discovery of psychoanalysis and the study of the unconscious greatly enriched and inspired the Surrealist Movements through realist and abstract modes. Many artists understand the indissoluble links between the view and the viewer. The premise of the preeminence of the visual faculty gave way to the concept of the validity of many other ways of expressing human realities.

Science continues to have a hugely influential impact on art. Both art and science are tools of the psyche and products thereof: the one provocative, ambiguous and sometimes mysterious; the other pragmatic and rational though not without its creative and aesthetic elements. They both deal with forces infinitely profound, and they must use the visual faculty either as a means of communication or as a discipline. They certainly both express the



Franz Marc, The Foxes, 1913.

great changes taking place in us and our environment.

New Dimensions

While ancient humans had an unquestioned path laid out for them, medieval humans dwelt to a great extent in the development of the emotional and spiritual self, the renaissance avant-garde woke up suddenly to nature. This process goes on added to by continuing invention and technology. Twenty-first-century humanity must face the task of rediscovering the inner self. The extremities of inner and outer realities of which we are now in possession create in us a tension which has to be resolved if we are to survive and thrive. Our imagination can range from the most minute atom to the most distant of galaxies and everywhere we look we now see only forces and energies, powers and potentialities. Where are the solid forms and certainties that for so long have sustained us? We can no longer choose between physical and spiritual because the divisions between them, which were ones in perception, have



Jean-Michel Basquiat, Untitled (Skull), 1981.

blurred if not disappeared altogether. The clear oppositions of inside and outside, up and down, have lost their compass anchor. Time itself has taken on new dimensions.

The synthesis in thought we now require is not a simple or easy task. Many people no doubt just close their mind to these frightening new ideas and cling desperately to the old familiar forms they have inherited. Others accept all that is new uncritically, thinking it is possible to be cut off from everything that is in the past: all those things that have molded us and which underlie our essential being. Readymade philosophies and exotic 'isms' can replace the task of understanding and integration. It is much easier to escape the paradox and look to others to map out a path to salvation for us. To the modern evolved individual this seems a retrogressive path. a failure to meet the

challenge of these times. Jung postulated the Syntonic Type: the individual in whom all the basic elements of the psyche are balanced and integrated, or at least have a harmonious working relationship.

As with the creative artist, the human individual who has dedicated himself to the path of truth can know the loneliness and difficulty of such a path. In seeking to serve the needs of the whole self, it can be easy at times to be misunderstood. Truth does not change but our understanding of it can change radically both in individuals and collective societies. The terrible oppositions of the past have to be resolved: it is an imperative synthesis for survival. In its very nature art has the means by which such a psychic synthesis is possible, through its processes as much as through its products.

