

THOUGHTS ABOUT ART

by

Patrick Burke Veerkamp

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The following is an abridged collection of written material gathered over the last three years (Fall, 1978 - Spring, 1981). This time span represents the period I spent working on a Master of Fine Arts degree at Colorado State University. As part of my academic education I was encouraged to read and write about all aspects of art. This discipline has had a considerable influence on my development as an artist. In general it has helped me to expand my thinking in terms of a personal definition of art. I have encountered both support and opposition to ideas and feelings of my own and thereby have been challenged to reexamine these concepts considering new information and points of view. In effect, this has led me to refine the fundamental premise of my work and to focus my ideas. Additionally, it has helped me to develop the critical faculty necessary to evaluate my own work as well as the work of others. In the process I have evolved a perspective regarding myself as an artist and the significance of my involvement in the arts.

Essentially, this paper is a record of the thought process involved in the development of a personal aesthetic. It documents a search for understanding and meaning, i.e., probing for an awareness of the substance of my art. Included are definitions and

direct quotes taken from a variety of sources both published and unpublished. In addition, there is much of my own writing in the form of singular thoughts, comments and complete essays. Most of the material which I am personally responsible for writing was originally never meant to be made public. As indicated previously it was written as a means of organizing thoughts and clarifying ideas, therefore the style of writing is very informal. In many instances there was no attempt made to develop ideas fully, merely to capture an ephemeral thought or record an observation. The material is presented exactly as it was written even though I may now discount the original idea or question the significance of a specific reference.

I have made an attempt to provide a context for the material by inserting notes and comments but I have avoided trying to evaluate or analyze.

Prior to returning to graduate school, in addition to teaching art history at a small Colorado college, I earned most of my income by producing utilitarian pottery--mostly cookware and tableware. Though I enjoyed the 'honest' hard work involved in 'production pottery' I likewise sensed a need to explore those feelings and thoughts which kept arising during those solitary hours of hard labor. When a thought would enter my head I would jot it down in a small notebook. Most of these notes were discarded or lost in the shuffle but the following note was found in a box of ceramic materials.

craft - the mechanics of making.

art - and outward sign of inner spirit.

Art, as a reflection of the spirit, reflects the fact that the spirit is not definable or a permanent notion but is ever changing.

1.16.78

Statements taken from a letter written as part of my application to graduate school at Colorado State University.

Making pottery helps me to understand myself. The rhythms and routine of pottery free my mind to absorb and experience the moment.

In general, I strive for consistency in my work, trying to eliminate those elements which seem unessential to the nature of the piece. Simplicity and a relaxed formalism are what I strive for in design.

My interest in contemporary art and criticism has strongly influenced my thinking and suggests a reexamination of my attitude regarding ceramics. However, even though I am inclined toward formalist theories, clay is still a pretty good material with which to make pots.

I stated that one of my objectives as a graduate student would be;

to appraise the seemingly incompatible tendencies of the formalist approach to object making and the subjective impulse, in a reevaluation of clay as a medium of expression and communication, and to analyze this thinking thus forming a personal conceptual foundation for my work.

(This statement of purpose was written soon after I arrived at Colorado State University.)

The direction of my work at this time seems to be toward formalist considerations within the realm of a pottery aesthetic.

The objectives of my work at this time are to develop a critical attitude toward pottery based on a formalist aesthetic. This means developing a personal visual disposition based on formal considerations within the limitations of the vessel or container. Likewise, it means building a supportive cognitive rationale based on a vocabulary founded in formalist theory and directed specifically toward pottery.

Formalism--not a movement or style but an attitude prevalent in recent art history which emphasises primarily formal elements within a work of art--such as plastic design elements and compositional arrangement. In general, formal concerns are dominant while subjective content is minimized; or formal concerns become the content of the work.

It was suggested to me that I take a trip, alone, to a place that seemed to have 'meaning' to me in terms of my own experience. A place that was not necessarily comfortable or familiar but significant to me because of my personal thoughts and feelings about this type of place. Since I spent most of my childhood living in a large city (Kansas City, Missouri) I felt that downtown Denver would be appropriate. My instructions were to keep a notebook with me at all times and to jot down anything and everything that came to my attention and that I regarded as being 'interesting', 'important', etc.--this included descriptions of objects, response to experiences and comments regarding both positive and negative reactions to any person, place, thing or event.

The following information is the result of the collation and interpretation of notes gathered while on a three day trip to Denver in January, 1979.

- * skin covers - non-obscuring cover/coat of shape under.
- * amorphic movement created out of particular parts.
- * color - warms/rust pink tones - also white.
- * 'significant' isolated detail with perception of the whole - sometimes figure/ground reversal.

- * interruptive directional movements, sometime balancing each other, other times with a dominance. Diagonals.
- * detail which is independently expressive yet dependent upon its supportive structure and vice versa.
- * modular repeat where whole is the issue but parts are significant.
- * organization and clarity of position but with inter dependence of parts so parts are also singular.

Spring 1979

In part, my work deals with a philosophy based on a personal observation of the dichotomous nature of my existance (spiritual-physical, subjective-objective, classical-romantic). I envision myself as part of a complex order (humankind, ecosystem, universe, energy) which I perceive conversely as disparity, contrast and variety. The essential components of this bipolar view of reality are; 1) the sense of an ultimate order throughout the universe, originating from energy, 2) a limited perception of the physical revelation of this order.

I am conscious of the harmony of the universe though I understand only discord.

I sense unity and organization though I perceive diversity.

I feel the rhythms of the energy of the universe but I respond through random movement.

I am aware of a rational consciousness though I am frustrated by physical impulse.

As a result of this observation of my reality I feel that my existance reflects the source of this grand order, i.e., energy. If my life has meaning it is merely as a reflection of this energy. That is, life and death have no cognative purpose, they are essentially manifestations of the transmutation of energy. My life is governed by an

acknowledgement of this feeling of order and the perception of chaos.

I am frustrated by my limitations of rational thought and can find relief only in the non-verbal expression of ideas and feelings.

The work of social anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss has been a significant source of inspiration for me and has proved to be a consistent validation of my thinking. Many of his ideas confirm my experiences in an objective manner providing me with a kindred spirit which can be traced back to primal man and his myths. His thoughts regarding a sense of order to existence are particularly relevant to my own experience and concern me as an artist.

Since I was a child, I have been bothered by, let's call it the irrational, and have been trying to find an order behind what is given to us as a disorder.*

It is, I think, absolutely impossible to conceive of meaning without order.*

This order is not meant to be interpreted as merely the physical structuring of material things but refers to and is synonymous with the meaning of reality, i.e., how humans conceive their own existence, their experience.

To speak of rules and to speak of meaning is to speak of the same thing; and if we look at all the intellectual undertakings of mankind, as far as they have been recorded all over the world, the common denominator is always to introduce some kind of order. If this represents a basic need for order in the human mind and since, after all, the human

*Claude Levi-Strauss, Myth and Meaning, (New York, Schocken Books, 1978), p. 11.

*Ibid., p. 12.

mind is only part of the universe, the need probably exists because there is some order in the universe and the universe is not a chaos.

Humankind participates in this order, is part of the meaning (order) of reality, in unity with the essence of being, and it is this experience which is the source of all thought and action. Thus, the will to participate in this order becomes the origin of the aesthetic experience.

Gregory Batesons' essay "The Pattern Which Connects" deals with the notion of an essential structure which forms a link between all living things and the universe.

The pattern which connects is a meta-pattern. It is a pattern of patterns. It is that meta-pattern which defines the vast generalization that indeed it is patterns which connect.*

He rather pessimistically depicts modern society as being out of touch with this essential unity of existence. Contemporary man has lost sight of the totality of experience which is portrayed as dualistic, both extremes of a continuum.

Most of us have lost that sense of unity of biosphere and humanity which would bind and reassure us all with an affirmation of beauty. Most of us do not today believe that, whatever the ups and downs of detail within our limited experience, the larger whole is primarily beautiful.

We have lost the core of Christianity. We have lost Shiva, the dancer of Hinduism whose dance at the trivial level is both creation and destruction but in whole is beauty. We have lost Abraxas, the terrible and beautiful god of both day and night in Gnosticism. We have lost totemism, the sense of parallelism between man's organization and that of the animals and plants. We have lost even the Dying God.*

Nevertheless, he goes on to confirm in my mind the underlying source of the aesthetic experience.

*Gregory Bateson, The Pattern Which Connects, The Co-Evolution Quarterly, Summer, 1978, p. 9.

*Ibid., pp. 15-16.

We are beginning to play with ideas of ecology, and, though we immediately trivialize these ideas into commerce or politics, there is at least an impulse still in the human breast to unify and thereby sanctify the total natural world, of which we are.

Observe, however, that there have been--and still are--in the world many different and even contrasting epistemologies which have been alike in stressing an ultimate unity and, though this is less sure, have also stressed the notion that ultimate unity is aesthetic. From the diversity of these views, we may hope that perhaps the great authority of quantitative science may be insufficient to deny an ultimate unifying beauty.*

It is an awareness of, and empathy with, this essential order which unifies all (the pattern which connects) that gives rise to the experience of the sublime. Transcending ordinary experience and arriving at a point where differences are reconciled.

*Ibid., p.16.

--There is a fundamental order inherent in all things and relationships.

--This order is accessible to the mind through conscious means and processes, however, it is the subtle (subliminal) sense of order that is commonly experienced and affects human feeling and actions.

--Disorder is the apparent opposite of order.

--Our interpretation of order--regularity, symmetry, etc.--may simply be the way we structure things and not the real order of the universe which may appear to us to be disorder.

--There are degrees of order.

--There are limitations to what we are able to know about the order of the universe.

First thoughts concerning order.

The following is a memory of an experience in western Colorado:

Standing in an orchard in the fertile Grand Valley. It is cool and moist in the shade of the fruit trees. There is the smell of earth and trees, and the sweet perfume of ripening fruit. The space is secure--sheltered from the intrusions of the urban environment, neatly ordered in rows, cleared of weeds and debris, quiet, colored blue, green and gray.

I stand looking out from this oasis into the desert. It is hot and parched by the sun. There is vegetation but of the southwest desert variety, low growing and gnarled with little green, leafy foliage. There is a smell to the desert that is difficult to describe--herbal, dusty and hot. The space is awesome; vast and lonely. The feeling is somewhat frightening at first though there is something reassuring in the sense of timelessness. The colors are of the earth--red and yellow bleached by the ambient light of the cloudless sky.

This recollection stands out vividly in my mind and represents an early stage in the development of a consciousness of the dichotomous nature of reality.

Art history always brings me back to a dichotomous affinity for both the objective (classical, formal, etc.) and the subjective (romantic, informal) attitudes in art-- and probably the most successful art is that which comes closest to resolving the difference between the two.

That in the beginning when the world was young there were a great many thoughts but no such thing as a truth. Man made the truths himself and each truth was a composite of a great many vague thoughts. All about in the world were the truths and they were all beautiful.

The old man had listed hundreds of the truths in his book. I will not try to tell you of all of them. There was the truth of virginity and the truth of passion, the truth of wealth and of poverty, of thrift and of profligacy, of carelessness and abandon. Hundreds and hundreds were the truths and they were all beautiful.

And then the people came along. Each as he appeared snatched up one of the truths and some who were quite strong snatched up a dozen of them.

It was the truths that made the people grotesques. The old man had quite an elaborate theory concerning the matter. It was his notion that the moment one of the people took one of the truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood.

You can see for yourself how the old man, who had spent all of his life writing and was filled with words, would write hundreds of pages concerning this matter. The subject would become so big in his mind that he himself would be in danger of becoming a grotesque. He didn't I suppose, for the same reason that he never published the book. It was the young thing (girl) inside him that saved the old man.*

This story is another analogy for the idea of the conjugation of extremes which is manifest in the image of an old man with a young girl inside him.

*Sherwood Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio, (New York: Viking Press, 1960), pp. 24-5.

The essay by Albert Rothenberg, Creative Contradictions, provided me with the rational I needed to support my feelings of the coexistence of conflicting aspects of human (my) nature. In essence, Rothenberg points out that not only does this dichotomy exist but that the relationship of the elemental contradictory principles is symbiotic. He describes this relationship as Janusian, after the Roman god Janus, the "...god of doorways and beginnings, whose faces (he is variously portrayed as having two, four, and even six of them) look in different directions at the same time."*

Always surprising is the discovery that the opposite of a previously held idea, concept, or belief is operative or true. Even more surprising is this: not only is the opposite true but both the opposite and the previously held idea are operative or true. Nothing could jar our expectations more.*

Furthermore, Rothenberg substantiates the notion that this confrontation of opposites is consciously directed toward specific expressive ends, i.e., the artist is aware of his expressive intent and conscious of his means.

*Albert Rothenberg, Creative Contradictions, Psychology Today, June 1979, p. 55.

*Ibid., p. 62.

In janusian thinking, the creative person is fully rational and intentional at the time he selects particular opposites and juxtaposes them.

Clearly, bringing together any opposites at all won't do. It matters very much which opposites are selected, and how the janusian formulation is elaborated in a particular work. In artistic fields, the creator chooses and develops those opposites and antithesis that most meaningfully crystallize and express personal as well as universal values, experiences, and feelings.*

Rothenberg's theory refutes the notion of some divine inspiration as the source of artistic creation.

Contrary to the romantic notion that creativity grows largely out of inspiration, the "primary process" thinking of dreams, or some unconscious source, I have found janusian thinking--a major element of the creative process--to be a fully conscious, intentional, rational process.*

Speaking of the scientist James Watson and his discovery of the double-helical structure of DNA, Rothenberg states, "...he was fully conscious, aware, and logical at that moment--but in that creative leap, he was able to transcend the bounds of ordinary logic and cognition."*

*Ibid. *Ibid., p. 55. *Ibid., p. 62.

Content in a work of art can be perceived by the artist and the viewer at a level of awareness and cognative understanding, i.e., both artist and audience must be consciously aware of the content of a work of art in order to appreciate it fully.

3.27.79

A Search for Form and Content

(The purpose of this statement is to define certain concepts which I have encountered in a search for a personal direction in my art; shape, form and content. In addition, I hope to clarify the independence as well as the interrelationship of these concepts. Though it is a premise of my position that content in a work of art cannot be defined by cognitive means, on the other hand, the general concept of content as the essence of art can be perceived, to a limited extent, if approached in the spirit of dialectic inquiry.)

"I am dead, you see," Agnes says.

Anna merely looks at Agnes and holds her hands tightly.

"The trouble is I can't get to sleep. I can't leave you all." She moans softly and tears are squeezed out from under the closed eyelids. "Can't anyone help me?" she moans. "I'm so tired."

"It's only a dream," Anna whispers in a flash of inspiration.

"No, it's not a dream," Agnes answers tormentedly. "For you perhaps it's a dream. But not for me."

Cries and Whispers, Ingmar Bergmen

Content in art cannot be specifically defined. This is to say that no singular definition can be given for the essential meaning of a work of art. Instead, content can only be addressed through an amalgamation of concepts which deal indirectly with a central theme. This theme is ultimately interpreted as the realization of ones' self--the individual artists reality.

Content deals in part with feeling--"...consciousness itself without regard to thought or a perceived object..." (Random House Dictionary)--that which is outside of form and shape.

It is
beyond object.

It is
beyond thought.

It is
what cannot be said,
the unutterable.

It is
the only reality
for there is no false or true.

Content is made manifest through shape and form. According to Rudolf Arnheim, "Shape is described by the spatial boundaries of objects; it is a purely visual property. Form is not purely visual; it is rather the relation between shape and something it is the shape of. Form is the shape that makes a content visible, and that content in itself may not be visible at all."*

*Rudolf Arnheim, Toward A Psychology of Art, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), p. 354.

Shape/Form---Content. Form deals specifically with cognitive idea. It embodies both abstract concept and concrete experience.

A building may be defined by its basic shape. The architect (artist) may adjust this shape to better serve his needs, whether expressive (aesthetic) or cognitive (functional), and this becomes the essential form of the building. For example, we may envision a classical Greek temple plan (Parthenon). Its refined geometry and mathematical proportions suggest a rational logic and clarity. Such cognitive systems as the Golden Mean, the Doric order and functionalism were employed in the design of the structure. In addition, harmony, rhythm and symmetry were aesthetic concerns of the designers of this magnificent structure. In effect these structural and abstract ideas can be considered the formal (form) characteristics of this Greek masterpiece. We might characterize the form of the structure as being 'stately', 'graceful' or 'dynamic'. However, all these formal terms are preconditioned by a priori knowledge of the concepts, i.e., we understand these terms by making an associative reference to something within the realm of our perceptual experience. On the other hand, content deals with what is essentially the unknown or at least that which can't be known by any objective standard. Our building is in fact a religious edifice and deals with ethereal qualities of

timelessness and eternity, and this is the content of the Parthenon.

For the Greeks, well-proportioned forms were tangible manifestations of a superior harmony, and the highest tribute they could pay their deities was to suggest an ideal order behind physical appearances.*

The Parthenon was sacred and beyond any epistemic rationale. Thus the real content of the building is outside of the known and into the sanctuary of the unknown.

The masters of the Parthenon were among the earliest artists to achieve a formal beauty essentially abstract and philosophical in character, a beauty independent of narrative theme or practical functionalism. To later generations of all periods this beauty seems to have had the impact of a basic law, a kind of definition of the activity of art.*

Form serves the function of mediation between understanding and emotion--thinking and feeling. Form has the power of transformation in a work of art "...lifting it above the ordinary by some mysterious adjustment of proportions and outlines of its volumes or by some inspired refinement of its coloring and decoration."*

*Henri Dorra, Art In Perspective: A Brief History, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.), p. 31.

*Vincent J. Bruno, The Parthenon, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1974), p. 59.

* Ibid., p. 58.

Victor Christ-Janer delivered a lecture at Colorado State University, April 3, 1980. The influence of this experience on my thinking was even greater than I remember.

The following notes were written while reading his unpublished essay "Irrationality and a Contemporary Consciousness".

I present the images as discoveries made by humans and experienced by humans as creative response to their own actions. The image becomes the perceptive opening to possibility, in giving the poietic mode a priority over the intellectual mode. The poietic images identified here are recurrent images which have no reference to time other than their ancient beginnings, the images are constituent images.

The image is a manifestation of mans actions, thus the image derives from experience rather than intellect.

The image is a counterpart of action; a semblance rather than an objective equivalent.

Image as unconscious poietic imprint becomes in effect, a psychic reality, the pattern of which is willed into existence as poietic event. The constituent image is objectified in action in an effort to come to terms with reality.

Mans actions in his effort to survive and the resultant emotional response to his consciousness of

his actions result in memory traces, imprinted in the collective consciousness of humankind, which are the source of all 'meaning' (content) in art. Christ-Janer refers to these 'imprints' as constituent images, i.e., the primal components of human thought and activity. Thus, the constituent image is the source of poietic (productive, creative) action.

For bestial persons and persons of antiquity, the first moments of dawning consciousness, facting the trauma of being separated from nature by consciousness and supported only by instinct, were the moments of the birth of poietics. Awe, fear, ecstasy, pleasure, began to shape the patterns of images necessary to support the individual self, confronted by the trauma of the birth of consciousness. The fact that bestial persons survived gives credibility to the significance of his poetic response. The mystery of the will to live in a conscious reality forms the generative power in the poietic action. Images, physical, psychological, and social come into existence to support the faltering hold on reality in a conscious world, in a conscious world where he and he alone is responsible for his survival.

Is there a state of mind in which a person can sense the reality of an idea, concept, etc., without being cognizant of the logic or intellectual reality of this idea?

Craft?

Faith--belief that does not rest on logical proof or material evidence (religious conviction).

The basic separation seems to be within the distinction between faith and reason.

Dialectic--the contradiction between two conflicting forces viewed as the determining factor in their continuing interaction.

Can you know something without being cognizant of its external reality?

Can feeling and faith be accepted as knowledge?

Tacit knowledge, in Michael Polanyi's words, means that "...we can know more than we can tell."* He suggests that there is a dimension to our intellect which is outside the realm of reason. It is concomitant with the more objective rational of scientific logic, i.e., the systematic cause and effect method of acquiring knowledge. It is awareness without conscious understanding of specifics.

This structure shows that all thought contains components of which we are subsidiarily aware in the focal content of our thinking, and that all thought dwells in its subsidiaries, as if they were parts of our body. Hence thinking is not only necessarily intentional, as Brentano has taught: it is also necessarily fraught with the roots that it embodies.*

Tacit knowledge comes from the internalizing of information gathered from the totality of our being, i.e., from the integration of all our senses and experiences. This includes every dimension of human nature, both physical and psychological.

We identified the two terms of tacit knowing, the proximal and the distal, and recognized the way we attend from the first to the second, thus achieving an integration of particulars to a coherent entity to which we are attending. Since we were not attending to the particulars in themselves, we could not identify them: but if we regard the integration of particulars as an interiorization, it takes on a more positive character. It now becomes a means of making certain

Michael Polanyi, The Tacit Dimension, (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1966), p. 4.

Ibid., p. x.

things function as the proximal terms of tacit knowing, so that instead of observing them in themselves, we may be aware of them in their bearing on the comprehensive entity which they constitute. It brings home to us that it is not by looking at things, but by dwelling in them, that we understand their joint meaning.*

Polanyi suggests that 'unbridled lucidity' can in fact diminish true understanding and;

...can destroy our understanding of complex matters. Scrutinize closely the particulars of a comprehensive entity and their meaning is effaced, our conception of the entity is destroyed.*

In effect, the subject of our attention is removed from its specific context and thereby its meaning is lost or distorted, like a pianist who is paralyzed by concentrating on each finger and note instead of the music.

But the damage done by the specification of particulars may be irremediable. Meticulous detailing may obscure beyond recall a subject like history, literature, or philosophy. Speaking more generally, the belief that, since particulars are more tangible, their knowledge offers a true conception of things is fundamentally mistaken.*

However, this is not to say that the understanding of particulars is always destructive, particularly if this type of analysis of specifics precedes the meaning we are searching for. In fact, this sort of analytical knowledge, while it may destroy the original meaning,

*Ibid., p. 18.

*Ibid.

*Ibid., 19.

may lead to new meaning.

But it is important to note that this recovery never brings back the original meaning. It may improve on it. Motion studies, which tend to paralyze a skill, will improve it when followed by practice. The meticulous dismembering of a text, which can kill its appreciation, can also supply material for a much deeper understanding of it. In these cases, the detailing of particulars, which by itself would destroy meaning, serves as a guide to their subsequent integration and thus establishes a more secure and more accurate meaning of them.*

In essence, as stated above, tacit knowledge works together with objective fact-finding and analysis and serves to direct the search for the yet to be identified truth which we are aware of only tacitly.

To hold such knowledge is an act deeply committed to the conviction that there is something there to be discovered. It is personal, in the sense of involving the personality of him who holds it, and also in the sense of being, as a rule, solitary; but there is no trace in it of self-indulgence. The discoverer is filled with a compelling sense of responsibility for the pursuit of a hidden truth, which demands his services for revealing it. His act of knowing exercises a personal judgment in relating evidence to an external reality, an aspect of which he is seeking to apprehend.*

*Ibid., p. 19.

*Ibid., 25.

Some random thoughts from Michael Polanyi:

This then is our liberation from objectivism; to realize that we can voice our ultimate convictions only from within our convictions--from within the whole system of acceptances that are logically prior to any particular assertion of our own, prior to the holding of any particular piece of knowledge.*

...a true knowledge of a theory can be established only after it has been interiorized and extensively used to interpret experience.*

The pursuit of discovery is conducted from the start in these terms; all the time we are guided by sensing the presence of a hidden reality toward which our clues are pointing; and the discovery which terminates and satisfies this pursuit is still sustained by the same vision.*

*Thomas Langford & Wm. Poteat, Ed., Intellect and Hope; Essays in the Thought of Michael Polanyi, p. 15.

*Michael Polanyi, The Tacit Dimension, (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1966), p. 21.

*Ibid., p. 24.

For an object to succeed as art the total expression must transcend the sum of its parts. It must go beyond formal considerations or even communication through metaphorical references implicit in its parts and communicate on a metaphysical level which denies specific description or analysis.

It seems to me that art falls within the realm of experiential communication and this is its strength as opposed to closed systems of language which carry with them extraneous information.

The following is a list of terms which I have used at one time or another to describe some particular aspect of my work.

* palimpsest - a parchment, tablet, etc., that has been written upon or inscribed two or three times, the previous text or texts having been imperfectly erased and remaining, therefore, still visible.

* vestige - a mark, trace, or visible evidence of something which is no longer present or in existence. A surviving evidence or memorial of some condition, practice, etc.

* interstitial - pertaining to, situated in, or forming interstices (an intervening space).

* acquiesce - to assent tacitly.

* tacit - not openly expressed but implied, understood or inferred; unspoken.

* tone - a relationship (means nothing) of object to viewer.

The difference between an artist and a craftsperson. The craftsperson essentially wants the known--the artist is searching for the unknown. The craftsperson is conscious of his role as a maker of beautiful and well designed objects that function aesthetically within a standard of beauty--the artist is aware of his personal aesthetic objective, i.e., to reveal his subjective and objective experience of reality and thus create a new reality of experience.

1.28.81

(The following statement was written in reference to a group of pots which were exhibited in the 7th Annual Ceramics Invitational Exhibit, Weber State College, Ogden, Utah, 1981.)

My work is about an awareness of ideas and feelings that are common to all people. In addition, it aspires to an association with the discipline of art. In these pieces the primary connective to the world of concrete reality is pottery. Though other references are made, via analogies to visual phenomena and metaphorical associations with subjective experience, the context remains the same-- pot. It is the intrinsic nature of the concept of pottery that serves as the fundamental abstract premise of this work. Embodied in this concept is the realization of the union of shape, form and content.

As evasive as this statement might appear, it was meant to point out a primary concern in regard to this work, i.e., that pottery, and its innate abstract associations, is the basic proposition upon which all 'information' concerning the actual content of the work depends. Any conclusions drawn in regard to the work rely on the fundamental premise of the pot as procreator of meaning.

- * western aesthetic focuses on the object or thing.
- * eastern aesthetic focuses on the condition or atmosphere or spiritual quality rather than a material or concrete quality.
- * western - spatial confrontation.
- * eastern - spatial continuity.

* spatial ambiguity and conflict--a distinctly 20th century issue.

myth - a collective belief (without or with a determinable basis of fact or a natural explanation) that is built up in response to the wishes of the group rather than an analysis of the basis of the wishes.

Art is a myth.

(Random notes taken from an interview with Joseph Campbell on the TV program Bill Moyers Journal--April, 17, 1981.)

mythology - a system of images that incorporates a concept of the universe as a divinely energised and energizing ambience within which we live.

Myths are not invented but inspired. They come from below the level of consciousness.

divine - transcendent energy source--a mystery.

When you begin to think of the devine you don't have many images to use--you begin to employ images from some other system of thought.

To interpret a mythological symbol as though it refered to a concrete or historical fact is to misread the symbol.

In regard to the similarity aspect, my main point was that, exactly as in a musical score, it is impossible to understand a myth as a continuous sequence. This is why we should be aware that if we try to read a myth as we read a novel or a newspaper article, that is line after line, reading from left to right, we don't understand the myth, because we have to apprehend it as a totality and discover that the basic meaning of the myth is not conveyed by the sequence of events but - if I may say so - by bundles of events even although these events appear at different moments in the story. Therefore, we have to read the myth more or less as we would read an orchestral score, not stave after stave, but understanding that we should apprehend the the whole page and understand that something which was written on the first stave at the top of the page acquires meaning only if one considers that it is part and parcel of what is written below on the second stave, the third stave, and so on. That is, we have to read not only from left to right, but at the same time vertically, from top to bottom. We have to understand that each page is a totality. And it is only by treating the myth as if it were an orchestral score, written stave after stave, that we can understand it as a totality, that we can extract the meaning out of the myth.*

*Claude Levi-Strauss, Myth and Meaning, (New York: Schocken Books, 1979), pp. 44-5.

The formal elements in Cy Twombly's work are autographic (self expressive) rather than purely formal. Not generating form unconsciously (as in Surrealism) or aggressively activated (as in Abstract Expressionism) but consciously self referential. Form generated in this way is more literal--in the sense that it lacks the overtly emotional (AE) and not derived from the subconscious (surreal)--literally a direct application of linear markings derived from handwriting. It is essentially a system of marks derived and related to calligraphy, "...matter-of-fact writing and counting...", "...scrawl, born of ennui, self gratifying, registers of loops...", "...meandering graphism...". *

I share this urge for self gratification--involvement in process and the expression of personal experiences in literal time/space.

*Robert Pincus-Witten, Cy Twombly, Artforum, April 1974.

Critic - not a professional fault finder - an observer who can voice opinions which command respect because the assumptions on which they are based are clearly more than unthinking prejudices. A good critic is perpetually testing his assumptions against new experiences. A critic must learn to rationalize unconscious responses which are peculiar to the individual or shared with people in general.

Criticism should initially be addressed to the specifics of the work, i.e., shape symbology, surface and color, etc., as supportive of expressive content.

"Analysis should follow and support intuitions; the inner preceeding the outer."*

*Bernard Leach, The Potters Challenge, (New York: Dutton, 1975), n.p.

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