

Born to be beautiful

Gustav Weiß

This applies to everyone and everything. Art defers to nature as beauty is divinely ordained in nature. In other words it serves the survival of the species. That is the will of nature. For a century or more, we have seen nature simply as material. We can no longer be satisfied with this. The earliest thinker was aware both of created nature as well as the principle that created it. That is a subject for natural philosophy, not for natural science. Anything created by humankind has to be beautiful in a different way, i.e. through sensitivity, emotion and intellect.

First: Nature

That is the way nature wants it. It can be upliftingly beautiful and it can be fantastic in the way it is constructed and in the way it behaves, without humans having to find its appearance beautiful. If you google the tree known as *cecropia* or pumpwood, it is possible to construct a whole philosophical edifice. Nature thus has an exterior and an interior beauty. As human beings, we say it is beautiful and good if the two coincide; if something is beautiful and true beauty is concealed behind this beauty. Since Classicism and Romanticism, true beauty is a "beautiful soul". But then it does not actually have to be beautiful to look at.

External beauty is there to attract attention. In humans, animals and plants, this is linked with creating interest in reproduction. Because all living beings compensate for their mortality through reproduction, they are born to be beautiful. Inner beauty is sometimes so well hidden that you only find

it if you have had to do with it for quite a while. This is also true of nature if we look into its beauty. One example is the butterfly. When looking for a partner, they do not rely on their beauty but they also give off sexual attractants, and they get together like humans, if as the Germans say, they "like the smell of each other". And as to their colours, they can do something no one else can, and that is to create colours without pigments. The surface of their body consists of scales that are made up of thin, transparent lamellae. When a ray of light strikes the surface, it is refracted in all the colours of the rainbow, like in a prism, and reflected many times. The colours vary depending on the angle of incidence of the light. It is a technical miracle. In rainbows too, millions of tiny raindrops refract the light. Beyond every rainbow there is a second, paler one with the colours in reverse order. The explanation of the rainbow and the colours of thin lamellae goes back to Sir Isaac Newton.

Second: Art

The shape of things in nature corresponds to form in art. Form and colour are the natural foundations of art. Art does not have the continuity of nature, it jumps around, which nature does not do. Art lives by jumping. In the surface it becomes more and more superficial and in depth it becomes more and more profound, where it can lead to more thoughtful thinking than science can. That reality does not only consist of nature and everything that time brings with it, but also of secrets that sometimes ignite for us, but you do not always want to think about it. But sometimes beauty forces itself upon you, suddenly and when you are unprepared.

"Fair daughters were by beauty raised", as Goethe said, but "Wit had but dull sons for his lot". In a different poem, he says we should be grateful that the muses

have promised an everlasting union of what the heart has felt and what the mind has formed. The mind however continued to work and found as a reward "beauty to quicken him again".

In the information society, beauty is information, in consumer society it is advertising. Be beautiful, "Take me!" That is design, just like in animate nature.

In contrast to nature, to which intuition is foreign because everything is predetermined and will remain thus for ever, and to design, which focuses on superficial impressions, art can direct the attention to ideas. As it always critical with itself, this demonstrating its alert spirit and its ability to survive, it is not satisfied with beauty alone. Through non-objective art and Abstract Expressionism, it counteracts the traditional concept of beauty and would actually like to avoid using the word all together. It is really true that art has become more intellectual (as Nietzsche claimed) by linking ideas with opinions. To put it in contemporary terms, art expresses "sense data".

Art wants to be noticed. Beauty serves as bait to make people notice it. To make individuality stand out but also to express a "message". As "semantic" art, which is said to be the next big thing in the USA, it tends to take its productive impulse from the desire to communicate and to impart meaning. Meaning emerges from creating. But it is only understood by an observer who is receptive for this meaning. The hidden meaning must be "untied" as it were. This limitation is the price that has to be paid for art becoming more intellectual.

Third: Ceramics

It is one of the main concerns of ceramics that craft has a command of the beauty of the functional. Design also lays claim to this task. But in contrast to craft, whose sense of beauty speaks with a soft voice, design advertises loudly for sales in the world of industrial goods. But studio craft is also not free of functionality either. Via daily use, it is intended to fulfil a social function and to influence society. Gropius called for art to educate taste. Today, the gradient is reversed. Artworks are products of individual and social factors that have a determining



ILLUSTRATION -
"Birth of the Starfish"

In the animal kingdom, the male must impress the female by his beauty. With plants, the blooms must attract the bearers of pollen. With humans, alluring beauty serves reproduction. In inanimate objects, it attracts attention, in industrial society it promotes sales. Everything is born to be beautiful.

Relief glaze painting 2009, 66 x 66 cm.

photos: Olaf Bruhn

influence on the times as well as on art. Where ceramics has been abolished in the art academies, this happened from ignorance. It was subsumed either in design or sculpture, where students could have their skills examined through modelling in clay. The wild, colourful and bold potential in ceramics as art – three-dimensional form is naturally united with colour in this genre – remained unseen in this process. The decision, based on conventional knowledge that considers itself progressive, lacks panoramic vision. In contrast to eras before modernism when ceramics was only considered art if it was painted, abstract art can achieve effects with pure colour and form that would be impossible without forgoing representational images. This does not apply so much to the surface, whose beauty is perceived by the senses, as to the fact that it can express something that is beautiful because it stimulates thought. You might call it “form and colour plus”. Whether this plus is expressionist, constructivist or actionist is unimportant in this context and discretionary. All art styles are now merely designations of the way something has been made. But it is what the piece says that matters. But irrespective of what it is, it would not interest anybody if they did not find it. It depends especially on the receptiveness and willingness of the observer if it refers to the mysterious nature of the world or it expresses something that we would not normally have much opportunity in life to discover.

In ceramics, the artists at all times also see themselves confronted by the fundamental problem of working creatively. At the same time, they have to confront the consequences of the changed intellectual force field of the times. Imagination and inspiration, which now have priority, are no longer the kind of knowledge that was required of the maker of the technical beauty of applied art in the 20th century. They are more like ignorance, something we cannot explain but only marvel at. Philosophers call it “ratio recta”. It is a reflection on the great arc.

All living beings are thus members of a single family, but each one is a subject. That is their nature and their subjectivity is their abilities. They have their roots in “domains” that are coupled to DNA. It is the special tal-

ent of humans to think. Thinking, clothed in beauty – that is art. As a consistent method, it is a new aspect that has emerged from the cosmos of reality. In it, humankind is its own centre. The centre of a community is above which arc a thousand heavens of illusions, hopes and mysteries. Of mysteries because what humankind knows is only a small area in the sea of what is knowable and in the infinity of the unknowable, especially with regard to what the individual knows. But he must continue to believe that the incomprehensible is in fact comprehensible; otherwise he would cease to research. And human research is not merely reviewing what is knowable; it means feeling one’s way forward from one insight to the next, from piece of soil to another. And humans overestimate its value. According to the certainty of religious faith, striving for knowledge is the original sin because of the tree of knowledge. But it is only a dried up tree in darkness that grows lighter in the distance. The tree shows itself off and begins to shine.

Thinking – wrapped up in art – wants to be untied, but it can also remain in concealment. It is also true to say that thinking, like life itself, compensates for its transience and renews itself by reproduction. This is why thinking must be reborn to be beautiful. It is in the genes and it is a mystery. Everyone knows what thinking is, but no one knows what it really is. It is a mystery.

The images:

“Birth of the Starfish”

As Nietzsche puts it, the beauty of nature is the greatest tool to pacify the modern soul. (Nietzsche, Werke I/522).

“Subject = Nature”

The various abilities of living beings are the “domains” linked to DNA.

“Myself, the Community and 1,000 Heavens”

The community and myself are “selfhoods” in the cosmos of illusions (Jacques Derrida).

“Walking across the soil”

With all our achievements, we are walking across the soil. With the ancient Japanese character for “way”.

“Knowledge”

In the sea of knowledge (with the ancient Japanese character for “water”) the knowledge of humanity and of the individual is strictly limited.

“Tree of Knowledge”

In spite of its poverty, to us our knowledge seems to shine and shows itself off.

“Mystery”

What cannot be explained seeks an explanation.

All pictures painted with glaze on tiles, without using a brush.

ILLUSTRATION -

„Walking over soil“

with the ancient Japanese character for “way” As our world has developed on the soil in the Earth’s crust, our knowledge unfolds in a similar way by feeling its way forward from one insight to the next.

Reliefglaze painting 2009, 66 x 66 cm.

