

DIVERSITY – the feeling of now

Gustav Weiß

When we speak of “new” ceramics, we mean its contribution to a free development of a culture that is in tune with the feeling of the times. Pluralism in politics and world affairs are reflected in the feeling of the contemporary era. We think that our own productivity is a sovereign product of our personality, whereas in fact it is subject to the dictates of the times.

What we think and feel in the present is a reaction to the past. Fascism and communism began with concepts for the common good and ended in dictatorships. They were political forms of monism, in contrast to pluralism, which is the determining factor of the feeling of the present age as a reaction to the monism of

the past. Pluralist society is based on a large number of independent entities that champion their own various interests. Out of plurality, problems evolve for the common good, which we are experiencing between the states of Europe, but which have equally found discharge in the spring of the Arab world. It is no longer a question of the zeitgeist (the spirit of the age) but the “Weltzeitgeist” (the world spirit of the age). Plurality penetrates all areas of life as a feeling of what life is like now, including culture and art. Correspondingly, present-day ceramics are different from the ceramics of the previous generation, when rules defined what “ceramic” was.

In ceramics orientated towards fine art, a

general human trait is expressed, namely to sacrifice the certainty that comes with tradition for an uncertain something different that has yet to be found. All culture moves forward after this pattern. Fundamentally, it is a law of nature.

Change needs and wants to retain the attraction of novelty and freshness, of making further gains, by stepping out beyond gains that have already been made. In its philosophy, it insists that it finds its way back to the connection between art and society by declaring everything valid. It sees in this a way to renew the appeal of what has not yet been experienced. This includes a suitably contemporary processing of the experiments of Classical Modernism, which created a special artis-



left
Plurality
relief glaze painting
66 x 66 cm

opposite page
Birth of the Starfish
relief glaze painting
66 x 66 cm

tic climate. Modernism belonged in an age in which technology dominated the sense of the age. This led not only to numerous technological experiments but also to automated, random art that with Jackson Pollock lasted until 1975, while in politics and art monism had already been overcome after the Second World War and diversity determined the feeling of the age in the shape of a "second" Modernism – i.e. Postmodernism.

Part of diversity is reviving historic techniques from long ago. One example is three-dimensional reliefs on a coloured background. They go back to cameos in antiquity, which in turn developed from stamps and seals from the Middle East in the third millennium B.C.E. They were the

inspiration for Wedgwood's Jasper ware, an art form found as modern art five thousand years later. Its diversity overcomes yesterday's weary sense of satisfaction. It may be a sign of intellectual productivity, but besides acceptable things, it also contains things that are unacceptable. In his book on pluralist society, Josef Ratzinger, who became pope in 2005, warned of the disappearance of the dignity of freedom if in society only attempting to satisfy needs is worthwhile.

Empty, undirected freedom has no dignity. An awareness of goals has a special meaning for us to the extent that we feel our way forwards into the whole potential of ceramics through insights, always endeavouring to tap the full creative poten-

tial of colour and form.

The ceramic artist who only follows their own autonomy, irrespective of whether they are recognised by society or not, becomes acquainted with freedom in plurality. However they decide, they are caught in a dilemma between on the one hand rejecting consumer society, which is hostile to aestheticism, and on the other hand being dependent on it.

www.gustav-weiss.de

Bibliography

- Abel, Günter (ed.): "Pluralismus–Erkenntnistheorie, Ethik und Politik". Hamburg: Meiner 1996.
- Beck, Rainer: "Wahrheit, Pluralismus, Kunst". Munich: Vögel 1979.
- Brucher, Günter: "Zum Problem des Stilpluralismus". Vienna: Böhlau 1985.
- Gehring, Axel: "Freiheit und Pluralismus". Berlin: Duncker & Humblot 1977.
- Kreuzer, Helmut (ed.): "Pluralismus und Postmodernismus". Frankfurt a.M.: Lang 1994.
- Ratzinger, Josef Cardinal: "Wahrheit, Werte, Macht: Prüfsteine der pluralistischen Gesellschaft". Freiburg: Herder 1993.
- Sandkühler, Hans Jörg: "Einheit des Wissens. Zur Debatte über Monismus, Dualismus und Pluralismus". Bremen: Zentrum Philosophische Grundlagen der Wissenschaften 1996.
- Weiß, Gustav: "Keramik, die Kunst der Erde". Bern: Haupt 2004.
- Welsch, Wolfgang: "Postmoderne – Pluralität als ethischer und politischer Wert". Cologne: Bachem 1988.

