

Beyond Post Modernism

What we need today is New Art. Most people I know are tired and bored with 'Art' that is calculated to shock and undermine our inherited wisdom, with 'Art' that is designed solely to fit the market place. So much of The Post Modern 'art', the Conceptual 'art' of the last forty years nurtured by influential Art Institutions seems to have engendered a blasé and cynical attitude in people and many feel it has debased Art and by consequence has debased us all. The argument is that it is not Art as we, and all previous cultures for millennia, around the world, have understood the term.

One of the ideas of the Deconstruction/Post Structuralism theories which gave rise to what we call Post Modernism, promulgated by such notable philosophers as Jacques Derrida and Michael Foucault (among others) and promoted by the likes of Jean Baudrillard is that "originality" in painting is longer possible.... further developed to say that "Painting is Dead", and that all that was left for painters to do was pick over the bones of previous discoveries and the work of artists now deceased. That there was no longer anything new in painting. This, I believe is a no longer true, though for a while I fell for the deception myself.

I had begun my career full of enthusiasm for Modern Art...inspired by the paintings and romantic stories of the Impressionists, Cezanne, Van Gogh, Picasso in his Cubist phase, Kandinsky, Robert Delauney...artists forging toward a brave New World, having broken with the figurative tradition that extended backwards to Giotto or indeed the Greeks. As a young man I believed I had 'something' and as an Art student in Australia studying at Swinburne University in Melbourne under Jeffrey Makin and Roger Kemp I was 'going places'.

Then something interesting happened. An acquaintance of mine, who was totally immersed in the Drugs Sex and Rock'n Roll Culture of those days had gone to India in search of cheap drugs. He was found overdosed, in a gutter, by Buddhist Monks who carried him back to their monastery and, in time, restored him. He returned to Australia a year or two later and came by my studio a completely transformed person, glowing in health, drug free and at peace.

Fuelled with curiosity, I accompanied him to meet these monks (who had come to Australia to set up a new monastery) and the now deceased and famous Lama Yeshe. I went to the Buddhist monastery intending to stay two weeks and finished up staying more than six months, meditating ten hours a day.

Eventually I returned to Melbourne where it seemed things had changed...I had changed...the art world was in chaos...Pop Art, Op Art, Feminism, Minimalism, Post – Minimalism, Conceptualism, Land Art, Body Art, Performance Art, Graffiti Art and "Bad Painting". ...and the general consensus that Painting was Dead. Was this the inevitable conclusion of the Modern Project? Disillusioned, I thought of the heroes of the past...Leonardo Da Vinci, Sandro Botticelli, Rembrandt van Rijn...Van Gogh. They had 'something'. Their art seemed real and solid and enduring. Maybe I had lost my nerve...the meditation which I continued to practise had certainly opened me up to every possibility... I

decided to increase my knowledge and skill and study the Old Masters. This is what brought me to England.

For the next thirty years I studied the techniques of my heroes to master the intense attention to detail of the mediaeval artists like Jan Van Eyck, the glazing techniques of Titian, the expressive broad brush stroking of Francisco Goya and gradually I did develop my own figurative style, winning the Discerning Eye with 'Study for Portrait of the Artist as a Fool' and enjoyed a moderately successful career as a figurative painter. My personal project culminating in a series of twenty five 6' x5' paintings on the Passion of Christ some of which are on show here at St Stephen.

Then, towards the end of producing this series another interesting thing happened. Whilst painting the Resurrection event, using free, broad, colourful strokes to represent the transcendental light emanating from the Resurrected Christ...I had an 'Epiphany' that took me back to the beginning where I realized once more that the Modern Movement was beget by the influence of the Holy Spirit, the Zeitgeist, and that the purpose of Art is to 'glorify God', to offer a new view of the world, to be transcendent, to inspire people, to bring joy and peace and connect the viewer with their deeper mind (self) that leads to contemplation of the great questions like "What is Reality?" Where do we come from? Where are we going? What are to do? And that Art, Painting, should reveal Beauty, and a Beauty that has not been seen before. That true Reality is Spiritual and does not change. That an artist only really contributes when the art is coming from the deepest part, from the spirit, from the soul. Not from the ego. A moment of revelation!

I returned to the work I had left off before going to the monastery, and embraced my original vision, empowered with the study I had done and some considerable experience of life and meditation. Now no longer emulating other artists or working in a derivative style. I believe this, My New Work, what I call 'Cosmic' art is original and authentic. The inspiration coming from personal experience in Meditation, the observation of the patterns in nature and the imagery we see coming via the Hubble telescope, the Liga project and the electron microscope. The advances of science mirroring the inner experience of the timeless wisdom of the sages. Studies in Neuroscience revealing the correlation between our perceptions of the structures and patterns of the outside world and our minds.

My new work hopefully points to the oneness of all creation, to our deep connection with the cosmos/nature and to each other. For me at least and I know that I am not the only one to think this, the Period of Post Modernism is over and we have entered a new phase where artists will create with confidence, authentic and original art, a time of increased awareness and Faith. My hope is this new art will resonate with all people regardless of their culture.

I am very happy to be showing this New Work. **This is** a personal opinion of course yet I believe that the period of dominance of Conceptual Art is coming to an end. There is always going to be the question as to whether it is art at all. It is something, of course. In Victorian days I think many of the "installations" and exhibits at such events as the Venice Biennale would be termed 'Follies' It is sometimes amusing and often calculated to shock...it has generated billions of words in discussion and maybe billions of pounds, but will any of this

work stand the test of time? Painting, is always coming up with new ideas as it has for millennia and the best work does transcend time.