

Althuis Hofland Fine Arts

Father, let the eyes be yours

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A dilettante (Italian dilettare from Latin delectare “to delight”) is a “lover” who engages in an activity for its own sake, i.e. out of personal interest, pleasure, or passion. The term was originally intended to refer to the untrained artist or art enthusiast.

Dilettantism is not an individual or cultural disease but rather a kind of imperfect artistry. Nietzsche contrasts the “perilous pleasure in the superficial tasting of one thing after another” with the term “naïveté.”¹ On the one hand, he defines it as the characteristic of “simply being himself,” as the strengthening of the individual in the face of the “feeble many-sidedness of modern life,”² and on the other as a state that is only attained through male maturity. The state of naïveté is preceded by the “drama of life”; it is the result of a long internal struggle between the will and the intellect. The naive artistic attitude results from overcoming the cognitive attitude; it is an act of ecstatic ego constitution in which the separation into instinctive desire and pessimistic, reflective awareness is reversed.

“Naïveté is the unrestricted impartiality of the creator, who at least closes his eyes and desires wholeheartedly amid the exhilaration of creation - it is, perhaps, a revelation of the experience of those who always desire wholeheartedly and never observe themselves - the highly naive, very free spirits.”³

As a special quality that the dilettante lacks, thus falling short of artistry, naïveté is the opposite position to excessive introspection and rhetorical speech⁴. The empty aestheticism of the dilettante is merely a rhetorical instrumentalization of aesthetic means and falls short of the intoxicating effect of the artwork, in which life and art actually grow towards and from one another.

He believes that sensual excitability and the analytical dissection of one’s own emotional life are among the qualities of an artist - and doubtless also among those of a dilettante. The crucial difference between dilettantism and artistry lies in the fact that the dilettante remains in this state. The sensitivity of the dilettante lacks the element of subjective mastery. The dilettante lacks the ability and willingness “to limit himself” that is necessary in order to be an artist.⁵ The creative spirit is the conquering of the analytical quest for truth, commitment to appearances or what Nietzsche calls the “goodwill to appearance”. It is the artist’s acknowledgement that any creation, anything that has manifested itself, anything that is fixed, is a lie. Only the dissolution of the perceived world into a plurality of sensory stimuli and subsequent recombination of these elements into a suggestive other can “give that which has been created the ultimate clarity, the divine breath of life.”⁶

The artwork is life that has taken shape; it is the manifestation of the most intense emotional states in a painting. All of the twitching, vivid moods are captured in one solid form. This creative process must be repeated by the recipient at the moment of perception. Only when the image is perceived as an expression of one’s own experience is it imbued with ‘life’ and ‘meaning.’ From the isolated fragment exposed by the dissecting glance, the viewer can conjure up a vision of this strange world for a moment and draw conclusions concerning a hidden whole, allowing him to be a part of the life that has gone into the artwork.

When looking at a painting I realized: “Hast just so much of life to me reveal’d / As my interrogating soul to thee did yield.”⁷

Recently Zimbelmann has had a three-person exhibition entitled ‘Oh Youth and Beauty’ at Museo MAN in Nuoro (IT, 2018-19) together with Anna Bjørger and Louis Fratino curated by Luigi Fassi. Zimbelmann’s work further more recently has been included in the group exhibition ‘Selections From the Grunwald Center and the Hammer Contemporary Collection’, at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles and he has had solo exhibitions at Meyer Riegger, Berlin Karlsruhe and at China Art Objects Los Angeles.

1 Friedrich Nietzsche: Richard Wagner in Bayreuth/ 2 Friedrich Nietzsche: Richard Wagner in Bayreuth/ 3 Henri-Frédéric Amiel: Fragments d’un journal intime/ 4 Hugo von Hofmannthal: Zur Physiologie der modernen Liebe/ 5 Hugo von Hofmannthal: Gesammelte Werke. Reden, Essays und Aufsätze/ 6 Henri-Frédéric Amiel: Fragments d’un journal intime/ 7 Hugo von Hofmannthal: der Tor und der Tod