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Creating Forms as Expression of our Inner life

Rudolf Steiner

Rudolf Steiner described the new approach to the arts in the following way: we need to develop a form of artistic creativity that enables a new kind of thinking and feeling in the onlooker, which in turn becomes an experience of a spiritual reality. This is the ideal for the work of the Section for the Visual Arts. The artistic images and architectural forms that arise out of this approach can be compared in their effects on anyone looking at them with experiences arising from a meditative practice. It is just that artists work with means that aim to give form to a sensory appearance, while individuals meditating work with soul-spiritual tools. Any material given form in this way can immediately lead to spiritual experiences. From this perspective, then, it makes sense that there is a consistency in Rudolf Steiner's approach: he devoted the second phase of the development of anthroposophy to the visual and performing arts (music and speech). Art comes into being when there is an interdependent relationship between creating art and receiving it or taking it in, in which the creative artist places a form at the disposal of the onlooker; with the

help of which the onlooker can move spiritually. Creating and perceiving the creation are therefore in a mutually determining relationship and they create the work of art. Artistic, creative work does not aim to produce finished items that can be exhibited; it is much more about the exchange that takes place between the creation of a form, or a harmony of colours, and the perception of those creations, which enable a spiritual movement to happen for the observer or onlooker. Only when these two sides are present does a work of art begin to exist.. Rudolf Steiner calls this new approach to art

*the core of the evolutionary progress in which we find ourselves.*¹

When we consider the architecture and sculptures, the drawings and paintings created by Rudolf Steiner, it is clear that he was mostly working with cosmic principles in his motifs, as, for example, he brought the planetary development of the earth into the metamorphoses of the capitals in the first Goetheanum and created the two counter-forces or adversaries, with the figure of the representative of humanity at its centre, creating a balancing effect, in his sculpture *The Representative of Humanity*. We can also find motifs from the development of the earth and humanity in the glass windows for the first Goetheanum, which were adapted by for the second Goetheanum Asa Turgenev. In all these works of art it is not a personal artistic expression that is at the centre of the work but the depiction of spiritual principles and realities. We might say that it is an attempt to use artistic means to embody what is working behind all sensory phenomena. But it is not about creating fixed images or symbols of spiritual perceptions or visions, rather it is about creating a musical score which becomes what it is actually meant to be, a work of art, thanks to the observer's or onlooker's spiritual activity. That is why we

1 Steiner, Rudolf, *The Balance in the World and Man, Lucifer and Ahriman* (GA 158), www.rsarchive.org

cannot engage in interpretations and readings when we encounter these works, but can only take hold of the possibility of a spiritual movement that leads us to a spiritual experience when we do that out of ourselves. We are dealing:

...with an immersing oneself into things, with accompanying what is creative: this pours out from the higher hierarchies and penetrates and shapes our whole world. There is no need to avoid this last aspect just because it is more difficult than interpreting either symbolically or allegorically, because it leads into the spiritual world and is the strongest drive or motivation of all to arrive at true imagination, true inspiration and true intuition [...]. For in the spheres which are open to these considerations, there lies what makes our world a wholeness, what lifts us above what is nothing more than Maya and leads us to what is true reality. ²

When we take this into consideration, we can understand that the anthroposophical approach to art follows the same course as the journey through the 19 groups of mantra in the lessons of the First Class, only it works with other means or tools. They are both concerned with the steps towards higher knowledge, towards imagination, inspiration and intuition, it is just that the means used to achieve that knowledge are different. Of course it is true that they fructify and enrich each other in a quite particular way, because Rudolf Steiner made blackboard drawings for the many introductions to the Class lessons, which transformed the meditations around the situation, made in a few simple brush strokes, into imaginations, as in making the situations into images. The artistic element serves as an introduction in this context, so that we can see how closely and deeply connected the artistic element is

² Steiner, Rudolf: *Art in the Light of Mystery Wisdom* (GA 275, 4.2.1915)

when it is the expression of and the means used on the journey of the 19 Lessons; it accompanies and gives depth to it and to its possibilities.

The connection between science, art and religion that was present and alive in the ancient mysteries is equally one of the foundations contributing to the founding of the new mysteries in the institution of the School of Spiritual Science as it had done in the past. But for those of us alive today we need to actively take hold of this connection ourselves. As the central element, art needs to be aware of its essential task, which is

*...on the one hand to bring divine spiritual life down to earth
and on the other to shape and form earthly physical life in such
a way that it lifts it, so that its forms and colours, its words
and tones can appear as an earthly revelation of something that
is not earthly.³*

Access to the spiritual is not something simply given today: it needs to be developed. That is why the path of the 19 Class lessons is a substantial enrichment for any artist and for the path of developing those same artists' individual creative resources.

The Section for Visual Arts works on the relationship described above, on the one hand bringing down the divine spiritual life on to the earth, in as much as any artist has access to this world, and on the other to give form and shape to the artistic tools available to the individual artistic fields so that they enable something non-earthly to become a possibility.

3 Steiner, Rudolf, *The Arts and Their Mission* (GA 276, 3.6.1923)

For this reason the artistic, creative work of individual members of the Visual Arts Section cannot remain at the level of personal expression connected with their biography; rather, the tasks undertaken need to lead to research fields and to research questions, which can then be explored as the community in the Section.

Please see sbk.goetheanum.org for further information on current activities and initiatives.