

This is a report on the conference:

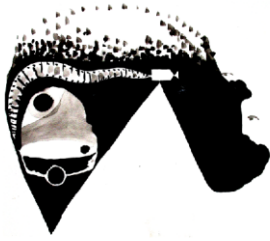


Image Arts Seen from the Perspective of Spiritual Reality

*that took place between the 6th and 9th of August, 2011.
This is a distillation of what I experienced and the ideas I
have tried to understand. For what it's worth, it is a
small window into the time we shared. It was a beautiful
meeting. Thank you to all who have been, and will be,
involved with this event.*

In Hudson, New York, beside the river and the trains, sits the Basilica Industria, a vast old factory. On August fifth, about seventy people came from many parts of the earth to investigate the meaning of Art today. This is the second year of the conference's life, put together by members of the Arts Section of the School of Spiritual Science and the community of the Free Columbia art course. The evolution of consciousness in relation to artistic and technological evolution was explored, and the metamorphosis of fear, as well as movement, group collaboration, and new searchings into what it means to be an artist and what the role of art is in these times. The high ceilings of the Basilica and the brick walls played with the echoes of expectation.

The conference, Image Arts Seen from the Perspective of Spiritual Reality, is unique today within the flood of technological innovation, the escapism of mainstream culture, and the dismissal of the reality of the spiritual world.

One was obliged to walk slowly for these few days. As you moved through the Basilica's space, you would find yourself around a low cradle between an equally shaped space of many small white bowls and a pile of earth. After your first encounter with this, the left side of your brain might ask, why did the artist make this, what are they

saying? There are many ways to perceive an artist's intention. A view common among people today was presented, that the subjective mind, with reflections of an individuality barred from participation in anything but itself, is the human experience and thus the foundation of the communication of an artist. An artist cannot contribute anything but their own take on the world. The symbols of their art stand only for their own experience. It is thought that only through completely antipathetic, abstract, ways of knowing can we form any correct presentation of the laws of the natural world. All imaginations of the natural world in this view that smack of the artistic are susceptible to the whims of an artist's fancy and bear less truth.



Figure 1-Part of an installation by Nick Pomeroy.

What was recognized at the conference, and is perhaps believed in a larger circle than some may imagine, is the reality of the human being's connection and communication with spiritual worlds. This is the belief that through the practice of art an individual may so transform their soul that they are able to access and collaborate with the creative world that lies behind all physicality and present imaginations of the natural world that are in line with scientific fact. In a time of many who believe that an individual cannot speak for any but themselves, there is belief in the possibilities of empathy.

If we were to again encounter these white bowls, how different would be the experience if we felt the artist was communicating something that we all share in, an objective, natural law. The possibility to make art through which the gods may speak was in this way explored.



Figure 2- Group working on a stop motion animation project.

A workshop on manual and stop-motion animation took place over the weekend. One group worked with an overhead projector and found objects, tissue paper, cardboard, colored light, poetry and sound, and collaborated in the creation of a puppet show. The other with a digital camera and I-movie, moving tissue paper, string, light, and chalk, slowly to the snapping of pictures,

manufacturing movement. In the deluge of digital media, the importance of returning to source, of understanding the many different ways a story can be told is invaluable. Explorations of the effect of the artist on the medium and of the medium on the artist began, and how the use of old and new technology today can be relevant to humanity, of how we can redeem the medium.

The middle of the Basilica was gathered by three canvasses with paintings on both sides hanging from the ceiling, they swayed, revealing currents of air, asking, how do you move towards an object, and how does it move towards you? The arrangement of the space in the factory asked the question of movement. It implicitly acknowledged movement as reality, spiritual as much as physical reality. There was a searching during the weekend for what this means.



Figure 3-Group discussion and Paintings by Laura Summer.



Figure 4-Spiral installation by Laura Summer.

goes inside it experiences in the innermost depths of his soul, when he feels the contours of the forms. All that the forms do is set the process going that creates the work of art. The work of art is what the soul experiences when it feels the shape of the forms. The work of art is the jelly.” (Art as seen in the Light of Mystery Wisdom, Lecture 1, page 28).

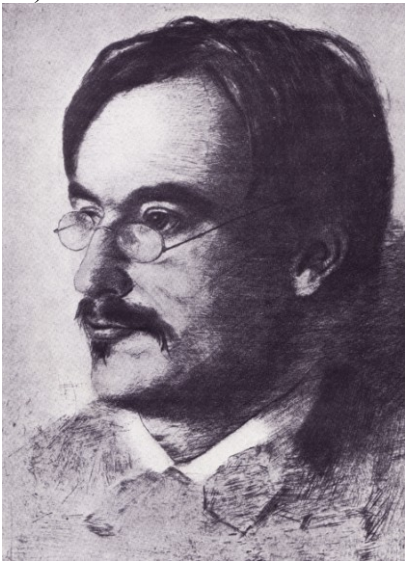


Figure 5-Rudolf Steiner

opening the creative. You could see them talking with each other, and talking to themselves, with their medium, returning to their intention, keeping their hypothesis open, listening. Others were asking, where is it true? Some standing back in resolution, finally let their art work on it’s own. The flow forms of artistic process loop from beginning to end and back again in myriad forms through the inner space created when someone accepts entering the creative process.

This particular group of individuals was working around the ideas that lay behind the large wooden structure that stood in the corner of the great room, where a small table covered with white match boxes lay, next to a crevice entrance. Holding a small wavering light at your fingers you entered the darkness and came to a small room made of brick. The shadows danced across a series of small pictures on the wall, depicting in small, burnt, cave drawings, a process of organic metamorphosis.

A chalk spiral was drawn on the floor, as you followed it, pictures moved around you, a circle form slowly breaking into color. Experiments in putting the observer of art into motion became a metaphor for the inner movement of the observer, the re-creation of the forms and colors in their own soul. Rudolf Steiner, “Our building is meant to be ... like a jelly mould that does not exist for its own sake but for the sake of the jelly ... and the important thing with our building is what a person who

To think of not only moving the physical forms, but of what the forms could move in the viewer, is a great responsibility for the artist. Equally, for the work of art to exist in one’s soul as the observer, as a re-creation of experience, would take a new kind of listening, a new response to art.

As you came out of the spiral you saw a table covered with color come to rest in sticks and tubes, transformed wood waiting to be redeemed, supplies, individuals bent over their work, going through the inner movements of the artistic process.

They had accepted entering into a process. They had set their intention. Others were gathering materials, collecting, choosing their medium. Some were moving the material, adding color to blankness, photographing what they had chosen, silencing the judgmental mind,

More than putting art objects on the wall, this structure spoke of the entire experience of art. It was the approach to the drawings that mattered, as it is one's entire biography that has led you to an object on a wall that creates the experience of art. This large wooden structure was created by a great painter who put down her brush to turn gallery spaces into cafes, parks into performance spaces, bringing the artistic into everyday life, finding new ways to welcome people into the experience of life, attempting to transform fear.

'Everyone is an artist' Joseph Beuys said. This was discussed at length. It was seen that the expansion of the definition of art would have far-reaching effects in the world. If doctors, politicians, businessmen, teachers, farmers, carpenters, *everybody*, realized their creativity, what changes we would see! So much good is held in the phrase 'Everyone is an artist'. It became apparent that artists have a role other than the creation of art in empowering others to realize their own artistry.

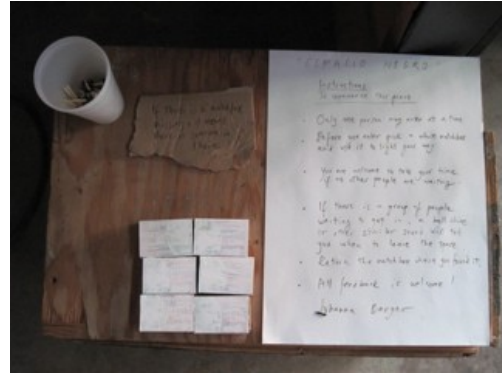


Figure 6-Match boxes and instructions, part of an installation by Johhanna Berger.

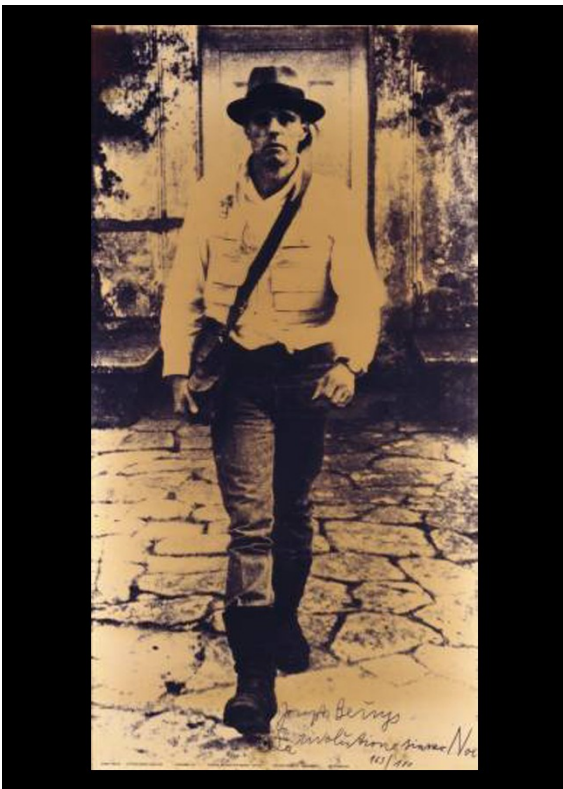


Figure 7-Joseph Beuys

The difference between photographing an image and creating it by hand was also explored throughout the weekend by a group of people. Opening a dialogue on the rush of technological innovation artistry has been subject too. Offering the opportunity, and sparking the question, to stop and think of what the use of new technologies means to the human being. As culture veers sharply into the digital world and Kindergartners are being given I-pads in America, it is truly a time to think about the difference between drawing a line and photographing one. As the group studied the difference between capturing and creating images, presentations of how the technological evolution has affected consciousness deepened the inquiry. The phenomenon of how people have come to feel that they are not communicating with a creative world, but capturing a created one. It was seen how people have come to relate to the camera more than the harp.

In the past, people felt they were 'harp's' the wind of the gods played through. They felt they interacted with, and participated in, a creative world. With the camera

series, evolving from a pin-hole of light to digital reproductions of images, we can perceive how people came to believe they were capturing a pre-fabricated world, not collaborating with a creative world. This has happened. We are living through the uncanny valley, where the difference between reality and virtual reality is very slim, and we have a choice.

Happily, the conference ended in questions. How to reestablish our connection as individuals and communities to the creative world, and rise above the deadening influences of these times, transforming our souls so to achieve true empathy, and creating art that transcends the experience of isolated subjectivity.

How a group could work artistically to lift 'art' out of the object, and place it in the observer. How to engage people in an experience of art that would lift them up, awaken their souls!

And how to evolve what has begun in Hudson, New York.

The conference itself is a living question.

Andrew Gilligan