

[typoscript]

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Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art: ⟨+ Non-figurative and Figurative Art.⟩

⟨- Non-figurative and Figurative Art.⟩

Although art is fundamentally everywhere and always the same, nevertheless two main ⟨tendencies → human inclinations⟩, diametrically opposed to each other, appear in its many and varied expressions. One aims at the *direct creation of universal beauty*, the other, at the *aesthetic expression of oneself*, in other words, of that which one thinks and experiences. The first aims at representing reality objectively, the second subjectively. Thus we see in every work of figurative art the desire, objectively to represent beauty, solely through form and colour, in mutually balanced relations, and, at the same time, an attempt to express that which these forms, colours and relations arouse in us. This latter attempt must of necessity result in an individual expression which veils the pure representation of beauty. Nevertheless, both ⟨these →the⟩ two opposing elements ⟨+(universal - individual)⟩ are indispensable if the work is to arouse emotion. Art had to find the right solution. In spite of the dual nature of the creative ⟨tendencies → inclinations⟩, figurative art has produced a harmony through a certain co-ordination between objective and subjective expression. For the spectator, however, who demands a pure representation of beauty, the individual expression is too predominant. For the artist, the search for a unified expression through the balance of two opposites has been, and always will be, a continual struggle.

⟨+ Sur la 9^e ligne d'en bas, ma phrase n'était pas claire dans mon manuscrit. Est-ce que l'on puisse la changer comme j'ai fait ? P.M.⟩

Throughout the history of culture, art has demonstrated that universal beauty does not arise from the particular character of the form, but from the dynamic rhythm of its inherent relationships, or - in a composition - from the mutual relations of forms. Art has shown that it is a question of determining the relations. It has revealed that ⟨- with⟩ the forms ⟨- that⟩ exist ⟨+ only for creating ⟨+ (to create)⟩ relations;⟩ ⟨- relationships can be created;⟩ ⟨these relationships create new forms while destroying the old → that forms create relations and that relations create forms.⟩ In this duality of forms and their relations neither takes precedence.

The only problem in art is to achieve a balance between the subjective and the objective. But it is of the utmost importance that this problem should be solved, in the realm of plastic art - technically, as it were - and not in the realm of thought. The work of art must be 'produced', ⟨+ 'constructed'.⟩ One must create as objective as possible a representation of forms and relations. Such work can never be empty because the opposition of its constructive elements and its execution arouse emotion.

⟨+ un peu d'espace v.a.r.8.[?] P.M.⟩

If some have failed to take into account the inherent character of the form and have forgotten that this - untransformed - predominates, others have overlooked the fact that an individual expression does not become a universal expression through figurative representation, which is based on our conception of feeling, be it classical, romantic, religious, surrealiste. Art has shown that universal expression can only be created by a *real equation of the universal and the individual*.

Gradually art is purifying its plastic means and thus bringing out the relationships between them. (In → Thus, in) our day (– the) (+ come out) two main tendencies (+appear:) (– are continuing the traditional aim of art:) the one maintains (the figurative → figuration), the other eliminates it. While the former employs more or less complicated and particular forms, the latter uses simple and neutral forms, or, ultimately, the free line and the pure colour. It is evident that the latter (non-figurative art) can more easily and thoroughly free itself from the domination of the subjective than can the figurative tendency; particular forms and colours (figurative art) are more easily exploited than neutral forms. It is, however, necessary to point out, that the definitions ‘figurative’ and ‘non-figurative’ are only approximate and relative. For every form, even every line, represents a figure, no form is absolutely neutral. Clearly, everything must be relative, but, since we need words to make our concepts understandable, we must keep to these terms.

Among the different forms we may consider those as being neutral which have neither the complexity nor the particularities possessed by the natural forms or abstract forms in general. We may call those neutral which do not evoke individual feelings or ideas. Geometrical forms being so profound an abstraction of form may be regarded as neutral; and on account of their tension and the purity of their outlines they may even be preferred to other neutral forms.

(As → If, as) a conception, non-figurative art has been created by the mutual interaction of (the two artistic tendencies; the method → the human duality, (– but) this art) has been *realised* by the mutual interaction of *constructive elements and their inherent relations*. This process consists in mutual purification; purified constructive elements set up pure relationships, and these in their turn demand pure constructive elements. Figurative art of today is the outcome of figurative art of the past, and non-figurative art is the outcome of the figurative art of today. Thus the unity of art is maintained.

If non-figurative art is born of figurative art, it is obvious that the two factors of human duality have not only changed, but have also approached one another towards a mutual balance; towards unity. One can rightly speak of an *evolution in plastic art*. It is of the greatest importance to note this fact, for it reveals the true way of art; the only path along which we can advance. Moreover, the evolution of the plastic arts shows that the dualism which has manifested itself in art is only relative and temporal. Both science and art are discovering and making us aware of the fact that *time is a process of intensification*, an evolution from the individual towards the universal, of the subjective towards the objective; towards the essence of things and of ourselves.

A careful observation of art since its origin shows that artistic expression seen from the outside is *not a process of extending but of intensifying one and the same thing*, universal beauty; and that seen from the inside *it is a growth*. Extension results in a continual repetition of nature; it is not human and art cannot follow it. So many of these repetitions which parade as ‘art’ clearly cannot arouse emotions.

Through intensification one creates successively on more profound planes: extension remains always on the same plane. Intensification, be it noted, is diametrically opposed to extension; they are at right angles to each other as are length and depth. This fact shows clearly the temporal opposition of non-figurative and figurative art.

But, if throughout its history art has meant a *continuous and gradual change in the expression of one and the something*, the opposition of the two trends - in our time so clear-out - is actually an unreal one. It is illogical that the two principal tendencies in art, figurative and non-figurative (objective and subjective) should be so hostile. Since art is in essence universal, its expression cannot rest on a subjective view. Our human capacities do not allow of a perfectly objective view, but that does not imply that the plastic expression of art is based on subjective conception. Our subjectivity realises but does not create the work.

(+ un peu d’espace ici [xxxx] comme ici. P.M.)

If (two tendencies → the two (+ mentioned) human inclinations) are apparent in a work of art, they have both collaborated in its realisation, but it is evident that the work will clearly show which of the two has predominated. In general, owing to the complexity of forms and the vague expression of relations, the two creative (tendencies → inclinations) will appear in the work in a confused manner. Although in general there remains much confusion, today the two (tendencies → inclinations) appear more clearly defined as (+ two tendencies:) *figurative and non-figurative art*. So-called non-figurative art often also creates a particular representation; figurative art, on the other hand, often neutralises its forms to a considerable extent. The fact that art which is really non-figurative is rare¹, does not detract from its value; evolution is always the work of pioneers, and their followers are always small in number. This following is not a clique; it is the result of all the existing social forces; it is composed of all those who through innate or acquired capacity are ready to represent the existing degree of human evolution. At a time when so much attention is paid to the collective, to the 'mass', it is necessary to note that evolution (+ , ultimately,) is never the work of the mass. The mass remains behind yet urges the pioneers to creation. For the pioneers, the social contact is indispensable, but not in order that they may know that what they are doing is necessary and useful, nor in order that 'collective approval may help them to persevere and nourish them with living ideas'. This contact is necessary only in an indirect way; it acts especially as an obstacle which increases their determination. The pioneers create through their reaction to external stimuli. They are guided not by the mass but by that which they see and feel. They discover consciously or unconsciously the fundamental laws hidden in reality, and aim at realizing them. In this way they further human development. They know that humanity is not served by making art comprehensible to everybody; to try this is to attempt the impossible. One serves mankind by enlightening it. Those who do not see will rebel, they will try to understand and will end up by 'seeing'. In art the search for a content which is collectively understandable is false; the content will always be individual. Religion, too, has been debased by that search.

Art is not made for anybody and is, at the same time for everybody. It is a mistake to try to go too fast. The complexity of art is due to the fact that different degrees of its evolution are present at one and the same time. The present carries with it the past and the future. But we need not try to foresee the future; we need only take our place in the development of human culture, a development which has made non-figurative art supreme. It has always been only one struggle, of only one real art; to create universal beauty. This points the way for both present and future. We need only continue and develop what already exists. The essential thing is that *the fixed laws of the plastic arts must be realised*. These have shown themselves clearly in non-figurative art.

Today one is tired of the dogmas of the past, and of truths once accepted but successively jettisoned. One realizes more and more the relativity of everything, and therefore one tends to reject the idea of fixed laws; of a single truth. This is very understandable but does not lead to profound vision. For there are 'made' laws, 'discovered' laws, but also laws - a truth for all time. These are more or less hidden in the reality which surrounds us and do not change. Not only science, but art also, shows us that reality, at first incomprehensible, gradually reveals itself, by the mutual relations that are inherent in things. Pure science and pure art, disinterested and free, can lead the advance in the recognition of the laws which are based on these relationships. A great scholar has recently said that pure science achieves practical results for humanity. Similarly, one can say that pure art, even though it appear abstract, can be of direct utility for life.

Art shows us that there are also constant truths concerning forms. Every form, every line has its own expression. This objective expression can be modified by our subjective view but it is no less true for that. Round is always round and square is always square. Simple though these facts are, they often appear to be forgotten in art. Many try to achieve one and the same end by different means. In plastic art this is impossibility. In plastic art it is necessary to choose constructive means which are of one piece with that which one wants to express.

¹ Waarschijnlijk typefout, moet zijn 'rare'

Art makes us realize that there are *fixed laws which govern and point to the use of the constructive elements of the composition and of the inherent inter-relationships between them*. These laws may be regarded as subsidiary laws to the *fundamental law of equivalence which creates dynamic equilibrium and reveals the true content of reality*.