

Bruce's Studio News

Process • Concept • Evolution • Solution

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Some thoughts about "Contemporary" Art:

For years, as a student of art and as an artist born eight years before the middle of the twentieth century, I listened to, read and discussed art historical and philosophical questions regarding the meaning and purpose of art. I confronted the age old debates about 16th century classical renaissance (the age of DaVinci and Michelangelo) and somehow tried to intellectually compare their trending to the past, with the movements that followed, and even those two centuries later that evolved and divided the movements of the 18th & 19th centuries so contrastingly into Romanticists, Impressionists, Expressionists and all the "post" variants of these movements. In the lexicon of art history, Modern Art began around 1860 and ended around the time I was born in 1942. So even the early 20th century art movements; Cubism, Fauvism, Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism were ancient history to me as I studied in the art schools of the 60's. Consequently, the artists that excited me were Contemporary Artists. I saw the influences of the past in many artist's work around me, but I observed the transitions in the contemporary art world in my lifetime as we moved from Abstract Expressionism, Neo-Plasticism and Color Field painting, through Pop Art, Op Art, Minimalism, Conceptualism, Photo Realism, Lyrical Abstraction, Neo-Expressionism, Appropriation (art), Installation (art), and early Digital Art (to name just a handful!).



In a sense, "CONTEMPORARY" during the late 20th century simply meant... changing ideas of what art was, and a fluid period of movements replacing each other in rapid succession. The world of art seemed to be moving faster and faster and all concepts of art were in flux. Now we are more than a decade into the twenty-first century and the art world continues to change, as it always does. Most obvious to me is the globalization of contemporary art. We live in a digitally interconnected world. The computer, internet and cell phone have changed everything I used to think about art, the visual dialogue as well as art's purpose and potential. Globalism has altered time and space for the contemporary artist.



So now I am left to ask what should we expect of the art of today? To be considered a "contemporary artist" is it enough to simply be living in the present day while producing derivative works based upon past art styles, or does the artist have to create truly innovative work that reflects the times through meaning and process?

The recent themed show "This is Water" at the Vermont Institute of Contemporary Art (of which I was a part) was an eclectic collection of works by a dozen artists of varying notoriety which may have suggested some interesting answers to the questions I have offered. It was curated by Mia Feroletto. As you might expect, the show had mixed reviews... depending on personal taste and understanding of the current landscape of art in 2013. The show was a success or not, depending on your point of view. For me, selling one of my mixed media works to an appreciative patron, made it a success!



Above: Some views of "This is Water" with works by Eric Aho, Katherine Bradford, Glenn Goldberg, Antoinetta Grassi, Karen Gunderson, Don Nice, Lucio Pozzi, Ameila Toelke, Doug Trump, Laura Jane Walker, Kylie Wolgamott and myself (Photos courtesy of VTICA)

In a recent post by Jean Robertson, Professor of Art History at Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis on the Oxford Art Online website she thoughtfully discusses where we are in today's 2013 art world. It may be a little too long to "tweet" but it's definitely worth the read if you find yourself trying to understand what Contemporary Art is all about. I have hyperlinked Robertson's post below, including additional links to a large number of interesting related subjects. (Unfortunately for me, and probably most of you, an online subscription costs \$295/yr., which for me, exceeds my budget for web readings!) None-the-less, you can read Robertson's article in its entirety without subscribing.

Click: <<http://www.oxfordartonline.com/public/page/themes/artin21cent>> for an interesting read...