



If we understand the past we can make a better world.

I was a fashion professor in Berlin for 13 years. I went for 4 days, 7 or 8 times a year. We discussed books, *Brave New World*, *1984*, *The gods will have Blood* by Anatol France. And I sent them to the art gallery. I said, "Before you go into the next room think, if the fire-bell went which painting would you save. If you continue going to the gallery, in 6 months time you would not choose that painting".

You would start

It's about discrimination. "The best is the enemy of the good". And discrimination is the root of our intelligence. Opinions are formed. Without judges there is no art. I think of the art lover as a freedom fighter for a better world. I would like to believe in human evolution; that we could become more cultivated, more human.

If we had true culture instead of consumption we would not have climate change. We would have different values.

My husband Andreas, who designs our most avant garde fashion, complained that I was spending too much time on Climate Revolution (that is the name of our activist NGO) – not helping him enough. “A dress is the most important thing! If people only bought beautiful things – that would be Climate Revolution!”

I think that in the early 20th century a shift occurred: the work of art, the object was considered not so much to have a value intrinsic to itself but to have value relative to the opinion of the viewer. And in the modern age of democracy every arbitrary opinion is now accepted to be as good as the next.

Less discrimination + more consumption

It was the age of the iconoclast + the dogma was to break traditions; “Keep up with the times”! “Follow the latest thing!” The break succeeded in painting, though Matisse + Picasso who began in the 19th century continued + the tradition finally ended with them. Francis Bacon + Frank Auerbach are exceptions, there may be others.

Telling the artist to break with tradition is like telling the scientist to smash its laboratory. Break tradition + you kill spontaneity. The artist becomes self-conscious, too preoccupied. Trying to be original by starting from himself ... Something different! How contrived that is. We feel we’ve seen it 17 times already.

Spontaneity can be quick but it can take ages. I know this from fashion design. It is something you discover as you go along. Think of Matisse going over + over trying to catch the idea he was after until he tried everything + he was satisfied.

Great art is always original. In his essay “*Tradition and the Original Talent*” T.S. Eliot says the proof of this is “If the new work fits into the tradition. And the tradition changes moves to include the new work.

There is no progress in art. Picasso is not greater than Titian + Titian is not greater than the cave painters of 20.000 BC.

There can be decadence. I love Chinese painting which lasted for 1.000 years until it fell off in the 19th century under western depredations + sabotage of Chinese cultural identity.

There is no progress because art is always original, as alive today as when it was first done. Each work is a vision captured by an individual. The artist changes, we change, the world changes. We can look back on it – but it's alive for us because we can see something of the reality behind it, though we cannot step into the same river twice.

There is not progress because art is universal + timeless. It is something humans can do. The world spins + we are part of the flux but we can stop the world, abstract a moment in time and pin it down by representation. It is universal because it is knowledge + capable of meaning through direct experience.

The Greek called art *Immitation* because though it mirrors the world it is not real.

Like all creatures we stop the world to understand it. Our experience comes to us through signs + sensations + direct experience abstracted from the flux. Because some people say that science and everything we make is art – The Eifel Tower! (We are homo faber, homo lognax, homo sapiens) But no! It seems the Greeks got it right, art is the thing we make that is not real. Art is imitation.

My friend Sarah is a dancer + a teacher of philosophy which she applies to the teaching of dance. I think that modern ballet has reached its limits and is burnt out. She does not agree + I respect her opinion in the hope that she can take me to an event that is the opposite of boring. Ballerino Michael Clark had outstanding artistic talent, he wanted to be a punk. Nureyev. The difference was Nureyev had culture. You need that to break the rules.

I reject abstract art: A square is not art, red seeping into brown is not art. They are just qualities, not imitations of anything. There is no focus, just an ambience.

I reject these qualities on the grounds that they do not give culture because they are not subjects + capable of meaning. The viewer would have to invent a meaning.

There is no common ground + culture is something we can share.