

THE ULTIMATE HALLUCINATION

BY

MARC GUIOT

The Ultimate Hallucination is, sorry, used to be Brussels most exciting authentic Modern Style brasserie-restaurant. Its vintage original furniture and decoration conveyed it a somewhat *prustian* bourgeois flavor. But it has closed recently. The “*Ultimate*” as we called it gently was a work of art. It was art at its very best both architecturally and gastronomically. Art nouveau, indeed but in the first place “art de vivre”. Georges Steiner was once suggesting that the spirit of Europe will survive as long as there are elegant bookshops and cosmopolitan cafés where you can exchange and read your papers.

The spirit of Europe? It is probably to be found in its traditions, culture and values i.e. in its fabulous culture. Europe is more than a concept it is literally a *civilization* (Edgar Morin) for there is indeed such thing as a specific European culture. *Homo Europeanus* has developed various faces, the face of a nymph called Europe (etymologically: the *wide-eyed*) and also that of its great mythological heroes such as of Antigone, Athena, Oedipus Rex, Prometheus, Ulysses, Don Juan, Don Quixote, Hamlet, Faust... and it has the eyes and the face of its great men and women: Socrates, Plato, Cicero, Carolus Magnus, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Newton, Goethe, Byron, Hesse, Einstein, Valéry, Joyce, Mann; Marie Curie Simone, de Beauvoir, Rosa Luxemburg, Hannah Arendt, Willy Brandt, ... Theirs are the Eyes of Europe who see the dreams and dramas of this, their European civilization. But not only their eyes are remarkable, also those of millions of anonymous teenagers provided they are eager and willing to internalize Europe's values and its incredible cultural heritage which is being terribly neglected by our national and regional school networks. A considerable challenge for Eyes of Europe indeed, that of creating a permanent virtual museum that gives access to the complete art production of mankind. This challenge can now be reduced to a technical problem fairly easily solved.

Over the last 30 years, art has tended to abandon one of its main objects: teaching people how to live, love, think, sense, experience and it has failed to challenge, criticize, warn and

question policy makers across the world which it was to have done. For decades art has indeed omitted to tackle the challenging issues of our civilization in decline, all for the sake of both frivolity and moneymaking: *vernissage events* to boost reputations and raise stock-market value. By doing so, art has become unreliable, value free as politics, chiefly concerned by worshipping Mammon and serving the golden calf. Contemporary art and politics have simply both lost credibility: commercial and subsidized art instead of fine art. Fine art has often goals beyond pure creativity and self-expression.

“For 1,000 Years Art Has Been One of Our Great Civilising Forces. Today, Pickled Sheep and Soiled Beds Threaten to Make Barbarians of Us All (. . .). There is agreement among all the parties, with the somewhat reluctant acquiescence of the voters, that art should be subsidized, helping to subsidise unmade beds as the Rembrandts of our day: an affront to common sense, taste and public decency. (Daily Mail , October 23, 1999) |

Anti-art this may be called; a valid label for art that fails to challenge meaning, value and the essence of fine art.

Isn't it time that we were asking ourselves what kind of purpose art is serving?

Most contemporary artists have lost touch with the search for transcendence that infused the work of such masters as Michelangelo, van Gogh, Paul Klee, Kandinsky...The moral irresponsibility of most contemporary art towards his own creative endeavors, is appalling .
Alex Grey

Art may be considered globally as an exploration of the human condition.

The mission of art is among other things stimulating critical and creative thinking, relating the present with the best of our past, and shaping a future that benefits humankind ; preparing them to meet their world with real concern, creative freedom, firm purpose, and strong resolve.

Beauty is in the beholder's eye (Shakespeare), provided the beholder's eye has been somehow educated. But who the devil bothers to educate it. The family, society, school? School is blamed for not bothering about art any longer.

It ought to be reintroduced in the curriculum in new ways in order to stimulate creativity, sensitivity and teach the eye critically, teach the pupils to decipher images both liminal and subliminal in order to understand and defuse them.

Europe's history is not only political but more than anything an ethical and esthetical conquest. European arts have definitely shaped the European soul.

Art should again become a healing force for our declining civilization in a period of acute crisis. Eyes of Europe definitely believes in arts curative power. Therefore it stands for teaching basic issues through art: *“Where We Come From? What we Are? Where Are We Going?”*

Museums are art temples for the initiated. They could and should make art accessible for the greatest number and look into the future and help shape it. *“Museums must be the advocates of beauty wherever it is found.”* (Roger) Therefore, museums must be made far more accessible, actively welcoming the public, through human interaction as well as through social media, and most of all through an active online presence in order that visitors both live and virtual take part in a uniquely powerful experience: the art experience. Delivering this art experience is one of the missions of Eyes of Europe. EoE considers that Art is for delight, for commentary, for worship and ritual, for commemoration and for persuasion and in the very first place for self-expression. *“Art must lift us above the steam of life”* Professor Liena Vayzman, CUNY La Guardia Community College

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Don't we all value music that provides emotional catharsis? Film, a most interesting form of visual art, is frequently used to tell a story. Major architects are well-known historical figures for their success in combining art and function. Persuasive art is intended to convey a message. Splendid religious and government buildings, public monuments, television commercials, music videos all harness the power of art to influence action and opinion. One of the things that art does is extend and expand our shared common visual language. What is the purpose or function of art to you? That is the key question EoE intends to put to all its participants in real time.

Do you think of art as of a way for you to express yourself creatively through writing, music, singing, dancing, makeup, painting, making a film, or photography, putting your feelings into a poem, a song?

Is Art a way for you to make life less dull?

Martin Heidegger has interpreted art as *the means by which a community develops for itself a medium for self-expression and interpretation.*

Art has had a great number of different functions throughout history, making its purpose difficult to abstract or quantify to any single concept. It has had many unique, different reasons for being created.

"The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science." -Albert Einstein

Most modern public museums and art education programs for children in schools can be traced back to this impulse to have art available to everyone. But despite all this, at least one of the important functions of art in the 21st century remains as a marker of wealth and social status. That doesn't make sense.

Paul Klee : *"art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible"*

It's one of Eyes of Europe's deepest concern and conviction that art should be made accessible virtually and live to all teenagers in Europe and all over the world. What is technically possible ought to be promptly implemented in order that art may become for all the "ultimate hallucination".

MARC GUIOT

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