

Oct. 1980

## THE ARTIST AND HIS ROLE

To explain the artist's role, or purpose, one must first define what is meant by the word 'artist'. What qualities, what type of expression, what characteristics make someone an artist? Most individuals will readily agree that paintings, sculptures and drawings are done by an artist. With a little further thought, there is general agreement that great actors, singers and musicians are artists following their line of art. Writers and music composers are very much involved in a creative process that is also a form of art.

The key word here, is 'creative'. Art is an appeal to the intellect and the emotions via the senses, whether it is visual, auditory, tactile, or an appeal the senses of taste and smell. If a painter is to be considered an artist involved in producing a painting, then the person involved in creating new strains of flowers through processes of cross-pollination cannot be excluded from the category of an artist involved in a work of art. If an argument arose that the technical aspects would exclude this field from the world of art, then what of the graphic artist whose field involves the creative application of specific and often complicated techniques? Once again, the key word is 'creative'.

To my mind, everyone is an artist in one form or another. The art created is the means by which the individual chooses to express himself, concerning attitudes, beliefs, ideas and concepts. The painter paints pictures that reflect his individuality, while at the same time reflecting some aspect of his reaction to the world in which he lives. Parents raise their children, becoming involved in interrelationships and challenges while attempting to instil into their children some of their ideas about what is involved in the creation of a self-fulfilling life within the social milieu in which they live. Some people have the ability to make people laugh. Some people are great storytellers and other have a knack for teach new ideas or inventing new products. All are involved in the creation of their own lives and through some form of interaction, reach out to others.

Areas of conflict and areas of fascination frequently demand some form of expression. A painter may be reacting to the rigidity of an attitude that prefers naturalistic and realistic works of art when he develops a very abstract style, thus expressing the chaos that rigidity often seeks to control. A musician involved in using electronic sounds and effects is both creative and expressive in his reactions to the more traditional forms of music. Society reacts to these changes by either accepting or rejecting them, revealing the set of beliefs by which it lives.

Over a period of time, set beliefs tend to become rigid and over-emphasized, allowing less and less creativity and originality to be expressed. When such a point is reached, it takes a revolutionary break-through to disrupt and break the hold of static responses. Elvis Presley and the Beatles, for example, were musicians who entered into the music world at a time when dramatic breakthroughs were needed. it is not surprising that the followers of these individuals tended to be young people. Since their thoughts had not yet become trapped within a set view of music, they had a more open-minded appreciation of the artistic endeavour as a reflection, not only of the artist but also of themselves, caught in a process of change, of rebirth.

The same pattern of revolutionary change can be seen throughout the history of painting. A fairly recent example is the dramatic Fauve outbreak at the beginning of the twentieth century, at which time a group of young artists were reacting to and attempting to break through the

academic beliefs about art. They created wildly colourful and distorted paintings that helped to initiate a change in the concepts of creativity in relation to painting and sculpture.

Without change and originality, art becomes static - a sense of repetitiveness sets in. At such times, a new approach is needed; a new beginning that breaks the rigidity of attitudes and breaks the rut. This is true of life itself, for the visual arts of any era reflect both the individual artist and the world within which the individual lives.

Up to this point, I have dealt with art and creativity in terms of known names in history. As stated earlier, I believe that every human being is an artist. If an artist is a person involved in creative self-expression, then each life is creativity in motion. Each individual passes through various stages of growth and understanding, and in a lifetime plays numerous roles such as that of child, adolescent, adult, employee, employer, teacher, parent, etc. Each individual is unique in the experiences and specific concepts that he chooses to express.

Creativity is an approach rather than 'that elusive element that some people have and others don't'. Everyone can choose to approach his or her life in a creative sense. Any job can be boring, but interactions with people, whether they are co-workers or customers, are the creative source that reawakens interest and vitality. When someone talks enthusiastically about a favourite hobby, the enthusiasm tends to draw listeners. Why? It is because the person talking is injecting his life, his approach, his love into the conversation, and expressing himself.

Each individual expresses himself in his own way, and through his self-expression is at the same time creating the story of his own life and dreams. Creativity is a way of being. It is the way in which the individual reacts to the world in which he lives. It is the spur to rebellion if the individual is motivated strongly enough against a certain rigidity in thought or tradition; and at the same time is the foundation of tradition for those who have found their lives best expressed within the patterns of a certain society.

Through the expression of self, whether it is vocal, written, painted, acted, etc., other individuals are influenced in some manner. Whether or not others agree or disagree with new ideas or old approaches, is also an individual expression. Whether one is affected adversely or not, the key factor is that they have been in some way affected, and have responded. Change comes about as a chain of interacting events that begin to spread outward in a series of ripples, gathering gradually into tides of influence as new schools of thought overwhelm the old. The new aspects of change gradually become accepted, and settle into a stability that reaches towards security, until a new reaction, a new creative approach stimulates further change.

Every human being is, in his own right, an artist. His art is his life - a creative expression of experiences, ideas and goals that mark his individuality. Through self-expression, he reaches towards further fulfilment of himself. Through interactions with others, he creates his own response to the world within which he lives.