A Culture Still Cultured Essay, Research Paper

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art n. the quality, production, expression, or realm, according to aesthetic principals, of what is beautiful, appealing, or of more than ordinary significance. ?The Random House Dictionary

?Josh, you just have to see the new GAP Khakis commercial!? proclaimed my excited brother. I even went as far as watching the same channel until I finally saw the commercial. I sat in front of the television for over a half an hour, and turned my head at the sound of catchy swing music to see young men and women dancing to music on a stark white backdrop. Their energy and enthusiasm to dance was like nothing I had seen in reality. In all the twisting and tangling of arms, legs, and female hair, I froze in my seat as everyone on the dance floor froze in mid air. My heart stopped as I followed the camera around the frozen dancers. The new perception heightened the dancing energy. The GAP Khakis sign invaded the screen for a few seconds and the screen went blank. Was this the work of an evil genius trying to get my attention so that I could be brainwashed into buying a product? Could it perhaps be simply one artist communicating a new sense of beauty to the whole world, regardless of the product I was deeply affected by the strange time and space rendered in front of me in thirty seconds. Commercial film affects me more than fine art in a museum does. It has also proven to be much better at portraying subtleties to a mass audience in a clear and definite way. People are ashamed of this comparative strength. Many of my self-fabricated intellectual friends claim to enjoy gallery fine art more than they enjoy movies and television. When we are at the gallery, I watch my friends ooh and aah at the work as they interpret its meaning amongst themselves. After dragging them cynically into the movie theater, they exit two hours later wiping their eyes off not wanting to say anything to anyone.

Before the idea of mass-produced copies of art, people were starved for the kind of extraordinary visions we take for granted. They went to art shows and concerts. They valued their circuses and city zoos. After someone realized that the power of the extraordinarily beautiful could be very profitable, everything became consumerism. So, did all of this artistic talent disappear into thin air? Do bitter fine artists have reason to spit at an official for stifling the National Endowment for the Arts? The answer is in the advertisement. Fine art appreciation may be a low priority to many Americans. I become uneasy when I hear someone say, ?Art is dead in America!? The truth is that traditional art is dead in America. Did puritans sail the Atlantic ocean to settle here and be just like the people they broke away from? America?s having non-traditional art is a blessing to its original idea of constantly self reforming and exploring the possible new and better.

America has a very thriving art form. Part of the reason why this art will never die is because people deny that it is art. The system is so engrained in our society that people are too ashamed to include it within the nomenclature of what they have been taught early on to see as inaccessible and foreign culture. That unique and strong art is renamed consumerism for its functional relationship to the economy. Very creative people in America work in show business and advertisement. The ?fine art? continues to live underground to satisfy our nostalgia for the past, our need for small hors d?ouvres of diversity now and again, and as an important breeding ground for new ideas and approaches. The advertisements on TV celebrate our culture?s new ideas and feelings. They catch our attention not because they were written by psychologist-brain washers, but because they are powered by artistic minds who would have stopped at nothing to communicate humanity in any other way, had it not been for such a wonderful system of communication as consumerism.

The audience gets a thrill and gains peace of mind. There is also a product being sold, but in a good commercial, that is almost irrelevant to the message of human identification. Apple?s Think different campaign catches our hearts by tirelessly reminding us that everyone who changed the history books thought outside of the box, and was unique in some way. As I drive up Sunset Blvd. my eye sometimes tears at the sight of John Lennon?s face 50 feet high on the side of a building. He was put there by an ad team to make me feel better about my own human uniqueness. I cheer at the face of Ansel Adams as I drive up the 405 freeway, and afterwards, it will always be my choice to purchase an Imac computer. It would be in my best interest to give that company money now that they have shown me their talent for choosing the right artists that I can identify with.

It?s as if the higher art critics have forgotten that art always had a commercial tie throughout history. People bought paintings of their loved ones and themselves. It was the most immortalizing thing they could find at the time, and still so to some. A famous Renaissance painter?s uncanny ability to catch the likeness in people was not only appreciated with the highest respect, but also paid handsomely. That existed even until Norman Rockwell?s uncanny ability to capture the same humanity. He never considered himself an artist.

So is it bad that we think our art culture doesn?t exist among the common folk? Wouldn?t all chaos rein if the people who considered themselves high class realized that they were just like the rest of us? Perhaps it is safe to say that as long as everyone secretly appreciates American consumer culture across the globe, it is no longer important whether it exactly resembles Art with a capital A. It is somewhat of a more powerful model, able to reach many more people in less time. It is Entertainment with a capital E, the new art for a new kind of society, something to be blissfully ashamed of!

Bibliography

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