

# universal colours

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Artist of the issue Avtarjeet Dhanjal



# Editorial

Well, a new year started and we just had the celebration of the fourth year working with our beloved young Organization the EUMAN. A new life battle started too, but things are showing better and more comfortable. In the horizon, there is some hope that we can continue our struggle and our resistance to this tough atmosphere, in exile.

Many interesting professional people have joined us. That is something that gives us hope for a better quality to our future, especially as they push our work forward by participating in our activities and show us new opportunities in other European countries. Especially Dr. Michael Casey, whose courage and support to our Organisation I deeply admire. A qualified person in the field of art critic, a wonderful artist as well, who opened many European exhibition doors to us. He will also contribute to the UC.

Mr. Jaber Alwan in Italy, who took the responsibility for setting up a committee in Italy to support our large-scale exhibition which will take place in St. Petersburg next autumn.

Of course the financial support which came during these four years from the Finnish Authorities is continuing and in addition to this financial support, there is significant support from the Ministry of Education in Finland especially Mr. Mikko Cortes Tell6s, and great significant advise and support from Mr. Risto Ruohonen the chairperson of the Finnish Art Council.

Anyway, we are in the beginning of this year, and I think that we are going to reach our aims during this year. Someone might say:- do not be happy in advance", but I do hope and it is just a hope. What I mean by our aims is that we were talking about recognition recently. Now all signs are indicating good future. Lets all hope so, or what?

Amir Khatib

# ARTIST OF THE ISSUE

## Avtarjeet Dhanjal

What I want to say about the artist of the issue this time, our artist Avtarjeet Dhanjal, is not analyzing or critic, as it is diving deep in the depth with his thinking when I face his art.

As I see it, there is strong relationship between the soul and the dream, and through meditation of the things, or others, man can find this relationship between the soul and the dream.

As I said, the dream is a reflexion of the reality. Avtarjeet creates from the things of reality the dream, or soul, relationships. The viewer cannot understand it unless she/he meditates upon his art. This meditation is a pure standing with the soul and at the same time a resource of the dreams, both the daydream and the sleeping dream.

Although the world of art is one world, there are two skies for this dream. The artist composes her/his world from the things of reality as mentioned above. These things are the resource of the artist's happiness, sadness, astonishments etc. In the point of view of the artist who makes her/his things, trees, earth, sea, day, night, move to a world of dream of her/his own. In the art these things lose their realistic meanings and turn to be symbols, shining signs in the buried horizon inside the night of the journey. What is realistic is very important, because it is the resource that is always shining, not because it is the inevitable end. The dealing with reality as a shiny resource means that what is realistic can make the composition of the borders of the dream. If Sigmund Freud separates between the relation brought into being by the creative activity of the artist? The essence of this, activity, as pointed out by the Finnish media/installation artist, Erkki Soininen, consists of specific acts of consciousness in the artist, but these invariably manifest themselves in certain physical operations directed by the artist's creative will which bring into being or transform a certain physical object - the material - bestowing upon it that form whereby it becomes the existential substrate of the work of art itself, for example a work of literature or music, a picture or photograph, a piece of design or architecture, etc., and at the same time assuring to it relative durability and accessibility to a multiplicity of observers.

## Comprehending installation art

Nevertheless in its structure and properties installation art always extends beyond its material substrate, the real "thing" which ontologically supports it, although the properties of the substrate are not irrelevant to the properties of the work of art which depends upon it.

Installation Art of whatever kind has the distinguishing feature that it is not the sort of thing which is completely determined in every respect by the primary level variables of its qualities; in other words, it contains within itself characteristic lacunae in definition, areas of

indeterminateness: it is, as Soininen's works demonstrate - for example, *Homely Objects*, Bunratty Folk Park, Ireland, 1996 - a schematic creation. Furthermore, not all its determinants, components, or qualities are in a state of actuality, but some of them are potential only. In view of this installation art requires an agent existing outside itself, that is an observer, in order - as I express it - to render it concrete. Through his co-creative activity in appreciation the observer sets himself as is commonly said to "interpret" the work or, as I prefer to say, to reconstruct it in its effective characteristics, and in doing this as it were under the influence of suggestions coming from the work itself he fills out its schematic structure, plenishing at least in part the areas of indeterminacy and actualising various elements which are as yet only in a state of potentiality.

In this way there comes about what I have called a "concretion" of the work of art. Installation Art then, is the product of the intentional activities of the artist; the concretion of the work is not only the reconstruction thanks to the activity of the observer of what is effectively inherent in the work, but also a completion of the work and the actualisation of the moments of potentiality. It is thus in a way the common product of artist and observer. In its nature Soininen's concretion goes beyond the schematic structure of the traditional notion of the work of art, but at the same time it is, or at any rate it can be, that which achieves a full and complete image - or at any rate a more complete image than in any likeness which is at variance with the work itself. Empirically, the artist's work is always manifested to the observer in some concretion: literature, plumbing, buildings, maps, etc. But this does not prevent the observer/interpreter trying to apprehend the work in its pure schematic structure together with its characteristic potentialities. But this mode of experiencing Installation Art demands a specific attitude and exertions in the observer if he is to withhold himself from all arbitrary completion of qualitative indeterminacies while at the same time taking full account of the special character of its every moment of potentiality.

## Artistic value and aesthetic value

There are thus two possible ways in which Soininen's Installation Art can be perceived. The act of perception may occur in the aesthetic experience of the object, the installation itself, or as frequently happens in the reading of literature - with the object of informing oneself about the vicissitudes of the characters depicted in the work or some other matter of extra-literary fact about which a reader can obtain information on the basis of the work of art.

By reading James Joyce's *Ulysses*, for example, scholars can familiarise themselves with the striking psychological realism of the narrative, the fictitious personages and use of "silent monologue." For Soininen, Joyce's *Ulysses* is not only an inspirational construct but also provides a source and context for his installation art. The artist's approach - abstract and metaphorical is based on sites, landmarks and institutions to be found in *Ulysses*. "My plan," he says, "is to select a site, landmark or institution and activate it conceptually through objects or materials connected to the work of the writer." However, Soininen's Installation Art is not constant or

permanent in the Joycean sense. Nor does he intend it to be. The parts do not follow each other in logical sequence. His transcriptions may thus be interpreted as single incidents at a particular moment in time. On the other hand, unlike a literary work, Soininen's transcriptions are characterised by two- or three-dimensional objects suspended in visual space. A literary work is first and foremost a linguistic construct. Its basic structure comprises a twofold linguistic stratification: on the one hand the layer of phonemes and linguistic sound-phenomena; on the other hand the meaning of the words and sentences, in virtue of which the higher-level units of meaning emerge and from them the representational content of the work and the aspects in which the subject matter is presented.

Although Soininen's transcriptions lack a dual stratification of language, they have, nonetheless, a means of presenting and defining objects as installation art. Through a multiplicity of objects - old shoes, socks, window frames, wooden barrels, water containers, etc. - he addresses issues related artistic value and aesthetic value. Artistic value, if we are to acknowledge its existence, is something that arises in the work of art itself and has its existential ground in that. Aesthetic value is something which manifests itself only in the aesthetic object and as a particular moment which determines the character of the whole. The ground of aesthetic value consists of a certain aggregation of aesthetically valuable qualities, and they in turn rest upon the basis of a certain aggregate of properties which render possible their emergence in an object. Both the one and the other kind of value assume the existence of a complete work of art (or installation object). It is not important here how the constitution of both types of object have been arrived at. What is indubitable is the fact that for the constitution of an aesthetic object the co-creative activity of an observer is necessary and therefore several aesthetic objects may emerge on the basis of one and the same work of art and that these may differ among themselves in their aesthetic value.

## The architectural container

A very great variety of aesthetically valuable qualities are exhibited in Soininen's "readymade" objects. All of them are characterised by being something given directly to perception, or if one prefers the expression they are directly presented phenomena not something indirectly deducible from other data or something whose existence can only be inferred on the basis of an apprehension of the whole work. They are concretely present to experience. In order that aesthetically valuable may be constituted, an aesthetic experience must be achieved since it is only in this kind of experience that these qualities come to realisation.

There first come to mind various emotional qualities such as those suggested by the expression sublime,' festive,' 'serene,' 'threatening,' 'pathetic,' 'dramatic,' 'tragic,' etc. But there also, such qualities as in contrast with the foregoing, one might call intellectual, as for example 'trite,' 'dull,' 'boring,' 'profound,' 'interesting,' 'acute,' 'clever,' 'witty,' 'Pedestrian' and soon. There are also aspects of a formal character, such as uniformity and variety, harmony and disharmony, awkwardness, coherence, expressiveness, dynamism, and so on. Another class are 'artificial,

'affected,' 'natural,' 'simple,' 'unaffected,' 'exaggerated,' 'genuine,' 'false,' 'insincere,' 'lacking in integrity,' and so on. In Soininen's Installation Art these qualities acquire an aesthetic value only when they are exhibited in an abstract/experimental context. Every truly creative artist, writer, poet, painter, musician, etc., in creating new works carries out certain experiments in the field. In composing his work the artist as it were sees ahead by creative intuition into possible complexes of aesthetically valuable qualities and how they will conduce to the emergence of an overall aesthetic value in the work as a whole.

At the same time, Soininen tries to find the technical means to realise a particular complex by his choice of those aesthetically neutral qualities (colours, forms, shapes, sounds, etc.) which by forming the skeleton of the work create the objective conditions (i.e., those on the side of the work of art) necessary for the realisation of the subjective conditions: that is, the existence of a suitable observer and the achievement of an aesthetic experience in space. If much of current installation practice appears to inhabit specific, physical spaces, it does so often unbounded by the architectural container. The work may essentially exist within the given space, yet this has not precluded artists, including Soininen, from transporting their audiences out of the surroundings into imagined places.

## Heuristic and didactic artifacts

Moreover, this brings us back to the basic question: "What sort of concept is Installation Art?" Installation art essentially relies on a multiplicity of forms and attitudes leading to projects which positively make use of process to reaffirm and problematise their open-endedness manifest in complex contextuality and shifting temporality. Installation art is its parts in relation to each other but is experienced as a whole. Installation art is greater than the sum of its parts. Installation Art is based in the aesthetic experience that in the end cannot be fully described, depicted, recorded or explained. The observer/interpreter, who in the act of experiencing the work, acts as catalyst and receptor.

Installation Art, as perceived by Soininen, teaches us that artifacts can guide and shape our vision of the world that are referred to by the representations we make, where the act of reference is itself a creative act and not merely a matching of pre-given similarities or identifies. One might say, then, that Installation Art is the result of a conceptual assimilation of heuristic and didactic artifacts. They teach us to see: they guide our vision in such a way that the seen world becomes the world scene.

Dr. MICHAEL CASEY

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