

The present.

On the countervalue of the mind

A philosophical introduction to Bad Ragartz by Gerhard Johann Lischka

1 When an art exhibition is called PRESENT, and the last one focussed on how art can sharpen the eye for observing the world around us, and moreover the entire venue in which this exhibition has been held for nine triennials and is still being held is Bad RagA(RT)z, you realise ART is all about how things are done. And how ART is to be understood in a playful yet serious way. However, when an entire town is renamed ART – every three years during summer – it is a strong commitment to set an example for ART and to take care of its meaning in a profound way. In keeping with the public space, this takes place in the form of sculptures that are laid out over a certain area. Time is taken for art.

2 Actually, as long as we move around in the world, we only experience the PRESENT as the result of countless moments of situations in which we find ourselves more or less consciously and unconsciously. We live in a reality of which we are a part. And that is reality. It consists, expressed in words / concepts, of the political state of society, the forms of communication shaped by the cultural memory of the customs prevailing at that time: the corresponding religions and the arts and techniques. These are forms and their contents, ideas that represent the changing world view over time. Politics tells us how we should behave according to the prevailing laws. Religion tells us through commandments and rites how we should behave in order to get to heaven. And art opens up the infinite freedom of thought and feeling to us.

3 So Ragartz is all about art. A word that is much used and abused these days. Almost inflationary and useless, but let's not be discouraged. Because the incredible abundance of usage is also an opportunity to use the word correctly and meaningfully. You just have to find and evaluate the appropriate contexts. First of all, ART consists of many arts that have

had different meanings at different times. They are all still perceptible in the present, hidden or only understood and cultivated by a few. Initially tools for processing were used to create not only everyday objects over the millennia but also unimaginable buildings, objects, pieces of jewellery and vehicles: A connection between subjects and objects came about, which led to techniques that have now even taken on threatening forms.

4 And with countless products of CIVILIZATION, one can really ask oneself whether we would not rather do without them or get rid of them right away. This is where the central and indispensable value of art in connection with politics and religion comes into its own. In the combination of poetry, music, literature, painting, plastic/sculpture, architecture, drama, the new media and much more as a whole of the arts. Then art is the guarantor of the openness of the playfulness of ideas – in whatever forms of beauty and quality. And can be perceived by recipients as a partner in the creation of art. Art is dialogue, partnership, insight and understanding, reason and emotion. Art is being in between in goodwill and a friendly willingness to become insightful together.

5 In the triad assumed here, art is not only a complementary partner with politics and religions. In the dynamic circle of forces, it is the alternative in the mix due to its effectiveness: because it is decisively undecided. It can be accepted for what it is and also ignored, because it has an incredible neutrality as meaning in the insignificant. Because art is IDEAS, which can also occupy many forms, but are transformed when seen anew in different times. The contents have shifted because they are never everlasting, but they regain meaning in the prevailing context. The pyramid of Cheops was a burial site, once almost 150 metres high. The top was made of electrum and shone brilliantly in gleaming white and dazzling metal. Millennia later, the Eiffel Tower, from the top of which floodlights were to illuminate the streets of

Paris. Although their function is completely different, they are now a wonder of the world and a landmark.

6 Even as ruins, we admire certain artefacts, feel overwhelmed by their charm, are amazed and travel long distances to see them. Or fall under their spell in caves, museums and similar places. Art is an AESTHETIC CATEGORY that represents an open field of perception and cognition. They are to be evaluated according to the intentions of the works of art. If we speak of children's art, the art of schizophrenics, stolen art or body art, we will adapt our judgements to the works of art when we perceive them. And in our complex global circumstances, aesthetics must also be available in a highly differentiated form.

To put it simply, we can then speak of fragmented aesthetics, super aesthetics and poetics: where dream worlds, high technology and mind art meet.

7 If we understand the aesthetics described in this way, we can define art in its diversity and sophistication as a momentary pleasure of insights that broaden our horizons. It conveys to all those engaged in this realisation a happiness / compassion that is also appreciated and shared by others: it is a jointly sublime togetherness. A bond that constitutes SOCIETY and provides proof and confirmation of the meaning of life. It is the acceptance and reciprocity with others that generates self in the first place. Because only in the other do we recognise ourselves, the present closeness that strengthens us. Art is this power as an act of cognition that educates and inspires us.

8 In open communication, in the exchange of the idea of freedom, art shapes a polylogical society. Aesthetics is both the transmitter and receiver of this physical and mental reality that connects us all. It is of course similar to the rationally developed and binding political laws that are based on fundamental constitutional rights. And is also in harmony with the prohibitions prevailing in various religions where a

pattern of behaviour is to be observed before deities. After all, in today's media and computer-driven global network, art is a world that can nevertheless be grasped and understood. In accordance with this complexity, art, as a systemically indefinable openness, is a necessarily welcome area of COUNTER-VALUE.