

IN MY ART BODY IS BUDDY**sub1: Notes on social value of creative action****sub2: Notes on Role of Artist in quest of freedom**

In my original body of work, a series of interviews, conducted between 1986 – 88, ART rises, strikes, and gains from RESISTANCE to racial segregation, cultural exploitation, professional marginalisation. Independent references and sources corroborated my astonishing findings. Namely 1, the unravelling of abstraction, elitism and aloofness as false, if you like fake values, obstructing and confusing our appreciation of Art. Rather than deepening and opening up access to a seemingly all too often misunderstood yet inherently free practice, this socially-based act of artistic creation.

Namely 2, this research drew on 28 talks with eminent Arts and Culture vultures, of which 24 made it to the final stage. The project included my black and white portraits of respondents, and drew on other images, documents, flyers, invites, sources etc., too, outlining the social context at the time. I added a comprehensive list of footnotes to each talk, anchoring the dialogues in political and historical references as well. Especially sources relevant shortly before the fall of the Apartheid regime play a role.

Namely 3, so that ART comes of age here, comes to signify true cultural confidence, liberation, individual growth and independence, spiritual freedom. Yet causes rupture and upheaval, leaves deep furrows behind. Which, once appreciated and applied sensibly, culminate in the joys of free movement, creative learning and inspiring Art....In fact, my talks revealed how Apartheid`s segregation dehumanised so-called non-whites and blacks alike by robbing Africans of their cultural values, elevating the European and Christian traditions to supremacy over everything else.

Yet a conscientisation of Art workers and creative activists helped bring down the Apartheid temple, the house of racism (anti-human, anti-creative) that enjoyed staunch support in conservative circles worldwide, not only in socio-political sphere but also on a religious level. Which brings us to insight 4, gained from my research, namely a strengthening of the contextual act of creativity, overlooked far too long by history, sociology and alleged Art and Culture insiders, buffons.

Find a link to the project and its many-layered context by clicking here:

<https://role of artist in society>

In My Art by RGW18c...2

So, this project came to express ART and CULTURE as very real soul motions of a certain nation, a group of people sharing common socio-political and economical values, and gives our search for meaning of creativity a new, more integrated, socially based and universally applicable framework, background, toolbox.

Namely arrives at point 5 and yields an easily applicable Do-It-Yourself programme to access, appreciate, understand relevant, sincere, inspirational Art. Which could assist in answering questions like: can one buy this junk, is this a worthless piece after all, worthless like the alphabet spelt in reverse in a darkroom? Yet traded for hundreds of thousands of Dollars, Rubles, Rand and Euros at high-flying Art auctions.... Worthless like hundreds of paintings and photographs, purchased for expensive money but locked away unseen in the Government Art Collection – GAC?

My research project lead me to express and synthesise a NEW THEORY OF ART, highlighted by socially, even universally applicable aspects, historical cornerstones, individual preferences and other angles, to be outlined later.

Yet, seen from an up-to-date standpoint that appreciates development and conditions of creativity in our present political environment: were the noble enterprises of soul-searching and humanising cultural rejection indeed aspired to and fulfilled after the so-called majority take-over, in waké of South Africa`s first democratic election in 1994?

You could say, ART had become an ORGANIZATIONAL and UNIFYING TOOL for RESISTANCE to something of no value, RESISTANCE to the exorbitant costs of racial segregation. Which we fostered, that important strengthening of opposition forces, then cultivated, hedged rather unwittingly, by the universal appeal of suggestive and imaginative Art. So we thought, and despite the creative spark not really having ignited a valid search for more peaceful times, it allowed the anti-Apartheid forces to unite, bind together and speak with one creative anti-establishment voice. In fact, most Art at the time directly opposed the white minority regime, with some artists willing to sacrifice career and even their precious life for the new freedom!! This while the lives of other cultural workers were plainly erased by the state security system at the time, no questions asked or inquests opened...

Art indeed helped in stripping away racial sanctioning and cultural exploitation, let alone cold-shouldered and institutionalised rejection of African traditions. All that had to go and even though this knowledge isn't really upheld or disseminated in Art schools today, it was a highly creative aspect that unified the then-opposition and dealt an incisive blow to the ailing segregation monster.

In My Art by RGW18c...3

As a result, the high price of defeat for the system, long upheld by major outside powers like Britain, Germany, the US, Israel and Taiwan, was social restructuring and break-down of cultural barriers. This could be achieved thru Art and language education, and the re-writing of history. It was also influenced by money flows in the world of business and commerce.

Yet again, did this really happen in the new South Africa, our post-1994 social universe? In fact, does creativity synthesise with history in the liberated world, free of social restraints, false racial categories, political oppression, media manipulation and the ever-widening income gap?

My catalogue of project questions touched 5 areas of enquiry:

- 1) Personality and social position: If you live in a well-to-do upmarket environment, does your Art reflect that? Or if you live in a shabby working class shack, does your Art speak a similarly coarse, shabby, dejected language? Does Art come first and then Realism follows, claiming lofty spiritual origins, or does Social Realism tell Art what`s up?**
- 2) Nature of conflict: What did we witness in South Africa, racial, class or even generational issues? How do artists handle, use, apply racial classifications, enforced by notorious Apartheid law?**
- 3) Personality and Art: Can you separate the person from the Art he or she created? Can a poem or painting from the 17th century survive in our times, be relevant, rhythmic, lyrical, inspirational, stand on its own?**
- 4) Creativity and Personality: When did artists discover their preference, creative streak, and who influenced them? Was there a certain reason they went into the Arts and what is their preferred style?**
- 5) Method: A comprehensive set of footnotes accompanies each talk, they highlight and clarify the socio-political context, eg the formation of political parties, workers` and cultural organisations, as well as historical cornerdates of struggle, eg Soweto 1976.**

II

More intriguing questions thrown up by my research:

ART´S RESISTANCE TO POLITICAL SYSTEM, EPOCH, PERIOD - Does it exist? Or is it a propaganda tool by political movements, no matter if government-approved or not, to engage artists in its rank and file operations? Engage them under false pretenses then get what in return? An arrest warrant, a kick in the back or a simple grave behind the city´s rubbish dump?

Or would artists who engage politically and socially gain new crowds of fans? Gain income? Gain jobs, recognition and Insight?

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What is meant by RESISTANCE on artistic or creative level?

Is it rather the internal growth process of the CREATIVE PERSON, struggling to gain insight? To overcome dejection and ignorance? Go beyond socio-political markers, demands, traps?

And a socially active artist gains what? Compared to factory worker, governmental clerk, train conductor or car mechanic, let alone compared to licensing officials, an artist does what? What exactly?

Promotes growth without recognition, elevates his/her work on religious or spiritual level?

Produces the common good for and healthy soul of capitalist society? For the chosen few or for all humanity? Common good as in paints a canvas littered with income gaps, money laundering, drug abuse and other social shortfalls, What`s good in that?

Produces essential, original, relevant, up-to-date creative stuff?

And why isn`t a car mechanic`s and coffee shop waitress`s work called creative, artistic?

Because social science and creative research have failed us up to now!

Have attributed an elitist halo to their wasted projects. And have ignored this seemingly dubious, often artificially mystified, yet rarely understood social side, the basis of my project, for far too long! Even among artists and creatives, critical or analytical probing along innovative lines, drawn along the seam and abyss of our public existence, has come into disrepute over the last decade or so. While those who do, who unravel the web of deceit around our social activity in terms of Art speak, pretend to something else, namely to an estranged, alienated, purely academic and often elitist status, crowned by misleading accolades and wrapped in fantastical terms, hard to disentangle. So we cannot lay bare their roots. Separate the mystical from the spiritual, elevating, enlightening message of true Art, lastly erase confusion. And reach a deeper, more satisfying understanding of the subject.

There is a new THEORY OF ART around the corner to heal all this, to uncover the deception and reinstall true appreciation of feelings, meanings and thoughts, of freedom and future creativity. Put spiritual elevation and inspirational joy, conveyed by relevant and sincere Art, on an easily followed and rather sound footing.

In My Art by RGW18c...5**III**

Even though ART engages with present and past modes of RESISTANCE, oddly enough, ART of...in...for...against RESISTANCE becomes the NEW CHIC. NEW THEORY OF ART. Becomes a tool in advertising and consumer wars. In lecture halls and for all the wrong reasons...

Did Art indeed contribute to the oppressed conquering their own conditions of reckoning, getting to terms with their life, the new-found freedom of culture and movement?

WOULD ELEVATION OF RESISTANCE ART TO A NEW CULTURAL LEVEL ENTAIL DIFFERENT, BETTER, EASIER ANGLE OF INSIGHT?

In my RESEARCH, ART'S relation to authorship is protectionist while ART'S relation to agency and the media is that of capitalist to critic. The colour of money paints empty canvasses with hefty income, despite all the kitch produced, fills battered notebooks and empty cheque-books alike, while ART engages with power as if it had to see that the lid was on. On what? Keep corruption in check, and grow spirituality and happiness at same time?

Yet ART's DABBING WITH POWER often creates the opposite, namely purest propaganda and anti-social filth, at times called higher aesthetics, at times bluntly named political strive, and always disseminated by demagogues, wolves in sheep's clothing, likely to mislead us and take us for a ride, perniciously mocking our social conditions and low-life, swampy origins.

That's why ART's relation to the public sphere is controversial, provocative, engaging, yet a teenie-wheenie bit inspirational, rather disastrous and highly manipulative, often censored and unhealthy, to say the least.

Untill upheaval and revolution invalidate restrictions and rejection...Untill revolution means universal healing and creates an all-inclusive spirit of nations and cultures, endowed with the soul of the ape as much as with that of the technological innovator....So that old meets new and innovative Art arises...

That's your higher artist, the perfect creative worker...who wraps the lore of old in a brandnew suit and bedazzles us with the fever of creation all along. And sets the stage for showcasing the soul of the new nation. To touch our feelings where creative bliss is communal and artistic joy an individual peak, not envied and abused by others but aspired to by humanity as a higher aim of life, a way of getting in touch with unknown, often misunderstood, yet very inspirational and deeply spiritual powers and insights.

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Untill upheaval and revolution strike a cord that sounds out the new notebook and send echos and reveberations of old around the Art world of now, send shockwaves and ripples to museums, to shows, sends you, the keen critic and Art lova a set of markers, points of concern, 5 of them to be exact, which help to assess and appreciate relevant, up-to-date and sincere creativity.

Untill upheaval and revolution hand out a NEW THEORY OF ART....Do they indeed?

Which allows for 3 of the 5 points that can be ticked off after appreciating a certain piece, sonata, text etc., to be relevant, and is based on a simple majority, so-to-speak, the 3-out-of-5 rule that attributes an authentic and well-done status to the piece under scrutiny. The work in question may even elicit the wow-experience from you!

IV

Among others the RESEARCH threw up these rather rude ripples:

What you see is not necessarily what others see...your state of insight, political education, willingness to challenge the system of racial division, any system of oppression, may not be shared, may not have been reached by fellow strugglers, now referred to as activists. Artists may reject the political surrounds. Your way forward may not be their way forward, meanwhile the demands of fact-finding, evaluating evidence, listening to informed opinions, lets you see clearly and find enactable solutions. Which may be rejected and ignored by others, firmly held in grips of media manipulation and suffering educational shortfalls. They have not reached your state of insight and of social consciousness yet, but live and breathe in the same spatial and social context.

The Art world is pestered by widespread poisoning, it intoxicates and soils our understanding of meaningful creation with censorship and false timelines, eg by withholding thousands of works of great value for years on end. This after the works had been confiscated from rightful owners during times of political oppression and outright dictatorship in first place! Or had been taken away as colonial conquest, to linger in European museums and collections, or on public embankments along the River Thames...

Add here a definite lack of historical knowledge, of concretising meaningful events in a certain context, the missing rigours of science, and incoherent social analysis...and suddenly the hundreds of thousands shrink back to a couple of five-o`s and bit of other small change. Will say, your Art loses appeal and universal claim because a certain fashionable but expensive slovenness is furthered in placid and elitist, yet popular divisions of the Art world.

In My Art by RGW18c...7

Art can linger, maligne, suffer, struggle, go under, disappear without a trace. Is Art really worth the effort, let alone is the tormented genius artist worth our compassion or hard-earned income who survives daily dallying between good and evil, taste and disgust, cake and breadline handouts, alcoholic delirium and spiritual clarity?

Without a budget, Art is worthless and creativity comes to nought.

Role of ambiguous media, licking power`s boot but kicking those who embellish our downward spin with crafty Art.

V

Let`s recap: this book deals with Art and artists and their function in society, their functioning as social animals, so-to-say, steered by strange psychology and driven by creative strife, an inner struggle that forever teeters on the abyss but shines outwardly. Produces brilliant Art.

So artists` replies to my questions bring up a certain time, recall a period of socio-political activity, the last gasps of the Apartheid system in the Southern African sub-continent. We thus get a better grasp of social context and our relational reality thru artistic research. Our focus is sharpened from the exercise, and we realise that Art without context is flat, non-desirable and lastly fake. Which does not mean to belittle the universal appeal of creative expression, independent of the producers and their times! Yet Art`s special context does solidify meaning and value. Even an artist operating from an anonymous glasshouse now and then goes to the shop to buy supplies, or has them delivered to his hidden, hard-to-reach studio, but some interchange between the recluse and the living environment, even if only with his agent or dealer, does take place, and that`s what is called the social background. By the way, elitist or hooligan structures can be background, too. My research has shown that creatives who acknowledge social background strengthen the message, thus lift their work on a higher level. Their tools of the trade are sharpened considerably in process, too.

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The excerpt ends here. Other chapters will look at issues ranging from a critique of the way to modernity in Danish Art and a review of a UK Pop-ART show, to a comprehensive discussion of the new 3-out-of-5 Art ruler/monger/governor....yielding a relevant creative experience.

I attach pix of respondents, ROLE ARTIST cover and author interview. Find out more and send email to swift_photo_agency@yahoo.com or to cape.socca@gmail.com or to cape.socca.union@gmail.com