

Daily Meditation 05/16/2022

Artist as Cultural Healer: More Wisdom from Suzi Gablik

Good morning.

Today we are meditating again, revisiting the work and teachings of Suzi Gablik--artist and critique, critic of art, especially the modern version of art that she feels reduces relationships to objects.

And she speaks in today's meditation about how we live in a toxic culture, not just environmentally, but spiritually as well. And she invites us to cultural healing. And to do so she proposes that we have to abandon old programming. And to me this is leaving old paradigms behind.

She said, "Let go of negative ideas and beliefs that are destructive to the planet and to life on Earth." And in her own work world, her own profession as an artist, she says, "This means letting go of the notion of art for art's sake."

That really, art is meant to serve a greater purpose, to serve a purpose of healing community, to serve the purpose of linking psyche to cosmos again, to bringing the great universe into our souls and growing our souls.

She says, "Modernism was the art of the industrial age. And it served up a patriarchal idea of value-free aesthetics."

Value-free aesthetics.

She's calling for a new set of values that matter. And it's not enough to take things apart, to deconstruct, we have to also reconstruct. And that's why cultural healing is so important. And that is what so much art can do for us.

But she ends this meditation with, I think, a very profound and important observation. She says, "Transformation cannot come from ever more manic production and consumption in the marketplace."

Manic production and consumption in the marketplace. To me, that's a very strong phrase, and very real. The key word is manic. And it's not just production and consumption, it's even manic about producing new gadgets, and jumping on them, and having them and seeing them everywhere. Something bigger has to happen than new gadgets, something that engages the soul--the soul of the community, the soul of human beings.

And she says, "It is more likely to come..." (that is to say, transformation) "from some new sense of service to the whole...." (W-H-O-L-E. Service to the whole.) "...from a new intensity and personal commitment."

And then she says, "The great collective project has, in fact, presented itself. It is that of saving the Earth."

Now, this was written decades ago. This is where she, like many of us, for decades have been talking about a new ecology, a new relation to the Earth, a new relationship to the universe, and the new cosmology, that gives us these stories to connect to the whole again.

And, of course, saving the Earth has become ever more pressing and challenging a value at this time. And to live in the mindset of the modern era, where value wasn't even a part of art, is destructive in itself.

So I think that Suzi Gablik was one of those prophets, people who interfere. And she was interfering in her profession, in the art world, by demanding that we look deeper, that transformation happen. And it does mean moving from manic production and manic consumption in the marketplace, to service to the whole--a new intensity of personal commitment, and especially the great collective project of saving Mother Earth.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.

And thank you to Suzi Gablik.