

Le miaou pour le miaou

(Interview with a cat on the relationship between art and politics)

We are talking about the relationship between art and politics; about whether art can influence social conditions, whether it wants to do so at all, or whether it is itself dependent on these conditions. Some go so far as to say that it is always complicit with these conditions...

Meow. Meow.

Well, it's not the first time we've talked about this topic, but somehow it's endlessly circular. Much remains pure speculation, not to say, a matter of taste... Because, as you correctly pointed out, it very quickly becomes ideological.

Meow. Meow.

The opinions range from "All art is political" or "Art is always political" to "Every art is bourgeois and thus automatically stabilizes the system - regardless of its content."

Meow. Meow.

Honestly, I think the reason why the topic is so hotly debated is because it contains the basic question of art, namely: what role does it have in society?

Meow. Meow.

While some are eager to understand art as politically effective and try to justify that, others have an almost hysterical rejection of anything that might appear political. Many artists seem afraid that they will automatically be branded as "bad artists" if they show a political consciousness.

Meow. Meow. Meow. Meow. Meow.

I see it exactly the same way: explicit political content in art is often boring – inasmuch as it ignores art's most powerful feature: it's ambiguity. But I find even more boring artists who refuse to think about the interests their work serves. They seriously claim that the intent of their art is exclusively – to make art.

Meow. Meow.

Right! The old mantra "L'art pour l'art." For me, it stands for a refusal to think, which I find almost painful.

Meow. Meow.

But we should come back to art itself and the question: Can the work of art in itself develop such force through its peculiarity that it exists above socio-political circumstances?

Meow. Meow.

Yes, yes, it is a question of faith, and I admit that I have a tendency here, and this tendency keeps resurfacing, but in the end it's the pure thirst for knowledge that drives me. I really want to find out... but probably there is no clear answer, because "art" does not exist in such a general sense, but is simply the many ideas of what it should be. That's where the cat bites its own tail.

Meow. Meow.

Of course, one of my favorite topoi: the "aesthetic experience." For some it is indeed a sensual experience, while others find it intellectually stimulating... So, what do you think, senses or intellect?

Meow. Meow.

Sure, I can go for that: senses and mind work together in a way that can trigger something in the viewer.

Meow. Meow.

So, let's assume that a really great work of art actually can change the experience of the viewer: She has a significant gain in knowledge, which changes her perception in a lasting way, or maybe even her whole life. According to this logic, art does have an effect, but only on the individual. That seems to be very limited.

Meow. Meow.

I would like the social aspect to receive more attention. Like, how does art bring people together, what experiences do they have in these encounters, and can't something happen there that is not possible in everyday life? Something like the experience of a new kind of communality or coexistence?

Meow. Meow.

Art can certainly exert influence by opening up possibilities for other, new, emancipatory production and reproduction of individuals. It offers a relative freedom – not only for those who practice it, but, most importantly, it stands for freedom, symbolizes and embodies freedom and thus awakens the desire for more...

Meow. Meow.

... but for me, it only becomes really exciting when it goes beyond the individual. I am interested in taking a closer look at how this "instrument of freedom" can work as a social engine. And I ask myself whether this individual freedom, which is so highly valued in art, does not turn out to be the trap par excellence...

[cat: no comment]