

Rühild RÖDER

Galerie Etre

Kloostersloot 85  
2000 Antwerpen

Tel · 0496 18 06 30



## Op Wandel met een Canadese Kunstenaar in België

*Rünhilde Röder: "If Picasso can make it, why can't I?..."*



Ik stel u voor: Rünhilde Röder, schilderes van het "mooie" in een tijd dat het "Schone an sich" als categorie om hedendaagse kunst te beoordelen quasi verdwenen is. Zijn wij klaar voor de eigen avant-garde van Rünhilde Röder, voor haar apologie van de Schoonheid en de Waarheid in het kunstwerk? In haar woorden luidt dit als volgt: "How to save the world of ugliness? I am the mother and the father of society." Is haar idealisme een achterhaalde utopie? Wat zijn haar argumenten om nog te schilderen? Voert zij een eenzame strijd?

Katlijn Van der Stighelen, hoofddocente aan de K.U.Leuven, schreef al een positieve beoordeling over Röders schilderijen: "Het is haar om het ZIJN te doen... Röders poging om de complexiteit van alledag anno 2000 te vatten, is authentiek, passioneel en lyrisch". Rünhilde Röder schildert sinds 1964 en had haar eerste tentoonstelling in 1983 in de "Gallery Demain d'Or" te Montreal. Deze galerij is van George Butcher, een Oxfordgeleerde en kunstcriticus die ondermeer David Hockney heeft gelanceerd. Haar schilderijen waren ook te bewonderen in Toronto, Ontario, Wenen, Delhi, Princeton, Leuven en Antwerpen. Na een succesvolle carrière als therapeute, kunstenaar en galeriehoudster te Montreal, verkoos zij Europa boven Canada en hield zij halt in België, waar zij nog steeds woont. Rünhilde Röder vertelt me: "België heeft nood aan een revolutie die ik vorm kan geven". Ze wil gehoord worden.

In februari opende Rünhilde in Antwerpen haar eigen galerij ETRÉ. Daarvoor studeerde zij filosofie aan het Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte van de universiteit van Leuven, waar zij lessen volgde aan de "Academie De Lei" en waar zij tweemaal in een galerij met haar werk was vertegenwoordigd, namelijk in "Two Ten Gallery" en "Galerie Verve".

Het begon allemaal ver van hier, namelijk in Vancouver. Rünhilde Röder was van jongsaf aan geobsedeerd door kleuren, vormen en lijnen. Ze tekende en schilderde graag, ontwierp haar eigen kleding, veride haar haar in de gekste kleuren en deed experimentele dingen met lippenstift. Op een dag toonde

zij een van haar werken aan de academie van Vancouver. De docenten merkten op dat haar schilderij dezelfde kracht en dezelfde speelsheid vertoonde als de werken van Paul Klee. Ze besloot haar functie als therapeute op te geven om haar leven te wijden aan de schilderkunst. In haar privé-collectie zijn werken te vinden van de kunstenaars van de Cobra-beweging (Appel, Alechinsky, Corneille enz.) en goedkoper werk van Picasso. Een van haar idolen is ook de Amerikaanse kunstenaar R.B. Kitay, die in zijn werk voortdurend bezig was met het erkennen van picturale problemen, en voor wie ook David Hockney een grote waardering koesterde. Een andere kunstenaar die David Hockney bewonderde, was Francis Bacon. In het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten van België te Brussel, dat we samen bezoeken, is Rünhilde ontroerd door het gebruik van de purperen kleur in "De Paus met de uilen", dat Francis Bacon (1909-1992) schilderde tussen 1947 en 1967. Ook het hallucinante zelfportret van Léon Spilliaert (1881-1946) en zijn landschappen (bijvoorbeeld "De Dijk" van 1908), die zweven tussen realiteit

en abstractie, spreken haar aan. Rünhilde Röder houdt van het spel tussen kleuren, lijnen en vormen, en ze zegt, geïnspireerd door de woorden van Paul Klee: "I take colors for a ride, lines for a walk, shapes and forms for a swim".

Het brengt ons tot een discussie over het "genie-principe". Vindt zij zich als kunstenaar een genie, vindt zij zichzelf begaafd? Haar antwoord is "ja",

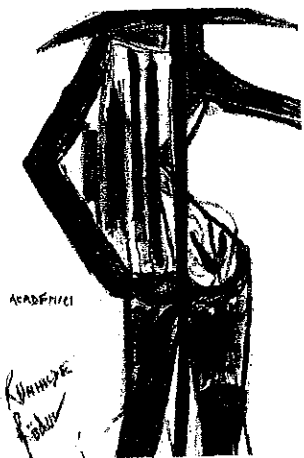
maar zij nuanceert door te stellen dat het allemaal draait om het spel, waar alle deelnemers - creator en toeschouwers - slechts deelnemers zijn van het alles dominerende spel: "You have to know that you are directed".

Kortom: Rünhilde Röder is een kunstenaar die zich distantieert van de lelijkheid in de kunst en in het leven. Haar werken zijn een ode aan de schilderkunst, waarin zij de traditie niet verloochent. Toch bereikt ze in haar spelen met lijnen, kleuren en vormen telkens opnieuw authenticiteit. ■

SONE VAN LOO

FOTOGRAAF: LUC PEETERS

Galerij-Atelier ETRÉ bevindt zich in de Kloosterstraat 85 te 2000 Antwerpen.



*Rünhilde Röder in Antwerp*

Good afternoon in Antwerpen, Kloosterstraat 52. Is there any relation between Rünhilde Röder and Antwerp? Yes, there is. Is there any relation between Rünhilde Röder and Bredabaan? Yes, there is. Is there any relation between Rünhilde Röder and Manhattan? Yes, there is. Is there any relation between Rünhilde Röder and the philosophical insights of Hans-Georg GADAMER? Yes there is.

Do you want to know more about this remarkable cocktail, you have to look at the paintings by Röder exhibited here at this particular moment. Every aspect of her art has to do with '*Aankomst*'. The arrival is related to '*Arrival of Apertures*'.

Röder recently wrote a thesis entitled '*What is understanding if not an encounter with Truth*', a text profoundly inspired by his view on the ontological explanation of the work of art. A painting or sculpture can not be seen as '*un objet gratuit*' but has to be interpreted as a bridge, as a play that renders the clue to ontological explanation. To paint becomes to play on an existential level. The true or the beautiful is raised in the work of art. Art is play of perception and imagination. The beautiful is relevant because it has to do with intuition as well as with the spiritual.

For Gadamer the artist has the society in view. The work is what endures and therefore the work will act upon the spectator. It has a structure of play and challenge. Looking at pictures is becoming some else.

In this way, the artist has the possibility to change or to transform the spectator. The process of looking at-, has to do with the relevance of the beautiful. In that way it can be connected to the ontological function of art.

Today it has become extremely difficult to discuss '*the beautiful*' as a category in contemporary art. The beautiful as such has disappeared, as painting as such has disappeared. Every reference to the traditional tools of painting or sculpture has been cancelled.

Rünhilde Röder does not fit in this tradition of '*homines novi*'. She never denies tradition but recuperates as much as she can. She likes to paint, to use brushes and oil on canvas.

And besides this, she likes colours. She only applies colours as signals, as symbols of her own symbolical system. She prefers '*non-colours*' as black and white with a touch

of yellow, red or blue. Is it mere coincidence that her palette exists out of primary colours? Or does it illustrate her fundamental approach? Her art is never vein but offers a rich existential message. In her philosophical dissertation, Röder cites Paul Celan 'who will give witness to the witness'. In this exhibition every spectator is in a peculiar way invited 'to give witness as a witness'.

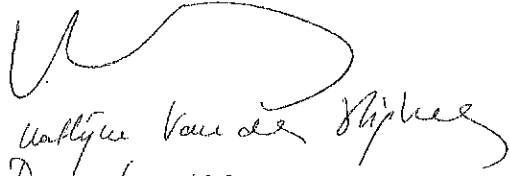
Welke thema's zijn er bij Röder te ontdekken? De titel wijst steeds de weg aan. Een titel heeft een functie en is er niet om het hermetisme nog groter te maken. Sommige schilderijen ontstaan in serie. Zo I er *Bredabaan I* en *Bredabaan II* of *Being in New York* en *Manhattan. Sunlight in the studio*, een uitzonderlijke diptiek. De schilderijen van Röder zijn altijd symbolische vensters: ze bieden vanuit de particuliere leefwereld van de artieste een doorlijk op een andere wereld, waar ze iets mee te maken heeft maar die nooit probleemloos de hare is. Haar doeken bevragen de werkelijkheid als een kosmopolitisch gegeven. Antwerpen, Soho of New York verschillen niet wezenlijk van elkaar als hetzelfde paar ogen de steeds andere stad ontdekt. Röder vertelt haar verhaal over de verschillende steden. Ze is geen natuurmens (meer) maar dankt haar inspiratie aan de opdringerige en steeds bruisende stadsomgeving. Op straat laat ze zich ontroeren: door de harde donkere lijnen van troosteloze wolkenkrabbers in Manhattan of door het poëtische blauw waarin Venetië zwent.

Haar boodschap is duidelijk. Het is haar om het ZIJN te doen; *Being* as such is niet toevallig de titel van één van haar schilderijen. En leven of 'zijn' heeft altijd ook met pijn te maken. *Desolate but resolute* is de titel van een ander werk. Ondanks alles zijn er in haar werken tekenen van hoop, existentiële hoop zelfs.

Röders poging om de complexiteit van alledag anno 2000 te vatten, is authentiek, passioneel en lyrisch. Haar zoektocht mondt slechts af en toe uit in *Unshakable Joy*, pas dan ontstaat een vuurwerk van kleuren en slaan de gele en de rode tinten als vlammen uit haar schilderij. Op dat ogenblik verdwijnt Rünhilde Röder in het doek om er als een Phoenix uit te herrijzen. De vrouw en de kunstenaar herleeft. De 'Aankomst' is verzekerd. In this way, she is the author of her own avant-garde.

Katlijne Van der Stighelen

December 1999



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December 1999

Röder has been dedicating her time to treat the 'malaise' of modernity since 1964.

As early as in sixties and seventies, in her youth she made more than modest contribution in Social Welfare in England/Canada.

In eighties she brought about a small change in the posh street of Montreal - in the proximity of Beaux on West Sherbrooke street. First young women to open her gallery and dare to show unknown artists, sometimes at her own expense. (Her own work sold well) She paid for their exhibitions while her neighbours galleries carried only the Big Names.

Nineteens have brought us Röder's amazing thesis and essays on philosophy of art.

Jan Hoet , world celebrity in art has noted her piece titled " I finally am able to be myself ", the art work is presently part of her private collection.

S.M.A.K. Museum our most known museum in Belgium.

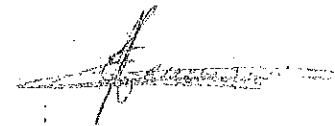
For those who know Gadamer's work, Röder has given lectures on his work at University of Miscolz.

She also was asked to give doctorate seminar at University of Budapest.

Evi Herremans

Economics, Antwerp, Belgium

Dit is het resultaat van mijn gesprek met Rünhild Röder



Rüthild Roeder

On "*The relevance of the beautiful*"

This thesis is about justification of art which Gadamer equates with justification of beauty as it were. Gadamer claims this problem of justifying art is not only that of modernity. It has been there all along. The problem arose with the birth of epistemological thinking with Socrates. How do we know such and such object is indeed beautiful, and how do we justify that it gives us access to truth? It was not clear that a narrative or picture contained truth. Truth was expressed in discursive word form and had to be in a dialectic form of argumentation. How does one reach such a dialectical synthesis form with a narrative word form or a picture? In other words, how do languages of arts also convey truth?

In late antiquity, already there was a resistance to 'pictorial representation'. Roman Empire had inflicted restraints on expression on rhetoric or language of art. In the 6th and 7th centuries, the propadeutic towards iconoclasm was turned. Christians gave language of art a new meaning. *Biblia Pauperum*, saying the biblical message in pictures for the illiterate public was one of the major causes for this change in attitude towards art. Christian and classical merged in baroque in Austria and Southern Germany. Christian classical and Christian humanist tradition under reformation brought further changes, as we see in Heinrich Schultz and Sebastian Bach's work. Pope Gregory the Great 'bequeathed' Latin hymns and Gregorian melody took the form of chorale, which continues to have a force even in modern times. Gadamer sets his question of justification of art against this background with Hegel's nostalgic lament that art is a 'thing of the past'.

Gadamer sees a move to set up philosophical claims to treat the very process - the method to truth become an 'object of knowledge' and to grasp this truth in its own domain, that is as it discloses itself in the historical process. Hegel in Gadamer's mind therefore proceeds to even grasp the Christian doctrine conceptually, including the mystery of trinity. He does not see in the Eucharist what Gadamer sees that is Christ is not represented symbolically in the Eucharist. He is there in the bread itself and in the wine. Similarly in Modern art, for Gadamer art has the truth and the beauty.

Technological bewitchment of nineteenth century dethroned the artist to 'his own bohemian fate'. Gadamer argues that open competition due to capitalism with the claim that only his own particular form and content bears truth is the problematic that confronts meaning in art today. In a sense art has taken on the role of presenting the new truth, the only truth about Modernity. Artist is the messiah who attempts to martyr and isolate himself from others in order to give them the truth in his art and redeem us from instrumentalism.

A new propaedeutic of active confrontation in bourgeois religion of culture is what is at work in the mind of the contemporary artist. Extreme modern thinking of the artists poses questions that are not simply constructivist and thereby affecting functional technological wares in the same constructivist style goes beyond constructivism. Gadamer points to a Heideggerian notion of pre-understanding in the idea of art. This argument is elusive but powerful. Gadamer states that historical consciousness is at work when we look at art. e.g. when we look at Altdorfer's medieval soldiers in "The Battle of Issos" dressed in modern uniforms, we are not alarmed by the fact that Altdorfer uses modern soldier attire instead of what Alexander wore when he defeated the Persians. Anyone who is upset at

this change Gadamer believes, he could not appreciate the precision in earlier art forms nor the unity that is present in all art forms including the modern ones. For Gadamer it is not a particular world-view or a scholar's construct that one has historical consciousness. Historical consciousness is just there already as a given in human intellect, it is therefore we perceive this in art and are able to have aesthetic experience. To accentuate this further, Gadamer claims that it is self-conscious reflection on the part of the artist of our own historical tradition on the whole and of other cultures that have stood outside and apart from Western culture that therefore can be merged with our own tradition. It therefore invites the philosopher to see how it is that everything that stands before us indeed speaks to us as if to disclose us our life world to us and produces thereby meaning. For philosophical aesthetics it is this argument that Gadamer attempts to tackle through discussion of the appeal to play, the concept of the symbol and in the final analysis the festival as the vehicle for universal communication. These being the subtitles of his essay, "The relevance of the beautiful".

Gadamer believes it is the problem of the philosopher to locate an arch to unite past and present forms of art. He finds the arch in the word "art". Word carries with it the historical weight. The word "art" has had specific meaning for not less than two centuries. In the eighteenth century "fine arts" was used whereas we now use the word "art". At that time the mechanical arts, technical and industrial know-how was included in this concept of fine arts. The contemporary concept of art is different from the earlier one. It is therefore absent in the philosophical tradition. Art for art's sake did not exist then. For Aristotle, art belonged to the category of *poietike episteme* - it had to do with knowledge

and facility appropriate for production. In art the two aspects are united. In craftsmanship they are separate. Fine art is *die schöne Kunst*, which simply defines art to be beautiful. This then brings us to the point of Gadamer's exposition or theory that is the beautiful. From art we go towards the beautiful as art is considered to be beautiful by the Germans. Beautiful still has in it the Greek connotations of *kalon* which means beautiful in Greek. Here in Gadamer shows how the word beautiful can be contrasted to the human affairs which represent instability or lack of order, lack of better intuitions. What is beautiful is what enjoys universal approval and approbation. Beauty serves no purpose, it speaks for itself. It has a presence that reflects universal flourishing and excellence, not simply particular excellence for it can be shared and recognized for being of qualitative state of affairs that stand on their own ground as it were. Gadamer traces the historical significance of the word beautiful signifying truth, stability, reliability, and order as Greeks knew it equating it to the order of heavens. Ideal life is detachment from sensuous life of givenness.

Plato decries the beautiful to be that which "shines clearly" and attracts us to itself so that we can indeed see the ideal face to face. Real and the ideal have a gulf between them, only beauty can bridge that gulf. Only the gods fully submit to the order and those highest intuitions. Common persons do not, because of their bodily attachments. The beautiful then first is the universal that determines itself, stands on its own ground. It is approved of by all and sundry. It helps persons to recognize themselves in it. It is the true vision but serves no other purpose other than being a mirror for truth and harmonious order. The earthly souls have lost their autonomy, their freedom to determine themselves. They are weighted down by communal attachments. It is experience of the beautiful that redeems

for them their freedom and their autonomy. It once again tears them away from their earthly cares and strengthens them to ascend to the 'ideal' which is unconfusing and reveals the essence of the things. Something Gadamer wishes to emphasize is the experience of the beautiful does not make a person unrealistic, it gives added meaning. Furthermore one finds beauty within daily life not by escaping from it.

"The ontological function of the beautiful is to bridge the chasm between the ideal and the real." (p 15 from Gadamer's essay) Herein we are outside the limits of normative conceptual reasoning and experience. What we recognize in the realm of art is the experience of the beautiful which dwells outside normative understanding. It does not conform to our experience nor is it 'a particular experience of the universal. It is in a sense standing on its own ground and it invokes us to dwell upon individual appearance itself.

#### On Play

The concept of Play for Gadamer, is on one hand influenced by Huizinga, and on the other hand by Aristotle. Huizinga compares the element of play to religious cult. The element of play is seen as free spirit at work rather than as an irresponsible activity, which would have no goal in view. It also involves an activity with movement back-and-forth; very much like a tennis game, in which players throw ball from one court to another. There is no other goal but throwing the ball with the perfect stroke and precision. This kind of discussion is brought out by Gadamer in order to then lead to the next point which is that of Aristotle. For Aristotle, self-movement is the most foundational feature of human beings. That living beings have desire to move without any purpose in mind, which in a sense represents a lack of proportion. This is also quite evident amongst



animals; the feature of excess. However human beings try to channel excess with some reasonableness by setting goals for themselves. Humans impose discipline on themselves in order to make some sense of their desire for movement. Rationality in humans is at the very base non-purposive, and yet there is a satisfaction from the movement itself. It's this 'self movement' that Gadamer calls 'Play'. Play intends nothing but movement in itself. The cultural input is that we try to give shape to this desire for movement by committing ourselves to finding meaning with some references and symbols. Play according to Gadamer, is self-representation of its own movement. We have often heard the expression that we were just 'playing along.' If we just think about the fuss that is made in watching a tennis match or football match. People really get involved in the play of the game and enjoy going along with what is taking place on the field. There is a sense of participation in the play, and it seems to liberate the person from a mundane brooding as it were. This point, for Gadamer, is crucial in understanding art, especially modern art. Modern artist is constantly trying to break down the distance between the audience, the consumer, and the public from the work of art. The game of art that was played in the past with some distance is now being done away with. We just have to think of Brecht who succeeded with his experiment with transforming the status of the viewer vis-à-vis the creator of the artwork. But that does not mean that the space that art work is contained in has less importance. The artwork remains irreducible, and has not suffered from any fragmentation as a result of this change of attitude towards the formality of the distance. The artist does not know what he is creating, and yet his work is admired by others even though artist stands in front of his work non-plussed. The play of faculties and rationality are mixed in such a way that it is very difficult to pass judgment on the work that could

be considered final. We don't have to go further than Marcelle Duchamp's urinal being considered one of the important works of art. It does not lack any hermeneutic unity as such to be not considered an artwork. It would become clear that the artwork today does not subscribe to any classical ideal of harmony. What gives the work the identity is not an easy question to answer today. The viewer belongs to the play as much as the creator of the work. The interpretation in other words involves a playful attitude in as much as the creation of the work. The artwork today has a different meaning and a different sort of identity than it had in the past, when it only reflected the divine and a very definite sense of harmony. There is much autonomy today with the artist who creates the work as it is with the viewer who looks at it. For Kant, color was not that important. It was form that was more important. For neo-classical art, line and form stood in the forefront. For us today, color is rather important and we find Kant's view one sided. The drawing of the line or the viewing of the line demands a construction from our part and it is neither absolute nor is it arbitrary. It lies somewhere in between these two extremes. Where exactly it is, is the issue at stake. If we take for example, the case of *Brother's Karamazov*, we all relate to the staircase down which Smerdjakov falls differently. We are all aware of that and yet each one of us has his own particular experience of the staircase. Herein lies the beauty of art: we all look at the playfulness for example, in Klee's work and yet we all have a singular and particular experience of this playfulness. It's the figuring out bit by bit of the artwork that is rather interesting. One feels one is involved in constructing and re-constructing conventional bits of information with one's own idiosyncratic input into an intellectual aesthetic space. Even to compare ancient art with modern art requires a certain construction and playfulness when we are engaged in

interpreting the two. One becomes one with the work of art when one is busy appreciating it, and therein lies the true enjoyment of the work.

It is quite different from looking at it in a cold way and making a hard-headed analysis of it. Is it not very different when someone who does not understand art from someone who does when they are looking at it? I can certainly remember when a first year art student who went to the very first art exhibition started to analyze a Matisse, as though there was a theory to be applied to it. And it certainly annoyed a connoisseur standing by, my good friend and art patron, George Butcher (incidentally he had one of the best galleries in Montreal). No artwork fits any one concept or can be explained by any art theory. Art cannot be read like a map; nor can it be looked through its syntactic or semantic connections. That would be the wrong way to look at any artwork. Art requires a certain love on the part of the viewer. It has more to do with sensuous engagement on his part. That is not to say that one does not need to know a bit of art history and how it partakes in one's culture. The element of play involved does not require overly serious and rigid outlook from us. It would not be appropriate for example to stare at the artwork to examine if it is true or false. That would not be the right propaedeutic. To look at the artwork and question how it is made and about its identity without its aesthetic enjoyment would not access necessarily aesthetic experience. Imagination and understanding have to be both engaged, when one is involved in the judgment of taste. It certainly involves *free play* and not adherence to concepts. No theory of Greek mimeses or any other art theory would help us to look at Titian's Charles the V. One in fact gets lost in memories of one's own childhood when one is looking at the horse. If one was to stand there and ask questions, is it really Charles the V, or is this horse really a horse, one has missed the

point. What beauty in art has to do with such determinacy, is quite clear: Art work, just like nature, cannot be pinned down to any one thing. Aesthetic experience of natural beauty teaches us that we can only see nature with awe, wonder, and with certain willingness to surrender on our part: our own egoistical attitude. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was different: we tried to look at art rationally, as though it was part of some geometrical order; that is not the case today. It is indeterminacy even to the extent of allowing for a certain chaos in art has meaning for us today. It is in the end the 'symbol', a token of remembrance for some aspect of our own historicity perhaps. Art stands for us as a symbol or the playful signal to give us a clue about reality. This now leads to Gadamer's next point which is on symbol itself.

#### On Symbol.

By symbolic, Gadamer does not mean allegorical. Art conceals not merely discloses something. It is elusive. It escapes us, and that is not a disadvantage as it would be in physics or mathematics. Revealing is related intrinsically to concealing. We cannot think of the hiddenness as a limitation, for it urges us on to carry out our own intellectual constructions. According to Borges, art is announcing revelation that does not take place it is always on the brink of the unsaid. There is a tension between concealing and revealing, rather a playful one which therefore urges us on to figure out from the various forms of suggestions that are never assertions. Otherwise it would be ruining the aesthetic experience. Finally, meaning is in the suggestions and in the infinite task of interpretation, never solving the problem and therefore continuing to be a fascinating entity. The symbol in art does not work like the allegorical conception of symbols. It

could be there but it is not obtrusive. Art does not give us a moral lesson in the way that allegory does; it is a fragment of something which yet has to be completed as it were by locating other fragments. This Gadamer compares to the discussion in Plato's Symposium where one fragment has to be tied to the other fragment to complete a message. One soul has to meet with another to find wholeness. Art could be a clue to our journey to whatever we are looking for in life. According to Hegel, art is the sensuous showing of the idea, and yet this idea is not the totality of meaning. We should not understand it as totality but rather see the tension between what is expressed and how it is expressed; that is how we understand the idea. Hegel does not mean for example, that specific works have allegorical meaning implies that distance between expression and idea is overcome best in the work of art.

Work of art presents itself as a concrete thing; It resists interpretation. It stands there, stubborn, unwilling to be incorporated, assimilated or absorbed in our obsession to give accounts or show causal links. It imposes silence and invites itself to be the object of tension. It draws attention to itself, and it makes us think of other things other than the mere mundane phenomenon. In allegory one moves away from the story and draws a message but with art it has a solitary position, it cannot be dissected into a message. It does not adapt itself to us: it remains inaccessible. It cannot be perceived as having thinghood. We thus give meaning to it; It has additional something, it has factuality, and it has resistance. We stand outside it, and in a sense we idealize it since we fail to incorporate it into our givenness. "Its particularity cannot be overridden by anything. We cannot explain it away. We have to continue to be involved in an intellectual and sensuous involvement. It continues to enrich our being as it touches our very core.

### On Festival

The word festival is derived from the word fest, implying celebration. This has to be distinguished from enjoying at a party. It is a bit surprising that Gadamer does not take the opportunity to relate art to religious cult. He comes close to it. He emphasizes community - meeting with other people. In other words, festival is an encounter with other people.

Festival has a temporal structure. It has its own time, different from ordinary, continuous instrumental time. Gadamer examines how we handle our time vis-a-vis when we are bored or when we are restlessly running from one activity to another. The intervals of time in recitation or listening to music are certainly experienced differently than when one is bored doing things of mundane nature. Time could be seen as a gift of life in music, in poetry, in looking at a painting, as opposed to when one is waiting at a bus stop on a wintry night, when caught in a snow storm. Gadamer has an ideality in mind concerning aesthetic listening when it comes to a particular musical performance or recitation. Our inner ear has a certain intrinsic relation with sound. The organic unity of world and time relations, how they connect and disconnect, is the issue under discussion in Gadamer's text on festival. Organic unity is, fundamental to any living being and work of art. There is a 'purpose without purpose' to humans and to art. Nothing can be added or taken away from a good work of art. Gadamer shows two sides of the picture once again, to strike a grasping of two extreme positions. Leaving things as they are and also modifying them when beautiful can indeed be inserted into something. In other words the concept of the beautiful is such that a work of art can be rendered beautiful with an

alteration in it, as can a human organism with a modification in speech accent or appropriate surgery. What Gadamer means once again is that there is a certain episteme at work in aesthetics. Not any piece of music can be played for any length of time. Timing to the last instant is crucial. Intensity has to be timed, measured - fine tuned with every performance. One cannot 'canonize' any piece of music to any one performance. If that was done - timing of one performance was to become the canon - then enjoyment of music is lost.

The question of 'identity and difference' is at work. The identity of any concerto cannot be limited to any one performance. There is autonomy that is applicable in tempo and timing in every performance - which is tied to the episteme at work. Gadamer rightly sees that 'the correct tempo can never be quantified'. In each performance there is an interrelation between original composition and performance. Variations cannot be too pronounced - they have to be kept to the minimum. Distinction between good and bad performance could help further to flush out Gadamer's insight. Good performance would take into account appropriate improvisation and avoid any ill-treatment of the piece. *Mise en scene* is appreciated by the connoisseur. When any performance misses the mark, it does not go without being noticed by her or him.

In an age of industrial and technological excellence - the authenticity of performance is rapidly being replaced by repeat performances that are supposed to obey canons in music, opera, dance and artworks. Aesthetic appreciation is enhanced only with ideality that Gadamer emphasizes i.e. to be open to the difference in each performance while keeping in mind the identity of the piece.

Gadamer claims art work strikes as lightning and lifts our spirits, when we have a feeling of loosing all our preconceptions and givennesses. It is when we are taken by a surprise - a move away from contingency - transcendence over any past experience of word, tempo, melody, rhythm - while not violating the given in any way.

Gadamer speaks about rhythm in the manner, colour is being spoken by a few philosophers of science. Rhythm, like colour, is autonomous. Is it in the hearer, the performer or somewhere else? Is it in the eye, in the object or somewhere else? We hear the rhythm that is in the music, we have to be engaged in a constructive mode as it were when we listen (not unlike in determining colour). The comparison with color is my input. Gadamer reminds us it is not only the temporal or timing oriented arts - language, music, dance - that confront us with their own autonomy, but this is also true of paintings and architecture. Modern architecture does not speak to 'us' (I suppose to Gadamer and his colleagues) because it is not ornamented or 'painterly'. Yet Gadamer encourages the viewer to 'tarry' and walk around the building, try to get familiar in order to gain an appreciation for its own 'given'. He explains that our temporal experience of art prompts us to take our time with it. It is one way to transcend the temporal sense and feel we are touching eternity.

#### Conclusion

The above detailed exposition on Gadamer is there to show what *Relevance of the Beautiful* displays to us above all, the play that transcends the 'roots and its causal links with the tree tops', in Gadamer's graphic explanation transcending (see p 46) age, style, race, class, past, present). Play of the form is displayed and experienced in colour, shape,

rhythm, timing etc. For Gadamer play - the excess of something is the ground of aesthetic production and appreciation of art. It is this that is eternal and stands over the temporal.

It is recognition of this excess that we authentically understand something in its autonomous ground. It stands between eternity and temporality.

Gadamer resolves the problem of ornamented ancient art and modern unsymbolic technological art by telling us we ought to be patient, take time to do symbolic constructions on our own (He indicated this especially last summer to me when visited with him at his home in Heidelberg.). We have to transcend our own limits and limits of our age to see the continuity of meaning that is being represented in a different referential ou quand c'est manques notre refrence ou notre conception. It is then we must seek out help from art - for beauty would at that time show us that there is something that is continuing to touch us on a deeper level - our productive imagination that we have to produce for ourselves.

Art challenges us to encounter the past not simply to repeat it, claims Gadamer. Let us encounter the present and not simply project our set attitudes - be prepared to move with it, as it were through aesthetic experience. Does that not justify art?

Festival for Gadamer transcends cultural limitations and status quo. It is for every one. He does not rule out that art can be part of commerce as well, although that is only marginally the case. In the center it is not something forced - not something that has material worth mainly, but that it communicates to us something that is in excess of the mundane and repetitious.

We do not go to Tristan and Isolde simply to be manipulated by artistic sentiments, nor should we go there as it were a ritual. The ideal aesthetics for Gadamer lies between the

two extremes. To go to listen to Callas' singing would be for connoisseur's secondary reflections, but to simply see the performance is kitschlike. We do not go to opera to receive the repetitious message nor do we look at art and merely see it for art's sake. The real task lies between the two extremes, to appreciate the power in art as it presents before us, the continuity of time and its mysterious relation to the present. Art takes us out of the temporal fright by letting us see the eternal embedded in a new dress. With a new rhythm that awakens us anew and penetrates us at that particular climactic aesthetic moment when we grasp the work in its essence. We stand there, spellbound and stare for a moment. The romantic strain of German Idealism offering a solution to the problem raised by Wordsworth in the English Romanticism. <sup>1</sup>

Work of art is resistant to complete interpretations. It retains its mystery in the right place. Art cannot be grasped in the universal. It is singular. Christ is not in the symbol in Eucharist. The symbol is the Christ; Christ is there in it. That is Gadamer's central point in this essay on the *Relevance of Beautiful*. One artwork cannot be replaced by another as a light signal can be replaced by another. Artist resists categorization, because he himself is confounded by art perpetually and is mystified by it.

The above should summarize Gadamer's essay on the *Relevance of the Beautiful*, at least the most vital part of the essay is covered in my exposition. I would like to support his argument in justification of art by situating it within my own experience of production and appreciation of painting, as following:

I as an artist and philosopher stand spell bound before my art as it never fails to tell me the truth. Art has the last word for me. I as an artist do not have the last word. Therein lies

my agreement with Gadamer for justification of art and/or the relevance of the beautiful. It is not philosophy but art that has the last word for me. It has the capacity to be contextual, not a mere generalization. An artwork is a singular not a universal, yet it does not have the problematic of being a deviant or a normative truth. For it has power as Gadamer notes which subsides the worry of the absolute or arbitrary, false/truth value. It is eternity standing before us and causing us to stare at it for a while and giving us an intimation of irreducibility or dynamism and multiplicity of junctions and dysjunctions resisting final interpretation within the sonnet or the canvas of the painting. From the very beginning despite being controversial "art" has enchanted us. It unites reference and meaning in a certain way that we cannot succeed in such a manner in the domain of the 'said'. It does not claim rightness or wrongness in any conceptual sense, and yet it provides the arche philosopher attempts to locate in concepts. In art, knowing and experience are united; it is more than poetic episteme. In philosophy there is only speculative knowledge; in art there is consummation of knowledge. It therefore touches us and invigorates our sense of wonder while it frees us from our givenness as it stands on its own platform. Therein lies its 'relevance.'

## Footnote 1:

Wordsworth, William. "Tintern Abbey" pg. 109.  
"And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,  
With many recognitions dim and faint,  
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,  
The picture of the mind revives again;  
While here I stand, not only with the sense  
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts  
That in this moment there is life and food  
For future years. And so I dare to hope .  
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first  
I came among these hills; when like a roe  
I bounded over the mountains, by the sides  
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,  
Wherever nature led: more like a man  
Flying from something that he dreads, then one  
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then  
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,  
And their glad animal movements all gone by)  
To me was all in all – I cannot paint  
What then I was."

## References:

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1986. *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*. Trans. Nicholas Walker, Edi. Robert Bernasconi. Cambridge. Cambridge UP.  
Elgin, Catherine Z. 1997. *Between the Absolute and the Arbitrary*. Ithaca and London. Cornell University Press.

There are now altogether at least nine hundred works of Röder's that are owned by galleries and collectors in Nord-America, Europe and India.

Thirty are in her gallery at 85 Kloosterstraat in Antwerp open for viewing upon appointment to be made on telephone at 0496/188630 or 03/289.62.02

