

Art and cognition

The recognition that the world we see is not really what it seems might be as old as art itself. Experiencing reality has long been compared to touching a thin, illusory layer: one of the many our mind tries to project based on the evidence of our misleading senses. The rest remains unseen, concealed and unknowable.

The realm of cognition is marked out by philosophy, science and religion. Yet alongside them there is also art which enables us to construct fictions and play with the illusoriness of the senses and the arbitrariness of the imagination. Artists do not claim to objectivize their inquiries. On the contrary, they relativize reality by enriching it with their own, parallel reality. Though unreal, this reality provides an alternative to that which exists, an alternative, which – artists maintain – is no less real.

Every artistic act is an experiment conducted on the road of cognition. Artists are not in awe of the pre-existing. For them, the world is a source of anxiety, something to be tampered with. Whether they let their imagination run wild, imitate life or art, or engage in their deconstruction, artists always penetrate, explore, and consequently transcend reality.

In such a context art is not a means of communication between the maker and the viewer. Artists invite others to co-witness their quest. They never name the unnamable, nor does anyone expect them to. Reception implies the ability to find questions. A Classical thinker once remarked that, 'each thing is whatever one imagines it to be.' Since there are as many realities as there are individuals what is the point of naming them, or communicating?

The world is appearance as art proves. By using the arbitrary and the fictitious art is a kind of universal simulation and artifact, with its array of mystification, with its swelling museums and collections which amass the paraphernalia of alternative realities: equally unreal and unfathomable as the everyday.

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