

A Work of Art

How they praised it, studied it, wrote about it;
A work of art: on the stage, on the wall, in the mall.
Not all agreed, of course. There were many who passed
Without pause, stopping or recognition. Were they blind?

The ones that knew, could see, had pronounced their verdict.
Who among the great unwashed, the uncultured could dissent,
Would care to disagree? Art is a thing of personal taste? Mais non!
The practitioners of art invest their life into their creation.

Surely they need it to be assessed, appreciated by a higher standard
than personal taste. Call it Beauty, if you like; a term lost in the commerce
Of language; thus decreased in status by overuse, thus decreased in
Its descriptive power. Nonetheless, let us, for argument's sake, use it.

Start with the creation, the planning, the preparation. Staring at a blank page,
A blank screen, a blank canvas, a piece of rock. Come on, do your best.
Make me different, make me special, make me unique. The clock ticks loudly.
Doesn't it thunder in your brain, as you gather your resolve, make your first move.

A blank moment. Then nothing! The anguish. Discipline, discipline!
As an artist, we set the barriers high. Do we expect to be judged by more stringent criteria?
We have our own language, our own criteria. Yes?
Do we not measure, assess and weigh every brush stroke, every word,
labour to perfect a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph?
Whatever we do, we paint a picture, colour it with care.

Stay within the lines? Your choice, your statement, your narrative. You're the creator.
So what's the question? Why? For whom! Who's the audience? In marketing terms,
The consumer. Let me venture a guess, an answer to the question.
"Who do we do it for?". We do it for ourselves. As the first and most brutal audience,
We do it for ourselves. What do we compare it with? Our last successful work.

Granted, art critics and literary critics have their own language, their own vocabulary.
Makes them sound incredibly wise. Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. A deft choice
Of phrasing in written form or music is identifiable, as in the choice of colour.
It can be discussed, measured, dissected. It's a person's experience or perception

Laid out on the table. Once in the public domain, it becomes a thing, still breathing, vibrant
It is still a thing. To be analysed, torn apart and pieced together.

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© 22 April 2021

Read this out at poetry conference

