

Art, Creativity
& Spiritual Life



Wildheart

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Painting by Alex Grey, from his recent book, *Transfigurations*. See www.alexgrey.com



Art is Love: THE WISDOM OF ADI DA SAMRAJ



« Self-portrait

ADI DA SAMRAJ has been helping people of all ages to find and feel and practice spiritual happiness for 30 years. Beginning with his now classic spiritual autobiography, *The Knee of Listening*, he has published well over 60 books on every subject pertaining to spiritual life, including: diet and health, relationships and sexuality, death and dying, meditation, enlightenment, and the nature of the human ego. Adi Da's unique wisdom has inspired the formation of schools, health clinics, artisans guilds and retreat sanctuaries, as well as an international network of communities devoted to the spiritual practice that he has outlined. Adi Da's teaching has never been limited to conceptual ideas, however, and has always been more of an artistic enterprise, in which he "drew pictures" of the primal truths at the heart of spiritual reality. When he completed his written teaching some years ago, he immediately became intensely concentrated on artistic work as his primary form of communication. For more about Adi Da Samraj and his artistic work, see www.adidam.org/gallery.

All "Transcendental Drawings" by Adi Da Samraj

Many of the purposes of art have been lost.

The arts, traditionally, were not a means of self-expression. All the arts were forms of ritual, or service to the community. There were dancers, painters, singers, sculptors, people who would recite, people who wrote stories, but they didn't do these things merely to express themselves. They did them because all the arts were presumed to have a function within the community. An individual would study to become proficient in any one of the arts, if he or she had the talent for it, and the talent was proven. Then that person could go on and spend his or her life doing this kind of work.



In general, the community in which an individual lived had a formula, a consideration, an idol, a history. It had a spectrum in which a person could operate as an artist. What a person was to do—let's say, for instance, as a painter—was pre-established, including the techniques to be used and the images to be created. Therefore, the individual had to transcend himself or herself to learn the art.

He or she would submit to a master—not a spiritual master necessarily, but generally

My Friends >>



a master of the craft—and would be schooled in the “cult” of the art. The artist would learn the tradition, the limits, the techniques, and the purposes of art in that culture. By submitting to this demand of the culture in general, the individual transcended his or her own self-possessed motivation. The apprentice was not permitted to paint or to sing or to play an instrument until the master could profess to the community that the individual had prepared to the degree that he or she could now serve the community. Not only had the artist learned all the techniques, not only did he or she know how to awaken in others the imagery to which that culture was devoted, but the individual had mastered self in the process, had become responsible for himself or herself.

AS ONE LOOKS THROUGH TIME, however, the arts cease to have a cultural purpose that is acknowledged to be necessary. They become mere entertainments. They become a way of expressing one’s self, one’s contents. From this point of view, there’s no culture, no center, no society, no necessity to what the artist does. He or she communicates the failure of the social order, the failure of the demands within an art to represent an obligation to transcend one’s self, to master one’s self, and to provide something within the social order that is valued by others, that has intrinsic value—fundamental value that’s not just decoration, but that’s part of the sacred purpose of the community.

We exist in a time when there’s no cultural necessity to the arts. They’re secondary to daily life. The arts don’t have any necessity in the social order.

Art was originally a sacred activity, generated within a sacred culture.

But even apart from those aspects of a culture that one might specifically call sacred, there’s another fundamental subject of art, which is beauty—to portray it, to represent it, to present something that is in fact beautiful or found to be beautiful by people.

But the sense of what is actually beautiful has also been lost.

THE IDEA OF WHAT IS BEAUTIFUL has been reduced to something about the appearance of some one or some thing. Much of contemporary art is basically an effort to construct something based on some system. If the purpose is to make something beautiful, it’s a matter of creating some object or performance that’s consistent and consistently applies some principles, perhaps even achieves some sort of balance between various forms or elements. In other words, the notion of what is beautiful has been reduced to the structure of something, or its appearance.

It’s commonly said that architecture is the mother of the arts. This suggests that structure is the basis of anything that can be called art. But the beautiful is certainly a fundamental subject of the arts.

Even where something apparently ugly was represented traditionally, even that object or performance was somehow mysteriously associated with the feeling of the beautiful.

What is something beautiful then? What is a beautiful subject?

When Nature became a subject of art, it was on the basis of feeling God in Nature, loving Nature, not just seeing trees and sky and mountains.

Only that which is loved is beautiful.

No form, however comely, however it may conform to some system of structure, is truly beautiful, if it’s not also loved.

The traditional subjects of the arts—of the representational arts for instance, like sculpture or painting—were beings: Gods or spiritual figures, personages commonly known in the society in which the art was produced. Or they were images of the world, perhaps, in the case of Nature paintings. But the subject was something, generally, for which any viewer could feel love. When Nature became a subject of art, it was on the basis of feeling God in Nature, loving Nature, not just seeing trees and sky and mountains.

The necessary essence of art is Love.

Art depends on the ability of the viewers of any object or performance to feel love relative to the process or object that is presented to them. The work of art must in some way or other generate this feeling, this attitude, this gesture—even if it is something as seemingly simple as a finely made pot. It must evoke somehow this participatory feeling. If it frustrates it, or doesn’t allow it, or doesn’t even try to invoke it, then it’s not really art.

TRUE ART invites participation, and it’s part of a cultural exercise. All art originally came out of the temple, or the religious culture, the sacred culture of the past. The art was used. There are high forms of art that were used within the ceremonial practices of various societies, → PAGE 30

“The restoration of the sacred domain is the means for creating human balance in the world again. Only sacred culture gives people the means to live a truly sane existence.”



RUCHIRA AVATAR
ADI DA SAMRAJ

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT ADI DA SAMRAJ AND HIS WISDOM ON SACRED CULTURE AND THE SACRED DOMAIN, VISIT
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