

THE CUT AND PAST EPOCH... THE SAMPLING ERA

It seems to me that art historians, museum curators and arts writers have need to create labels for forms of art as groups that conform to formulas, which have characteristics in common, which fit into categories and cubbyholes. Such classification methods can provide insight into what goes on at any period in history, it can seem to offer stability and group thought, to offer comfort and a sense of understanding to authors, museum personnel and educators.

How easy is it to classify art “movements” in today's fractured art climate? How easy it is to see the forest for the trees when one is immersed in today's incoming barrage of multifarious production? There are so many directions and existing forms of visual art, so many materials and so many artist names being proffered about in publications and galleries from so many more art centers in the world.

There are so many experiences, expectations, cultural sources and idiosyncratic expressions, all of which are vying to be “the next big thing”. See me! Look at me! Here I am! Pay attention to me!

Considering what is seen in contemporary arts publications, new exhibits of art from around the nation and world, and the results of auctions of late 20th and early 21st century art...I can personally feel bewildered. The wealth and diversity can be disorienting to the art appreciator, the analyst, casual observer and the diligent student.

At the turn into the 20th century the world of art expression opened up an artistic Pandora's box and out flew all the possibilities we have seen mill about in the past 100 plus years. From Impressionism to Dada to Expressionisms to Minimalism to what was Modern to Post Modernism...the last label not describing a style but an era.

Post Modernism is another way of saying “all that abundance of stuff thrown at us, especially following the fifties”. It is an era expanding and encouraging exploration into all new and old materials, more exploration and experimentation, sometimes outrageous ideas, a freeing up and escape from rules while individuals seek recognition for their fresh sometimes preposterous expressions in search of approval. Publicity and taste makers rule as we all try to sort out the abundant varieties.

It can be disorienting for those artists who have not arrived at a comfort level in their own art production and who might be searching for that right combination to satisfy both soul and the marketplace.