

DETRITUS & ART / A personal point of view on Environment and Art by Rainer Stegmann

Artists seldom provide an interpretation of their own work; they leave this to the observer. Indeed, each of us will have our own individual view of a specific piece of art, seeing different contents and experiencing a range of feelings and emotions. Bearing this in mind, I created this page where you will find regularly a selected work of art from different epochs and I express my thoughts on what the work conveys to me personally. The interpretation should be related specifically to the environment and what kind of message I deduct from it: it may be to preserve the beauty and integrity of nature, to prevent destruction, issue warnings, etc.

I would also like to involve you, the reader of DETRITUS, to give your own interpretation of a work of art in max 8-10 lines. I will present the piece to be discussed in the next issue and I will publish your interpretation together with mine.

I look forward to a highly fruitful exchange of views and thoughts, and am convinced that art will open our eyes with regard to the specific work of art and its relationship with the environment.



MARC CHAGALL / PARADISE - 1961, Oil on Canvas, Chagall Museum, Nice, France

In this issue I will start by discussing "Paradise", a painting by Marc Chagall.

On first looking at this beautiful painting the clear bold colours overwhelmed me. You should also bear in mind the considerably large format (198 x 288 cm), which actually underpins the power of the colours. The painting shows a scene from the Bible depicting Adam and Eve on

the left in Paradise, living in harmony. On the other side of the painting the snake, which has persuaded Eve to eat an apple from the forbidden tree: "If you eat the apple you become like God and will be able to discern between good and bad" the snake said. Eating an apple from this tree was the only thing God had expressly forbidden. Unfortunately, Eve ate the apple and gave it to Adam, who of

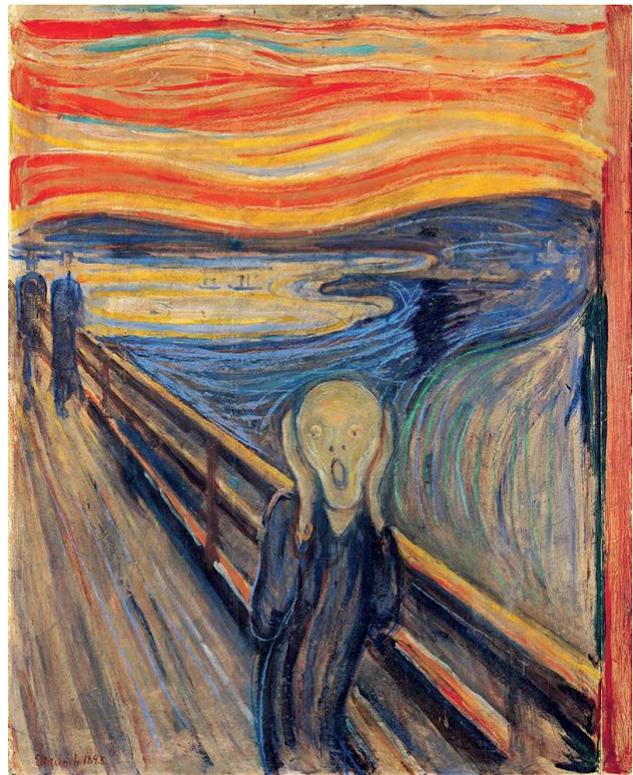
course did the same. As stated in the Bible, God punished Adam and Eve by expelling them from Paradise: "The Fall of Man".

For me, this painting symbolises the "Second Fall of Man": humans have not succeeded in preserving the creation of our planet but have plundered its natural resources and exorbitantly polluted the elements water, air and soil.

The snake may represent a symbol of pure capitalism, suggesting that natural resources can be used unrestrictedly in order to further increase economic growth, and overlooking respect for the environment. People trusted the snake and still bit into, and continue to bite into the apple with the well-known consequences. Global pollution and climate change are making our living conditions more and more critical.

We are indeed in great danger of leaving our "Human Paradise" (different from the "Divine Paradise" that Adam and Eve left), with its beautiful nature, which is still intact in many places; I therefore interpret this wonderful painting as the "Second Fall of Man". In my opinion the beautiful expressive colours used in this work of art extol the beauty of nature.

However, in contrast to the first "Fall of Man" mankind has been given a chance to remedy his failings and stay in human paradise. To achieve this no efforts should be spared to preserve our environment. What would be the alternative? Hell.....?



EDVARD MUNCH / THE SCREAM

In the next issue of DETRITUS I like to present "The Scream" created by Norwegian Expressionist Edvard Munch in 1893. There are several versions of this theme and I have selected this amazing coloured work of art. Please send your thoughts by 15th November to stegmann@tuhh.de.