

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

When I am in Venice I always visit the Guggenheim Museum Venice. It is a small beautiful museum at the Canale Grande with some extraordinary pieces of Artwork. During my last visit I came across the sculpture from the Italian artist Umberto Boccioni (19.10.1882- 17.8.1916). He is one of the co-founders of futurism in Italy. The Futurism, is an early 20th-century artistic movement centered in Italy that emphasized the dynamism, speed, energy, and power of the machine and the vitality, change, and restlessness of modern life (Britannica). The Futurist aesthetic platform advocates the use of various materials in a single work, the rejection of closed form, and the suggestion of the interpenetration of form and the environment through the device of intersecting planes. (Guggenheim Museum, Venice, Italy, <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/580>).

Umberto Boccioni: Dynamism of a Speeding Horse + houses (Guggenheim Museum, Venice, Italy)

The here presented sculpture is called "Dynamism of a Speeding Horse + Houses". Boccioni assembled wood, cardboard, and metal, with painted areas. His work is influenced by the Cubism of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. In his sculpture he used the horse to demonstrate his observation that the nature of vision produces the illusion of a fusing of forms. When the distance between a galloping horse and a stationary house is visually imperceptible, horse and house appear to merge into a single changing form (based on text from Lucy Flint, Guggenheim Museum, Venice, Italy) <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/580>).

This is the interpretation of the expert Lucy Flint from Guggenheim Museum, but of course everybody may have his own. I find the sculpture very esthetic; the different used materials fit well together and form a homogeneous sculpture. The used materials are very different like wood, cardboard and metal. Due to the similar colour the different materials combine to form a unit.

I do not think that Boccioni wanted arouse our interest for recycling, because during his lifetime used materials and products were not easily thrown away. It was in general the goal to reuse used materials for other purposes. Waste composition during those times consisted mainly ashes and dust, 2.7% paper, 3.4% slags and coal residues (Waste Composition in 1895 in Berlin, Germany from Breer et. al. 2010). The waste actually did not contain the materials used by Boccioni. But artwork can be interpreted differently in different times. I see more the recycling aspect of the used materials, the potential for reuse. Once more an artist shows us the value of these materials when they are completely or partly reused. I presented already the bull



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head created from bicycle parts by Pablo Picasso, which is a very prominent example. I see the use of the materials in some cases as upcycling, to increase the value of the materials compared to their past use. Of course, looking at the sculpture created by Boccioni I did not relate it immediately to waste, to recycling. But on the second look the different used materials caught my attention also because they fit so well to each other although they are so different. How would Boccioni react if he would know about my interpretation? Maybe he would turn over in his grave – a German saying.

REFERENCE

Breer, R. Mlodoch, S. Willms, H. 2010, Asche Kehricht und Saubermänner, SASE gGMBH, Iserlohn, Germany



In the next edition I will present a work of art by the contemporary artist Eddy Ekete (1978) from Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Kongo, Africa. He makes installations on persons in their environment in Kinshasa highlighting specific waste problems.*