

How Art can Inform Our Work and Provide a Welcome Escape

By Deborah Hope Wayne, Esq., NYSCDM President

I like weaving a thread between culture and mediation. With our new one-page format for Council News, I wondered if it made sense to focus on the arts when there are so many serious issues before us right now. One of the original reasons for a column on mediation and culture was to focus on the arts from the perspective of a mediator. A painting, a dance performance and a piece of music can help us to broaden our perspective on any number of things, including our work. At the same time, the arts can be somewhat of an escape. I think we all need a bit of relief from the daily challenges we are facing.

In a prior writing, I took a look at cubism. Instead of depicting objects from a single viewpoint, cubist artists tried to inspire us to understand there can be multiple viewpoints. Just like mediation, there can be so much more to the initial picture that we see.

The underlying geometric framework of artists like Juan Gris, Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso are like the pieces of a puzzle. The whole picture can so much more intricate. Or, we can choose to just take it at face value.

As a neutral, we often ask ourselves to look beneath the surface of what is being said both verbally and non-verbally. This has taken an interesting and sometimes challenging twist during the COVID pandemic. I am now doing all of my mediations remotely on a zoom platform. Like many, I feel like I now have a virtual life and need some relief from time to time. Our focus is different these days and we may be cognizant of that or not. (Frankly, seeing myself during the mediation is probably the most challenging part!)

I have not been to a museum in months. Broadway is closed. I am watching dance performances on zoom. Yet, I still want to bring the inspiration and energy of art in one form or another into my life. I hope you have a way to balance your life so that you can bring your best self to the mediation table (screen). During this pause created by the pandemic, I have returned to my true love, the arts, as an escape and also as a reminder of what is important in life. The work of two artists, in particular, is



currently top of mind for me, Gerhard Richter and Ursula Abresch. Abstract and photorealistic paintings seem appropriate for the time.

Gerhard Richter has asked, “What can art be used for?” I think it stimulates the mind and inspires us. We can use that energy in our work. Mr. Richter has talked about “blurring things to make them equally important and unimportant”. His paintings evolve such that incidental details and patterns emerge. The flexibility of the composition allows us to see more. If you choose, you can draw a line between the flexibility of this type of art to the flexibility of a being neutral in mediation. What we see and how we react may change the result.

Ursula Abresch is an art photographer based in West Kootenays, British Columbia. I became interested in her work through a photographic print called “Watery Windows” - hanging on my wall next to the Open Window by Juan Gris - all part of my escapism! Ms. Abresch tell us, “There’s more to a moment than what you see with your eyes. There are thoughts at the time, the sounds, the smells, what you touch ... and more”. (1)

The prints of their art in my home office will give you a glimpse at their vision. I invite you to take a closer look at the work of these artists when you are able. I hope you are all finding ways to stay mentally healthy and safe during these challenging times and I look forward to seeing you soon.

1. I invite you to view the referenced art online. Due to copyright restrictions I could not include copies here.