

Someday the Museums Will Reopen (But Not as We Have Known Them)

By Bernard Marszalek

From *Dissent Magazine*:

We will need art “on the other side of this,” says a worker at the Guggenheim Museum.

We are sort of getting at the real nitty gritty about “Why do we have art?” and “Why is it valuable? Why is it treasured?” . . . We are going to really need that on the other side of this. That means we are really going to need the people that run these institutions and work at these institutions and maintain them. – Worker at the Guggenheim Museum.¹

While I sympathize with the workers at museums (and galleries and ‘art’ boutiques), I hardly think ‘we’ will need to flock to museums for succor, much less, edification and enlightenment, “on the other side of this.” I say, “Keep the museums closed, until they reflect the creativity of liberated individuals!” Liberated from jobs!

“What about the workers?” – I can hear the missionaries scream, when what they mean is not the workers, but their jobs.

I would say in response – “Let them take their freedom!”

Releasing workers from their jobs, in an effort to reduce COVID-19 infections, but without material security, amounts to inflicting mental torture on them, if not worse, and cannot be sustained. For the first time, many will have an abundance of time to do what they crave and no means to bring their projects to fruition. To return to “normalcy” – the program of the oligarchs and their sycophants – perpetuates a social crime. The only solution is a social subsidy for being human: an income for autonomous creativity for all, and not the wage slavery of a job.

Those who have developed skills to build installations, to mount lighting, to do repairs, and to take on assorted tasks, can better use them to create palaces of fantasy and wonder inside these edifices of a glitteringly oafish culture metastasized on the accumulation of wealth and the false fame of celebrity.

And those “attendants,” who must waste their days accomplishing nothing more than increasing the size of their varicose veins protecting the symbols of wealth and spectacle, must be freed from the chains of submission that their jobs entail to seek personal and collective expression, and in that way contribute to the expansion of a culture of imagination and creativity, of, essentially, a culture of humane values. The goal is a truly sustainable society; there are no other goals.

¹ Sarah Jaffe, “Belabored Stories: Someday the Museums Will Reopen,” published 30 March 2020, *Dissent Magazine*: <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/blog/belabored-stories-someday-the-museums-will-reopen>.

How can we respond to a society that glorifies the creativity of previous ages of oppression more than promoting and celebrating an effusion of contemporary creativity for all? It's corrupt! It must be abolished!

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