

Zen and the art of haiku

Life rushes by at an ever increasing pace, time may be relative, but relative to what? Our lives have become increasingly complicated as we become more industrialized, more civilized, we often forget to reconnect ourselves to the natural world. Establishing this connection allows us to realign ourselves, relieve the stress accumulated in our everyday lives and increase our emotional well being.

*When you know nature as part of yourself,
You will act in harmony,
When you feel yourself a part of nature
You will live in harmony.*

Tao Te Ch'ing (Tao 13)

“Many animals have senses that are much more acute than ours, and we have lost much of our sensory acuity and openness, largely because we live most of our lives in cities and indoors, areas of great sensory homogeneity, poverty and concealment. We no longer have either rich sensory environments to experience, or practice exercising our senses, opportunities to open ourselves up to the richness of sounds, sights, smells, tastes and feelings in nature, so that even in those rare times when we are in natural environments we are unaware, insensitive, closed, disinterested in their magic, their meaning, their knowledge.”

David Pollard 'How to save the world'

<http://blogs.salon.com/0002007/stories/2004/09/15/theTruthAboutNatureHowToSaveTheWorld.html>

The writer Henry Thoreau believed that the process of taking a walk everyday, being surrounded by nature, being absorbed by the sights and sounds the nuances of light and the verdant scent of growth was necessary for the sanity. Unfortunately many of us don't have the opportunity to indulge ourselves in this way so we must look to other methods to calm the spirit.

"We should go forth on the shortest walk, perchance, in the spirit of undying adventure, never to return; prepared to send back our embalmed hearts only, as relics to our desolate kingdoms."

Henry David Thoreau 'Walking'
[Http://thoreau.eserver.org/walking.html](http://thoreau.eserver.org/walking.html)

The practice of Zen offers many insights into living a calmer more centered life. Zen does not rely on doctrines and theories, in fact in ancient times the Zen masters would often teach without words, only using gestures to convey their intentions, encouraging a more intuitive and individual approach. Part of the discipline involves waking up the mind, dissolving the walls and boundaries that have been erected and teaching that we aren't separate beings but part of a whole.

Zen encourages looking inside for enlightenment, believing there is no need to look to the external for answers as all answers come from the same place as the questions. An important part of the process is to be aware of the present moment, the sights and sounds, the smells and tastes that one is experiencing right now.

The principles of Zen are often expressed within an artistic framework.

“Zen art does not try to create the illusion of reality. It abandons true to life perspective, and works with artificial space relations which make one think beyond reality into the essence of reality. This concept of essence as opposed to illusion is basic to Zen art in all phases.

The job of the artist is to suggest the essence, the eternal qualities of the object, which is in itself a work of natural art before the artist arrives on the scene. In order to achieve this, the artist must fully understand the inner nature of the aesthetic object, its Buddha nature. This is the hard part. Technique, though important, is useless without it; and the actual execution of the art work may be startlingly spontaneous, once the artist has comprehended the essence of his subject.”

Zen Buddhism and Its Relationship to Elements of Eastern And Western Arts
Fredric Lieberman

<http://arts.ucsc.edu/faculty/lieberman/zen.html>

The art of writing Haiku began with Japanese Zen monks finding expression in the form of poetry, traditional Haiku is formed with very strict guidelines; they must be of three lines; with five syllables in the first, seven in the second line and five in the third. The poem must contain a cutting, dividing it into two sections which contain meaning for each other and it must contain a *kigo* a season word to indicate when the Haiku is set, these rules impose structure which allows for simplistic freedom of expression.

*The moment two bubbles
are united, they both vanish.
A lotus blooms.*

Murakami, Kijo. (1865-1938).

The current series has been created with these principles in mind, the idea of having all the information and executing the work with a sweep of the hand. Naturally working with glass, the work doesn't come about in quite such a spontaneous way, but the idea and the finished piece strive to give the impression of a fleeting moment.

The intention of the work is to create a sense of walking in the forest, looking at the undergrowth and making a discovery, looking at the minute and seeing the endless variation within.

Using seed pods makes a reference to the life contained within, an endless cycle of rebirth which encompasses all species whether they be animal or botanical.

“Life has always seemed to me like a plant that lives on its rhizome. Its true life is invisible, hidden in the rhizome. The part that appears above ground lasts only a single summer. Then it withers away – an ephemeral apparition. When we think of the unending growth and decay of life and civilizations, we cannot escape the impression of absolute nullity. Yet I have never lost a sense of something that lives and endures under the eternal flux. What we see is the blossom, which passes. The rhizome remains.”

C.J. Jung 'Memories, Dreams and Reflections'

The connection with nature and the world around us is an essential element to the emotional well being of the human spirit, our increasing distance from the natural world is contributing to the serious environmental issues we are facing in the near future.

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