

“The Artist and the Mystic Share a Dilemma”



“The earthly artist, because perception brings with it the imperative longing for expression, tries to give us in color, sound or words a hint of his ecstasy, his glimpse of truth. Only those who have tried, know how small a fraction of his

vision he can, under the most favorable circumstances, contrive to represent. The mystic, too, tries very hard to tell an unwilling world his secret. But in his case, the difficulties are enormously increased. First, there is the huge disparity between his unspeakable experience and the language which will most nearly suggest it. Next, there is the great gulf fixed between his mind and the mind of the world. His audience must be ... caught us to something of his state, before they can be made to understand.” ~Evelyn Underhill

“Many people don’t realize it, but it is quite true that artists often struggle with trying to express the images or thoughts in their mind. We know that many great painters have actually destroyed some of their own works by painting something new over the original because they were simply not satisfied with it. Composers will sometimes rework their compositions over and over trying to get them just right, and some musicians will play a song over and over trying to get it just the way they want it. This is true of virtually all artists, and especially if they are inspired by a certain degree of spiritual awareness, or have a spiritual muse that they may not even be aware of. Georgia O’Keeffe was frustrated that others couldn’t see the beauty in the desert that she saw, so she blew up tiny desert flowers into giant ones on canvas. She continued to do the same with other flowers making those giant flowers her signature style (along with desert scenes).

“The mystic, or spiritual adept, has a similar dilemma to that of the artists, but more so as Ms. Underhill says. Not only is the mystic trying to communicate a spiritual vision that is uniquely his to other people , but he is often trying to do this with people who have no spiritual awareness at all.”

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