

Politics and Art: A Naïve Separation

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Human existence would probably be a lot easier if the spheres that compose it could be dealt with separately. Imagine a world where going to work had little to do with one's own health, or where friendship could be alienated from one's economy, or where family life was completely separated from religious practice. On paper, we could think, why not? Every instance of life could be thought of as an independent matter: time for work is time for work, time for school is time for school, time for entertainment is time for entertainment, time for voting in the presidential election is time for voting in the presidential election, and so on. But, in reality, human existence is designed as a complicated cobweb, in which everything is constantly affecting everything else. It is not different when it comes to art and politics, no matter how many conservatives insist that musicians should stick to singing and painters should only be thinking of colors and brushes. Art is infiltrated into politics, even if it is not welcome, not unlike a Trojan horse. Politics, on the other hand, is plastered all over art, as flashy posters cover city walls.

The idea that art exists only for entertainment is a bygone one. Even if there are people who still think in these terms, the power of art in politics is undeniable. Living in an almost completely globalized world and in an era of ultra-communication, politicians should look out for what artists are doing and saying, because *art moves people*. Art, in all of its forms, has the power to open people's eyes and to tug at their heartstrings. Photographers can capture moments of senseless beauty or of transfixing cruelty and share these frames of reality with the entire world in a couple of seconds by posting them on Instagram. Film directors can make a controversial script come to life, causing people to get an almost electric shock of class conscience when watching the Korean movie that won Best Picture at the 2020 Academy Awards. A certain singer-songwriter and American sweetheart managed to move her millions of followers to sign a petition promoting the Equality Act, which was then passed by the US House of Representatives, creating policies of safety for LGBTQ+ people in the workplace - all by releasing a music video with a powerful message. This tremendous impact art has on people and politics is not a 21st century exclusive - if we think of *The Communist Manifesto* as a literary piece, then it is a literary piece that created an entirely new set of ideas for a system of government and economy. Art is and has been loud, and no matter the efforts to minimize its resonance, art will always make itself heard. Any effort to keep art away from politics is a futile one.

Art today has become so broad and impossible to cage, that stating it exists for a single purpose would be irrational. Yes, art is entertainment - we might think there is hardly anything political about the average early 2000's sitcom or about some of the most famous works of the current tsunami of Young Adult fiction. Art is a mirror-like reflection of the human condition because it deals with all its sides - romance, family, friendship, money, church, food, etc. Love songs will always be love songs, and dreamy sonnets will always be written to make people yearn and sigh, and movie theaters will always welcome us to enjoy silly romcoms. The

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purpose of art can be nothing but decoration (paintings and sculptures decorate space, music and poetry decorate time), but it can also be radicalization, and everything else in between. Today, the artist has the choice: art can be politicized to its very DNA, or it can leave this world and deal with nothing mundane. But, how real is this choice? Behind every art piece there is a conscious human, who is affected by politics, and who needs to make their sentiments and philosophies come alive and materialize. A Netflix sitcom following a group of Irish teens in the 1990's would not be complete without depicting the impact the Troubles had in everyday life, and we cannot look at a picture of Duchamp's *Fountain* without thinking "This is absurd!", quickly followed by the retaliating thought: "The world and everything about it is absurd". Even when art seems to be made without a purpose, it can be traced back to politics, because any sentiment portrayed in art is caused by experiencing a world dominated by politics.

The attempt to separate art from politics is a naïve, almost ridiculous one. The need to keep these spheres of life apart is deeply rooted, I believe, in the need of privileged people in positions of power to alienate those who have something different to bring to the table. Every revolution in history has been either encouraged by or represented in art. Every protest is filled with agitating posters and with people reading their desperate poetry into a megaphone. Photos of those posters and videos of the recital of such poetry usually find their way into social media and are made viral by people who, in the next post, will announce to the world their latest Spotify activity. Every instance of human life is marked by the presence of art, whether it is in entertainment and amusement, or in an eye-opening Sociology course. This is because art makes its way into everything, including politics, just like everything makes its way into art, including politics. To keep one away from the other would be like untangling an eternal cobweb - the cobweb of human existence.