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PUBLICATIONS
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THE BEING OF A THING AND ITS MEANING
IN SOCIAL COMMUNICATION
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ABSTRACT

Since the concept of Visual Art has welcome everyday objects as authentic form and meaning I have found that Heidegger’s Was ist ein Ding?/What is a thing? 1967, and Habermas’s Communication and the Evolution of Society, 1976, can be theoretically used in some extent to support and illustrate the reason of existence and creation by using such objects as genuine constructs of artworks and daily dialogs. On social communication, I understand Habermas’s limits of his theory to verbal language exclusively, but I would like to follow his guidelines only to explore the possibility of semantic or non-verbal representation that links individuals with community, a sort of communication without speech. To strengthen my thesis, I will begin evaluating Heidegger’s discussion on the essence of “thing” to deepen human consciousness of living in the world. I will also use visual images to further evaluate communication based on concrete and probable realities.

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A

METAPHYSICAL AND PRAGMATIC QUESTION

THEMATICALLY, “What is a Thing” a discourse advanced by Heidegger, aims at a deeper investigation of knowledge following the original idea of Kant’s Ding an sich. Such an investigation passes over to Hermeneutic strategy for deeper understanding. Yet, “Was is ein Ding?” as a broad topic, deals with many different meanings and objectives in terms of thought and practice. Therefore, it envelopes a great deal of subjects concerning human beings, things and even the cosmos. In area connecting with human communication we will sometimes review the issue of rationality and emotion;
so called the grass roots of techniques and strategies exhaustively discussed in Husserlian *Cartesian Meditations*.

In reality, the phrase “Universal Pragmatics” in Habermas’s *Communication and Evolution of Society* has triguered my curiosity to write this essay, not to critique but to investigate, the core of Habermas’s thesis to see if there is room for artworks to be included in social communication. Habermas makes it clear in *Communication* that his project sets aside (not exclude) the language of arts or non-verbal communicative action, such as painting, sculpture, and music. So, why should I waste my time? Following Stueber, concerning intersubjectivity strickly in empathic mode, we wonder if communicative action makes it possible only through rationality or grammatical modes? (Stueber 2006).

At the outset of *Communication* Habermas briefly defends his thesis of pragmatic communication based on “consensus speech actions” and “general presuppositions” as follows:

a) A statement must be clear about what is understandable;

b) So that the speaker and the audience have mutual understanding.

However, to which and for the purpose of communicative action I would like to add two presuppositions, for the non-verbal language [if] where and when appicable. Here are my points:

a) Show a work of art that is understandable, so

b) The artist and the audience have mutual understanding.

Although Habermas’s communicative framework is not applicable to arts, in reality, today visual culture in the vogue, has both peculiar and universal impacts in social communication as did Husserl observe in his *Logical Investigations*, 1900. Certainly, we are not discussing this issue in scientific light as we are aware of the boundaries of different subject matters that yield to the variety of knowleges.

With respect to the art of speech, when the speaker desires to address a topic to the audience, he must be sure of the content of the subject and anticipate the right kind of public who can attend to (or bebenefit). Husserl has this for us that although the artist’s experiences are concrete, it is hardly to the public that such experiences make sense to them (*Logical Investigations*), save the case of commercial art. However, the intent thematically requires serious investigations, although it appears clearly on the surface. This sort of game-playing does not look like the chest-game under each of whose pawn exists no motif at all.

Thus, could it be possible to have a communication between artist and public? And could it be possible for a pragmatic understanding of sense, not meaning, in any sort of communication? In reality, problem of pragmatic communication still arises, as observed Habemas himself, owing to many shortcomings of speech, for example:

a. There are still so many presuppositions in thought expression;

b. There are so many syntactic explanations in grammatical logic. Therefore, thought is unclear;

c. Analysis of basic idea does not follow logical form, and

d. Incoherence of thought expression resulting in poor communication between the speaker and the public.

Of those four points, issue (b) shows that syntactic explanations are not always “clear” and not always “understandable”, due to grammatical form. Like all logical forms, those of grammar do not have specific content. Like the organic structure of our body the form of logic does not speak of the
content, our communication like the soul, speaks of the rational, and the emotional, therefore, only content can stand up to jurisdictions. Furthermore, invariants in communication must be tested against truth because the worldliness of the world mainly consists of variants as is clear in the Fifth Meditation of Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations*.

**B**

**WAS IST EIN DING, AN ONTOLOGICAL QUESTION OF COMMUNICATION**

“*Was is ein Ding*” or about idea (eidos), a metaphysical question for an extensive research of true knowledge or epistemè. It becomes a sub-theme of Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*. The discussion includes all things (Dinge) or ideas on the natural, emotional, irrational, concrete, abstract, active, inactive, uncanny as well as numbers, weathers and unfinished projects (werbehafte Dinge). Following which we may venture to investigate a thing in terms of the beauuteous aspects, such as laughter, smile, and even body language inherently in daily circumstances.

One can violate a thing but cannot do so to its essence or depth that remains uncanny to our knowledge. From Kant’s “*Ding an sich*” comes Heidegger’s “*Ding für uns*” about our perceptions of a thing. “*Ding für uns*”, precisely the perceptual or perceived thing has its attributes; which to represent them linguistically successful demand us a great deal of communicative skills. Representation of a thing may follow Heidegger’s strategy of limited or unlimited “ratio”, following the ancient Greek concept, in the vertical order as follows:

- This house is red
- This house is tall
- This house is smaller than the one of the next-door
- This house is by a stream dotted with pine trees
- This house is one of the 18th century architectural styles.

Heidegger calls the deterministic characters of the house “ratio” that rationally reflects the idea of “Vernunft” in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, whereby a thing is decidedly demonstrated as follows:

1. The meaning of a thing is what it appears to us;
2. The meaning of a thing is what we name it;
3. The meaning of anything (ein Etwas), either concrete or abstract.

For Habermas, to know the clear deterministic characters or attributes of a thing we must be able to show our understanding (verstehen) that although grounded in concrete experiences, the understanding requires further radical investigation called “empirical-analytic method” or better known as “reconstructive sciences”. This empirical analytic strategy ultimately demands “interpretation” and “observation” of a thing to finally pass such an empirical analysis to speech by means of which communication is possible in three phases:

**Phase I**

- The observed thing
- The observer or method of observation

**Phase II**

Demonstrative of statement of knowledge

**Phase III**

Interpretation
Habermas’s idea of “reconstructive sciences” reminds us of Heidegger’s thought when the latter argues that the substance of science rests in our understanding of everyday things, both universal and singular or simply TRUE or FALSE. As such our understanding of a thing in front of us is limited if not superficial (Vorhanden). In fact argues Heidegger only successfully grabbing (grasping) a thing’s essence would lead to our transcendental knowledge of the observed target; namely the “thingness/Dingkeit” of a thing. Moreover, Husserlian advanced Cartesian meditation or doubt to a sort of transcendental knowledge of a thing by continuously questioning the subjectivity, again and again. To support and clarify Husserl’s remark, Heidegger argues that doubt is legitimate since we are but egos to which all knowledge is represented subjectively; if our knowledge still falls short of subjective analysis. Due to the return to subjectivity, some scholars have misunderstood Husserl and mistakably associated it with solipsism.

That only a thing can show its own essence supports Heidegger’s central theme that the essence of mathematics is manifest by mathematics exclusively, as he follows the ancient Greek definitions:

1. A thing is born and it follows its own natural process;
2. If a thing is a man’s product, then it reflects exactly man’s desire;
3. When a thing is used by man, it is always subject to man’s will;
4. Beyond the concept of morality and application, a thing is pragmatically in man’s use.

About the first definition (1) or “ Thing in itself” (later we discuss “art in itself), Heidegger poses a legitimate question: “In what way?” This question clearly leads us to investigation of the Being (Sein) of mathematics, beginning with numbers that Heidegger questions if it is “true that numbers are mathematics?” and “Why numbers must be mathematical?” For common readers, the answer would probably means “yes” and “no”. I am delighted to hear G.H. Hardy, the purest mathematician of the twentieth century, who succinctly points out that “mathematics concerns “things” in the world, and not “numbers”. In the same token, theorems indisputably display the beautiful concepts for numbers that satisfies proofs and evidences, and thus mathematical functions require techniques and strategies that can only be apprehended by basic skills. However, in reality, such techniques and strategies cannot prove the essence of mathematics.

For Hardy, a serious theorem contains significant “idea”. Thus, idea itself in general term has nothing to do with number, instead it shows shallow (trivial) theorems and deeper theorems. Regardless the different degrees of significance of different theorems, one thing makes theorem as idea that all theorems must relate to each other. This answers Heidegger’s question on the essence of mathematics on the ground of metaphysics. Hardy wisely concludes, “I believe that mathematical reality lies outside us, that our function is to discover or observe it, and that the theorems which we prove, and which we grandiloquently as our “creations”, are simply the notes of our observations.” (Hardy 1993). This may spurs our attention to Heidegger’s central idea that all things must gear to humanism, a noble ideal, not idea. Hardy may have no problem with Heidegger on humanism he sees art and science different in substance but common in terms of the beautiful of human intellect, that like a painter and a poet, a mathematician is a maker of patterns (Hardy 1993). We tend to think of art as something beautiful, do we think theorems are beautiful or ugly? While the functions and idea of making patterns greatly differ from mathematics to poetry and painting, Hardy enjoys the fact that “the mathematician’s patterns must be beautiful. (Hardy 1993). I agree. Concerning the perseverance of the beauty of idea, Hardy finds that while the beauty of the idea of verbal pattern seems “hardly” affected by “poverty”, that of mathematics “lasts longer” (Hardy 1993), for instance the Pythagoras’s theorem or the ratio 66 in Babylon’s culture.

For Heidegger, that the system of number is the depth or essence of mathematics can be taught and comprehended according to different levels. But it goes against epistemology if one holds that mathematics could be formulated into logical equations. One of the great logicians of the 20th century
Willard van Orman Quine poignantly shows that the “certainty” of mathematical propositions and proofs do not work with logic due to the concept/idea and doctrine of mathematics. Mathematical doctrine sees that mathematical proofs must stand on their own ground. (Quine 1969). In the same fashion, Wittgenstein, author of *Foundations of Mathematics*, cautions that Mathematical logic distorts mathematicians’ and philosophers’ thinking by charging: “The disastrous invasion of mathematics, by logic.”

C. A THING AS SOCIAL BEING

More than half the title CES of Habermas vigorously investigates the communicative actions and evolutions in human society, abandoning the concreteness but limitation of grammar “pragmatic communication” in favor of pragmatic society. First, Habermas recognizes the significance of labor that already existed before the birth of language. His argument begins with Marxist Historical Materialism that sees the important role of labor in society. So, labor as a thing means the essence or the depth of working life, in terms of production and procreation, or the existence of human life, not that with Hominids.

a) Social communication requires pragmatic and continuous participation of all social members through mutual empathy;

b) The foundation of society constitutionally manifests that it includes all social members with their temporal and limited horizon, so that the production and society strongly complement each other; and

c) To help the social members understand the values of labor and social contracts against those who do not participate in political organizations supporting working force.

In principle, Habermas follows Marxist Historical Materialism, with one exception that he feels at odd with Marx’s concept of Superstructure. For Habermas, the Base (Infrastructure) supports the Superstructure. Therefore, the Superstructure only exists in a short period of state emergency that appears inherently for social evolution or transformation (my word). As such Habermas concludes the concept of the Superstructure cannot interpret the needs of society *ontologically*, but only provides leadership temporarily sanctioned by economic structure. Habermas quotes Karl Kautsky’s *Marxism, Revolution & Democracy*, to support his premise (Kautsky 1994) and I paraphrase it as follows:

“Only at the final analysis comes the play of legislature, the politic and the ideology that assume the higher role of the Superstructure over that of the Infrastructure economics. It follows that Marx’s concept of Infrastructure and Superstructure only makes sense at the new epoch of history.” (Walterstein1974).

Although *Tractatus* impresses us with terse and economic strategy to elucidate both language and thought by its doctrine in daily communication endorsing “justice” and “legitimation” it may sometimes either slowdown or halt discourse due to the deficit of vocabulary, admits Wittgenstein. As the result, we must employ gesture and body language that inherently enter the language game to warrant the continuity and smoothness of communication.

In *Wittgenstein and Justices* (1972), Pitkins picks up one instance from Plato’s *Republic* in which Socrates used Normative or Standard for the issue on Justice. Thrasymacus, a Sophist counter-argued that Justice must be based in experiences that go well with human way of life, similarly to the notion of Beauty and Truth. Then, Thrasymacus suggested that the notion of Justice should lie between Normative and Experience. To achieve the mid-point position for Justice, there needs to alter the definition or meaning of Justice suggests Habermas. To such arguments, Pitkins adds that such a midpoint for Justice should avoid arbitrary-ness accidently from either Socrates or Thrasymacus viewpoint. Although way of human life in terms of social communication includes grammar and custom, in reality
it truly makes strong impact on rational thinking that bears on the representation of content and context of everyday communication topics.

Furthermore, communicative action, according to Dilthey, should make use of Hermeneutics strategy; namely the interpretation that clarifies life as it is, in terms of facticity, by participation, approaching, extension, and investigation. When connecting Hermeneutic approach to language and grammar, we should look into *Ontological Reality and Other Essays* by Quine (1969). In this volume Quine discusses facts or things in verbal propositions for better communication having two basic sentences:

a) Declarative sentence
b) Eternal sentence

Declarative sentence focusses on the meaning either TRUE or FALSE. However, if a declarative sentence gets a typical meaning, then the rule of TRUE or FALSE does not apply. A typical meaning depends on the verb’s cases and tenses, and also on pronouns and adverbs, including dates, person and place names.

Eternal sentence on the contrary is demonstrative and fixed; namely the TRUE or FALSE remains forever. Therefore, eternal sentence expounds the cognitive meanings, such as the conscious, the sensual, and the intuitive. As such to describe the accuracy of events, we should only consult the logical forms as but applicable guidelines. As for the eternal sentence, we should be able to see in it the conditional of the words and objects based on a language parameter.

D. THE BEING OF A THING AS ART IN COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

We have learned so far that all types of communications – scholarly or non-academic – rely on verbal language for the acquisitions of meaning that clearly demonstrate linguistic ability and comprehensive ability. While art appears as the subject of discussion, its language, a dichotomy of form and content takes on no grammatical logic role as a means to the communicative vehicle for pragmatic purposes. However, visual language has proven that its significance to clarification and augmentation of picture of reality shows itself in discourse. Art gained by our recognition, inherently by its attraction and permeation to our sense, not meaning, has determined its presence in social communication action. Thus, conflicting and contradictory as it seems to be, we should look into art as a thing in communicative action. I have found Hegel’s remarks on the *Aesthetics in Art (Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik)* some idea worth thinking.

According to Hegel an artwork is a man’s product manifesting the spiritual of the artist in the process of making art. This idea reveals the reason that motivates man to make art because artwork reflects man’s higher needs for existential ambition of the most universal for all (Weltanschauen) that signifies man’s belief and religious thinking, too. Why? It all begins with the fact that “man is a thinking consciousness”. Man pictures himself as any objects in front of him, as the spiritual (Geist/geistige). The ability of self-representation as such demonstrates man’s consciousness. Therefore, making art would mean to enable the consciousness manifest. It does not simply manifest an individual’s consciousness, it does so for man’s sake that the consciousness becomes the most universal for all, and ultimately for freedom. To manifest or to make one’s consciousness shown requires one’s courage of breaking the focus or appearance.

Once the confine evaporates man becomes enlightened so that man’s need of making art stands for man’s intellect, and whereby man realizes for himself he attains his “becoming-being”. For Hegel, to recognize and vitalize the inner feelings means to bring them back to the origin (Füsichseyn), and more importantly, it intuits the inner feelings. A work of art shows us the sense, not meaning. The experiences of it come from our sensuous sphere. Concerning experiences of every subject tells us the
significance of education, whether by way of schooling or by way of self-teaching; hence the more intuited inner feelings, the richer the sensuous sphere.

In art what makes this happen argues Hegel, comes from the power (Bestimmung) of the work of art? Indeed, the power of the work of art does not come from heaven. The concrete nature of a work of art made by man greatly differs from that of nature, and by man’s education and experience each work stands for a case and some degree of creativity that probably escapes daily communication in which many subjects in sensuous sphere suffer distortions simply for the polarization of the rational and the emotional.

If we pay close attention to *The Birth of Tragedy*, we would understand Nietzsche’s ambition to get a complete knowledge of human being by the union of the Apollonian type and the Dionysian one. Furthermore, through man’s experience, man becomes conscious of his hidden conflicts, which are the roots of tragedy. To understand such conflicts by means of communication requires experience and education that we might ask for, but we might not succeed. Therefore, pragmatic communicative approach might just be too idealistic in reality.

In some case, communication by way of speech and writing needs illustrations, for instance a map. Many scientific essays of Einstein include diagrams or schematic drawings to augment comprehension. Newton’s *Philosophica Naturalis Principia Mathematica* problems make use of all but the discipline of geometry - not calculus, one of Newton’s chief contributions, in fact some of Newton’s claims did not happen in the laboratory, asserts Einstein. This reminds us of Wittgenstein’s observation that we have to wait until having a proof in order to realize a false proposition. (Wittgenstein 1978).

The effective-ness or satisfaction of communicative action via verbal language needs help from visual language for both practical experience and education. We may skip the early traditional history of the book illumination established by the *Book of Durrow* and the *Book of Kells* in the seventh century and go directly to the Manuscript Painting of the fifteenth century where Limbourg Brothers, Pol, Jean, and Herman co-authored a series of wonderful works for the book entitled *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, 1413-1416, also known as the calendar pictures. January (picture 1) in which the duke presides over a New Year’s reception. As a magnanimous host he looks like a holy figure receiving the peasants to the table with plenty of food. The court setting is highly decorated with the sumptuousness and extravagance that are unmistakably the cultural custom details of the time and unequalled by verbal and written language. Paintings, in this case, not a mere eye-witness, provide the accuracy that is worth thousands of words.

![Picture 1. Limbourg Brothers, January, from Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry, 1413-1416](Image)
Unlike the socio-political reality of January, Hieronymus’s center panel of Garden of Earthly Delights, 1505 – 1510, (picture 2) a mixture of fantasy and life, showcases the universal love by which all beings and races harmoniously co-exist. It looks uncanny to reality marred by distortions and depressions; the painting speaks for a model of the would-be paradise on earth. Any verbal description of such a theme would be inconceivable for it shall show no visual cues at all.

The Mughal artist Bichitr of the seventeenth century educates the audience at least of three points of historical relevancies. His Manuscript painting Jahangir Preferring a Sufi Shaykh to Kings (1615 – 1618) (picture 3) illustrates: a) within the traditional Muslim pictorial pattern and format, flat and decorative, symmetrical and calligraphic all characters obey linear perspective that demonstrates the make-believe three-dimension; b) the soft contour defines forms, weight and action to highlight the circumstance of anecdote; and c) picture of King James I of England based on the king portrait of the British painter John de Critz, a gift to King Jahangir. Other personalities depicted at the moment are the Turkish Sultan, and the artist Bichitr himself to show the sway of the traditional painting in the East, and the presence of artistic influences from the West. In sum, this is a testimony of positive politic and diplomacy, culture and art.
The fourth instance coming from a street alley in the running-down section in down-town El Paso, TX audaciously and solitarily testifies the resilient, perseverant and unflagging voice from the street life, perhaps across the USA (picture 4).

![Picture 4. Unknown artist, *Untitled*, ca. 2010-2012, Oil on wall. Left section, 30’ x 9’. Downtown El Paso, Tx](image)

We are and always are confronting the popular graffiti pattern making, the color, and interestingly linguistic-art interplay, not originated from some studios, but from public spaces where unknown and un-schooling artists exercise their thought. Over four decades, graffiti art, at the outset, mixed with vandalism seriously troubled the public’s eyes and mind. Slowly, its bearing or direction has revealed messages from the faceless individuals who live in the margin of society, but who deny to be invisible. The artistic quality of some graffiti works magnificently demonstrates skill and expression as it grows to maturity. We do not question about what kind of artists gets into the museums worldwide, but we may sometimes wonder if many artworks in public collection would match with some best pieces of street art.

If social communicative action only focuses and is based on dire (cautionary/indicative) grammatical logic, then verbal expressions only work for daily greetings and business transactions on shallow levels. In every moment of life in social context we see and perceive things as numbers, colors, shapes, sounds and movements, because life presents itself dynamically and kaleidoscopically not the frozen and isolated facticity. The use of visual language in communication has proven effectiveness in transmitting idea. In public education, some projects like the 60-Minute on television have made use of arts, not just visual art, to enhance the quality of subject and accessibility universally that cannot be denied.

Quynh Nguyen, Ph.D.
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Quynh Nguyen

ART AS SOCIO-POLITICAL VOICE

FEMINIST AND GRAFFITI ART

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May 9, 2011

[Thursday, June 16, 2011. Dear Dr. Quynh Nguyen,

Your paper, Art as Socio-Political Voice, will now be typeset. You will receive a proof for approval of
the typeset version of your paper prior to publication. You will be notified when the proof for
approval is available.

Yours Sincerely— Stephanie Turza, The International Journal of the Arts in Society]
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1. INTRODUCTION

There are many unfinished discourses in the deep (the unfathomable extent or abyss) of human history due to both ignorance and arrogance. Among such disturbing subject-matters, stand out two issues of my interest: Feminist Art and Post-modernist Mural Painting (Graffiti). I will discuss them in the context of social and political voice.

Different from the tradition of mural painting, be it the mosaic or the fresco, the so-called new mural painting, probably due to some connection with Graffiti, has not been scholarly investigated. Meanwhile, the Feminist Art, on the contrary, has somewhat gained considerable recognition, but not yet complete, according to some radical woman-artists.

From the point of view of social and political life, these two phenomena require serious attention, while aesthetic and artistic judgments sound like “self-evidence” that turns out to be dubious. Probably Foucault is correct when he observes that, we, since the ancient Greece, have ever defined the nature of things, but never really looked for it (Foucault, Foucault Live, or FL, 1989, p. 330). He also believes: “Philosophy should pay attention to the screams in the streets.”

Of various reasons accountable for such screams – objectively or subjectively, universally or individually – some appears to be perplexing and proof-burdened. To understand such phenomena there is a need of well formulated question, according to Heidegger (Sein und Zeit, p. 45.) Questioning about such upsetting voices is tangible and distinctive; hence true investigations need a clear direction in order to determine the “thatness and whatness” of the problem at stake, because classifications and universalities are mere suppositions.

Foucault then wished to see a new concept of intellectual that would end classifications and universalities that have created constraints of the present. (Foucault, FL, p. 151). The question of
present in Foucault’s discourse reminds us of Wittgenstein’s remark that philosophy should be all about the questions, and not about solutions. (Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics*, or *RFM*, p. 40)

Is it true that all solutions are final?

2. FEMINIST ART AS POLITICAL VOICE: KING OR QUEEN?

a) DE-FACTO VERSUS DE-JURE: THE CASE OF QUEEN (KING) HATSHEPSUT.

The *lifeworld* and the *Weltanschauung* or the *world concepts* are different. The latter always refers to some ideological intention only existing in fantasy: a world-view as such and such makes its impression of truth, which cannot be challenged politically and which becomes some moral doctrine, culturally and socially although in future problems of the world-view may prove it irrelevant or unhealthy. Here is the first case of our discourse.

The portrait-sculptures of Queen Hatshepshut (c. 1473 BCE) acknowledged the latter as *de-jure*, while refuted the former as *de-factor*. But Queen Hatshepsut was no fool; she confirmed her identity and authority as an ablest ruler against all favor of male dominance, precisely about the political game and correction. Furthermore, in this connection, interestingly, her portrait-sculptures depict the lifeworld. Although she did not create such artworks, consciously she demanded and directed the huge art projects; totally about 200 free-standing pieces. Thus, her thoughts are art, in terms of modern-and-post-modernist definitions hold.

Since the royal family failed to have a male successor, Queen Hatshepsut ascended as a Pharaoh or King. As a terrific leader she possessed great administrative skill, by uniting the two parts of Egypt, and as an absolute monarch-to-emperor she led Egypt to a powerful empire enveloping even the Middle-East. She understood perfectly the title “Pharaoh” that was just an iconic image devoid of sexist connotation. Yet, Hatshepsut justly adopted the Pharaoh’s royal attire, symbol or sign of the Monarchy. This sign or symbol, according to Semiotic theory, was neither meant an abducting (by interpretation) objectified power, nor a volatile thirst of power.

She wore the “Pharaoh” attire (the kilt) including a false beard – an iconic image for male - to uphold the spiritual, social and political tradition, to which she belonged, not an effort of political adjustment at all. To make matter clear, she wore the nemes with the headdress of the falcon Horus, which according to Egyptian mythology, a legal successor to the throne, (Picture 1) and before the Sun God she knelt down with two globular jars, a sign of offering. (Adams, *Art Across Time*, 4th Ed. 2011, p. 99). It is unmistaken that she was the only one in the dynasty bestowed with unmatched power and privilege.
However, one more radical image Hatshepsut intended to distinguish herself; to show her tenacity and originality, brilliancy and creativity, was that instead of showing her hands clenched or holding the king’s mandate like her precedent monarchs of the Old Kingdom, such as seen in the statue of Menkaure, (Picture 3) she laid down her hands flat. (Kleiner, Art through the Ages, 13th. Ed., 2009, p. 68). This anti-iconography might mean that she was an iconoclast, and so she did not need extraneous or superfluous affinities to showcase her power. She also made it clear that, all inscriptions about her deeds and life should be added the term “His Majesty” not “Hers Majesty”. As such the question “KING or QUEEN” no longer existed politically, because she was KING.

b. THE QUESTION OF “KING” MUST BE CONNECTED TO THE QUESTION OF BEING.

In fact, the question of “KING” should be well formulated and directed because it concerns ontology or Being. In his Sein und Zeit or Being and Time, Heidegger tried to convince us that Being exists in everything, yet it is a “self-evident” concept, and at the same time undefinable (indefinable). Being is something already existing before the world. Being devoid of genus and classifications underlines all thematic objects and concepts among which the concept of “KING” stands out with various definitions, obscure and mystified. But when Being is a being e.g. with regard to mankind particularly, a humanist being means “humanism (Humanimus)”. (Heidegger, p. 41 – 51) To be a humanist being, one should exist near Being, and learn how to be in the nameless. (Heidegger, Brief über den Humanimus, p.223). In the same token to become a king, one should be close to Being, and learn how to exist in the nameless of the kingliness. That is an accomplishment awaiting an ablest candidate regardless of gender.

One’s observation: “X is John’s king. X is not my king” shows both the obscurity and prejudices of the concept of “KING”. This concept is self-evident of what “KING” would be. Supposing that one’s observation is true, still we must demand serious or transcendental questions to fathom the deep of
this problem. The concept of “KING” has never been investigated because as a concept it is obscure and has no details to offer. Thus is the tricky nature and activity of the art of politics. Heidegger is right when he holds that “questioning is exactly about investigation of the truth.” In this connection, Hatshepsut might have a number of questions, such as “Can a woman be KING?” “What is the attribute of “KING”? “If there is no definition of “KING” as Being (not a being), then in most cases, the sign and symbol of “KING” semiotically speaking, was abducted (by interpretation), and not gained by merits and wisdom.” As a being – in sum – Hatshepsut was a formidable monarch or a king regardless of gender. Therefore, there is no need to question her status.

3. ART AS SOCIAL VOICE: THE CASE OF GENTILESCHI.
Artemisia Gentileschi was one of a few most talented artists of all times, and one of the most famous Baroque painters in Italy. Yet, she was a victim of both political and social injustice. As the first woman trained in the Academy of Design (Academia del Disegno), Italy, Gentileschi had many distinguished accomplishments that humbled her male contemporary, nevertheless she also found herself a subject of social injustice. “Social injustice” is not a causal kind; it is the ideology that does not discriminate. More than forty years ago, when I was a Doctoral student at Columbia University, the name and the works of Artemisia Gentileschi were not mentioned. Likewise, the works of Ingres and Wyeth did not appear in British and American textbooks. For me alone, I was certain that the recognition of such realities would come. We had then a bias that, to be in the vogue, we should not fail to live with all schools of art then, before and after the fifties, beginning with Abstract Expressionism. The following quotation attests to the fact concerning Gentileschi’s case indirectly.

“Over the past forty years, largely as a result of feminism. Art historians have researched and reevaluated the role of women artists in the West. Women’s achievements in the visual arts, and the obstacles they had to overcome, are much better understood.” (Adams, Art across Time, p. 635)

Being repeatedly raped by her teacher Tassi, Gentileschi endured humiliation at court when she was testified by the lie-detector “Thumb Screw”, an instrument of torture for crushing the thumbs. Yet her violator only served a few-month-term in prison and then was declared “not guilty”. Soon after such a torture, Gentileschi left Rome for Florence only to learn another crushing humiliation that in the eye of society, she was called a “wanton woman”. (Lewis, The Power of Art, 2009, p. 310-311). She was regarded as but a “sex object” in a culture and society dictated by man’s ideology! Due to her awesome talent, she received many commissions, only to discover social discrimination against her: her painting contract was violated: She was robbed! The following excerpt from Gentileschi’s letter demonstrated the truth.

Gentileschi wrote a letter in 1649, from Naples to Don Antonio Ruffo in Messina, we highlight the most tangible parts of the letter: “I was mortified to hear that you want to deduct one third from the already very low price that I had asked ... It must be that in your heart Your Most Illustrious Lordship find little merit in me ... I found myself that, having done a drawing of souls in purgatory for the Bishop of St. Gata, he, in order to spend less, commissioned another painter to do the painting using
my work. If I were a man, I can’t imagine it would have turned out this way…” (Kleiner, *Art through the Ages*, p. 662)

Gentileschi turned to art and creativity to reclaim her dignity as a humanist being. Her voice of justice for herself (the Ego/Subjectivity) and for the World (Objectivity), according to the concept of Constitution of Husserl’s Phenomenology,* afforded her strength and courage to manifest her transcendental consciousness, in a series of paintings entitled *Judith Slaying Honofernes* (1614 – 1620), probably an act of revenge – but for me these Baroque works of violence and *tenebroso* stand for social justice to manifest the cornerstone of feminism. To make it a most poignant point, Gentileschi likened herself to Judith, the Old Testament Hero. In fact, the paintings show Gentileschi, a metaphor of triumph: she used her own face (physiognomy) to portray Judith.

![Artemisia Gentileschi, Judith Slaying Herlofernes, 1614](image)

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4. **The Art of Feminism: A Socio-Political Voice.**

The cultural and artistic movement of the sixties in the USA was so phenomenal, so much that, the landscape of social and political structures, and even education, would never been the same again. Feminism went politics as it recognized the role and deeds of Queen Hatshepsut, and somehow played very little or even nothing about the case of Gentileschi, a victim of the male-dominance ideology.

The Feminist Judy Chicago used feminine genitals to shock, to ridicule, and to show woman power. She spearheaded an art project named *The Dinner Party* (all women) 1979, (picture 5) with the collaboration of some male artists. This according to some scholars, is a critique of Da Vinci’s *the Last
Supper (most men). The iconic image of vagina on the “plates” of her party project might revert to the phallic complex (Phallocentrism), which undermines what has been believed to be the myth of male power, and then assures the female genitals does not lack strength and dominance. If so, this is a weak argument. Woman, more than anyone else, knows that “they are very strong” in many capacities, save the muscular power.

The Phallic Complex (Phallocentrism), reported by Robinson and Hilary, reminds us of Lacan’s theory, which holds that the incumbent symbolic order, e.g. male genitals could be usurped if it is found unconstitutionally abused. (Robinson and Hilary, *Reading Art, Reading Irigaray*, 2006, p. 53). Otherwise, according to Isaak, amid social and political tensions, it could turn to “inevitable hysteria disease”, or a psychiatric symptom (Isaak, *Feminism and Contemporary Art*, 1996, p. 199). Meanwhile, there is sympathy for the provocative voice of the Feminist artists like Chicago, Sherman, and Attie, due to the immoral abuse of man’s phallic image (Mochlin, *Women, Art and Power*, 1998, pp. 138, 139).

The use or even abuse of images in the Feminist Art, following Freud’s theory, may have some justification if and only if such a practice is necessary. For Freud, using humor is a rebellious option or a political strategy for the voice to be heard when the underprivileged or women have no access to power (Isaak, *Feminism and Contemporary Art*, 1996, p. 14). Kristeva however maintains different point of view, for her: “Life is the junction of giving life and meaning to the art of giving life.” (Pollock, ed. *The Sacred and the Feminine: Imagination and Sexual Difference*, 2007, p. 10).

Somehow, between philosophy and art, Georgia O’Keeffe mediated without cataclysm. The series of her orchid and iris flower paintings suggest double meanings, for instance the vagina image in disguise - similarly to the use of spoonerism; hence a kind of Romanticist poetry, pure and fantasy-like. But, O’Keeffe’s works were criticized by the Feminist hardliners, for whom to idealize women as fictional beings was out of touch with reality (Mochlin, Linda, *Women, Art and Power*, 1998, p. 92). However, Kosmeyer wisely cautioned that: “The employment of disgust in art featuring women’s bodies is complex, multi-layered and risky (Kosmeyer, Carolyn, *Gender and Aesthetics*, 2004, p. 53). All revolutions are idealistic and ideological. They do not have space for reconciliation. As such, the art of Chicago and Sherman, utilizing different kinds of technology only serve as a means to an end, that their voice of social and political concerns must be heard.

Although discrimination and prejudice remain stubborn in many circumstances, liberation as a dream against them in madness should be avoided. Foucault makes it clearly about the difference between madness and dream, he holds that, “Dream and madness do not at all have the same status nor the same role in the development of Cartesian doubt: dreaming allows me to doubt the place where I am, ..., but madness is no sense an instrument or a stage of doubt; because “I who think, cannot be mad.” (Foucault, *History of Madness*, 2009, p. 550).
5. GRAFFITI/NEO-MURAL ART: A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL VOICE

Out of the spirit of time of the late sixties, and almost parallel to the Feminist Art and movement came a powerful and disturbing display of Graffiti art, which resembled a new kind of popular art against art and society. Like the Italian Futurism, Graffiti appeared to promote violence and destruction. As a result, some public opinion published on NYC subway cars, asked Graffiti artists: “Leaving a mark for society, NOT making a mark on society,” allegedly the defacement of public properties in poor ghettos by Graffiti artists. The cause of this rebellion has never been investigated by anthropologists and social scientists. Nevertheless, Graffiti is a socio-political voice.

When we see Graffiti art as a new form of mural painting, we should make sure that we do not want to connect Graffiti with the traditional mural paintings (the frescos), including the modern style of Mexican muralists like Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros of the 20th century, whose works revealed great struggles of and for social, cultural and political life, very impressive to international public, but exclusively the Mexican experiences due to their localization. Therefore, Mexican mural paintings did not go globalization. Meanwhile, the Graffiti by faceless artists enjoyed international attention even prolific-ness, probably their voice reflected the spirit of time. Generally, what struck the viewers of Graffiti was not essentially about artistic and aesthetic quality, save a few, but about the reality that constituted the problems, socially, politically, and even economically.

For the non-social members; namely the citizens who do not belong to any political associations, the social and political voices do not need to be eloquent and crafty, creative and aesthetic. Their voice resembles a “street scream” that begs for many questions, true and honest, although it might be carried away too far to become vulgar and clumsy. Only professional politicians know the art of
rhetorical manipulations to show all but make-believe solutions that are in fact empty or non-existing in the lifeworld. Graffiti artists’ covert statement, we suppose, would be analogous to Punk cultural stand that “although unemployed, they were NOT invisible in society.

The street screams – or in this case it is precisely the voice of Graffiti art – must have the reason to exist against the social and political system or institution, which always assumes its foundation is flawless. (Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 1956, p. 412). Following his contention, Hegel holds that the will to freedom is for every legal social member. Firstly it is about his property or possession, and secondly his identity. These two basic elements should not be misunderstood as one’s duality but his intersubjectivity (constitution in Husserl’s Phenomenology). They stand in need of each other to constitute one’s transcendental consciousness that, according to Hegel, “I am the master of my own body that does not belong to other.” (Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, pp. 42-43).

In general, Graffiti have two distinct styles, the one that “smeared” or “doodled” with paints and the other in a form of writing distant feature of Mesoamerican glyphs and Walt Disney’s cartoon characters. While the latter was colorfully executed by Hispanic artists, the former exclusively by the African Americans displayed abstraction with one color in the manner of hand-driven gesture style that reminds us of Abstract Expressionists like Pollock, Kline and de Kooning. The works of these two groups were found on the Manhattan subway cars and in the running down neighborhoods. It is not known about any relationship and collaboration of such groups, save the racial friction as was reported in *Getting-Up: Subway Graffiti in New York* by Craig Castleman, MIT Press, 1982, perhaps the only publication on the Graffiti known to date.

On the mind of those Graffiti artists there could be a few things that constitute their common sense capitulated as follows:

1. If, since the Dada movement, everything is art, then Graffiti is art.
2. Artistically and culturally if Abstract art and Pop-art are legitimate canons of creation and freedom, then Graffiti not only a true voice as it does not need art museums, galleries and maintenance costs.
3. If all forms of art require public, then Graffiti gets a larger crowd right in the street, and everyday.
4. If all artists are sort of monadic souls, then the Graffiti artists best fit into this concept.
5. Traditional artists need specific space known as territory. The Graffiti artists like the Gypsies see the whole universe as their home to live and to work. The Graffiti artists live in the margin of society but their works are not marginal, because they are human beings.
6. From obscurity, the Graffiti artists enjoy seeing their works attached to any object, either in motion or at rest that all together appear to be their own properties.
7. The passion to work alone and to face danger, even death best portray the Graffiti artists a noble symbol like that of Jesus Christ.
8. Facing the questions of violence the Graffiti artists might find their sympathy with Carrà’s *Funeral of the Anarchist Calli* (1910), and with Rivera’s *The Liberation of the Peon* (1931) [anthropologist]
With such artistic credos, if they happened to be exactly of the Graffiti, the US public then might have problem to understand such beliefs, save the people of Germany who not only welcome Graffiti art but purchased some Graffiti art works including sections of the wall connected to such paintings, for their museums, probably for the interest of anthropological bearings.

However, “violence” is both a question and an issue extremely sensitive. Since “violence” posits suppositions it merits our attention to causality and end of violence. And yet it could become topsy-turvy as is the case of Max Beckmann’s supposition, that at first he believed that “War is needed for a new and better world. In reality the destruction of war was a nightmare without remedy.” Beckmann was forced to exile at the horrors of human tortures (Lois, Understanding Art, 2001, p. 475)

6. ANTHROPOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF THE VOICE
After the nineties, the socio-political voice of Feminist Art subsided. Meanwhile, we noticed the inactivity of African American Graffiti by the end of the eighty. Interestingly, the latter style was welcome by some students in the department of Visual Arts. At Yale University, for example, where I gave a lecture on Deconstruction Architecture around 1984, I saw the works of one graduate student of the MFA Program (later he became a professor of art at Columbia University). I could quickly detect the student’s use of Graffiti style: script writing and the naivety of child-like doodling, either in public places or in restrooms.

That was a clear evidence of the African American Graffiti iconography, minus political and social voice. Using or borrowing some references for making one’s art is a matter of long history, either covert or overt. We have many examples in the history of modern art, for example the African masks and Picasso (1906), the cross-hatching lines in a Harlem wall and the human shadows on Manhattan streets and the works of Jasper Johns (1974 and 1984). Our questions of the references do not merely probe artistic images, but anthropological layers to unveil the traits of ethnicity.

Meanwhile the Hispanic (Chicano) Graffiti not only throve but also got into academic milieu. This happened probably due to the liberal curriculum based on which all good ideas were accepted as new mode of experience. The Hispanic Graffiti was transformed or elevated to a new kind of mural painting, especially in some states in the Southwest and the West of the United States, where firstly the Hispanic influx continued, and secondly the political and social, cultural and economic life made up a harsh reality, endlessly plagued with depression and crime infestation.

Judith F. Baca and her collaborators took seven years (1976 – 1983) to complete a large mural painting in Van Nuys, California entitled The Great Wall of Los Angeles (picture 6). The work depicts the history of Mexican-American, African-American, and Japanese-American neighborhoods in the most challenging times, such as the Great Depression and the Second World War. (Stokstad and Cothren, Art History, Prentice Hall. 2011, p. 1111-1112).

One mural painting by an unknown artist was found on Hildebrand Street in San Antonio, Texas (picture 7). For this reason I gave it a name for reference: Untitled. It was painted on the eastside wall of an automotive repair shop called Body Shop, next to a Japanese grocery store and restaurant named Tokyo. The dimension of this picturesque mural about 40 feet long by 10 feet high reminds us
of Wifredo Lam’s *Jungle* (1943) without a contrast palette. *Untitled* was essentially a composition of analogous red-brown harmony that could be viewed as a self-assurance of peace and wisdom. A bold and revolutionary style yet successfully illustrated the mindfulness!

Fig. 6. Anonymous, *Untitled*, (no date), about 30’ x 8’ on Hildebrandt St. San Antonio, TX.

7. **RIBBON PROJECT (2011) AND THE VOICE CONTINUES OR ORATIO CONTINUA IN ANTROPOLOGICAL CONTEXT**

The *Ribbon Project* of the Spring Semester 2011 was initiated by Prof. Mary Scott for her students of the Department of Art of EPC College in El Paso, Texas. It consists of seventeen panels. In overall the dimension of this work is 53 feet long by 9 feet high. *Project Ribbon*, a collective work, each panel features a theme thought of and executed by individual artist, wished to represent the voice of the community as the students experienced it and learned it from others. As such the diversity (objectivity and subjectivity) constituted a mutual understanding that finally becomes the unity. Following are the descriptions of each panel for reference, without interpretation. (Picture 7)

**Panel One:**
A clean but empty street in a well-kept neighborhood. Blue sky, and leafless trees well complimented by winter grass.

**Panel Two:**
A medical doctor or a nurse is standing. Hand gesture indicates some sort of instruction. A lecture screen hung from a tree branch, behind this man.

**Panel Three:**
Picture of the solar system with the moon, the earth planet, and Saturn. White cloud or the Milky Way connecting such bodies.

**Panel Four:**
Close-up picture of two hands in front of the viewers suggesting a point made in an argument. A brick walkway.

**Panel Five and Six:**
View of a festival, a circus, or an amusement park, with roller-coaster, tents, revelers, and children.

**Panel Seven:**
A young girl strolling on a walk board. Clear and moving water. Colorful sky.

**Panel Eight:**
Stylization of a big breaker, of a colorful and abstract wave and clouds.

**Panel Nine:**
Photos of a family connected together by strands of hair from the head of a young woman. The face of the woman is split in two halves. The left one is an alive woman, the right one a human skull.

**Panel Ten:**
Doll-like children hanged high and before a colonnade of Maya style. Ghastly human figures with blood stains and snakes suggest horrors.

Panel Eleven:
Picture of a Graffiti artist wearing a mask to hide his identity. He is using a paint can to make the following statement: “Art is not just paint on canvas or pencil on paper. Art is control ...”

Panel Twelve:
Portrait of a young girl with tear and a coffin from her eye.

Panel Thirteen:
A half-size portrait of the face of a young woman. She wears a big smile. Behind her radiate rays of light. The bubble from her head might mean before or after a statement is made, after which what remains is “Empty”.

Panel Fourteen:
A naked woman is holding a flower high in the air. Entangled ribbon rises like smoke.

Panel Fifteen:
View of a deserted main street. It is clean with the blue sky and open windows.

Panel Sixteen
View of a prosperous town showing two communities and cultures (Mexico and Texas) living together. Photo of the head of a woman in the sun.

Panel Seventeen:
Picture of a stack of drawers. The open one at the bottom may suggest either the beginning or the end of the ribbon that unites all seventeen experiences (episodes) together.

(All pictures are withdrawn due to copyright)

Supposing those seventeen panels were the mosaic of community realities. To understand them we should open new discourses beginning with an array of questions. Do we see such a community a lifeworld with different dreams or nonsense? We admit that to change the way of seeing and accepting new things does not happen overnight, it require life experiences, which mean empathy and commitment.

Not all artworks in the museums are great, not because they are subject to some tastes or aesthetic judgments, but because they might not be better than some Graffiti art. So, why some works were recognized as the voice of freedom and creativity, while other works, such as those in the street were shushed and suppressed? What are the political and social concepts that have constituted such behavior? The ones that got power?

Within the anthropological context, Graffiti and Feminist art not only expose their political and social voice per say, but also the connection with human behavior in terms of social and cultural traits that is anthropological question, and that must be investigated. Layers of truth once through and through understood must be re-examined again due to different situations, thereby discourse is an open ending and needs to be re-opened that Buber called “Oratio Coninua” any time by way of detranscendentalization that is precisely what Habermas’s strategy suggests an alternative: “communicative actions”. In his book *Truth and Justification* of the communicative actions, Habermas postulates the strategy of detranscendentalization for better understanding and knowing objects in
socializing context of the lifeworld (Habermas, 2005, p. 89). In this manner, Habermas has not only clarified Hegel's intersubjectivity, but also made Husserl's dream of the community of mankind accessible. This lifeworld should have been a social and political project of both the Feminism and the Graffiti, first and foremost to wisely negotiate in duo propensities; namely speech and action of all subjects, which must be able to refer (sich beziehen) to something in the objective world from within the horizon of their shared lifeworld (Habermas, *Truth and Justification*, 2005, pp. 88, 89). With regard to the issue of speech and action, one cannot isolate speech from language as well as action from experimentation in reference to actual commitment of creative purposefulness. Purposefulness argues Habermas, comes in under different levels: value-rational, effectual-rational, traditional-rational, and purposive-rational (Habermas, *Truth and Justification*, 1992, volume one, p. 282). Only purposive-rational would lead to consequences or fruitfulness and this must be the strategy and goal for both Feminist artists and Post-Modernist Muralists (Graffiti) to consider with heart and mind for their socio-political voice through the art to be heard, perpetually and meaningfully,

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NOTE

*“Meine Erfahrung als Welterfahrung (also jede meiner Wahrnmungen schon) schiesßt nicht nur andere als Weltobjekte ein, sondern beständig in seinsmäsßiger Mitgeltung als Mitsubjekte, als Mitkonstituierende.”

Following is my English version that is moderately and linguistically adjusted to capture NOT Husserl’s terminology, but his thought:

“The exchange of my experience or the experience of the world is but all perceptions inseparable as objects of the world. Such experience is stable in a higher and harmonious order, which is precisely the host of constitution (or the process).” QN.

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