

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Not Just Objects

Maurice Amiel · Wednesday, April 1st, 2020

Solitude and singularity

When in solitary confinement, courtesy of Covid-19, the experience of solitude is accompanied by moments of heightened awareness of one's singularity, to be projected on certain objects, particularly those that, *through associations*, seem to reach for us.

The feature image and the others in this post are not just of objects but, with associations involving people, places and usages, their *singularity becomes intimately intertwined with mine ... to wit:*

The Minox

The vintage Minox film camera has all the volumetric features of a standard SLR camera, but at a subminiature scale.



The Minox

These features, being in formal sympathy with the graphics on the cover of a monograph about a Czech avant-garde photographer, made me choose to photograph the Minox over it.

The camera has social, economic and technical associations since it was *the preferred camera of my department head* who introduced me to it long time ago, *when I could not afford one ...* so it gave me particular pleasure to recently find a second hand one, in working order, for me to use on occasion, *particularly for its fast and quiet operation.*

The hand-crafted vase

With its protruding ear-like handles and mouth-like false spout, that vase has *an archeological aspect* although it was found in a curio shop, near Montreal, belonging to Frank Hicks, *well known to the local antique shopping crowd for his "Politically incorrect Memoirs of an antique dealer.a"*



the hand crafted vase

Small enough to fit in the palm of one's hand it is easy to imagine its top stopped with a cork, in order for it to be carried as a flask with a shoulder strap attached to its ear-like handles.

The delicate material, the engraved graphic design and the paint-by-the-number-like nature of the finish belie any probable archeologic origin for the piece; *it is rather the social connection to the shop owner, I have since befriended, and the snug way it fits in the palm of one's hand, that holds its continued interest as another miniature object I enjoy pondering.*

The ritual cup ...



The ritual cup

... found in the second-hand shop run by the Ladies Auxiliary of a local hospital, it gathers on its classic silver-plated shape, in bas-relief fashion, the Hebrew blessing on the wine and the wine's iconic source, i.e. the grapes hanging from their twirling stems.

The cup's reflective finish brings "in", perceptually speaking, objects nearby, or at further distance, giving a lively turn to its physical presence *as a reminder of past family gatherings at certain holidays.*

The Greek or Turkish coffee "cafetière"



the cafetière

A modern enameled metal version of the original Ottoman brass design, which can be seen throughout the Middle East countries that have adopted it when under Ottoman rule; it is a practical container to bring a cup of water to a rapid boil because of its beheaded conical volume and practical spout and handle.

Just looking at it brings back the *memory of the Turkish coffee drunk by my parents at outdoor seaside cafés of my youth, as well as the memory of the last cup of such coffee I had at a welcoming Arab outdoor café, drinking it while sitting under the shade of an olive tree, somewhere between the Galil and Jerusalem.*

Discussion

If solitude caused by circumstantial confinement can set the scene for the contemplation of familiar objects in search for their singularity... *what is singularity about?*

The French photographic curator J-F Chevrier wrote, in the catalog of the photo exhibition on the theme of "Common Places and Singular Figures," held at the Musée d'Art Moderne of Paris in 1992.

"... singularity, the sign of an individual, is the consequence of history."

Whereas ***I looked at and photographed the Minox*** as the product of German engineering, **the vase** as the work of a craftsman vaguely inspired by indigenous design, **the ritual cup** as derivative of European wine glass design **and the "cafetière"** as a variation on the classic Mediterranean Greek-Turkish coffee maker ... ***I wrote about them*** from the point of view of a singularity issued from meaningful associations with my own social-cultural-professional history, and with my own character traits: sensitivity, interests, memories, self-image, etc. which made me acquire these objects in the first place!

Credit all photographs to Maurice Amiel

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