

RAPHAELLE GOETHALS

*For Beauty is nothing but the
onset of the dreadful*

—Rainer Maria Rilke

It is generally agreed that beauty is part of the field of aesthetics, in the sense of the classical Greek term pertaining to sense perception, particularly the visual, and having to do with the principles and judgments of artistic practice. It can also be said that beauty is a search for Truth that transcends all cultures. I believe there is a fundamental element in beauty which we receive with our whole body, not just our intellect or our eyes, that has to do with the sublime, taking us to the limits of what can be experienced as human beings. Beauty can draw us into an infinite in which we can recognize ourselves.

Yet beauty is, in our post-modernist, post-atomic age, the last taboo. Art is dominated by a critical or cynical voice, and no longer gives us a sense of transcendence. Beauty and the search for perfection, unattached to intellectual ideas or discourse, are suspicious. In my work beauty is certainly not an end in itself, as I believe painting is a means to arrive at a point of knowing more; yet I recognize it, I am absorbed in it, I am no longer afraid of it. Two years ago I titled a piece *Towards a Reconciliation with Beauty*, which marked a significant turning point in my work. Beauty in my paintings comes from an acceptance of loss, transition, and transformation, and ultimately the acceptance of death. It is transcending the raging of the soul and reaching the perfect center within oneself; it is a link to the invisible.

ROBERT KELLY

Beauty is a culturally mediated phenomenon as well as one that has an intrinsically transcendent set of possibilities. Within it, the recognition of it (both consciously as well as unconsciously), is our own registered self-awareness, and the mutual play of the object as source and subject. We are suspended, transported, moved, toward a rapturous response, an internal repose, pause, and reflection. We witness the alchemical shifting of our emotional network. Intuition is activated and we stand vulnerable and permeable; a moment of unsaying and unknowing, reminding us of our essential humanity.

Beauty involves the suspension of the quotidian where, perhaps for a brief moment, we dwell outside of time. In that moment we inhabit a realm where we are sharing the diet of saints: epiphany, transcendence, oneness, devotion, recognition of divine attributes, and humility. It is in the recognition of the beautiful that we also come to

Beauty?

in -
habit it.

Within it we broaden our boundaries, and the senses guide the mind and heart through a momentary cutting of our mundane tethers. It is here that we expand our nature to embrace that which leads us inspirationally upward, or passionately towards.

Beauty leads us into the "clouds of unknowing" where we are brought to bear on a keener sense of recognizing what we may not know or allowing a state of unknowing to guide us. It is akin to faith. It allows us deep internal references that perhaps find resonance and corresponding features in the material realm. It is a place where soul and mind become dance partners, and the steps, previously unfamiliar, guide us through a tango. We suspend our doubt and allow ourselves to be guided by an uncertain delight. Or we use this doubt to address an untapped source. It can be a rigorous exchange or one of felt pleasure. Unjudgingly, there is a path underfoot. And it is here we are compelled to follow a muse, a guide, a set of sensations that mysteriously provoke response.

ZACHARIAH RIEKE

For me, painting is a lifelong pursuit of something transcendent—an attempt to convey meanings that are often beyond my limited understanding. If from time to time I succeed in this "chasing after the wind" it is primarily by grace rather than by striving. Presently I am working with found papers layered with "base" materials—natural compounds of lowly origin like tar, mud, or ashes. I work with these materials to keep the painting grounded in elemental reality and paradoxically to emphasize its transcendence. It is not so much beauty I seek as truth. But in the final analysis they are probably the same—when we find one, the other is revealed.



