

TIMELESS ART IN MODERN TIMES

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E. Vietinghoff

The Egon von Vietinghoff Foundation makes available the work of an artist who's technique belongs (is part) of the **European cultural heritage**.

People buy an original painting because they like it esthetically, because its message is stimulating or due to the material worth. The painter Egon von Vietinghoff had a different view: "pure painting" which means a creation solely with colors, and only perceived through the eyes. Any decorative aspect, intellectual content or provocative idea was undesirable. While painting, he immersed in a meditative state without any intention for transitory popularity.



The character of his creation gives insights into the nature only via the color phenomena of mainly simple subjects. The remarkably warm luminosity of his works originates from his technique that includes self-produced paints. His oeuvre encompasses all classical categories: still lifes, flowers, landscapes, portraits and figure paintings. In addition he made chalk drawings (mainly portraits and female nudes) while in his earlier years also pencil drawings and pen-and-ink drawings as well as etchings.

Biography



Born 1903 in The Hague, Netherlands, Egon grew up in a house open to internationally renowned artists. His father, a pianist, was of noble German-Baltic extraction. His mother's parents were Belgian and Dutch, and she was an author of philosophical books. Born as a subject of the Tsar, he was stateless after the collapse of the Russian Empire. Egon's childhood was spent in France (Paris), Germany (Wiesbaden), and starting in 1913 and during World War I in Switzerland (Geneva, Zuz and Zurich). There he received Swiss citizenship in 1922. Vietinghoff lived in Munich, Capri, Paris (1923-1933), Majorca, Argentina, and Uruguay. He undertook numerous journeys through Europe, Argentina and Turkey. However, until his last active years he treated in his figure paintings the formative impressions from his trip on foot through Spain and Morocco as a youth. From 1938, until his death in 1994, he again lived in Zurich.

From 1928 to 1933, his early works were shown in exhibitions in Paris, such as in the *Salon d'Automne* and the *Salon des Tuileries* together with later well-known modern painters. Afterwards, his paintings were exhibited mainly in Switzerland and in Southern Germany. Also, he sold many of his paintings privately to art lovers coming to his studio. 1989, in the last year of his 70(!) years of active creation he established the Egon von Vietinghoff Foundation. It presently owns 82 works that are never offered for sale. Its purpose is to make this representative collection available to the public through periodic exhibitions to demonstrate the continuity of the traditional European painting and to promote the comprehension of *Transcendental painting* in times of radical changes, consumerism and technological thinking. The Foundation documents the artistic work, the philosophy, the origin, and the personality of an extraordinary painter and human being.

Technique – Spirit and Material



During the artistic crises at the end of the 19th and the early 20th century, many painters reacted by experimentation, with Dadaism, Surrealism and Cubism or searched in different directions up to abstraction. Egon von Vietinghoff shared their general criticism to academic naturalism and dogmatic impressionism and freed himself from these in his own way. He agreed that painting needed a fundamental philosophical and creative renewal but instead of following one of those post-impressionistisms he profoundly studied his models, the Old

Masters, such as Rembrandt, Rubens, Hals, van Dyck, Guardi, Titian, Chardin and Velasquez. In his view the last true genius were Goya and Turner whose work he knew of only in his sixties.

In doing so, he discovered that it is not important to present painstakingly the external forms as many famous painters did with astounding technique. He learned from his models to focus rather on rendering an inner vision of the subject's colors, i.e. a "drama of color, light and form", from which the external appearance grows finally "by itself". Painting in this spirit means to communicate a personal experience of colors which is triggered by the contemplated subject, instead of copying its properties.

To obtain the desired effect, Egon von Vietinghoff produced his paints and binders by himself using the purest natural products possible, which confer on his pictures their characteristic warm luminosity. Since the impressionists had broken away from this tradition and had developed their own kinds of painting based on different theories, the knowledge of multi-layer oil-resin painting had been lost. During 35 years of autonomous experimenting he rediscovered the knowledge not taught anymore in academies.

The multilayer oil-resin technique is an invention of the Netherlands during the 14th and 15th century and was as the basis of the western painting for more than 4 centuries, a specific European cultural heritage. Several liquid layers of color (glazes) can be applied either thick, semi-opaque or translucent, one on top of the other. Different steps of light reflection bring about depth and color differentiations not possible in one-layer painting. The plasticity thus obtained does not need any conspicuous construction of perspective. This knowledge is the basis of the color depth and the luminous power typical of Vietinghoff's paintings.

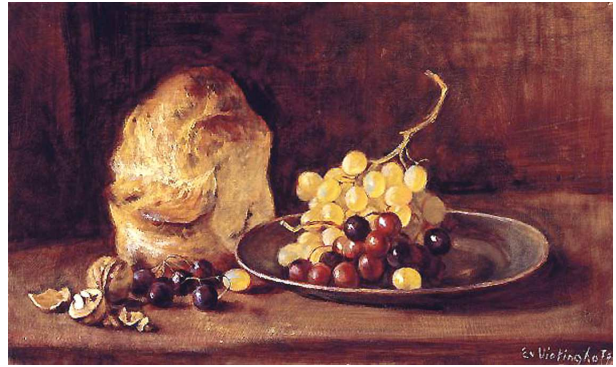


In his *Handbuch zur Technik der Malerei* (a technical painting handbook) he brought together the sum total of his life-long experience, defining the translucency of color (a property which had not been considered explicitly before) and explained the theory of chromatics as seen by the creative painter. In doing so, he made available once more the lost knowledge of the traditional oil and resin painting techniques for the future generations of artists. In his manuscript *The Nature of Visual Arts* (available in German on the Internet) he speaks of a *School of Pure Vision* and of the *Transcendental Painting*. In this way, he expounds a philosophy, abandoning the apparent opposites of naturalism and abstraction. In this technique spirit and material meet each other. The light penetrates the different layers partly down to the prime coat and let the pigments illuminate from inside. Similar the painter's eye transcends to the bottom of the subject in a meditative process which connect him with the core of the phenomena.

With his philosophy of the *Transcendental Painting*, Vietinghoff offered an alternative answer to the crisis in visual arts. He brought his authentic inner experiences into his method of the "pure vision" which defines the comprehension of the inner dynamic of colors and light from a given subject. The *School of Pure Vision* is both a visual and mental training for a view free from intellect.

Subject and Style

Visual Arts is a language to be understood and will be understood if it remains representational. Vietinghoff's aim was neither the natural representation of the exterior of the objects nor the restructuring or alienation of nature in accordance with intellectual concepts. Almost solemnly with simplicity, he presents his still lifes as if on a stage and sets the focus of attention often on single fruits, breads, mushrooms and other subjects like individuals. The often rather dark background is subdued although not neglected. The subjects are depicted in natural freshness and collective calm. They impress through a fascinating plasticity and masterfully placed highlights. Due to the great demand, still lifes with fruits made up more than half of his output. In general he needed the subject in front of his easel, except for the imagined figures.



With an eye for the essentials and with lovingly formed details he shows the beholder the unpretentious wonders of life. As a life-long outsider he followed only his artistic conscience. Thus, in this time of abstract and politically oriented painting his art is provocative in a different sense. Vietinghoff strove after the representation of that inner rhythm of form and color from which natural objects are formed. He wants only to share his visual experiences. Unencumbered by theory, he offers the immediate material perception which leads him through meditation to transcendence.

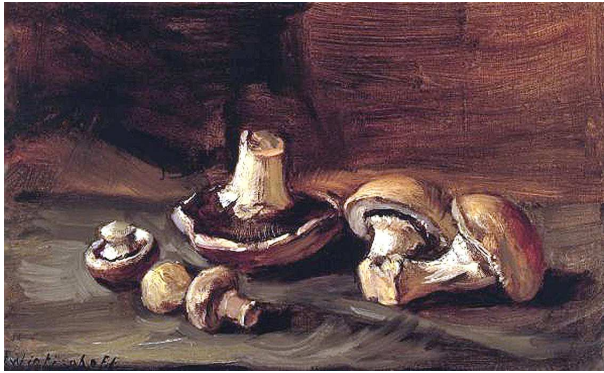
To paint representationally does not mean unavoidably to use a naturalistic style or to render the subject strikingly alike. Similar, the detachment from the subject does not remarkably leads implicit to abstraction. This can be observed in the works of well-known colleagues, such as Kokoschka, Vlaminck or Campigli, who renounce Cubism – as Vietinghoff did – and continued with representational painting. Resemblance to nature is not equal to naturalism. Vietinghoff's philosophy shows an alternative to the poles “naturalism or abstraction”. Vietinghoff's intensive studies are the basis of his unique know-how and personal expression as an artist, in conjunction with his competence as an author. His paintings are the successful synthesis of his artistic vision and his workmanship.

The Egon von Vietinghoff Foundation

The charitable Foundation represents the huge oeuvre of 2750 oil-paintings and some hundreds of graphics. The aim is to make its collection available to the public through exhibitions, to demonstrate the unique cultural heritage of European painting and also to promote the spiritual legacy of this artist, the comprehension of “transcendental painting”. Previous activities include 2 exhibitions and several publications: a photo catalogue of the first 64 oil paintings in the collection, the website, a brochure, a video (also on CD) and an audio-visual show (all in German), postcard art prints, a lithography and a catalogue of the Foundation's collection. In addition more exhibitions of the original works and a comprehensive retrospective are desired as well as records in media and literature such as article in art science, dissertations or encyclopaedias.



There is a vicious circle which should be resolved: The works of the founder are not exhibited in a larger frame (important institution) because he is not well-known enough but he is not well-known enough because there are no important exhibitions and publications. The paintings of the Foundation are not offered for sale and bring no benefit to the exhibitors. The funds of the Foundation are not sufficient for advertisement, room rent and other expenses. In addition, sales exhibition of paintings still in property of the heirs are uninteresting due to the price decay of this kind of art on the art market; the Foundation would not profit from anyway.



Extensive information in different languages is available at www.vietinghoff.org.

Outlook

There should be different ways to cooperate with interested partners for the purpose of public relations work and exhibitions. A common voice for associated goals in a larger frame could lead to a synergetic effect also for other foundations, organizations and sponsors. Ideas and hints are welcome!

Suggested topics:

- Art and Philosophy
- Meditative Art
- Individual Ways to Creativity
- European Cultural Heritage
- Estates of European Painters
- Multilayer Oil and Resin Painting today
- Figurative (representational) Painting of the 20th century



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Please visit our website and gallery at www.vietinghoff.org