

Preface

If artists and writers are constantly inquiring into the role and place their work and they themselves have in the world and society, then aestheticians have recently been inquiring mostly into the nature, meaning and significance of aesthetics. The organizers of the XIVth International Congress for Aesthetics »Aesthetics as Philosophy« (Ljubljana, 1-5 September 1998) were of the opinion that a possible response to such an inquiry is for aesthetics to strengthen its links with philosophy as that all-encompassing reflection upon the human world which is exemplified by its perpetual critical stance towards reality and the meanings that are ascribed to it.

Aesthetics can be a reflection upon beauty, art and other natural and human phenomena. This reflection is predominantly theoretical, and only as such can it remain or become philosophical too. It is true though, that as have aporias such as the »right« balance between form and content in an artwork drifted into oblivion, so has a similar dilemma about the »right« balance between theory and practice. For aestheticians as philosophers, i.e. critical theoretical thinkers, such issues have become obsolete, for not only is our social reality becoming increasingly integrated, but so are social practices and the humanities, as that broader framework of aesthetics. The latter offers critical theoretical tools previously used only with difficulty because of disciplinary and other divisions.

This integration resembles the present globalization, an on-going process that was also clearly visible at this aesthetics congress. Globalization allows us not only to understand what aestheticians are doing on the other side of the globe (or perhaps in the university department across the street), but also to employ and use the results of their work as never before in history. What »they« are doing is ceasing to be limited to an object of academic curiosity and becoming something that »we« understand and use.

It is my pleasure to note that the theme »Aesthetics as Philosophy« has attracted to Ljubljana around 550 participants from 48 countries. Almost 200 of these have submitted their paper for publication in the XIV ICA Proceedings. The two volumes of Proceedings contain the invited papers (vol. 1) and a selection of the papers presented in the ten sections (vol. 2). The organizers of the XIVth International Congress for Aesthetics were very delighted to see that the congress generated so much interest and that aestheticians from so many different countries and cultures came

to Ljubljana to present their papers, take part in the discussions, and attend various artistic and cultural events that took place during the congress. Without them and their efforts this congress would not have been a success. I would therefore like to thank all the congress participants, as well as all the others who helped us hold this event.

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