

# Body and mind entwined – an 11 year old perspective on “things”

Dr Isabel Boege

“Mum, look this looks like organs.” Tate Museum of Modern Art... it is a cold but sunny Sunday afternoon, and I had decided to abandon my paper work for a while – my usual Sunday afternoon preoccupation - in favour of visiting the Orozco Exhibition at Tate Modern Art together with my eleven year old daughter. Before entering the exhibition we browse through the other galleries to pass a wait when my daughter comments on this small, quite inconspicuous, piece of art next to Magritte, Masson and de Chiroco framed in elaborate golden curlicues. Thoughtful she puts her head to one side and states slowly: “What do you think people imagine when looking at this. Here this loop could be the small intestine. But that is peculiar.” The work she is contemplating is “Bomblet” by Trevelyan, a British surrealist, who worked in Britain and France in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Twelve tactile forms, suggesting organic or body parts, are singled out next to each other in small pits, held together by a very elaborate framing. It is a disturbing composition of plump and filigree details, which contrast as well as complement each other. My daughter hasn’t finished her thoughts yet, she continues: “It is like body and mind ... they belong and interact with each other and yet each part is very different, has its own space, distinctly separated and entwined withal.” Before I have decided if I have to discuss anatomy, neuroscience or psychological theories her thoughtful expression changes and she pulls me towards the special Exhibition Gallery we came for.

We move on to Orozco, an artist born 1962 in Mexico, well known for transforming everyday life materials with a lightness of touch into something poignant, humorous, poetic. With his work he challenges us with questions about the world, the body and the mind. The titles of his pieces of art sometimes contain both the question and the answer; sometimes they are self-explanatory and sometimes remain title-less. An association with the requirements of our day to day diagnostic practice floods my head. When we tell patients a diagnosis isn’t the naming often presentiment, implication, verdict, therapy in itself? But is the wor(l)d that narrow? And if it were the case, what does then naming of an ailment really convey to the patient? Medical facts? Hopes? Fears? How often do we talk about it? Orozco delineates: “I don’t believe the object in itself is what it is. I think there is always a language around an object, but the title that I am putting on the object is a real language and the transparency is for me the final realisation of the work, when I feel it’s transparent enough, I don’t have to give any more explanations.”

His work of art has a message to convey. Some pieces are experimental, coincidentally capturing a moment, coming into existence by watching,

Correspondence address

*Dr Isabel Boege  
ZfP Suedwuerttemberg  
Weingartshoferstrasse 2  
88214 Ravensburg  
Germany*

witnessing life. The object appears tenuous in itself, not sparing death as a remainder of the fragility in life. Some are carefully, meticulously created, in detail and material, chosen, long thought over. All of them emphasize aspects of exploration and experimentation as the driving forces in life.

My daughter is captured by one of Orozco's best known work of art, shown on the exhibition poster, "The Black Kites", a human skull covered with a graphite grid. She carefully views the precision of his work, the combination of geometry and chance, of the organic and the systematic, of the squares which are forced to adapt to the crevices, irregularities and rounded form of the skull. "Who dominates whom?" could be the question. Orozco comments: "I wanted to live experience. I wanted to see how behaviour of a bi-dimensional grid on a very complex and real organic shape like that one (a skull) would evolve. To superimpose two things that are kind of contrary: a flat geometric structure, over an organic super-complex form like a real – and "accidental" - human skull. "

On our way home we both conclude Orozco was worthwhile a visit. She mentions again the Black Kites, brings them together with Bomblet from Trevelyan: "Mum, I think art is about us. Our body, our feelings, our existence. Our body is the place we live in. All kinds of things meet there: Thought and feeling, yesterday's reality and hopes of tomorrow, day to day impressions individualized in just this body, as in art, where the world encounters illusion: body parts can look differently, depending on the view of the artist as well as the observer; geometry meets unevenness, clarity of form contrasts playfulness of life. But, however different they are, when they interact they allow us to sense, perceive and imagine the world around us – each person in his/her own way. Don't you think?"

Was that an eleven year old talking? Well, who cares, she seems to know how to piece this all together, maybe she can teach me...