

Conversation with Massimo Antonaci by Sarah Ngu

1. **What do you see as the role of the artist?**

It may be easiest to understand the role of an artist by looking at a masterpiece. Some might think that art simply entails creativity and that an artist is just somebody who possesses and expresses creative talent. But when we look at any masterpiece across the history of art, it is clear that artist is who intuits the archetypal idea and captures it with a sign, building a bridge between the physical and the metaphysical, the visible and the invisible.

2. **You talk about the process of “alchemic transmutation” in your artwork. Can you explain what that is about?**

An artist doesn't create; s/he simply transmits an archetypal idea by opening up to an inner vision and making space for an alchemic transmutation. The most important and difficult task for an artist is to purify his/her mind and dissolve all emotional and sentimental knots. Art is a practice that requires humility and simplicity; it proceeds from baring one's ego, from reintegrating the fullness of the self, from re-establishing a state of inner and outer balance. In this sense, it is like a meditative act; only by connecting to a higher-order Principle can we aspire to a 'pure' action...a 'pure' work of art. As the doer of something pure, an artist should only be concerned with 'enabling' a transmission and manifesting a harmony of higher order. It is not a coincidence that, in the past, art was an anonymous opus, the completion of inner work.

3. **Your ideas are best internalized through human intuition. This is hard because it requires a meditative patience, a suspension of purely cerebral reasoning, and a (scary) step of faith to trust my intuition. What do you see as the common traps that people fall into that keep them from accessing their intuition?**

The ego falls prey to a number of different things; in the end, all of these traps have to do with desire and imagination. If you think about it, imagination has little to do with Art. As we imagine, we lose or move away from the Center, while art is ultimately a process of self-knowledge. It is by 'knowing ourselves' that we can transcend. In this sense, art is knowledge, which includes coming to terms with those traps and resolving them.

4. **What drew you to art in the beginning? Why did you choose the profession of an artist over other professions?**

An artist doesn't choose to be an artist. Art is not a 'profession;' it's not like being a lawyer or a doctor. More than to a choice, an artist listens to a need, an inner Fire that lies beyond any given set of expectations or wants. Becoming an artist is like letting a seed that exists deep inside blossom by acknowledging and diving into that depth; by learning how the furrow in which that seed resides is absolutely neutral, devoid of wants and intentions; it's the furrow of a straight line that takes you neither left nor right.

5. You have said to me before you can get frustrated with how people flit in and out of galleries, glancing at art here and there without spending time with it. What do you say to someone who thinks that your artwork is just a bunch of striking colors and lines? When you go to a gallery or museum or just observe artwork, how do you generally try to approach it?

The fact that people may flit in and out of galleries, glancing at art here and there without spending time with it is not source of frustration for me personally; it is just an observation. There are also those who are aware of what they are looking at. When I look at a work of art, I try to stay neutral; nothing of what I superimpose can fully capture the real meaning of what I might eventually be able to See. I look at art like I would look at an image of myself beyond a mirror; an image that is best captured by listening to it in Silence, with an open mind and heart.

6. In your experience, what do you think about how the younger generation approaches art? Do you think they are more or less receptive to the ideas behind your artwork?

The younger generations are extremely open and receptive to the 'world of ideas.' They can travel fast across the Universal plane; that's the beauty and the danger with them. The spontaneity with which they bare their minds and conscience to the world in hope of discovery sometimes makes us forget that they are looking for true Ideas, for παιδεία (paideia), not just nebulous ideas springing from the collective unconscious. True Ideas free the mind from the pain that can come from interacting with and reacting to what is all around us, whereas nebulous ideas force the mind into the same routes of pain and suffering. Two parallel routes that are completely separate and should never be confused one with the other.