



„The secret of Nefertiti or the ancient healing power of culture“

Nefertiti means: “The beautiful one has come”.

What message does she have for us today, this mysterious queen of the Amarna empire that sank three and a half millennia ago after a glorious reign, who was recovered intact from the sands of Ancient Egypt a good 100 years ago and is now once again enchanting the whole world?

"Beauty will save the world."

Could this be her message, as Dostoyevsky once proclaimed? Believing in these words can also give us strength - especially in these challenging and unsettling times.

It is not about escaping from reality, but about strengthening our soul in order to survive in it. Beauty gives our soul joy and inspiration, fires our imagination. It leaves us amazed and is capable to make us feel positive and confident.

Which "beauty" is meant?

Each of us carries it within us ...

We are all surrounded by its rich facets, which illuminate everything precious and essential that touches us deeply and makes us happy - we just have to perceive it and let it into our hearts ...

Father Anselm Grün is convinced that we experience comfort and healing through it: "We cannot "make" it - we encounter it when we open our eyes."

What touches us? What moves us? What do we live for?

What can we hold on to? What can give us orientation? How can we achieve peaceful, tolerant coexistence?

Artists have always tried to find answers to these existential questions and stimulate our thoughts.

Our chance ...

Encounters with art and culture can help us to question our basic attitude to what is important for our lives and for shaping a future worth living.

Being touched emotionally can remind us of our individual creative resources.

For me, the key to a positive attitude to life is enthusiasm: If we live what we are passionate about, it makes us happy and we contribute "our" personal share to improving the world with our very own potential!

„Art plays such an important role in the current process of change in our society. The old cultures show us how to preserve values. Truthfulness, boldness and dignity will help us to blossom and survive. And art and the love for it is part of this dignity.

It is time to re-raise art's place in our daily lives. The creation and appreciation of art belong to the most dignified habits we can adopt, because in each instance we set aside our economic rational selves, and we prioritise emotions and ideals instead. Art reminds us that the intangibles matter.”

This is, what Achilles Tsaltas (Vice President The New York Times, London und President The Democracy & Culture Foundation) wrote to me as an organizer of the annual „Art for Tomorrow" conference.

Ancient Egypt has survived for over three millennia as the cradle of our culture and can tell us fascinating stories about the conditions under which culture arises and is passed on, about cohesion in a stable social and spiritual order, about a definite goal in life.

The building of the Neues Museum itself also fascinates with its breathtaking history as an important part of the "Museum Island" vision that has grown over 100 years, in which all world cultures are honored in peaceful close coexistence, each with its own special imposing architecture; they all suffered severe destruction in the last days of the war and the fragmentation caused by the construction of the Wall and today - thanks to worldwide support - they can shine again as UNESCO World Heritage.

The impressive symbolism of the building is imprinted with images of magnificent splendour, of destruction and overcoming with scars as a sign of strength and hope, of gradual growth - such as the majestic staircase leading to the uplifting high hall with its pillars - of appreciative coexistence in different strengths and firm cohesion - such as the magnificent colourful mosaic floors - all messages for our own lives. For our walk, I have also selected a series of poetic texts from different eras that enter into a dialog with the ancient relics and convey their deep human messages.

Culture evokes its own associations in everyone. Culture encourages us to accept change as a challenge and to actively and positively shape our lives with a worthwhile goal in mind. We just need to remain curious, agile and patient and have confidence in our potential for growth - just as Rainer Maria Rilke describes it:

*"Have patience against everything unresolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves,
like locked rooms and like books
written in a very strange language. Do not search for the answers now,
that cannot be given to you,
because you could not live them.
And it is about living everything.
Live the questions now!
Perhaps you will then gradually, without realizing it, live into the answer
one day in the distant future."*

"Art is childhood, after all. Art means to be oblivious to the fact, that the world already exists and to create one. Not to destroy what one encounters but simply not to find anything complete."

Culture connects us all and helps us to cross borders.

I am very much looking forward share the secret of Nefertiti with you!

All the best, Barbara

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