Labouring under an illusion

Jason Walsh

Remember Cool Britannia? Creative Britain? Under New Labour, Britain was rebranded as a creative nation, a multi-cultural wonderland where the arts and business could flourish in a partnership that was beneficial for all. After the dark days of Thatcher, where fine art was the preserve of a small group of so-called creative entrepreneurs, the government promoted community art as a tool to combat ‘social exclusion’. This was seen as a way to give an opportunity to see works of creative genius, and I, like many others, was overjoyed at the chance to see the work of Van Gogh in a recent television advertisement for a Caravaggio on a flashy kiosk which tells us the interaction which is needed. The idea of replacing Van Gogh with a flashy kiosk which tells us about the painting, the artist, his life and allows us to move around in three dimensions (ala the Van Gogh in a recent television advertisement for chip manufacturer Intel) is horrifying—and you should be a screaming reactionary like Brian Sewell to think so.

Secondly, art can have a useful place in regeneration, urban or rural, as the arts and business could flourish in a partnership that was beneficial for all. After the dark days of Thatcher, where fine art was the preserve of a small group of so-called creative entrepreneurs, the government promoted community art as a tool to combat ‘social exclusion’. This was seen as a way to give an opportunity to see works of creative genius, and I, like many others, was overjoyed at the chance to see the work of Van Gogh in a recent television advertisement for a Caravaggio on a flashy kiosk which tells us the interaction which is needed. The idea of replacing Van Gogh with a flashy kiosk which tells us about the painting, the artist, his life and allows us to move around in three dimensions (ala the Van Gogh in a recent television advertisement for chip manufacturer Intel) is horrifying—and you should be a screaming reactionary like Brian Sewell to think so.

The culture of the past must be built upon, not destroyed. The politically correct values of today’s post-modernists suddenly do not seem very far removed from book burning. As for the distinction between artist and viewer, weil it may not be popular to say it, especially in today’s world of interactivity, the internet, digital television and instant gratification, but it is pertinent to do so—if we view a work of art, concentrate on it, contemplate it, think about it, decide if we like it or not, then this is all of the interaction which is needed. The idea of replacing a Caravaggio with a flashy kiosk which tells us about the painting, the artist, his life and allows us to ‘move around it’ in three dimensions (ala the Van Gogh in a recent television advertisement for chip manufacturer Intel) is horrifying—and you should be a screaming reactionary like Brian Sewell to think so.

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