

# A Transfigured World: The Work of Anne Schwegmann-Fielding

When art works well, it has the ability to show us an aspect of the world as we have never seen it before. It transforms our view and enriches our understanding of what we see around us.

Only the barest of touches are needed to produce the most profound shifts in understanding. When Marcel Duchamp began making 'Readymades' in 1913 it was with the most minimal intervention that he took everyday objects and transformed them into high art. In 'Fountain' a urinal was turned upside down and signed, and with 'Bicycle Wheel', the wheel of a bike placed simply upon a stool.

This same lightness of touch is found in the paintings and screen-prints of Andy Warhol. In Warhol's greatest pieces, he takes existing photographs and crops them. The photographs are then over-printed in a variety of colours that change according to the printers own discretion. Think of Warhol's 'Electric Chair', 'Marilyn', or 'Campbell's Soup Cans' and you are presented with two dimensional versions of Duchamp's 'Readymades'.

The process of bringing together two concepts and combining them to make a third is at the heart of all artistic processes, and seems to be at its height when the artist removes his own personality as far from the outcome as possible. This detachment enables the work to act as an exploration of, and comment on, the culture it emerges from.

Self-taught and Outsider artists like Niki de Saint Phalle and Nek Chand, who Schwegmann-Fielding has worked with in India, employ the same process of bringing together disparate elements in order to produce visual metaphor, using it as a means of exploring self-expression.

Anne Schwegmann-Fielding's work occupies the same ground as that of the self-taught artists she most admires. She takes discarded objects such as saws, spoons and mannequins and decorates them using broken glass or smashed crockery. These objects which once had a physical and practical function have been born into a new role. This re-created identity always references former function, enabling past and present to co-exist in harmony.

The simpler this process is kept the better the results appear to be. The original form is still visible and the viewer has the greatest opportunity to project something of their own thoughts upon it. The process of adornment enables this to happen in a way that just looking at the untouched thing

itself doesn't. For Schwegmann-Fielding '*...the importance of using your eyes and seeing how beautiful things are around you*' is central to what she is trying to achieve. This is a thought expressed by the artists Jeanne-Claude and Christo who state that they simply wish to make the world a '*more beautiful place*'.

In wrapping buildings such as the Reichstag in Berlin or the Pont Neuf bridge in Paris, Jeanne-Claude and Christo aim to help us think of the world differently by concealing it. In their work, original form remains present, but its function is lost for the time being, causing us to pause for thought and reflect on the everyday landscape of our lives.

Anne Schwegmann-Fielding's work is intimate in scale, and produces many gems, like her log containing crushed glass. Commonly, her sculptures involve taking and transforming machine manufactured objects which have been abandoned. She says of her work, '*What I have been feeling as I am working on the pieces, is that they all have quite a crude feel about them and they look very hand-made. I have a really strong view of there being beauty in imperfection and what I like is that some of the work – from a distance has a quite jewel like, expensive quality but on closer inspection is quite crude, emphasising I suppose the unique compared to the mass produced*'.

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