

Disney Land Colors.

For: ART FORUM

Why is it that dogs are not yet blue with red spots all over, and that hares do not yet irradiate phosphorescent colors over nocturnal meadows? Why is it that animal breeding is still concerned with economy, and not yet with aesthetics? As if nothing had changed in the relation between mankind and the biological surroundings ever since the neolithic revolution? This is the sort of question this paper is going to ask, and it will put that question into the following context:

On the one hand farming and animal breeding in North America and in Western Europe is producing more that can be consumed; and on the other hand we now dispose of techniques which permit the creation of plant and animal species according to program. On the one hand we have mountains of butter and ham, and rivers of milk and wine; and on the other hand we can now create artificial living beings, living art works. Those two sides of the problem can be made to coincide, and farming should be transferred from peasants, (an almost extinct species anyhow), to artists, (who breed like rabbits and have feeding troubles).

If you make a film of the Western European scene, one which accelerates millenia into seconds, you will see the following story: First you will see a cold steppe where large ruminants migrate toward the north in spring and towards the south in fall, and which are being hunted by beasts of prey, (including humans). Then you will see an ever denser forest wherein people open clearings with fire and stone impliments, because it is difficult to hunt in a forest. Then you will see the familiar scene of field where edible grains grow, and of meadows where edible animals graze, with some forests left which may be transformed into news print. And if you project your film into the immediate future, you will see an enormous Disneyland where people made unemployed by automation try to amuse themselves, so that they might not die of boredom. The question here asked is this: who is going to be the future Disney? And the answer here suggested is: he will have to be a molecular biologist become artist.

Organisms secrete dye stuffs which have vital functions. They help the individual to survive, (protective coloring), and the species to propagate, (sexually attractive colors). We are beginning to understand the chemical and physiological processes which govern that secretion. And we can now formulate the mathematical laws which govern the distribution of those colors over the body. Genetic engineering is beginning to interfere in those processes and in this distribution. Molecular biologists can handle those colors more or less like painters handle theirs: they can mix them and spread them. Thus biological dye stuff secretion is acquiring a new vital function: it may help the human species to survive boredom, by filling a future Disneyland with multicolored fauna and flora.

Do not say that this is fanciful thinking. Take a diving-bell and a torch-light instead, and dive into the deep of the ocean. What you will see there are fields, meadows and forests of plant-like animals whose red, blue and yellow tentacles swing with the currents, you will see rainbow-colored gigantic snails which walk through those meadows, and swarms of silvery, golden and violet crawfish which overfly that scenery. This is how North America and Western Europe may look like in the future. It has become almost feasible to transfer the genetic information which programs this deep-sea coloring into inhabitants of the continental surface. This is why the future Disney will have to be a molecular biologist turned artist.

You might say that what is being described here is a kind of super-dimensional land art. But of course such a land art would be infinitely more complex, and therefore more interesting, than what is being done at present. No longer is it a question of covering rocks with paint, (or some comparable simpleminded gestures), but of composing and computing a complex game of living colors. An example may serve to show the complexity which is involved here: There is a species of potatoes which is pollenized by a single species of butterfly which again feeds exclusively on that potato species. The butterfly may be said to be the sexual organ of the potato, and the potato to be the digestive apparatus of the butterfly, the two forming a single organism. Now the butterfly wing has exactly the same blue coloring as has the potato flower, although in the wing the color is a result of rays being reflected by minuscule mirrors, and in the flower it is a result of chlorophyll transformation. The future Disney will have to program such extremely complex ecological feed-backs.

In fact: the future Disney will have to compose an enormous color symphony which will evolve spontaneously through endless variations, (mutations), and the color of each living organism within that symphony will mirror the colors of all the other organisms, and be mirrored by them. A gigantic living work of art with an as yet unimaginable wealth and beauty.

The present environmentalists and ecologists, (who stubbornly continue to call themselves "green"), will object that such a North America and Western Europe transformed into a Disneyland, (a work of art), will no longer be natural. But consider: When people began to open clearings within the forests, they began to make Western Europe artificial. And when they began to plant fields, they accentuated this process of artificialisation. The future Disneyland will do nothing else than to continue that process. Now this progressive transformation of Western Europe and North America into works of art has resulted in their becoming the most fertile of all the continents, where life is most active. May it not be said that art is a method to breath life into nature? And this is the real meaning of the initial question: "why is it that dogs are not yet blue with red spots all over?". The question is meant to ask about the role art will have to play in the immediate future, which is not only menaced by nuclear and demographic explosions, but equally by the explosion of boredom.