

### METHOD AND TERMINOLOGY OF ART CRITICISM

I should prefer to restrict my report to terminology, particularly as I am convinced that a properly prepared vocabulary would contribute to the method of art history and criticism. Naturally, an art term can only be understood historically; after its original meaning has been determined, the evolution of that meaning as a result of changing ideas must be traced right up to the present.

Let us take, for example, the word art, used as the common noun for all forms of art. In the 16th century, Giorgio Vasari referred to "the art of draughtsmanship", because his esthetic attitude gave pride of place to Technique. After Poussin and the classic French period of the 17th century, beauty was given the place of honour and the term "beaux arts" came into use. But as early as the 18th century, the figure began to be considered as the common denominator of art and Lessing coined the term "bildende Künste", which has often been translated in the Latin countries as "figurative art", a translation which is somewhat <sup>debatable</sup> ~~arguable~~. This term has endured until the present and is the most commonly used. But in a period where art has to some extent become non-figurative, it can no longer be accepted, and such is all the more the case as the term cannot include architecture. In fact, the present century has given rise to the terms "plastic arts" and "visual arts", which cannot cover the whole range of art nor satisfy our awareness of the spiritual value of art. Thus the question remains open.

Another current terminological problem is the distinction between the artisan and the artist, a question of burning interest during the Renaissance, particularly to Leonardo da Vinci. But can we be sure that we have solved it?

Other problems arise for distinguishing the performance of artistic creation and the finished work of art. Perhaps only in English are there

terms expressing the difference precisely, viz., artistry and art. But the difference existed even in the classical period between the person in the act of making the work of art and the creator of a finished work.

As you see, the question is one of the various terminological approaches to the concept of art.

Lionello Venturi.