



For Julian Schnabel

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We are living in the market-driven age of imitation predicted by Walter Benjamin, in which art is produced to be imitated, and where frequently enough we remember who did it last rather than who did it first.

We are living today in an age of entertainment, shaped and controlled by the media, in which time is shattered with all the hype, speed, and moral delinquency needed to reduce anything to trivia, as you may have seen in the television commercial featuring car wreck dummies singing to the ode to joy, suggesting that if we cannot rise to the artistic levels of Beethoven and Schiller, perhaps we can bring them down to ours.

We are living in an age of information, enlisting all values and non-values under its banner so indiscriminately that it has already supplied our children's overflowing cornucopia of mysteries with a new category called a.d.d.; signifying attention deficit disorder. Have you seen the great new Jackson Pollock retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art? No, I saw it on television... (pause)

Must we learn again the simple, forthright experience of actually seeing a painting?

This may in fact be an essential aspect of the work of Julian Schnabel-- painting on wood, on broken crockery, on the paint itself--demanding that we look, and look again, that we move forward from the American tradition of seeing art as decoration, as the safe refuge promised by the New York Times section labeled "Arts and Leisure," equating one with the other, and thus putting a fine spin on this oxymoron in fashionable use on all sides today.

In his relentless search for authenticity, the artist works to please himself in a constant process of discovery through the very experience of the making of art, and then seeking opportunities for it to prevail. Traveling abroad, he may encounter other cultural versions of himself, or as Julian Schnabel did in reviving the long abandoned wreckage of the Cuartel del Carmen in Seville with a battle standard painted "Idiota," opening himself to a discovery in the past, in history, even in time itself. Nearer home, do his gigantic paintings on old army tarpaulins dragged through the dirt open new avenues for discovery in our own culture, and ask us to look again? I think so.