

ANTOA`S RIDE ON SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS XPRESS  
A METAPHOR OF TRUE CREATIVITY THROUGH THE AGES...  
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**Abstract/Summary:**

*This article in my ANTOA series outlines analogy between my New Theory of Art, seen as journey, and a travel itinerary that includes train, plane and offroad vehicle. Starting out in Danish capitol of Copenhagen and arriving in north German metropole of Hamburg, the train stops at anthropological, sociological and psychological stations. The journey continues via air to Johannesburg in South Africa. The experience is called Social Consciousness Xpress after title of essay published in 2015, calling visual artists to send samples of socially motivated works in an epoch of poor political leadership. The article explains how laypeople gained access to the myth of creativity. Especially the modern age popularizing the notion. Eg thru ethnological expeditions of expressionists like Emil Nolde and Max Pechstein, yet the message heavily coded and rarely appreciated by outsiders. It also illustrates link between stone-age processing of artefacts and their imaginative value, long overlooked and part of anthropological angle of creative travels. The article ends by quoting the 5-pointer table of the New Arts Theory as worthwhile final destination. The universal itinerary of soulful invention marked by detours into personality, social consciousness, skills innovation, abstraction and symbolic message. As cornerstones of and signposts to true Art.*

**Keywords:** *Analogy, ANTOA, Art, Consciousness, Destination, Journey, Modernity, Skill, Social, Station, Stone-age, Train.*

The analogy between a train passage and the journey called ANTOA - A NEW THEORY OF ART – expresses this particular joyride very well. From point 1 – individual content - to point 5 of ANTOA – message, value and symbolism – the creative trip also passes anthropological, sociological and psychological stations. Stopping there at times and refreshing a scientific approach, all too often misunderstood. Art and science in one compartment and enjoying the break at far outlying junctions? Art and science two perfect bedfellows? Yes indeed!

I first expressed the metaphor in my illustrated call to arms from 2015, entitled Social Consciousness Xpress. It occurred to me on a ride from the Danish capitol, Copenhagen to the north German metropole of Hamburg. In a time of political uncertainty and lack of sensible leadership, I asked artists to send samples of their visual work, and combined them with apt illustrations from Danish Art history. Explaining that my social based approach allows for re-evaluating Danish Art epochs and place the cradle of modernity in this northerly country when painters depicted social concerns of common folks in street rather than glorifying royalty or religious pedantry. Explaining how artists' contributions sharpened societal awareness and supported the spread of socialism.

Visual artists in specific refined and popularized creative thinking and its role of resistance movement. This idea was also referred to in my original series of talks among South African creatives between 1986 and 1988. Art as tool to fight and thwart racial segregation!

Yet the joyride starts and ends at same time, its novelty, the mix of social awareness and cultural invention, artistic work, long known, even back in the stone-age. The latter another intriguing station for the train to stop at and find its desert feet. I point to my experience with original Bushmen or KungSan hunter-gatherers in Botswana's Kalahari desert. This connection between creativity and stone-age convention existed for thousands of years yet was wiped under the proverbial carpet for as long! Kept as secret reserved for insiders, yet when the modern age approached, this info advanced the democratization of a creativity myth in giant steps. Put the artwork in reach of the general public, supported by opening more and more galleries and museums. And laid the onus of explication or appreciation in the hands of ethnographers and cultural researchers, however controversial such a notion. Adventurous scientists and artists willing to explore remote territories and expose unknown rituals belonged to this extraordinary group of academic pioneers!

The layperson or admirer of Art suddenly owned a handy tool to unlock a long kept puzzle. Where did the creative inspiration come from and who influenced this particular choice of profession? The pertinent issue also an integral part of my interview series, called ROLE OF THE ARTIST IN SOCIETY, 24 INTERVIEWS FROM SOUTH AFRICA.

Therefore the baffling immediacy of ancient Art culture and its fanciful processing of artefacts, some of the latter now considered masterpieces in primitive Art, seen as driving force. In direction of the modern epoch, to self-reflection and experimentation, to exploding boundaries by innovating traditional skills with a baffling ease. With an equally baffling sense of personality, developing into profitable artist cults. And this amazing raw Art more and more represented in ethnological and other museums or archives.

Yet today a bane for cultural activists all too keen in condemning the colonial background or contort good intentions of formerly colonial expeditions. Just think of those organized by the German government shortly before outbreak of World War 1.

When two famous expressionists, Emil Nolde and Max Pechstein, journeyed for thousands of kilometers and almost across half of the earth's circumference, to visit Papua New Guinea and the Solomon and Marshal islands, famous for hosting the pioneers of anthropological research, among them Bronislaw Malinowsky and Arthur Radcliffe-Brown. Not to mention French painter Paul Gauguin and his escapades in the South Seas. Where these exceptional artists and craftsmen witnessed so-called primitive island worlds, ethnicities, first-hand. Then changed their creative styles and modes into a hitherto unknown direction.

Nonetheless, the layperson's delight indirect and shortlived rather than helpful because the knowledge spread by the daring craftsmen after their return went through artistic filters, in shape of soulful screens painted with intense colours in contrasty tones. And demanding a certain sense of aesthetics rarely held by outsiders. The democratization of the Arts not really happening, meanwhile the joyride meant to improve understanding and appreciation. And equip the admirer with a set of tools and terms, easily graspable and applicable in front of a giant Renaissance statue or 5 x 3 m Impressionist murals.

But that rarely happened and only in recent years did laypeople indeed acquire the social insights to separate true Art from profitable fakes. This partly due to ANTOA's influence, too.

The journey came to a halt in Hamburg. Only a short stop is on cards, due to transfer by local metro to the airport and check-in for a long-distance flight.

It takes off and crosses oceans, mountains and deserts, before it touches down in the South African metropole of Johannesburg. At the proverbial end of the African continent, and switches to offroad transport! The start-stop mode of the ride by now seemingly inbuilt and recurring regularly, as if the intricacies of football, a classic start-stop sport, were followed!

Alas, artefacts and Art come first and an enlightening drive into Botswana's Central Kalahari ensues, reaching out for a harsh yet vibrant semi-desert, up to 1985 still roamed over by traditional Kung-San groups in search of game and water. The latter processing game skins or elephant hair or oxtails or even inflammable wood into ritual objects and everyday artefacts. Creatively shaped and decorated they serve as spiritual wardens or enhance rituals of healing and stave off bad fortune. Arts and ethnographic science and spiritual enlightenment all in the same boat, here a luxury carriage of the famous Blue Train. Yet we still travel in a sturdy offroad vehicle that looks like a railway compartment. Leaves remote desert reaches and passes a few of stations, the train heading for joyous inspiration. Into the wind of change. Blowing an intriguing view into social webs and their creative representation into our faces. Revealing the soulful character of true Art. Setting up very private symbols and common values against a seemingly chaotic outside world. Firing up the creative weapon against racial segregation and intellectual paucity, against the onesidedness of a world view advocating racism and prejudice. This in a nutshell the summary of replies given by eloquent and prominent cultural workers in my series of interviews – ROLE OF ARTIST IN SOCIETY.

The train heads for the final destination, my 5-pointer New Theory of Art, espousing individuality, social consciousness, skill innovation and processing of artefacts as well as a detour into abstraction, and culminating in a new interpretation of message and symbol.

While 3 of these 5 markers need to be ticked off to speak of authentic and up-to-date creativity, the real advantage for the layperson comes to fore.

However, is this equal to popularizing the notion by social appreciation while galleries, museums and Art temples open up to our keen scrutiny? Namely our careful balancing of the scales that invites many more passengers to the ride back to where it all started. Yet hazy beginnings seem difficult to pinpoint due to the scientific side, an ordered approach to evaluation of evidence, demanding rigorous and regular record-keeping. But it's definitely feasible and achievable. Illuminates a hairy issue.

And this although true appreciation calls for a certain level of education, surpassing the current regime of ignorance and prejudice in the capitalist world. That may have been lost or dimmed over the ages, that education away from conflict and endless wars.

So when does sensible education pull the veil off racialistic and prejudicial assessment of face value, and allows a deeper probe of anti-creative and fully vengeful political agitation and mobilisation for war? When the terms and corner stones of ANTOA are valid, appreciated and applied? When the social side of creative bliss enlightens us rather than invoking boredom, indifference and self-serving elitism? When the ensuing ride is enjoyable, informative and passes a diverse net of destinations and train stations? Surely this angle of evaluating the issue an ongoing concern.

Answer these revealing questions in your own sweet way and find yourself on a fascinating journey to universal insights and invigorating knowledge. To true, sincere, authentic and up-to-date Art. And find that the obstacles pushed in way, although seemingly insurmountable, are the stunted shards of intolerant thought, of poor spirits, that keep us away from personal growth. From arty appreciation, peace and love.

They constitute cul-de-sacs in a confusing web of roads and rail lines, long-distance trajectories of ill-defined plane rides included. All ending up in Arts and Culture circles taking you for a ride in negative sense or misrepresenting the course of history.

Meanwhile ANTOA – THE NEW THEORY OF ART – is a refreshing antidote and worthwhile final destination. Equipping us with a sense of personality that surpasses deep-down creative anonymity, universally applied or not. Giving us a sense of environment and social responsibility so rare in today's quick-living consumerism, and endows us with a keen eye for skills appreciation, where old technique meets new interpretation. And teaches us about the value of abstraction as long as it shows a definite beginning and a probable end. Finally allows for evaluating symbolic messages at the flick of a switch, tick by pen, their content more often than not double-edged and veiled and hard to grasp, yet offering an escape route by correct deciphering of the artwork's title. That's another summary of ANTOA in a nutshell! A further motivation for excellent results. The evaluation of creativity along social markers, placed at strategic junctures, bases success on a thorough, technical and rewarding apprenticeship. Where method and free-flowing soul motions lead to surprising and inspiring advances of the Arts. Their universal application as well as relevance in a worldwide net of ethnic diversity now graspable, achievable, a very special and specific destination.

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