

Quotations from the book “Woven by hand”

by Ramses Wissa Wassef

“I had this vague conviction that every human being was born an artist, But that his gift could be brought out only if artistic creation were encouraged by the practicing of a craft, from the early childhood”.

“It would be very hard to neutralize the various influences- not just the gadgets, magazines, films and so on, that encroach on so much of a child’s emotional life, but above all the educational system of today, which is caught up in a set of all-powerful routines and has become a cog in the mass production machine, it pushes children towards a mindless universal conformism, a monster that paralyses judgment and sensitivity. Only a few exceptionally hardy individuals escape being damaged by it”.

“Nowadays an artist cannot survive unless he gets his name in the papers, and he is ready to do any thing to ensure this. Fame means money and the serious artist is a victim of this sorry situation”.

“An artist’s work is no longer of much use in modern society. Exhibitions in art galleries are visited by people as social events, like race meetings or cocktail parties. Basically, art is dying in the twentieth century because it has been torn as under from daily life. It has become part of the trade in rare, expensive luxuries, or else it is cast aside. It undergoes all day to day caprices of fashion and gains attention by being provocative or sensational, or even by making use of drugs. And then the works that have won fame, or notoriety, are put into museums to be admired”.

“The word handcraft has taken on a pejorative sense and is almost considered the opposite of art. The craftsman is capable only of copying or if he tries really hard to show his skill, he overdoes it, over-elaborates and imitates.

Modern society more than ever is concerned with population in mass and gives no attention at all to these individual potentialities. Children are classified according to several well-determined tests of abilities, and then directed in groups towards different forms of planed activities. Art is a language of communication, of a universal value. A work of art is similar to an address. It

happened that we were for these children, persons to whom they addressed themselves, through the medium of their work, and we have been able to capture their expression and intention. This role was nether forced nor exclusive, but played with affection and comprehension.

Modern society only promotes impersonal and interchangeable talent, which conforms to a certain set of norms. In spite of all this, sometimes, the profound accent of creative artists bursts out. But unfortunately, the world usually stays numb for a long time.