

(2nd Plumb bob collectors meeting may 2, 2008 Bièvres / Paris)

PLOMADAS *Plumb bobs* - collection Primitivo Gonzalez

News of a fascinating plumb bob exhibition in Zamora, Spain.

With this presentation I would like to let you know about the exhibition organized by The Ethnographic Museum of Castilla y Leon in Zamora, Spain. It took place from 5th October until 20th March 2008. Also to present you the catalogue made in collaboration with the museum. Simultaneously, during Architecture's Week, a selection of pictures included in the catalogue, made by photographer Ricardo Gonzalez, were exhibited in the Association of Architects in Madrid. This show let architects in Madrid know about the exhibition taking place in the small city of Zamora.

The catalogue includes a suggestive and poetic essay by Juan Navarro Baldeweg, one of the most prestigious Spanish architects, who has given his personal point of view regarding plumb bobs. Before showing you some pictures of the exhibition I think it is convenient to make a reference to my interest in this tool. I allow myself to take out some brief notes from the catalogue: the beginning and the end of the text of which there is a translation available, for those who are interested.

I would like to talk about "why" I am interested in plumb bobs. I wouldn't like to talk about plumb bobs here. Most of you know more than me.

"A simple necessity, a weight suspended by a string for establishing and showing the vertical line by means of gravity, the organizing principle of early architecture. Human intelligence and the need to express in the objects we make more than pure utility have brought about the formal diversity presented in this collection.

Such basic elements as string and weight, together with the complexity of different cultures, have produced a world of objects which arouse our fascination. To transmit and communicate this journey around different ages and civilizations, as well as to make it evident, is the purpose of this project.

Our interest in shape makes us collect this catalogue without the intention to investigate, classify or justify, on the contrary, we intend to enjoy these objects, to admire their variety and the human ability to solve simple things in a complex way, or in a basic and subtle way, like a game or like a challenge. It may be a simple shape or a complex one, but it is essentially an expression of culture.

The history of humankind and its evolution is shown in the devices made by man to solve his needs. The discovery of how tools have made human tasks and work easier and how they have revealed this evolution.

The perfection and suitability of tools have revealed the history of construction, as well. Architecture is also the history of crafts and the history of the builders' skills, who have expressed themselves in the instruments they used".

The text, after a short historical introduction, for those ones "inexperienced", concluded with a reflexion;

"This compilation expresses the interest in proving the permanence of shapes: all along the centuries man has used similar shapes in order to solve similar necessities. The timeless character of some objects which have remained unchanged along the millennia. And at the same time the subtle evolution of shapes, which has been even slower than human evolution and the technology man has created.

Man is committed to the world of shapes. The shape is a temptation of the expression. What is art, but the effort to solve problems which apparently do not exist and which take us along unknown roads? Is not this effort, which makes us think a thousand times of the objects and our milieu, the one thing which makes us evolve? Is not this culture?

We need to draw a conclusion from this compilation. The history of objects, tools and implements is a history full of passion and it is also the history of human beings and their development. The production of artificial shapes shows the difference between humans and other species (e). We cannot forget this passion for usefulness and beauty. More and more we get surrounded by useless, ugly objects which are unfeeling and soulless. We need objects which are affective. They can be found not only among historical objects but also among objects which express our emotions, which have the power to move us and which help us evolve, which help us be more sensitive and therefore more human. This is only possible, as it has always been, with the creative effort of human beings".

(SLIDE FILM PASSING)

I would like to make a last comment. I'm a passionate collector but I should explain something. Putting together a collection means to make a passionate search of something unknown. There is a passion to discover and also to give a different point of view of a group of objects, objects that placed one next to another tells us something that is not discovered by its individuality. I also have to say that this passion remains, at least for me, when there is mystery, when there is something to discover.

This is the reason why, and probably due to the generosity of some of you attending this meeting, the mystery has been "revealed" to me.

Maybe that is why I am not a "plumb bob collector" any longer; I say it low voice as temptation is always round the corner. Maybe now I am just a "plumb bob keeper" who enjoys showing a collection gathered with passion and with your help.

THANKS

Primitivo Gonzales