

ART WILL NEVER DIE

Stewart Hendrickson

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In these times of pandemic, art has taken a big hit. No more live concerts. No more open galleries to show old and new art. Music, dance, and drama organizations may fold for lack of support, but new ones will arise to take their place. An old piece of art may be lost, but something new will appear. Writers will always find something to write about. Art is a human endeavor, it comes from within, and will arise wherever humans prevail.

Ever since the first human banged two rocks together or fashioned the first reed flute, music has evolved. We joke that there is only one melody from which all others have evolved. There may be some truth to this. Mediocre musicians copy, good musicians copy a lot. A melodic fragment from one musician may be picked up by another and fashioned into a whole new composition. Then there are themes and variations. Musicians love to take a melodic theme from another musician and compose variations. Jazz musicians love variations, and no two jazz artists will play the same melodic line the same way. Each performer will play it differently according to his or her own interpretation. This does not work well in modern times with copyright laws as they are. One might say that technology stifles art.

Music is transforming. When I hear a performance of classical music I don't feel a part of the material world. What I hear is internalized into a place outside of where I am. It could be a place in nature or a particular feeling in my mind. We are made to respond to music. Music provides healing for the sick and condolence for those facing death as well as those grieving for a death. No technology can do that as well as music. As long as there is a human need, music will live.

The visual arts also have healing power. Neurologist and author Oliver Sacks (1933–2015) writes in a short essay titled *Why We Need Gardens*, "*As a writer, I find gardens essential to the creative process; as a physician, I take my patients to gardens whenever possible. All of us have had the experience of wandering through a lush garden or a timeless desert, walking by a river or an ocean, or climbing a mountain and finding ourselves simultaneously calmed and reinvigorated, engaged in mind, refreshed in body and spirit. The importance of these physiological states on individual and community health is fundamental and wide-ranging. In forty years of medical practice, I have found only two types of non-pharmaceutical "therapy" to be vitally important for patients with chronic neurological diseases: music and gardens.*"

We do not live forever. Humans die and matter may be destroyed, but for the arts there is no dying.

THE WEIGHING

by Jane Hirshfield

The heart's reasons
seen clearly,
even the hardest
will carry
its whip-marks and sadness
and must be forgiven.

As the drought-starved
eland forgives
the drought-starved lion
who finally takes her,
enters willingly then
the life she cannot refuse,
and is lion, is fed,
and does not remember the other.

So few grains of happiness
measured against all the dark
and still the scales balance.

The world asks of us
only the strength we have and we give it.
Then it asks more, and we give it.