

## Visual Arts Seminar with Christian Hitsch

at Hesperus Village, 18-20 July, 2014

- by Dianne Denhart

**Mercury Standing In The Balance.** Christian Hitsch, master artist, craftsman, and architect, opened the workshop with a lecture on the theme, *Oh, human being, know thyself in balanced striving – The Goetheanum Art Impulse*. He recalled the pivotal moment when Rudolf Steiner laid the Foundation Stone of the First Goetheanum on 20 September 1913 – the moment when Mercury entered the sign of Libra. The theme *polarity in balance* leads to the question: What is the genesis and task of anthroposophical art today? Christian framed the art impulse as a counterbalancing force to the polarizing forces pervading every sphere of modern life. For there is an urgency facing humanity. We are crossing the threshold without an understanding of what is actually going on.

Christian then shared some of his research and experiences with the Goetheanum building. Out of his deep connection to anthroposophy, he revealed the meaning of the linkages between the smaller cupola – the world of the hierarchies, and the large cupola – the world of the earth and humanity. A sense of wonder arose in the group out of Christian's enthusiasm for this amazing building. Our hearts opened to a new awareness that it conveyed the mysteries of Earth's evolution and humanity's role within it.

The arts speak to human beings, and with heightened perceptions we can meet the crises of our times. Sculpture, paintings, and architecture can create that necessary middle space in which a new world can arise.

**Artistic Exploration of the Theme.** Workshop participants gathered Saturday morning in the Toronto Waldorf School wood workshop. After a brief round of introductions, the adventure began. We were to explore, experiment, and play artistically with the questions that had arisen around the theme, *Polarity in Balance*. We were encouraged to work alone as individuals, or to work as individuals with others. A variety of materials such as clay, pastels, black & white conté and different sizes of paper were on hand. After initial moments of uncertainty, we gathered up our courage and moved from the chaos of uncertainty to a tentative purposefulness. Soon the worktables were alive with enterprising activity.

Christian had not lectured to us or given us direction. Rather, he had challenged us to see ourselves not merely as individuals, but as individuals working together in group work. He said, "It is in the relationships between humans that is the only reality. We are the only beings who are conversing with each other, while among us weaves *anthroposophy*."

At day's end, the group gathered around each worktable to experience the unfolding of a new understanding of the visual arts impulse. A wealth of concepts and new perceptions was there for all to see – of how *polarity in balance* was revealed in multiple forms in the clay, in the pastels, and in the black & white drawings. We experienced a new way of working together, free of preconceptions about art and each other. We felt an enlivened social consciousness, and now see more open to opportunities for creating new living forms in our many spheres of human interest. A renewed hopefulness arose from within as the future beckoned – awaiting our creative striving.

***The Genesis and Task of the Art Section.*** We reconvened on Sunday morning at Hesperus for a final talk by Christian. Recapping Friday's lecture about the smaller and larger cupolas of the first Goetheanum, he spoke of the different spheres of activity issuing from these two components. From the smaller cupola, the hierarchies can send forces into the larger cupola, wherein the human beings work on earth. This mystery building shows how spiritual reality can be conveyed into the sphere of human concepts.

If we can imagine the smaller cupola as the heart and soul of the Goetheanum, and the larger cupola as the body of the Goetheanum, then we can ask, what mediates between the two? In this way, we arrive at the organs of this mystery edifice – the “sections” of the School for Spiritual Science.

It is important to note that each section has its own approaches and initiatory tasks. An Arts Section co-worker needs to deepen his understanding of the arts impulse out of spiritual science. He could study, for example, the Goetheanum, the colour exercises and lectures of Steiner, or the sculpture, *The Representative of Man*. The more one approaches the core of esoteric work, the more open and free one can be.

There is a lawfulness of form in the supersensible spheres, and the artist's true task is to tap into that lawfulness and then to gather together the elements of colour, shapes, textures so that the spiritual reality can show through. Through meditation and spiritual work, the artist can be an essential vessel to mediate and expand the impulse of spiritual science in the world.

The words of Rudolf Steiner ring loud and clear: *Oh, human being, know thyself in balanced striving...* We hear the call; now is the time to act.