
Between Fine Arts and Science: Aspects of the Interdisciplinary Activities of Prof. Dr. Claus-Frenz Claussen

Considerations on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday

Hermann Henrich

Ebenstein Dachtal 44, D-97082, Würzburg, Germany

Science is not merely a side activity for our honoree. As a professor of physiology, I have accepted, in this primarily scientific symposium, the role of "honorer" of our friend and colleague, Prof. Dr. Claus-Frenz Claussen, for his contributions to the fine arts. I am an artistically interested academic colleague and companion of the honoree. As time is limited during this symposium, I can present only a limited representation and not a complete evaluation of the creative work of Claus. Therefore, I must rely little on systematic assessment but confine myself primarily to subjective evaluation. Nonetheless, this self-restraint shall not diminish my admiration for the artist.

For the hiker Claus-Frenz Claussen, the fine arts and sciences do not occupy two different worlds. Rather, they are conditional on one another; each stimulates the other. They are fields of analogous activities. In some sense, they merge in their expression: The neuron, as a basic functional element of the human equilibrium, operates to maintain permanent regulation of equilibrium and dysequilibrium; likewise, the artistic momentum of a person's creative efforts express that artist's regulation of equilibrium and dysequilibrium. Claus's early spatial graphic representations abstract this momentum in wire graph sculptures. His reference to space characterizes both living beings and Claus's fine art objects.

Now, I want to approach my explanations of Claus's fine art a bit more systematically. I see four main elements of this doctor's artistic expressions: (1) a mythological, (2) a material, (3) a sensory, and (4) a logical element: a scientific artistic expression.

Concerning the first, the *mythological element* cannot easily be accessed in Claus's artwork. It is determined mainly by the naming of a work of art. Which of us is not already familiar with Nordic legends and gods? Where is the ambiguous double-faced head better represented than in a Loki or a Jarl? One face is determined by sense, whereas the other is anthropomorphi-

cally divine. Claus has broadly handled many aspects of this theme. His work extends from the Greek gods and heroes of Homer to the *Gilgamesh Epic*. In particular, Claus has presented Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu in steel sculptures during his spatial surface phase. Claus also deals in his artwork with the histories from Thule of the "Nibelung" song. Memories of wonderful large sculptures of "Hagen von Tronje" and "Siegfried" return to me; they are outdoor knights in the sculpture park of Eisenbühl. Also standing in that park is the multifaceted figure of "Lohengrin," who still is in *statu nascendi*. Last but not least, the impressive "Gaia Australis," the oldest mother and basic monster, can be seen at Eisenbühl. Here, Claus's work is very great. The mythological element of his creations impart color, tell joyful stories, conjure complete pictures; this element discloses sculpture as a "narrative" medium.

The *material element* of our honoree's work is the object of brilliant inventions, endless toil, and restless searching for the concretization of his ideas through materials and tools. A look into the studio hall of Eisenbühl gives one a glimpse of understanding of the artist's struggle with the material as a means for continual artistic fulfillment, for making manifest his ideas as creations. Claus the iron sculptor is a forger, a hammerer, a driller, a puncher, a bender, and a welder. When one sees him in his protective mask, his hard-hat, and his fire-protective attire, one is reminded of Hephaistos or the blacksmith Oluf, who is working on the horseshoes of god Odin's horse Sleipnir.

Steel is Claus's chosen material. For a few hours, when it is not yet zinc-plated or painted but reveals an unprotected surface, the steel shows its original color, the gleam of its elementary being. The necessity of protecting a sculpture from corrosion forces the artist to alter the surface of the structure, an independent step in the creative process that becomes another special means of expression.

With admiration, I mention specifically the small sculptures of the soul of birds or the flame-cut birds (of which I keep a splendid copy in my own home). These bird sculptures were the focus of Claus's activities in the 1970s. Very convincingly, Claus the artist makes use of color as both a surface protectant and a means of expression, especially in his block sculptures. Never again will I part with my "Rider Queen" or "Jackson Bear" sculptures!

The benzene ring sculptures and early figures made by Claus derive their artistic expression from an excellent synthesis of their extension into space and their expressive color. The material element makes enormous demands on the scientist-artist, as the inherent difficulties of the material play only a minor role in his scientific domain. Occasionally, on visits to the iron sculptor, I have witnessed Claus focusing on academic, technical difficulties, problems concerning the choice of material or quality requirements, as opposed to artistic concerns such as special colors. He then centers his creative ideas around these problems. In such instances, the presentation of new works must take second place. From the point of view of a visitor to Claus's steel studio, the focal interest seems to be just backward. One would expect that the artist would be more interested in new creations and actual works.

The third element that I wish to stress is the *sensory element* of Claus's artistic creations. Claus demonstrates an uncanny ability to provoke perception and recognition in the viewer of his fine art pieces. The mythological as well as the material elements work together to support this goal of being perceived, recognized, and understood. Being a medical doctor, I cannot overlook a sensorimotor element in the multifaceted pieces of Claus's art. The close coupling of sensory impression and motor expression, which is the central theme of his scientific neurootological studies, are quantified by means of equilibrimetry. These basic areas of interest in Claus's scientific neurootological pursuits become visible in all his artistic creations. For visitors who are acquainted with the scientist-artist's endeavors in neurootology, his early rough steel wire sculptures reflect the marriage between science and art in their space orientation, as is seen in living beings. A very fine-tuned sensorimotor viewpoint vitalizes them through a stimulating game of balance and imbalance.

To illustrate the composite nature of Claus's abilities, I would draw your attention to the early wire sculptures of "Enno" and "Maria," which can be admired in Claus's Eisenbühl sculpture park. In this group are included also such bird sculptures as the "Cognac Bird," "The Birds of Death," and the "Victory Family."

His well-received sculpture exhibition in 1987 in

Bad Urach, Baden-Württemberg, Germany, has documented the sensorimotor element of Claus's art through an undeniable effect on the viewer of perception and movement. Claussen underscores his view of the similarities between science and art by his reference to "tunnel-shaped entrance gates of the senses." In the attentive observer, these so-called entrance gates make possible—indeed induce—an "internal processing storm." However, other essentials are eyesight and feeling. The countless input signals streaming into the human observer then may result in a better understanding of the artwork.

From the perspective of sensory physiology, the basis of human understanding is the extremely complicated neuron, which also accounts for the highest use of logic in the expressive fine arts of Claus-Frenz Claussen. Claus's cute filigree neuron sculptures, which silently swing and shiver at a touch, represent another end of the spectrum when compared with his large, space-occupying steel sculptures. In their names, such as "Edda Neurons, Eleonore Neurons," are mythology indicators, which serve to flood a viewer's senses with imagery and sensorimotor signals.

The performance of the neuron is the peak of excitement. The netlike circuitry board created by the human neuronal system forms a biological basis for the *logical element* both in Claus's fine art and in his neurootological studies. I assume that our honoree loves his neuron sculptures and his scientific pursuits as he would his children. Like two developing youngsters, science and art promote and support one another mutually. Then, one day, their creator must set them free to develop further under the tutelage of others; but ultimately, the youngsters return as giants and perch proudly on the shoulder of their begetter.

In summary, the four elements of my analytical approach to Prof. Dr. Claussen's fine art can easily be fitted together under the label that Claus himself coined: *narrative sensology*. Though my brief analysis and Claus's narrative sensology do not constitute an instruction manual for the better understanding of Claus's fine art, they may nonetheless aid viewers in dealing with the flood of signals incited by Prof. Dr. Claussen's artwork. It is hoped that this evaluation will help observers of Claus's creations better to understand his intentions.

I will end this presentation by offering you a look at one of Claus's youngest major sculptures, "Odd's Fehu Ship Jeran Before the Look of Ofeig." The theme is drawn from the *Edda*, the old north Germanic mythology. Together with you, I wish to send (like Ofeig) a positive look after the boat of life to our friend Claus-Frenz Claussen and to wish him a fortunate future in which he is surrounded by many, many "Butterflies."