

Opinion: Embracing art as the medium that heals

By Robert Schimmel

Do we always need tragedy or an odious event like 9/11 to make us appreciate art and what it brings to the very heart of the matter? Doesn't art often speak louder than words or certainly more eloquently when many have no words?

Please don't misunderstand, I believe human suffering and pain come well ahead of any art, but we are blessed when the arts aid in healing, understanding and forgiveness. Look at the amazing murals in NYC that tell endless stories and express myriad emotions about this horrific day. Each image on a vacant wall, a borough's firehouse, or in a city park tells of emotions no one can utter because there are no words for the deep grief or the tragic memories that grow a spirit and create personal inner resolve not subject to linguistic skills.



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Schimmel

Our families were robbed, our souls scarred, and our fears realized that lamentable day in September 2001. No one will forget where (s)he was that moment of the Twin Towers imminent demise to rubble and ash, and most do not want to forget for reasons of patriotism or simple, anguished loss and a desire to remember a last hug or kiss.

We must pray, accept and understand that all suffered loss of some kind if we get honest and go deep. Then, in the midst, what is it that touches us most, expresses what we cannot say, and does it without confusing words? Art. Why? Simple, you get to "read" the art and feel or relive the emotions of a moment, an event, an experience, an honor, a tradition, or whatever. And no one can say you're wrong because there is nothing wrong with personal experience and its truth; it just is, and the doubters be damned. Art does not need to be translated; it is spoken once and heard by all. It goes to the heart of the matter and is truly "worth a thousand words," if not more.

My sincere point and purpose are to passionately illustrate how art makes a difference we often don't feel or even recognize until a 9/11 hits. Two and 3-D art, for example, can capture your attention at 500 yards or 5 inches and tell you more in a glance than 50 pages of the finest prose on the planet. From sculpture to architecture, murals to painted eggs, dance to gymnastic rhythms, poetry to music to choirs, et al, we must embrace the elements and artists of what keep us tuned-in and turned-on to life in all its fascinating developments and foundational building blocks we require for personal growth, not to mention our national character.

The expressive quality and talents of our artists need to be recognized and encouraged beyond the commercial scenes and not just for what they can contribute to fundraisers, etc. As a community seeking an identity, Lake Tahoe has an abundance of artists and talent waiting to be creative in ways only they can imagine. Public art and the artists' giving hands and hearts get the presumptive nods and occasional financial grants but not nearly often enough to make them thrive and able to continue their mission of self-expression (which really turns out to be yours and mine, especially during trying times) and beautification which leads to personal healing, community identity and, ultimately, national recognition.

Should my comments bring concern that this revolves around money, I'll just have to say you may be right because almost every activity or accomplishment has its sustenance there. Please don't throw the baby out with the bath water, but preferably get a grip on what can make us spiritually strong, emotionally healthy, and visually pleasing as a community that will naturally attract just what we want: a sustainable future with heart, a memory, and an appreciation of God's gifts and talents among us at all times, not just when a deplorable event occurs.

Robert Schimmel is a professional artist and teacher in South Lake Tahoe as well as host of "Lake Tahoe Art Scene" on KTHO radio on Thursdays at 5:15pm.