Art should also be experienced in book form

Kristelig Dagblad, Denmark

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March 7, 2017

**Gold man playing with his identity**

Richard Shusterman: The Adventures of the Man in Gold - Paths Between Art and Life. With text in English and French and with pictures of Yann Toma. 128 pages. 20 euros (150 kroner). Éditions Hermann, Paris.

 5 stars

Richard Shusterman (born 1949) is one of the leading thinkers in the disciplines of philosophy and aesthetics. He has two positions at the Florida Atlantic University: He is partly professor of philosophy, partly director of the Center for Body, Mind and Culture. In addition, he became affiliated to Aalborg University's new institute, Arts and Technology, as honorary professor a few years ago, which means that we are currently seeing more of him in Denmark.

He is also co-editor of the online magazine, Journal of Somaesthetics. As a thinker, he is open-minded and unprejudiced, and he willingly leaves the scientific forums and the academic context to work closely with international contemporary artists. Most of his ideas are quite atypical for a classically schooled philosopher as they have occurred outside the library and the auditorium, just as they rarely rest solely on the many philosophical articles and books that he has read - and has written quite a few of.

Shusterman’s philosophy rests on a bodily foundation as he, in accordance with the natural sciences, argues that all of our experiences and lessons in life are facilitated by the senses. The philosopher must therefore step down from his ivory tower and experiment, engage in and explore reality - and art - in new and creative ways, says Shusterman, whose books are translated into 15 languages.

Now there is a small fine illustrated book where he, as a consequence of these thoughts, plays with another identity: *the man in gold / l'homme en or.* Here he emerges as a performance artist and it is the experiences from this new identity, that the book is about - told as a fable. When Shusterman puts on his gold suit, the learned scholar disappears and in comes the shy, searching and sensitive gold man who allows him to be guided by his senses and emotions - far from the academic achievement-oriented man using only his head.

H.C. Andersen's fairy tale "The Shadow" from 1847 comes immediately to mind on reading it. This thematizes a doppelganger motif where the shadow as a destructive force, detaches himself from his erudite man and seizes power from him; different from Shusterman whose Man in Gold struggles to redeem himself and find love. It happens in the encounter with art. In the book, he finally gets the most beautiful woman that he has long dreamed of - the luminous golden woman, Wanmei.

The Gold Man's experiences are photographed by the French researcher and artist Yann Toma. He experiments with drawings of light, which capture the gold man's energy and aura onto the light-sensitive paper. We are in a convent outside Paris, by the Seine, on the beach in the US, but foremost in Denmark and, more specifically, in Vendsyssel on the large farm of the artist couple, Benthe Marit Norheim and Claus Ørntoft, where the gold man meets art that serves as a revelation to him.

The book testifies to what a sloughing-off can initiate in the way of changes in an otherwise deeply rooted identity. It is a courageous and inspiring initiative - and makes for captivating reading.