

Ben Shahn

Quotes

Art, Artist, Photography, Believe, Thinking, Men, People, Jobs, Numbers, Essence, Painting, Shapes, Eye, War, Matter, Dull, Born, Yellow, Decision, World

I believe that if it were left to artists to choose their own labels, most would choose none.

~Ben Shahn

An amateur is an artist who supports himself with outside jobs which enable him to paint. A professional is someone whose wife works to enable him to paint.

~Ben Shahn

Of course I realize that photography is not the technical facility as much as it is the eye, and this decision that one makes for the moment at which you are going to snap, you know.

~Ben Shahn

If one has set for himself the position that his painting shall not misconstrue his personal mode of thinking, then he must be rather alert to just what he does think.

~Ben Shahn

The artist is likely to be looked upon with some uneasiness by the more conservative members of society.

~Ben Shahn

Only an individual can imagine, invent, or create. The whole audience of art is an audience of individuals.

~Ben Shahn

I love chaos.... It's the poetic element in a dull and ordered world.

~Ben Shahn

Art almost always has its ingredient of impudence, its flouting of established authority, so that it may substitute its own authority and its own enlightenment.

~Ben Shahn

It may be a point of great pride to have a Van Gogh on the living room wall, but the prospects of having Van Gogh himself in the living room would put a great many devoted art lovers to rout.

~Ben Shahn

The natural reaction of the artist will be strongly towards bringing man back into focus as the center of importance.

~Ben Shahn

I became interested in photography when I was sharing a studio with Walker Evans, and found my own sketching was inadequate.

~Ben Shahn

Forms in art arise from the impact of idea upon material... so that thinking and belief and attitudes may endure as actual things.

~Ben Shahn

Personal style, be it that of Michelangelo, or that of Tintoretto... has always been that peculiar personal rapport which has developed between an artist and his medium.

~Ben Shahn

I feel, having the choices I had, I felt I had more control over my own medium than I did over photography.

~Ben Shahn

The time when I had desire to go to the United States I didn't have a penny. It was in the middle of the depression, you know. I couldn't get as far as Hoboken at that time.

~Ben Shahn

I was brought in, not in the photographic department at all, I was brought in on a thing called Special Skills. I was to do posters, pamphlets, murals, propaganda in general, you know.

~Ben Shahn

To abstract is to draw out the essence of a matter.

~Ben Shahn

Every great historic change has been based on nonconformity, has been bought either with the blood or with the reputation of nonconformists.

~Ben Shahn

Form is the shape of content.

~Ben Shahn

It is not the how of painting but the why. To imitate a style would be a little like teaching a tone of voice or a personality.

~Ben Shahn

The moving toward one's inner self is a long pilgrimage for a painter. It offers many temporary successes and high points, but impels him on toward the more adequate image.

~Ben Shahn

The apprehension of... values is intuitive; but it is not a built-in intuition, not something with which one is born. Intuition in art is actually the result of... prolonged tuition.

~Ben Shahn

To abstract is to draw out the essence of a matter. To abstract in art is to separate certain fundamentals from irrelevant material which surrounds them.

~Ben Shahn

It is an intimately communicative affair between the painter and his painting, a conversation back and forth, the painting telling the painter

even as it receives its shape and form.

~Ben Shahn

The popular eye is not untrained; it is only wrongly trained - trained by inferior and insincere visual representations.

~Ben Shahn

Being an artist is not only what you do, but how you live your life.

~Ben Shahn

Content may be trivial. But I do not think that any person may pronounce either upon the weight or upon the triviality of an idea before its execution.

~Ben Shahn

I was primarily interested in people, and people in action, so that I did nothing photographically in the sense of doing buildings for their own sake or a still life or anything like that.

~Ben Shahn

Now, my knowledge of photography was terribly limited.

~Ben Shahn

How do you paint yellow wheat against a yellow sky? You paint it jet black.

~Ben Shahn

Paint what you are, paint what you believe, paint what you feel.

~Ben Shahn

It is the mission of art to remind man from time to time that he is human, and the time is ripe, just now, today, for such a reminder.

~Ben Shahn

The values that reside in art are anarchic, they are every man's loves and hates and his momentary divine revelation.

~Ben Shahn

All art is based on non-conformity.

~Ben Shahn

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