

...on the aesthetic side of things the British public is peculiarly stupid. It utterly fails, for the most part, to understand the meaning and purpose of art. It fails to realize that beauty and sweetness are essential elements of any human perfection, and that art, when it is vital, enters into every operation of industry, from the making of bricks to the highest flights of the imagination. It conceives of art as a veneer or decoration superimposed upon, or added to something which would otherwise be ugly. The idea that art is organic and inherent in the nature of a thing from the moment of its inception has never so much as entered the public mind. And yet it is precisely the perception of this truth which is the essence of the artist. He recognizes that there is a right way of doing everything, and that right way is art. The ordinary British philistine will not admit this. Being without the finer aesthetic perceptions, which alone can enable a man to determine which is the right way of doing things, and lacking that spirit of humility which in the ages of great traditions made him conscious of his ignorance, he seeks to evade the problem by affirming that everything is a matter of taste. In one sense this is true, but not in the sense in which he means it.

– A.J. Penty: *'The Ethics of Consumption' in 'Old Worlds for New: a Study of the Post-Industrial State'*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1917