

7. THE INTERCULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF THE AVANT-GARDISTE ART AND ITS DIRECT IMPLICATION AS A MEANS OF MEDIATION AND COMMUNITY ACTION

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Abstract: *The aesthetic viability of the real world and the superfluous character of contemporary art, explicit and ironic sometimes, entails the intercultural dimension within the artistic education, which makes visual art and fashion become a medium for the action and comunitary mediacies. At the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th, under the modernism of the avant-gardist European art, we are witnessing a dialectic report between truth and beauty. This dialogue is created most of the times through the common orientation schools (Fluxus, Pop art, Nuveau Realism, Nul, conceptual and random art) as a result of the Duchampian paradigm. Thus, art itself becomes a self-destructive communication act which closes the discourse that generated it and, in which the object's aesthetic contributes to a more effective reception, according to the cultural norms and patterns determined by the pluralist cultural fields.*

Key words: *education, art, conceptual art, paradigm, discourse, contemporary, interculturality, Modernism, Pop Art, Nul, Fluxus, communication, visual, aesthetic*

Introduction

Concerning the open dialogue to which the modern artist participates and the contemporary artistic production, one is witnessing a changing liberty of the plastic language in which the evolution and the more pronounced interference in art, unconsciously reveal the formal support as object – mediator, where the various plastic languages interfere. In this context, a work of art is an artefact especially created to be presented to a public of the artistic world, which can be defined only through the filter of the psychological aspects it displays. In this way, the institutional theory about *art* places this notion in the centre of its reasoning about *art* and, by extension, of the *anti-art*, ensuring a new perspective through the creation of non-aesthetic factors, leading to different conclusions related to the nature and significance of *anti-art* in which the latter contains an obvious remonstrating character, not following the art rules.

Observations

“The question is whether contemporary art (which educates in the spirit of continous rejection of models and schemes – choosing as model and scheme the deterioration of models and schemes, as well as the necessity of their succesion, not just from piece to piece but also in the interior of the same work of art) [...], and its discourse would overcome the level of preference and aesthetic structures in order to inserate itself into a wider context, so as to point out to the modern man a possibility to recover and be independent.”²⁷⁶

At the same time, the aim of the present analytic enterprise is to bring forth the issue which needs such a correction, in using and delineating the notion of intercultural dimension within the realm of artistic education, which makes

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²⁷⁶ Umberto Eco „*Operă deschisă*”, Editura Paralela 45, București 2002, p. 155

visual art and fashion become a way of communication that stands out not as synonymous but as tangent. Nonetheless, behind this tangency, unconsciously, exist fluxes that cannot be dissociated and require, in order to be understood, analogies and metaphors concerning the semiotics of image in the contemporary cultural context. However, it is quite difficult to discover that this material form, which in this case is conceptual art, becomes an abstraction of spatial and temporal elements. “Thus, one could say, that affectivity is not necessarily in me, but in the object, to feel means to experience a feeling, but not as an intrinsic state, but as a property of the object. This means that what exists in me is the answer to a certain affective structure encapsulated in the object. Vice versa, this structure proves the fact that the object is not reduced to the objectivity dimensions, according to which, it does not exist for anyone: within it exists something that cannot be known unless the subject is sympathetic and open.”²⁷⁷

The concept of appearance, in this context, is more or less related to a loss of value of the sensitive, in favour of a reality dedicated to sense and perception. The human being subjects itself to a *reification* process since affirmation can only occur in the middle of other people, into a world erected as such, different from the natural environment that can condition, in a cyclical succession, only the biological needs. Similar to contemporary art, fashion is a temporal reality and its forms can be correlated to the eras, geographical spaces and human groups that produced them. The *ephemerality-constancy* dichotomy reproduces the dichotomy between *substance* and *ways* (superficial) and between *modern* and *avant-gardist*.”

In this case, the work of art can be defined less through the filter of the spectator contemplation, and more from the perspective of the creation process of the artist or the science of the critic, as product or problem. Thus, the work of art is intrinsically connected to the artist’s reflection, which judges as it creates, and also to the spectator’s reflection who tries to understand where it comes from, how it is made and the effect it produces, the issue standing out from a psychological standpoint, that of a loyal perception, and from an ontological viewpoint, that of any perceived object’s status and, in this case, of an object which asks only to be perceived.²⁷⁸

The transition from an intentional separation of the *major* arts from the ones declared *minor* (all the decorative and industrial arts), to a permeability of the boundaries which allows the mixing of different genres, produces the artists who feel the impetus to make these breedings. A multitude of characters, situations and concepts, contradictory sometimes, intersect or unite, thus, demonstrating the profusion and relevance of this aspect.

Edgar Morin notes that “ the proximity between the real pole and the imaginary one makes the development of imaginary consumerism trigger a rise of real demand. Economic growth is caused by something that would have been

²⁷⁷ Mikel Dufrenne, “Fenomenologia experientei estetice, Perceptia estetica “, vol II, Editura Meridiane, Bucuresti, 1976, pag. 125

²⁷⁸ Mikel Dufrenne, “Fenomenologia experientei estetice”, vol. I, Editura Meridiane, Bucuresti, 1976, pag. 66

unconceivable a century ago: development of the imaginary. Imaginary participations and participations to real life, far from excluding, they complement each other.”²⁷⁹

Through the avant-garde art, the artist launches statements that entail a literary value, curiously didactic and well-defined, as opposed to the Kantian option of art. These works of art do not actually practice the aesthetic interpretation of a thing. They stand for the idea of „making that thing”, enunciating at the same time the superfluous character of art, aesthetic viability being rendered via the readymades or the press images, explicit and ironic, involving sometimes monochromies, tautologies, paradoxes, empty spaces, etc. Through the *conceptual perspective* or *art as idea* participating to the creation act, one can discover a „sterile” style which owes its characteristic to the inexistence of the reason to be repeated. In most cases, these are self-destructive communication acts, which close the discourse that generated them. The readymades have influenced the next generations of artists such as the conceptualistic Joseph Kosuth. This way, conceptual art adopts antiart for its own strategic purposes. The common orientation schools, as a result of adopting the Duchampian paradigm, such as Fluxus, Pop Art, Nuveau Realisme, Nul, random and conceptual art, transmit a state of emptiness, an aesthetic void. All these concepts and avant-gardist methods of manipulating the materials, used in fashion design, place the latter into the elitist area of art. One of the artistic movements with a powerful impact on the creation process, Dadaism broke the patrimonial tradition of the object and subjected it to randomness in a moment when – through a profoundly liberative gesture of the art work from the incidence of everything that means tradition - Marcel Duchamp questioned the entire artistic processuality, along with everything it stands for: artist, language, instrument, art work, receptor.

By choosing and affirming a *ready-made* (1917) as a work of art, the artist provoked the translation of ideas from the level of traditional aesthetic to an aesthetic of the invested object with the status awarded by a creative attitude, coming from the viewer projected in the creator’s shoes, for which the „objects chosen to embody the art work are neutral symbolically, devoid of any aesthetic emotion, they do not display techniques of traditional artistic realisation, they are just postulating a reflexive judgment. The conceptualist is trapped into a determination report, between the intention to frustrate the expectations of the art world on the one hand, and on the other hand, to alert the art world, on what has been denied to him. Without the world art participation, the act itself would have no signification. In this sense, the most appropriate example would be the „Art & Project” exhibition, presented in 1969 in Amsterdam, which had the following content „During the exhibition, the art gallery will be closed”. With the work of Robert Berry, on the 15th of June, 1969 „All the works I know, but pay no attention at the moment - - 1: 36 P.M.”

²⁷⁹ Edgar, Morin, *Spiritul timpului*, <http://elkorg-projects.blogspot.com/2008/02/edgar-morin-spiritul-timpului-breviar.html>, Publicat de Radu Iliescu

„Its affective values remain to be seen a priori and finally, in what way the picture of affective qualities could constitute the picture of affective a prioris and also the manner in which these could be based on a “pure aesthetics”²⁸⁰.

Ever since it has been recognized as a science, the philosophy of culture has known various schools of thought, theoretical and methodological orientations. Thus, culture has been approached from various perspectives: i.e. *evolutionists, functionalists, relativist, culturalist, structuralist, semiotic and communicational*. The latter have offered the necessary definitions for understanding a domain in which fashion and art, as a cultural product, trace back their roots, subordinating the multiple research directions included in the ontology of culture. „*Social heredity*”, a phenomenon of individual assimilation of the social value system, similar to the genetic information, transmits the capacity of being unique of individuals that distinguished themselves against a competitive social backdrop.

At the bottom of the socializing scenery lays the individual, seen as a generic personality, which makes us remark that the individual and the social are the birth and dynamic factors of the social. The individual owns a social creation just as the society springs from a cummulation of individual creations. The unification between form and content is the IDEA, in the process of its production and its materialisation as well as the manifestations specific to visuality make the object of an analytical research direction, which describes the mechanisms specific to image production. The „*rupture*” tendencies represent, by and large, the most consistent Western cultural contribution of the 20th century, a hystorical moment, in which all the past centuries coexist and render themselves accessible. Once the bond between era and style was broken, all the historical styles have released themselves from the era in which they originated and became contemporary. The attachment on the artistic patrimony is no longer a nostalgic act, style becomes contemporary.

Innovation, experientialism, transgression, substitution, genre disappearance - these are all frequent expressions, concerning culture, through which the Western society signals the events of a radically renewed era. The tension between cultural traditions and the new forms of creation, new languages and spiritual visions was extremely powerful during the 20th century, triggering a mechanism of evolution and change. Discontinuity and innovation have prevailed in front of the tradition mechanism, whereas change became a dominant process. The radicalism shown towards the traditional forms of culture, the violent avant-gardist movements, the rapid succession of the stylistical forms and ideological trends, the vision relativity and spiritual positions etc, have all accumulated until they reached, during the second half of the 20th century, a critical mass, which prompted theoreticians to discuss about the appearance of a new type of civilization, called post-industrial or informational. Contemporary art calls back into attention the concept of *homo faber* – for which the essence of human is related to the creation and use of tools

²⁸⁰ Mikel Dufrenne, “Fenomenologia experientei estetice”, vol. I, Editura Meridiane, Bucuresti, 1976, pag. 66

because in art any object is judged more for its form than for its utility. The classic interrogation: „*What is art?*” is being replaced by another „*When is it art?*” – which marks the moment in which a prefabricated object starts to function as a work of art (Nelson Goodman).²⁸¹

Solutions

The current frontiers of the „world of art” have been traced during the conquering process of the art autonomy, which happened along many centuries, and should be seen in the larger context of a specialisation of the social activities, according to their own logic. Under the modernism of the European avant-garde art, from the end of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, contemporary art defines style as enemy, whereas beauty must become suspect. Through its artistical approach, the Avant-garde trend, celebrates the ugly, unrefined, mundane, usual – any cultural enterprise that is against the bourgeois notion of property and taste (i.e. the notion of what is beautiful). This type of modernism defies the notion of aristocratic social gathering, truth and beauty, becoming a continuous dialectical relationship. Against this backdrop, the conceptualist is trapped into a determination relationship, with the intention to rebel against the expectations of the world of art, by taking its art object, on the one hand, and the need to alert the world of art about what has been stolen from it, on the other hand. This issue, brought under attention by Umberto Eco, marks the exaggerated gestures of the artists who stand out in the everyday reality in which the formal and symbolical mutations continued to produce themselves through a use *transfer*.

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²⁸¹ Nelson Goodman, *Manières de faire des mondes*, éd. Jacqueline Chambon, 1992, p. 90