IDENTITY AND EXPECTATIONS IN THE FIELD OF MODERN VISUAL ART

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Abstract: *Liberties offered to us, which have never been so wide, have changed the views of the world – the artist is wondering where we are, which way civilisation is moving and what we have become. Art offers new role models from the sphere of music, film and visual art. It uses models, forms, patterns and approaches which are the core of avant-garde, often rejecting all the previous experiences which have been nourished for centuries and which have built the identity of a society, a nation and an individual. Are we able to fully comprehend what is modern art telling us and how much it is affecting us? The end of the twentieth century has spawned the most bizarre works which have arised from drugs induced visions, from rediscoveries of materials and objects to use, from the pulsation of the unknown and mentally unstable conditions of an artist. Are we able to accept art made in this way and the changes that affect us? Have the questions "What does this represent?" and „Is this art?" changed our view of the world and our identity and to what extent?*

Keywords*: identity, visual art, ideology*

Relationship between tradition and modern trends

The moment, which the society is currently in, is marked with globalization, transition and tumultuous changes which have seized all the spheres of human actions. It has influenced the condition of the people's spirit, character and moral, especially in countries which haven't easily accepted the strength and speed of these changes. It's interesting to recognize in what way art suffers the consequences of general change of the whole society, to view the reaction of an individual and see if his identity has changed. While we are still heavily influenced by traditionalism, the modern course of art is aiming at provocation, aggression, rebel attitude and often to bizarreness and morbidity.

Tradition, deeply rooted in Balkan countries, has been interacting with the influences and tendencies of the western countries during the XX and XXI century. New fashion canons, models of beauty and life styles in general have made direct pressure on traditional values, to a point where they came to a certain obstacle in the acceptance of new trends. Rashness in making conclusions and unilateralism in theoretical and practical judgement influenced the nearly automatical acceptance of novelties, without wasting time and effort to reconsider the problem of adapting which would create a complete and correct judgement about further actions of an individual and the society as well. Namely, we accepted newly emerged cultural patterns in their original forms which are actually adjusted to the model and needs of the society in which they were created.

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Influence of ideology

During its development, entire art was in an unbreakable bond with morals, politics, philosophy, religion, law and science (Borjev, J., 2009: 161). The expectations of an artist, as well as of the society, have been more or less changing depending on strength of influence of a certain ideology. An example of ideology in art in our areas is clearly outlined in the socialistic realizm in mid XX century, formed on the foundations of Marxism. At the very base, the absence of absolute freedom in art is apparent because the basic idea of aesthetics of Marxism was accepted, in which: art is conditioned by economy and artistical and intelectual traditions; it is able to influence the masses and utilize their activity in a direction which is suitable for the party (government); party leadership is directing art into the required track; art must serve to move the society towards communism (Krleza, M., 1977: 10). If we accept Wittgeinstein's critics on defining art (Hagberg, G., 2007), in which art is different from everything else and therefore every definition of it and its onesidedness would suffocate the artist's creativity, we will come to a paradox. Socialistic realism precisely defined guidelines of art, which is not in agreement with Wittgeinstein's interpretation because conditioning disables the creativity of an artist. Likewise, if the creativity of an artist, as the most important feature of artistic doings, doesn't have complete freedom, the question appears of how socialistic realism can even be considered art, just as any other movement where freedom and creativity are conditioned. This paradox likely represents the biggest stumbling stone between traditional and modern approach to art as well as between the supporters of both approaches – traditionalism based on creative expression with emphasis on craftmanship and modern conceptions with absolute freedom of thought and creation which are not necessarily a product of experience.

By analyzing strong ideological currents which have appeared in the history of art and by following the reactions of oponents of the mentioned currents, it can be easily concluded that freedoms in the widest possible sense have changed considerably. In addition and more importantly, it was clearly seen that through art you can influence the individual, both the artist and the observer. With the creation of absolute freedom (of expression), with placing emphasis on originality and creativity, which cannot be expressed quantitatively, and also with introducing subjectivism, modern art, which liberty has never been greater, was created.

Different approaches to the visual art

If we look at art works of the Middle Ages, we will notice a difference in presentation of poverty and wealth, where the power of the rich is immortalized with depicting the most expensive dresses, bright jewels and luxuries in general. Therefore, in the artistic achievements made during the Middle Ages, the freedom of the artist is limited by motif, but also with the technical and technological approach which involves mandatory craftsmanship, while the work itself has a function of glorifying the church and the ruling class. According to Janson, technical aspect is justified because „Every artist starts at the level of craftsmen, using other works of art... no one can be tought creation; one can only learn how to go through the process of creating...“ (Janson, H. W., 1997: 15). Leonardo da Vinci also talks about the need for knowledge of techniques and a vocational part of art, stating that „beginner should first learn perspective, then the relations of all things, then he can learn with a good master,“ and then „get used to create and work as an artist“ (Da Vinci, L., 2003: 29).

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We must understand that visual art is no longer based on theories but on its own theory of an individual. More precisely, it cannot be directioned towards the prescribed method and practice. Visual art has accepted creativity in such a way never done before. It acquired an extensive thought of individual expression and enabled the artist to demonstrate his personality with complete freedom of expression. However, a negative point is reflected in the sole existence of an individual who approaches art in a bizzare and morbid manner, which is possible to justify with good rethorical abilities of a critic.

With the appearance of irrelevance, art is entering a state in which thought and word are gaining on essence and becoming one of the most important elements, taking primacy over former visual elements of an art piece (Prette, C., 2003: 206). Perspective, as a visual element, is disappearing, followed by motif and proportion as key ingridients of traditional painting. A work of modern visual art is based on matter, its shaping, the stream of consciousness, the flow of thoughts, the interwining energy in different forms of performance and conceptualism (Eco, U., 2004: 413). The painting, which has for centuries represented a material or physical aspect of artistic action, is nearly vanishing.

Unsatisfied with the current state of society, modern artists criticise the moment in most unusual ways but also talk about what surroundings they would like to live in, creating a completely new world. If we go back only one hundred and fifty years, we will notice a trend which is continued up to today and is about acceptance or non-acceptance of society and creation of new art, as a result of insurgency and a response to daily routine. The second half of the XX century brings a new direction in fine art known as the impressionism. The pioneers of impressionism reacted to the state of the world of art, nurturing the idea of painting outside the art studios, in nature, recording the moment and opposing realism in art (Welton, J., 1993: 21). It is important to note that impressionism represents the artist's first free step forward, whose freedom of expression and thought will become more pronounced with the creation of new art directions. The impressionist's idea of painting comprised of several key elements – black colour is not used in painting, every shadow has a light, a shadow is defined with clear colours (*Ibidem*: 60). The basic idea, which in this case referes only to the material aspect of a work of art, will become more complex in other art directions, often ideologicaly directed and it will create new ideologies which will directly influence the identity of an indivudal and the masses. It is precisely this argument that becomes apparent in the afore mentioned example of socialistic realism. The art of socialistic realism was made in a manner it could be easily understood by the citizens, considering the clear theme – all achievements are dedicated to historical accomplishments of partizan units and fighters, in which the heroic spirit as a symbol of incredible unstoppable strength is dominating (Baldani, J., 1977: 17). The observer is deprived of subjectivity in its original meaning because it can be said that the subjective experience from a work of art is under the direct influence of ideology – identical for every individual and differes only in the intensity of emotions it triggers because the fundamental idea is to increase patriotism and strengthen fellowship which helps create an individual and form his identity by the standards of the government.

The problem of absolute liberty in the visual art

The creation of art which contains an absolute degree of liberty enabled undisturbed action which gives the possibility of free choice, equal opportunities and forming of personality without the influence of ideology but also without the existence

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of valuation criteria.It is interesting to perceive the individual segments of modern visual art, presented with new concepts and performances, and also the desire of an artist to reach the ordinary person in an understandable way through the work of art and convey his own personal view of the world we live in. Can we find ourselves in the work of art? Is the possible lack of understanding a lack of knowledge, faith, culture or identity? Is modern art building a new screen which aims to create a man's identity based on triviality, prosaic and conformity of the society?

A world known performance artist, Marina Abramovic, carried out a performance called „The Artist is Present“ in 2010. during which she personally sat in a chair placed in an empty space of a gallery and opposing her was another chair for the audience (also participants of the preformance), while in between there was an empty table. At the moment when the observer from the audience sat in the empty chair, Marina raised her head and observed this new participant of the performance, without any additional gesticulation or words. When the participant got up from the chair she again bowed her head and continued to sit until a new participant sat down. The performance lasted for three months during which Marina Abramovic spent 736 and a half hours sitting on a chair, 6 hours per day in average (Abramovic, 2012.). The work of Marina Abramovic examined the connection between the performer and the audience, the limits of human body and the possibilities of the mind. In the absence of words, gestures, emotions and elements in the room, the performance „The Artist is Present“ showed how hard is to do nothing and not show emotions. We get the impression that in this moment it is necessary to know what performance is as a type of art, to place it in a certain context and after that analyze deeper meaning so the observer gets the point.

In some individual artworks, the meaning is lost (insisted on) which leads to the creation of a new conception which logic occurs in a moment when it reaches complete meaninglessness. Such art is „destroy to create“, „more is less“ etc. One of the examples is a serigraphy of a Vorhol's portraite which multiples indefinitely and therefore creates emptiness in consciousness as a response to the emptiness of the world. As it can be concluded, today's visual art produces a very different feeling in man, in contrast to the sense of grandeur and awe resulting from the interaction of the viewer with the painted vault of the Sistine Chapel, Rembrandt portraits, the cathedral of Notre Dame or Da Vinci's Mona Lisa.

It should be borne in mind that contemporary art values substance, which from figuration becomes a spontaneous complex of words, phrases, thoughts, colors, sounds. This approach to art has created a number of directions such as constructivism, action art, minimalism, which can be subsumed under a single concept - conceptualism. The theory of conceptualism defines art through structuralism, philosophical learning and information theory, arising from the modern understanding and development tendencies of society as a whole (Eco, U., 2004: 275). Artist allows the matter to shape itself, perceiving himself as a mediator between nature, art work and the viewer. By changing perceptions of things there is a change of aesthetic meaning and the introduction of new measures, which affect the changing of human life.

The tendency to create recognizable and current, defined and understandable in art, seem to have neglected the need for meaning and lost its essence in an overwhelming desire to reach the essence, a personal and social identity.

Conclusion

If we observe modern art as a concept based on provocation and triviality, and

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in which appropriated cultural forms are not, or are less adapted to the lifestyle of people in the Balkans, including the modern tendencies of visual art, which association with the experience of an average man is very weak, we conclude that, almost hopelessly, good is mixed with bad and that it's very difficult to maintain personal and social identity, identity created for decades and centuries. Contemporary visual art has at this moment advanced deeply into psychology, philosophy, sociology, neglecting the artistic as its essential characteristic.

In a time of absolute freedom, which is manifested through various social aspects, a paradigm is slowly creating by which freedom is a new ideology and when it comes to the point where freedom itself becomes a criterion for determining the quality of anything, it can happen that in the infinite possibilities we lose our identity, like many did in times of strongest ideologies, when opportunities did not exist.

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