

WHY ARE THEORY AND RESEARCH IN THE WORLD OF THOUGHT IMPORTANT FOR A FUTURE ARTIST?

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We know that, although God remains valid in everyday life, there are realms in which He has died or, at the very least, in which He has retreated. The art world is one of them.

Indeed, when God withdraws from art, it ceases to think of itself as the "vector" occupied with pointing toward lofty, transcendent, universal, perennial, and unequivocal ideas; thus, the exercise of refined manual skills (drawing, painting, sculpting, engraving), the effective mastery of which takes years of practice, becomes irrelevant. Even knowing this, we tend to think that the aesthetic experience is always an experience of the beautiful or the sublime and, in the most daring cases, of sensual pleasure.

But... if God has withdrawn from the world of art, what remains? Let us see: Foucault tells us that when God dies, no interpretation of the world or human existence "collides" with Him, and then the sign becomes malevolent, for every interpretation opens its possibilities to infinity. Consequently, art stops behaving like that arrow that directs the spectator's gaze toward the divine; instead, it finds itself forced to propose ideas about the contingent, the futile, the trivial... that is, to illuminate the everyday with a different light.

In Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*, there are no transcendent ideas or displays of skill. On the contrary, we find ourselves before an "anti-aesthetic," facing a work of art that lacks all the qualities postulated by Kantian "affirmative" aesthetics. Thus, more than ever, art self-enunciates as a form of human knowledge and the artist as a producer of knowledge at the antipodes of mere Greek *techné*. The current artist, rather than providing a utopian vision that guides the spectator toward beauty, brings us other possibilities:

- They redistribute knowledge and the sensible, giving access to voices that until then were "hidden and inaccessible."
- They show the impossibility of an "affirmative" aesthetic in a society based on oppression, the exploitation of man, and the commercialization and commodification of art.

Consequently, art has moved from subordinating itself to aesthetic theory (Kant, Hegel) to submitting to sociology (Bourdieu, Rancière) or to the studies of language and communication (Eco, Barthes, Althusser). Indeed, although until not long ago the artist was obliged to present content (themes, motifs, narratives) dictated by religion or political power, today they are demanded to address topics of public interest, even when they are free and capable of showing their mastery and taste.

Now then, before the retreat of God in the mid-19th century, that is, in the midst of modernity, which is when reflection on art begins and develops, artists were few, spectators were the majority, and art was produced to form taste, develop aesthetic sensitivity, and educate both the gaze and the rest of the senses. Thus, the division between artists and spectators was clear and socially established.

However, at the beginning of the 20th century, this dichotomy began to collapse, as the emergence and rapid development of visual media turned an immense number of people into objects of surveillance, attention, and observation in a way that would have been unthinkable before. Thus, according to Groys, visual media will be the new agora for public discussion, especially for political discussion. Under these conditions, the Kantian aesthetic attitude loses its old social relevance because it will no longer be disinterested nor will it occupy itself, as we have already said, with the transcendental, that is, with God.

Currently, millions of people are producers of images in a state that is not unconscious or "given" by external forces; rather, those images respond to technical and political decisions for which their authors are ethically responsible. Thus, contemporary art must be analyzed not from its aesthetic dimension (based on reception) and valuing *techné*, but from its poetic dimension (conditions of production) and highlighting its hermeneutic qualities, that is, relying on interpretation.

In fact, this shift began with the historical avant-gardes in which figures such as Kandinsky, Malevich, Ball, or Duchamp created narratives through which they acted as public persons stripped of the romantic aura of the "artist," placing journalistic articles, teaching, theoretical writing, performances and, of course, the production of objects themselves on the same level. These artistic practices must be thought of as radical transformations that go from traditional "positive" aesthetics toward a poetics or, rather, toward an "autopoetics", toward the production of a public Self. This is because those artists did not seek to please their spectators but to investigate "other-poetics" that would divert the trajectory of Western art.

Nonetheless, in the contemporary world, the public condition has accelerated *ad infinitum* with the omnipresence of mass media and the informatics and rhizomatic power of the internet. Under these conditions, the production and dissemination of images has also proliferated into innumerable poetics, and the notion of authorship blurs more and more. For this reason, I repeat, the current artist cannot and must not enter into the complex contemporary reality by emulating their work with that of the demiurge creator of sensible objects in the image and likeness of Platonic archetypes, nor by circumscribing their contemplation to the Kantian "positive" aesthetic of values such as the beautiful and the sublime, and much less by considering themselves a subject of "divine inspiration." In this complex context, those tools are no longer useful to us. The contemporary artist

does not provide a simple representation of reality but operates upon it and, even more, operates *with* it, moving beyond mere contemplation to create a common space between author and public.

Therefore, to operate directly with reality, placing the work at the mercy of the general flow of events, it becomes necessary to maintain constant communication with them and with the sciences that analyze them, philosophy, sociology, but also political science, because, what unites the world of politics with that of art? The fact that the arena in which they take place is society and that, for better or for worse, upon manifesting themselves, both inaugurate a different time and space.

To this complex panorama, we also add the phenomenon that the attic in which the romantic artist exhausted their brushes, gouges, or chisels has been replaced by the computer, from which projects are devised whose realization depends on third parties (curators, managers, foundations, or the State itself). To conclude, it is necessary for us to recover a concept already mentioned: the procedural decisions that precede the execution of a piece, which include the materials used and the techniques employed, respond to decisions for which the current artist is consciously responsible; and in order to do so, both theoretical thought and research will be a constituent part of their creative process.