

When the Imagination Replaces an Absent Memory¹

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Abstract

The art cannot be limited to overcoming limitations, however those are important facts in its history. After modernism, the idea of time as a straight line, loaded the linear orientation. Even fuzzy and without a trace of it attributed distinctiveness, time is in the author's power. The creation allows the imagination to replace true memory or its failure. If the creator is able to organize a temporality which tempts him and at the same time attracts the attention of certain listeners, there are all conditions for a success of the creation.

Keywords: style, modernism, creation, memory, imagination, time.

1. Introduction

“The Compression” of the decades into a synonymous feature of the past came into fashion during the last century. No matter how much the fashion itself has been underestimated and ridiculed as a perfunctory term, it has grown to its symbolic determinant. In the latest fashion, the fashion of prosperity has thrown shadows on everything. The photography has played its decisive part as a new fashion and miracle of the new technology. The photography can take hold (catch) the very moment; it can fix its temporary place.

2. Art and time

A drawing, painted by William Hogarth about 1740, provokes our curiosity with the fact that a new attitude towards the time appeared. Though Hogarth's drawing disappeared, we know about it only from its numerous engravings. The name of this drawing is “Taste in High Life”. It presents some modern of that time temptations. A boring old woman in a crinoline dress flirts with a growing older gentleman with a wig and a cane, a young lady tickles a black boy and in front of them a monkey reads a French menu. A number of paintings hung on the walls. We see Venera Medichy on one of them, she is also in a crinoline dress and an old fat woman tightens her corset. In the left corner a fluffy little amur arranges different clothes and accessories of the previous fashion season. On the Venera's pedestal is written the mode 1742 “It's obvious that time still passes

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slowly. If we accept that Hogarth painted it about 1740, it means that he collected little amur dresses and clothes fashionable in 1739. On the pedestal is 1742, i.e. the painting was engraved 2 years later” (Dgeimisan, 2005: 63).

A modern Hogarth, who lives in London with a substantial image of a businessman and creator, will not be relaxing if the idea of a Taste in High Life was born in his mind. He will draw in outlines a fashion story which will firstly appear in Vogue in 2 weeks, and then in a Brazilian magazine in a month and even in a Bulgarian one. It will also appear in the Net and in 6 months they will appear in the completed, tempting, easy to remember image of the style-x.

The last century was soaked in charm of these characters and now we “the old men” of the 21st century who cannot realize what has happened in the 2000 sigh deeply over these images of the style-x, though badly the children of the new millennium has already written.

All these things will not be possible without the help of the photography. The dead time prints has gathered one by one.

You can find among them the airhostesses’ hairstyle of the 1950s when a group of art trends has declared its presence as a whole because they do not share the characteristic feature of modernism – the opposition between art for the elite and common art. It’s the time when people began to talk about the so called global anti-culture as a common base of all human activities – starting with medicine, education up to music and poetry.

The charming vulgarity of Mary Quant’s mini-skirt which bombed the fashion of the 1960s and declared equality between Brigitte Bardot and Jean-Paul Sartre, who’s smoking “Gouloise” in a stylish way. In the same way the adventurous James Bond’s experience (wisdom of life) added in some way the refined experiment of the conceptual vanguard.

At the end of the 1960s the so called anti-cultural revolutions which followed the Chinese cultural wave faded away and an illusion for coming back to the traditions, nostalgia for the high “retro” style in fashion appeared. On the grounds of that a discussion about the new conservative reaction began. Over the course of time it became clear enough that the conservative tendencies of the 70s had just organically completed the democracy of the 60s (see. Angelov, 2005).

3. Modernity and cultural memory

In 1986, D’Orse’s Museum in Paris was officially opened and it became a symbol of the unification between the vanguard, the traditions and common banality. Earlier this unification was really impossible. Its exposition was devoted to the Art of the 19c but it invalidated the results and obliterated the last traces of the past artistic collisions. For the first time impressionists and post – impressionists’ canvas were exposed at one and the same time with their opponents of the historical art of painting also those of the parade portrait style as well as the sentimental genre too. The opening of the museum was a kind of climax of the interest towards the so called “bad” paintings, bloody, erotic triteness, and pictorial murders of the Roman emperors, also agony and torture of the first Christians as well as “interrogation s” of the Inquisition.

In this train of thought the question about the 90s arises. Where was their place? Where were they? The style overloaded retrospectively slowly disappeared, faded away...

In one of the Bulgarian university hospitals just for the sake of the numerous visitors’ convenience who are always confused while standing in queue in front of the doctors’ consulting room or surgery and they cannot orientate themselves along the hospital corridors, in the central hall at the entrance there is a big board of the hospital wards: anesthesiology, surgery, urology, hematology... On another board is written archives museum. In this way without any punctuation

marks distinctions or particularization, following the same way you can find the morgue without any symbols. Probably it's out of courtesy.

At first sight, without thinking, this strict mark showing the way out of the building, together with the hospital ward and the morgue, convinces our resistant consciousness in its simplicity and unusual justice. In fact, it shows distinction to immortality. Some people are trying to threaten other people speculatively, who still resist temptation. This sequence of the directions – morgue, archives, and museum – rules the history with necessity and inevitability, though feelings and mood which cast a gloom. This gloomy frankness of memento mori reminds us of the end of life. All the things remained in this direction are just a pressed form of a formula for time overcoming. Focusing on the end of the vital human passions themselves, events and acts, the arrow generalizes the irresistible completion of the vital cycles. At the same time a thing which has just been alive and can change whatever and whenever it likes, moves to an area where every activity and change disappear completely – the area of memory. Without being at present and without future, our memory is free of time. Time has lost its power over it.

A state of complete immobility is a state of immortality. Thus, 90s are entirely in the sphere of memory.

The 20th century is over. It's like a book which had been read for a long time and its plot was of great interest at the very beginning but it became boring and gradually lost its rhythm, and the relations between them also became monotonous not only for the readers but also for the author too. The promising story of modernism at the very beginning has come to its natural end. The book, on the first page of which arrogantly is written "20th century – the century of modernism" is now on the bookshelf close to the other books which have already been "read". These are the books of our past: *The Century of Humanism*, *The Baroque Century*, *Enlightenment*, *The century of History*, etc. The 20th century like the previous centuries has turned to a historical fact, an archival document, and a museum exponent. The 20th century is dead.

For none of the previous centuries that fact wouldn't be so unexpected with the characteristic of a tragedy. "Novecento" (Italian – means 20th century). Unlike the other centuries the 20th century was seized with passion for news – about wars, catastrophes, horror, tragedies etc. The 20th century wanted to be modern above all things, to master (come over) the secret of the eternal modernity, to create "Perpetua mobile" of actuality. In the past the 20th century couldn't think about itself. Its character was defined by strive for conquer and rule the speed of the motion towards. Overcoming gravity, the 20th century man dashed happily higher and higher, enchanted by the increasing speed and pleasure. An impression was born that maddening dynamics was endless and the free flight of modernism would wander far in the free distance without any limits. The past seemed to be like a convict prison and the man who was in chains for a long time looked as if he had just been unshackled. Looking from the skies, the sky of the free flight, our past was funny and aside. It was the same as we observe the earth from the space. Thus, our past slowly disappeared also our God. Looking forward the eternal and permanent change, finally the secret of modernity was found forever (see. Eco, 2006).

The 20th century has developed a language appropriate to overloading everybody and everything by its increasing speed. The language of modernism requires a permanent change in order to remain adequate to the dashing vanguard. The idea of the future art created the language of the future and the maniacal wish to escape of the past, to forget all the things that happened before; It felt fear of the approaching moment when the new will not be new it is its turn to go into the sphere of memory. A hope was born that the only way to press the fear of the completion is to create a language of the future now. This is the only way to make that necessary step forward into the future. Looking forward the Future and despising the reality, the genius modernist peacefully waits for the future time and future generations these people who have to speak the language

he has created. The goal of modernism was to conquer the future. For this reason, the past caused only contempt and loathing.

Despite declaring hostility in a number of manifestos towards the positivism of the 19th century the vanguard created a new concept of time, though. The only difference in the interpretation of time in comparison with the historical concept of the previous century is their appeals to a complete destroy of the past. The idea of the progress of the modernistic vanguard is to expel past because that passionate desire for speed, overcoming time and space, acquires the sacrifice of everything in the future. But this idea depends on the idea of revolution and the famous history of the 19th century considering world history as a simple endless line only the process of evolution could complete itself.

The realization of the history as a revolutionary process imposes everything to be historically explained. For this reason, we got used to thinking a possible common history. In the same way we refer to Nature, even to our own life. In such a way we can easily and without any problems explain all the events that have happened, using one scheme in advance. To this preliminary scheme are subordinated not only fashion but also ideas as well as art. However, the past seems to be something quite big and it is beyond a simple “package “of a just one principle scheme.

Certainly, the people who were adept to modernism knew well that every relation which belonged to the past wasn't a form of conservatism. This maxim threatened their modernistic revolution. That's why they made great efforts in creating a new completely incomprehensible for the past language. In fact, this is the language of the future for which the past itself is something unnecessary “Language which will mark the unspoken, inexpressible and will transform the live protest of the present into hard set time structures, inadaptable to all known ways and methods of writing history” (Rusev, 2005: 38).

The fear of the death mask of the elementary endless straightforwardness established, gave rise to the modernistic intolerance to the museums. The constellation of dead points adhesion arranged, lined up by featureless, lacking individuality regularity of the great powers of the historical consistency implacably prompting that it is capable of taking in the next modern time, facing the hated past.

The new modernistic language had to keep the freedom of every single fact, of every single creature out of the global context of the whole. Also, it had to protect them from any kind of domination and not to allow just one creative outburst of a single part of the chain of the numerous consequences, results. This language had to make fun of the metaphor expressing culture as a shelf on which all these creative outbursts are thrown as simple facts, and the culture itself simply presented as an experienced and comprehended past.

A museum, a library, a graveyard, - all those show the embodiment of the time tyranny, which modernism wants to destroy. Every event, every revolution, every creative act found in the museum departments are elementary documentary archive units which should be kept and saved. In the museum there isn't any kind of a creative act pretending for future realization because in the hated past it has mechanically gone out of real life.

The traditional museum exhibitions are arranged according to definite regularities, prompted by logics of the elementary endless straightforwardness and historical succession. The museum of Guggenheim in New York, created by Frank Lloyd Wright is something completely different. Unlike ordinary art galleries in which the exponents are in one horizontal line, in the Guggenheim Museum they are in a vertical spiral. The idea is that there is nothing permanent in life; even the museum is subordinate to the inevitable, inescapable change. Thus, the modernistic art hasn't been “driven into a tight corner”, actually it out of it. The modernistic art is not a simple mixture of hard exponents but it's a continuation of the present day into the future, which has

differentiated its ideal “field” in which the time couldn’t be in power. Named “modern”, the museum has declared that it won’t be a collection of some facts from our cultural past, or just an expression of conformism which lacks strength of character.

The exhibition itself is arranged as a protest against the traditional inertness of the museums and their mausoleum silence. Artifacts and objects are moving, blinking, making a noise, so you cannot think of them as some dead items. There is a special place for the film art and its variety. The visitor becomes not only an involuntary, unintentional and a direct witness but also a real participant in the destruction of obstacles between the object and the subject, between the one who contemplates and the thing, item that has been contemplated. In this direct communication with the viewer the modern art opposes to its turning into a document of the past.

Some shining and making a noise exponent of the modern art are as curious as the one that could be seen in the museums of old technical equipment. Marcel Duchamp’s radical act of exposing his famous public lavatory 100 years ago, nowadays it hardly ever be defined as radical, after a visit to the Mall’ promotion of toilet and bathroom accessories for public conveniences. Nobody is shocked anymore by such a radical act. Marcel Duchamp’s ... *pissoir* ... has been declared as the most influential creation of the modern art instead of the traditional favorite Picasso and Matisse. The photo of that toilet unit was published on the first page of the British newspapers. That 60 cm porcelain sculpture was declared as the most important work of the XX c art by 500 British experts. Honestly speaking, bell époque public lavatories, one of which has been renowned as a work of art by Duchamp, now it seems to simply ridiculous.

Certainly, it’s naïve to expect that a creation could overcome time. It seems as if the work of art has succeeded in its own way to unravel and get into the time. That was A. Malraux’ idea when he declared that “a work of art exists in time which is out of the chronological order”.

If innovation and creativity are vital they become traditions. If they are not talented – they disappear. Appeared as a radical negation of the tradition, the language of modernism couldn’t overcome it because it was talented and it became its captive. The border between its revolutionary character and the fashion slightly vanish to an absolute impossibility to be distinguished. Thus, 90s began to look like a preliminary definite reserve, where modernism could stops its mad rush and specifies more accurately its attitude towards the cultural memory.

4. Conclusion

After the period of modernism the former idea of time as a straight layout has lost its one-way character. To create a story whatever it is – historical or fictitious, romantic or real, or just to retell what happened yesterday or last year, it shows that over the past time something had been kept/saved and “ego” can still express it. Though vague, time is still within the creator/artist’s power. Sometimes the creation allows imagination to be a substitute for the true memory or its insufficiency. So, what, if the simple presentation of the time as a trip, the beginning of which fades into the dim distance and the end scarcely flashes in our eyes with its slogan “future”, has already passed censure on us? If the creator (the artist) is in a position to organize temporality which has tempted him and at the same time has attracted attention of a particular audience, it means that obviously there are favorable conditions for success.

Art can be reduced to overcome some restriction nevertheless how essential, important these facts are for its history on one hand and on the other hand to look for its meaning in the exultation of the permanently increasing speed, the result of which is the final goal. The modern art has overcome its pathological dependence on fear by birth and to assert itself. The art develops freely, easily in every direction. It has been found that the sphere of memory is not a dead zone. In fact, the news is dead. That’s why 90s are considered to be the end of the 20th century.

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