

Educational concept of art in modern reality

Concepto educativo del arte en la realidad moderna

Boris SOKOLOV ¹; Irina KHYMYROVA-PRUEL ²; Yuliya MALTSEVA ³; Nikita NOGOVITSYN ⁴

Received: 30/07/2018 • Approved: 20/08/2018

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Literature review
3. Materials and methods
4. Dominance of power in the modern period
5. Present-day state: power assemblage through art
6. Results
7. Discussion
8. Conclusion

Bibliographic references

ABSTRACT:

The article is devoted to the study of the influence of education and art on modern society. The goal is to provide an analysis of the potential aspects of the interaction between education, art and society. The authors formulate the provisions of the educational concept and the basic principles for a culture cluster.

Keywords: new educational practices, knowledge, culture, globalization, modern

RESUMEN:

El artículo está dedicado al estudio de la influencia de la educación y el arte en la sociedad moderna. El objetivo es proporcionar un análisis de los aspectos potenciales de la interacción entre educación, arte y sociedad. Los autores formulan las disposiciones del concepto educativo y los principios básicos para un grupo de cultura.

Palabras clave: nuevas prácticas educativas, conocimiento, cultura, globalización, moderna

1. Introduction

The rapid dynamics of current sociocultural processes bring about qualitative changes in the reality structure and ways of denoting reality. These changes can be observed both at the macro and micro levels. They are evident on almost every plane of the cultural space and social life, as well as at the level of everyday practices. The main reasons for this transformation can be defined as the appearance and rapid development of the so-called globalization processes related to boosting communication technologies, de-bordering of the social field, re-interpretation of the core goals and values, modification of art practices and gender positioning, etc. Yet, such things cannot happen if the prevailing type of consciousness stays unchanged. The type of consciousness gets transformed under the influence of the said changes. It influences the reality as such, speeding up, in its turn, the

transformation processes. Any changes in the type of consciousness lead to changes in the borders, forms and dimensions of the prevailing individual consciousness. As a rule, we are able to provide an insight into an isolated sphere of cultural reality, no more than that. Current studies (Bell, 1973; Lyotard, 1984) describe this situation as a post-postmodern one. The most farsighted strategy to describe and understand these sociocultural processes is a model of the so-called cluster communities (Rheingold, 2007). It is a basic description model aimed at considering both the reality defragmentation processes and the means of its "regional" incorporation. The cluster phenomenon that can serve as a model of today's reality description emerges against the background of the ever-evolving communication techniques, ideological and political transformations. A cluster is understood as a spatial, temporal and logical event unity forming a personal identity in its participants. This unity is not based on the "classical" hierarchical principle of submission. Being oriented at the historicity and tradition to a lesser extent, it exists rather as a "horizontal" structure of relationships. Thus, if compared to the "classical" cultural space, cluster communities have a principally different foundation. The key thing about cluster description is not our resorting to the logic of information and knowledge but our resorting to the logic of any information acquisition and the form of this information. The "assembled" cluster thus demonstrates the modified and mutated traditional ties of any unification model, that eventually resulting in essential transformations of the basic spheres of reality. The main ontic constitutives undergo transformation. It causes changes in the ways of reality structuring and in the models of existing.

2. Literature review

Previous studies have examined structures of cultural relations, literature, and art as clues to interpreting ideology and social organization. Jan Baetens, Fred Truyen (2004) demonstrate that images are cultural forms or cultural practices which ought to be studied as such in their social context. Marisol J. D'Andrea (2017) analyze the process of funding art and shows that there is a tension between councils, jurors, and government agencies when making funding decisions. Visual Studies by Jennifer Gradecki (n.d.) indicates the connection between art and power through cultural values. K. Ryan (2014) described relationship between art and power within a particular aesthetic, spatial and historical context. Other studies have used imagery and texts, the content of the monuments, to interpret ideology in local terms. Michaela Crimmin and Jemima Montagu (2016) maintains that art is often most powerful when it is ambiguous, leaving viewers, critics and historians moved, yet unable to say exactly what they feel in response to an image and one of the strengths of art in response to conflict lies in the deliberate mix of materials and methodologies. J. Lacan and J. Mehlman (1972) created a methodology for the analysis of images in art. A. A. Lvov (2017) considers the possibility of freedom beside the subject and power. Some have framed the discussion in terms of public and private art, where public art is meant for large groups of people and private art is meant for the few nobles allowed to enter power structures. D. Bell (1973) and M. Foucault (1994) used the method of archaeology to the analysis of art. Chantal Mouffe (2013) examines international relations, strategies for radical politics, the future of Europe and the politics of artistic practices and shows that in many circumstances art is the fundamental way of expression of political ideas. Howard Rheingold (2007) changes in contemporary art are connected with super-efficient mobile communications-cellular phones, wireless-paging, and Internet-access devices-that will allow us to connect with anyone, anytime, anywhere. Rodrigues Manoela dos Anjos Afonso (2018) locates art practice within the academic research realm and contributes to researchers working on autobiographical studies and practice-based research methods. Samuel Hope (1994) analyzes the methods of influence of art on modern culture. We can assume that now the genesis of the image of power is not finalized.

3. Materials and methods

Building on previous interpretations, this study combined approaches from several fields into a systematic, multidisciplinary approach. The study has been undertaken as part of the methodology of phenomenology and hermeneutics, considering information and

4. Dominance of power in the modern period

Let us consider some crucial points in the history of these relationships. To begin with, we have to point out that power is something that cannot take form of a particular object or thing, that meaning it manifests itself symbolically and its portrayal may only be an indirect one. For art, the fact that power cannot be directly portrayed is a real challenge. Most pictorial traditions demand that the object of portrayal be material and concrete. Does it mean that power as such cannot be depicted at all? We can see that power is slipping away from art here and it is the ruler's personality and things manifesting his or her dominance that constitute the image of power. Thus, in the paintings of the 18th and 19th centuries, monarchs mostly appear in all of their grandeur and glory, yet as people with their own weaknesses and imperfections, Thus any attempt to hide or minimize any personal and therefore "superfluous" traits of the ruler's personality proves unsuccessful and causes rightful criticism in connoisseurs and spectators. In other words, an artist attempting to portray a power figure faces much more than a mere technical or narrow-focused task. The innermost core of the power principle — its nature and its essence — makes it extend far beyond portrayal. One can depict certain regalia, symbols or a bearer of this principle, but not the principle itself.

Las Meninas by Diego Velázquez was one of the most prominent attempts to visualize the very principle of power in the classical period of the European culture. There is a good reason for such focused attention to this painting from the part of not only art historians and aestheticians but also philosophers and culture experts. It will suffice to mention Michel Foucault who devoted a whole chapter of *The Order of Things* to its analysis. This painting is enigmatic for both the spectator and the scholar. One can surely see a royal family in it, yet the king and his wife are portrayed indirectly. At a casual glance one notices the painter and the infanta, yet, by the marks 'incorporated' by Velázquez into his work — such as the painter's gaze, the reflection in the mirror, the courtiers' posture — we understand that the ruler is present in the painting in person. If we try to detect the monarch's location, we find him right where we are standing. Or, more specifically, we realize, quite unexpectedly, that we have occupied the royal position. We are standing at the monarch's place. This is how Michel Foucault describes this situation in his above-mentioned work *The Order of Things*: "In the realm of the anecdote, this center is symbolically sovereign, since it is occupied by King Philip IV and his wife. But it is so above all because of the triple function it fulfils in relation to the picture. For in it there occurs an exact superimposition of the model's gaze as it is being painted, of the spectator's as he contemplates the painting, and of the painter's as he is composing his picture (not the one represented, but the one in front of us which we are discussing). These three 'observing' functions come together in a point exterior to the picture: that is, an ideal point in relation to what is represented, but a perfectly real one too, since it is also the starting-point that makes the representation possible. Within that reality itself, it cannot not be invisible" (Foucault, 1994).

Thus, only by means of a visual trick, Velázquez solves the problem of portraying power within the framework of the classical painting scheme. On the one hand, he preserves the "frailty" of power's body: "... in so far as they are visible, they are the frailest and the most distant form of all reality" (Foucault, 1994). On the other hand, the artist externalizes the grandeur of the power principle, i.e. manifests the essence of power as such. This way to achieve the goal of expressing the power principle only seems to be a direct one. In fact, it is quite indirect. In this case power is represented through a transactor, namely the monarch's fragile body. Thus, Velázquez does manifest power in this painting of his, yet it is not so much a visualization of power as of its bearer. This scheme of portraying the power principle is applicable not only in painting but also in other arts, in theatre and architecture for instance. In other words, to become visualized and be represented *de visu*, power is identified with the means of its manifestation, i.e. the power bearer's personality. The classical European art does not offer us any other solution.

Let us note one more significant point. Within the European artistic tradition, power has

always been something totally different from force. It became one of the subjects of Jacques Lacan's Seminar on The Purloined Letter, which is one of the best texts ever devoted to the innermost origins of power. In this work of his, Jacques Lacan demonstrates that power cannot rest upon force, for as soon as force has been used, power is forfeited (Lacan and Mehlman, 1972). Let us also point out another essential characteristic of the European reflection and therefore of the European model of portraying a "power figure": power cannot rest upon truth. For the European mentality and respective models of this mentality visualization, the dimension of truth neither knows nor endures any power structures. "For the signifier is a unit in its uniqueness, being by nature symbol only of an absence" (Foucault, 1994).

We can observe that the European mentality draws a distinction between force and power. Force is about submission, while power claims that submission should be voluntary. That is why power and force are somewhat similar to each other, yet at the same time totally different. In this scheme, differentiating power and force, only an absolute sovereign can have power. The monarch is sitting enthroned, with symbolic attributes of power in his or her hands. These objects are weapons, yet they are always symbolic, therefore a monarch can be considered a ruler only when he or she is obeyed on a voluntary basis. An absolute sovereign may, of course, turn to force in case of disobedience, i.e. when there is no voluntary submission. He or she may call in the army, which a propos has to obey the ruler voluntarily. The army will undoubtedly use this force, removed from the direct power mode. Yet, such a case does not affect the sense and meaning of power that can be fixed in the European paradigm, for force is needed only when power is not acknowledged, i.e. if the situation becomes marginal and nontypical. We can see that, in the European classical tradition in general and in the European artistic practice in particular, power is materialized through a symbol. A few explanations should be made here.

For example, this can be seen in the paintings of David, the founder of the French neoclassical, who restructured classical standards and updated them according to the epoch. He was a revolutionary in favor of the French Revolution. He was a follower of Napoleon and believed that he was capable of giving the world what he needed. Napoleon at the Saint Bernard Pass (1801-1804) - The painting is completely fabled. It is not written to keep a historical message and to recall how it was. It is created to make Napoleon even greater, to give his image of brilliance. The horse reared. The cape blowing softly in the wind. With the royal gesture Napoleon points forward, where his army should come. Under the hooves of the horse, on stones, that looks like the pedestal, the names of Hannibal, Carl the Great, and Napoleon - the great warlords who traveled this path.

The solemnity and the greatness of the painting are due to its purpose. It must be like this, because Napoleon must be the most fearsome, conqueror, the Master of bowed kings and nations. The other work of David is the coronation of Napoleon (1805-1808). In 1804, a glorious ceremony of the coronation of Napoleon and his wife Josephine was held in the famous Cathedral of Notre Dame. The gold carriages, the luxurious furniture, the multitude of crowds - David just couldn't pass by such a landmark event. To be sure, he chose the moment when the new emperor crowned his wife. In the meantime, he had taken from the hands of Pope Pius VII the Crown and himself, contrary to custom, put it him to his head.

Some historians of art claims that David marks this moment in all of the rich and lush act, because he was impressed by the painting of Rubens "The Coronation of Mary Medici" (1622-1625, during this period Rubens will create a series of paintings consisting of 24 pieces, it was the order of Maria Medici).

The picture is an example of how a painter's superior can be pleased. Work on the canvas lasted about three years, as the painter constantly made changes at the request of Napoleon. The most famous of these additions is the presence on the canvas of Napoleon's mother, although she was not at the coronation. In addition, some nobleman asked to rewrite their shapes, placing them as close as possible to the emperor.

5. Present-day state: power assemblage through art

On the one hand, acting under the conditions of depreciation and deconstruction of the

classical power/art disposition, present-day art is striving to discover new forms of expressing this relationship and new means of comprehension of the very status of power and art. On the other hand, the contents, the imperatives and the areas of existence of present-day art objects undergo significant changes now. Let us refer to a project by Wafaa Bilal, an Iraqi American artist, as a remarkable example of a new statement of the power/art relationship problem. In 2007, trying to voice his protest against the war in Iraq, he launched an art project titled Domestic Tension. For a month Wafaa Bilal had been living in a small room visible via a webcam with 24-hour access to the Internet. There was one essential point about that: the webcam was not only broadcasting what was happening in the room but was also synchronized with a paintball gun. Any viewers could log onto the Internet to perform an act of aggression actually coinciding with an act of power: to remotely shoot the artist. According to Wafaa Bilal, the project was aimed at demonstrating how hard it is to permanently live at the Other's gunpoint. We can see here a sort of reinterpretation of Michel Foucault's Panopticon (Foucault, 1985): on the one hand, it is no longer mere theorization of the omnipresence and totality of power authorities, yet it is not a real-life war situation either (it is just a paintball gun, not a Kalashnikov rifle). In his art project Wafaa Bilal makes the viewers acknowledge, through their involvement into the "imaginary" vindictive control, the existence of a narrative legitimizing not only this form of powerful control but also the power itself.

Let us now turn to direct visualization of power as it is represented in art, films by Quentin Tarantino being an example of a new pattern of such visualization. In his Pulp Fiction Tarantino vividly depicts "hard men" with big guns. These men are a personification of dominance, money and death, i. e. they encapsulate all of the most popular attributes of power permanently replicated by the mass culture. They can neither be defeated or broken down; they can only be killed. Their extreme hardness brings them beyond reality, that is why they are not mere copies of reality: they personify the abstract principle, the principle of power. At the same time Tarantino's works demonstrate the reasons why this principle cannot develop into an absolute, why it has to prove its identity by various means. Expression of discontent is a natural result thereof. This discontent takes form of resistance (often an armed one) and triumph (although an indirect one). This becomes quite unexpected for the protagonists. The discontent here is connected to the conventionality of the power principle.

Art objects by Andy Warhol illustrate the new disposition of power. Many of them (first of all let us refer to the portrait of a Campbell's soup can, one of his most renowned works) clearly demonstrate certain aspects of modern social life. The artist points out that the social life of today ties the subject up and makes them obey. Perhaps it even eliminates the figure of the subject — if we do not consider the subject equal to what has traditionally been considered subject matter, i.e. anything relying on itself in its existence. The most interesting thing about Andy Warhol's experiments is the fact that in his art objects the image itself is designed to demonstrate to the questioned subject the actual work of power mechanisms and their conventional character, thus helping the subject to reach beyond the horizons of power. "The matter is that in digital era, the image is not in the first place a digital image (without original, without aura, without whatever you want), but most of all something completely different the object has become an action" (Lacan and Mehlman, 1972).

6. Results

The structure, meaning and symbolism of power have undergone significant changes during the modern period. The classical paradigm of the European culture made symbol the main device of power legitimation. Power was not the only thing that was visualized in the symbolic horizon; the same could be said of the basic principles and patterns of society structuring. In the 20th century this mechanism becomes disintegrated. Influenced by mass media, the culture undergoes deconstruction and certain re-coding of the symbolic horizon. Symbolic structures, re-interpreted in accordance with the simulacrum model, can no longer be manifestation devices, thus there appears a need for additional legitimation means. One of the key features of modern culture is fundamental disbelief in direct statement and

therefore in the symbol as a power statement device. That is why the society requires another device of power presence formation. That results in art becoming an important phenomenon of modern social relations. It is in the field of art practices that the system of values and relations pivotal for modern culture is formed. Art draws a borderline between what is real and what is unreal; by defining power and justifying its existence, art is a unique assemblage point of present-day reality.

Speaking of the symbolic origin of power, we assume that power exists as a principle, a function performed by someone. Any bearer of power is only someone serving an eternal uniform function inherent to our lifeworld. That was why the ancient Greeks thought that anyone who would know God would turn to ashes; yet at the same time each person embodied many divine principles. No one can bear a complete similarity to Zeus. It is impossible to deserve the right to personify the eternal principle entirely in yourself. Therefore, a ruler as a manifestation of this eternal principle of power is always accidental and is able to externalize only a bit of this eternal principle — and that will not last forever. As to the principle itself, it is eternal and integral. That means any identification of the ruler as the one manifesting the eternal principle may lie in the symbolic plane only.

The given manner of power visualization is often used in modern artistic culture, although in the second half of the 20th century it undergoes prominent transformations. First of all, these changes are connected to what was classified by Jean-François Lyotard (1984) as loss of trust in the metanarratives in the modern culture, which manifests the above-mentioned "castration" of the symbolic field. The changes in the power/art disposition are also connected to what is described in the theory of the "mass culture" phenomenon as the appearance of a subject against the present-day background who neither knows how to acknowledge power, both the other persons' power and the power as such, nor wants to do it at all. Lyotard notes that the disposition of power and symbol sort of remains unchanged: a symbol is still a symbol — it is recognizable, while power is still power — it is unchangeable. Yet, power credibility is what is shifted and therefore lost, and that transforms the mentioned disposition. In such a situation power is being unfolded in the visual space through a figure of discontent, i. e. through a figure of deficiency. In other words, the current cultural situation deals with something like transformation of the definition of power, re-coding of its meaning and deconstruction of its value. Up until now power has always been connected to the acknowledgement of a subordinate position. Nowadays power is playing quite another part: it is defined through deficiency and through discontent.

7. Discussion

Art communicated different messages in different contexts and for different audiences. Power and the symbolic plane are closely connected, therefore the potential visualization and "materialization" of power in the European culture were evolving in the symbolic field and only with the help of symbols. In regard thereto it should be noted that in this case the principle is represented as something natural, an "organic" part of the world, therefore it needs neither argument nor proof in any form of substantiation. It is self-existent and accomplished. It means that in the European classical tradition power is based on faith. In the present-day reality the subject realizes that he or she can always occupy the place of a bearer of power and therefore acts in such a manner. The changes in the disposition, which includes, as we have already attempted to demonstrate, not only power and art but also the symbolic horizon, can be traced on all levels. Yet, we can hardly define what appears to be the initial transformation causing other changes in the temporal and logical planes.

The relationship between content and context of various forms of art provides the basis for interpretation, where content is the information communicated through images, text, and other aspects of form and style, and context provides the setting for the content and its intended audience. It is acceptable to consider this interaction from two perspectives. On the one hand, art describes and shapes the image of power structures, i. e. in this respect the old phenomena assemblage mechanism is reproduced: the one based on the persistent influence of power authorities. As a matter of fact, art is often the only possible environment

where the image of power and power authorities can be formed. For the society art acts as a specific mirror where the power authorities may be thematized and visualized. On the other hand, the 20th century art was often of crucial importance — and sometimes directly participated in ideology formation — for setting the direction for the social mechanism in general and various social relationships in particular. As a result, art both depicted and defined potential vectors of development, i. e. practically replaced the power authorities or supported them socially and culturally. Throughout the 20th century art and power have been enjoying quite a fanciful and whimsical romance requiring particular clarification.

8. Conclusion

We can assume that in the modern culture the disposition pattern of the power/art relationships is structured otherwise. The symbolic nature of power is not trusted anymore and the symbol itself is no longer a significant figure in the present-day skies: today's symbol is not the old classical symbol; it has become sort of a fake, a simulacrum (see Jean Baudrillard's works). In the present-day disposition, the symbolic dimension is being deconsolidated and, figuratively speaking, "castrated". As to the classical disposition, the acknowledgement of the reality of symbol as a symbol was one of the most important anchors there.

Bibliographic references

- BAETENS, J., TRUYEN, F. Which Visual Literacy in the Teaching of Culture? *Kritika Kultura*. Vol 5, year 2004, page 10–11.
- BELL, D. (1973). *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture of Social Forecasting*. New York: Basic Books.
- CRIMMIN, M., MONTAGU, J. The Art of Power and the Power of Art. *The RUSI Journal*. Vol 161, year 2016, number 1, page 80–88.
- D'ANDREA, M.J. Symbolic Power: Impact of Government Priorities for Arts Funding in Canada. *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*. Vol 47, year 2017, number 4, page 245–258.
- FOUCAULT, M. (1985). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- FOUCAULT, M. (1994). *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage Books.
- GRADECKI, J. The Art Index as Art. *Visual Resources*. Page 1–28.
- HOPE, S. Art, Power, and Arts Education. *Arts Education Policy Review*. Vol 95, year 1994, number 6, page 2–14.
- LACAN, J., MEHLMAN, J. Seminar on "The Purloined Letter". *Yale French Studies*. Vol 48, year 1972, page 54.
- LVOV, A.A. On the Possibility of Freedom beside the Subject: Michel Foucault and the Attempt of Overcoming of the Teleology of Modern Historicism. *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Philosophy and Conflict Studies*. Vol 33, year 2017, number 3, page 316–326.
- LYOTARD, J.-F. (1984). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- MOUFFE, C. (2013). *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. London: Verso.
- RODRIGUES, M.A.A. Writing Life Narratives through Art Practice. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*. Year 2018.
- RHEINGOLD, H. (2007). *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution*. New York: Basic Books.
- RYAN, K. The Art of Democracy: Constitutive Power and the Limits of Dissensus. *Journal of Political Power*. Vol 7, year 2014, number 3, page 363–381.

2. Saint-Petersburg State University
 3. Saint-Petersburg State University
 4. Saint-Petersburg State University
-

Revista ESPACIOS. ISSN 0798 1015
Vol. 39 (Nº 40) Year 2018

[Index]

[In case you find any errors on this site, please send e-mail to [webmaster](#)]

©2018. revistaESPACIOS.com • ®Rights Reserved