Mapping Culture and Compromised Art in the Era of Globalization

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ABSTRACT

This work presents an analysis of the cultural and artistic field, positively compromised with social and political questions. The authors start with the categorization of the idea of culture and move to vindication art movements. These movements, which followed the first vanguards and worked from the compromise with “otherness”, are at the origin of the contemporary denomination of political art. In this context, the authors approach the origins of activist art, referring to issues of gender, multiculturalism, globalization, and poverty. The different forms of presenting content are also an object of analysis: from art tradition to the contamination of daily life, from local to global, from street contact to digital.

Keywords: Activism, Art, Culture, Globalization, Internet, New Media, Politics

INTRODUCTION: GLOBALIZATION AND TENDENCIES—THE UNIFORM CULTURE

“Perhaps the time has come to globally revise the Western playing rule that promotes unity versus diversity; that attempts at all costs to eliminate the anxiety provoked by what is different. As G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter state, we have always “converted strange places into maps, we have classified rare species, we have interpreted strange habits, we have imposed order”. To summarize, we have tried to organize the world according to our image and likeness, with well defined codes that help eliminate the fear of what we cannot name, of what we do not know, up to the final consequences.” (de Diego, 1998, p. 32)

We contemporary authors agree – and have so for some decades – to consider post-modernism as the space of the cultural other, the time when the “other” and the personal become political. This led to the (apparent) absorption of the minority by official culture, of the other and inclusively of the critic – official culture has assumed the role of political correctness. By
doing this, it was integrated into social life. In recent years, the other’s reality, the difference, has become mainstream in countries within the northern hemisphere, mainly in European capitals and in New York.

One phenomenon that characterizes the 20th century, especially in its second half, is the present contamination of life, everyday and art, between what is considered low and high culture. From the analysis provided by Naomi Klein (2002), we note that advertisement - marketing in companies - has been exploring this approach as an answer to a bourgeoisie eager to climb the social ladder. It is also available for the identification (of its social group) through the possession of a set of objects and emotions that are simultaneously artificial and global.

If we are to consider the doubts created by globalization, we cannot ignore the apparent cultural balance of previous years - Roger Scruton (1998) sees this in a linear way. According to this author, consumption is the direct substitute of faith and religious rituals. As though contemporary Man felt more complete with consumption. In the fetishistic and opulent society installed from modernity, as enunciated by Karl Marx and ironized by Oscar Wilde. To consider this idea, let us refer to MTV (Music Television), which is watched and religiously followed by more the 275 million families all over the world - in 2002, Naomi Klein said that this TV channel was the best method for orienting/convincing young consumers. In her book *No Logo*, the author states that global youth watch so many hours of MTV per day that, as a cultural experience, it can only be compared to the time adults spend in front of the television when a new civil war begins. She adds that there is a total absorption of a set of images, trademarks and stereotyped behaviors by this “tribe” of youth. The defense of difference or of the respect for difference promoted by MTV among blacks, Indians, Pakistanis, Nordics and Latinos then leads to a cultural homogeny where all these groups wear jeans and denim jackets as if they were a uniform.

According to Naomi Klein, globalization will always be related to a form of culture created and supported by multinational companies with the approval of contemporary democratic states, which results in the idea of the social asset as something impenetrable. To guarantee its preservation, large retail chains, according to political power, have re-discovered their popular culture, as films and music. In Klein’s view, corporate censorship exists so that certain moral values and behaviors can be imposed upon us as being correct. This form of politics limits the production and realization of the majority of music and films produced in the Western world. The formula is simple: when “rules” are not respected, multinational companies do not manage to sell.

Like Klein, and as a “form of influence”, it is necessary to consider the mega industry introduced by Mark Zuckerberg (co-founder of facebook), from Harvard to the world, – the social networking site Facebook – available on the web 2.0, which in just a few years has surpassed almost all means of formal and informal communication, institutionalizing the immediateness of communicating and deconstructing a set of values from the “previous society”. This gives the idea of the democratization of communication regardless of age, race, gender and other factors. It also introduces a new way of “training” that, although seemingly managed by the user, has been creating several questions related to the use of personal information as a commercial product1. About this we can also cite Bonsu and Darmody (2008) that used Second Life: ... as an exemplar of firm–consumer co-creation in action to suggest how and where sociocultural and economic value—the financial and market power—is created and controlled” (Bonsu & Darmody, 2008, p. 356). Second Life is a Web-based, 3-D virtual world founded in 2003 by Philip Rosedale where people can live a virtual life. Bonsu and Darmody highlight the double-edged sword that is co-creation of this “new world”: “... on one side, empowering consumers to cooperate with the firm in the production process, while on the other, opening doors for the firm to appropriate the consumers’ creative output” (Bonsu & Darmody, 2008, p. 356).
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