Chapter 6
Future of Visual Arts and Their Social Role: Art Reaching to the Future and Finding New Ways of Expression

ABSTRACT

Here we contemplate the future and look also back to see where we have arrived. Art has responded to the ever-increasing presence of images available to people everywhere by maintaining its authenticity and originality. The proliferation of images in newspapers, magazines, books, posters and postcards has deeply influenced people and increased the number of images around them. Next the television, videos and movies introduced moving images and further accelerated this process. This whole phase has taken roughly two hundred years. More recently, the digitizing and Internet together have further made the spreading of images much easier and the quality of copying and receiving images gets all the time better. Meanwhile, the cost of reproducing images has drastically decreased. After this I will cover the present and future trends in art market and new ways of creating visual art and marketing it. There are some people who early on started to wonder whether authenticity really matters any more. My answer is that it matters more than ever and that art is still going strong.

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Art has responded to the ever increasing presence of images available to people everywhere by maintaining its authenticity and originality. The proliferation of images in newspapers, magazines, books, posters and postcards has deeply influenced people and increased the number of images around them. Next the television, videos and movies introduced moving images (both films and animations) and further accelerated this process. This whole phase has taken roughly two hundred years. More recently, the digitizing and Internet together have further made the spreading of images much easier and the quality of copying and receiving images gets all the time better. Meanwhile, the cost of reproducing images has drastically decreased. There are some people who early on started to wonder whether authenticity really matters any more. This question is by no means new and versions of it have been circulating already in antiquity. However, the modern version of the debate was started when Walter Benjamin in 1936 in his most famous pamphlet ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ introduced the concept of ‘aura’ as the essence of authentic artwork. For Marxist Benjamin the transformations of art were directly caused by changes in the economic structure. He saw that art is coming to resemble economic production, albeit at a delayed pace. The movement from contemplation to distraction is creating big changes in how people sense and perceive. Historically, works of art had an ‘aura’ – an appearance of magical or supernatural force arising from their uniqueness. The aura includes a sensory experience of distance between the reader and the work of art. The aura has gradually disappeared in the modern age because art has become reproducible (Benjamin 1936, Robinson 2013 and Freeland 2001: 120-121).

Benjamin starts his work by quoting Paul Valéry and his ‘Pièces sur L’Art’ (1931) “Our fine arts were developed, their types and uses were established, in times very different from the present, by men whose power of action upon things was insignificant in comparison with ours. But the amazing growth of our techniques, the adaptability and precision they have attained, the ideas and habits they are creating, make it a certainty that profound changes are impending in the ancient craft of the Beautiful. In all the arts there is a physical component, which can no longer be considered or treated as it used to be, which cannot remain unaffected by our modern knowledge and power. For the last twenty years neither matter nor space nor time has been what it was from time immemorial. We must expect great innovations to transform the entire technique of the arts, thereby affecting artistic invention itself and perhaps even bringing about an amazing change in our very notion of art” (Benjamin 1936).