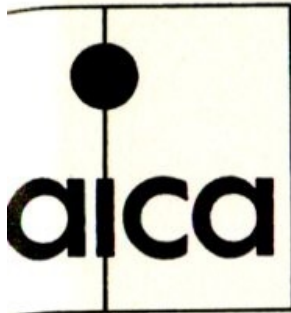


**FINLANDE 83**

**L'INFORMATION SUR L'ART — UN PONT OU UNE BARRIERE ENTRE LES CULTURES?**  
**ART INFORMATION — A BRIDGE OR A BARRIER BETWEEN CULTURES?**



Kansainvälisen taidearvostelijain liiton AICA:n Suomen  
kansallinen osasto

Finnish National Section of the International Association  
of Art Critics AICA

Section nationale Finlandaise d'Association Internationale  
des Critiques d'Art AICA

16EME CONGRES ET 35EME ASSEMBLEE GENERALE  
DE L'ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DES CRITIQUES D'ART  
HELSINKI ET TAMPERE, FINLANDE  
26 MAI — 1 JUIN 1983

THE 16TH CONGRESS AND THE 35TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ART CRITICS  
HELSINKI AND TAMPERE, FINLAND  
MAY 26 — JUNE 1, 1983





THE TENTH CONGRESS AND THE 32ND GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ART CRITICS  
HELSINKI AND TAMPERE, FINLAND  
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## PREFACE

The meetings of the 35th General Assembly and the 16th Congress of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA) were held in Helsinki and Tampere from May 26 to June 1, 1983. The themes of the Congress were Nordic cultural identity and the capabilities of language to interpret contemporary art. The Congress was attended by 136 participants. The first part of the annual meeting was held in Tampere at the Sara Hildén Art Museum, and the annual meeting was continued in Helsinki on the last day of the Congress.

The programme of the Congress included a joint day with the Congress of the International Association of Artists (AIAP), during which a dialogue between artists and critics was arranged. In conclusion of the discussions, a communique expressing the aim to continue and deepen cooperation between AICA and AIAP was issued. Furthermore, the programme shared with the artists' congress included an excursion by boat to the Nordic Art Centre in Suomenlinna.

In addition to visits to art museums and galleries in Helsinki the programme included an Alvar Aalto excursion and a trip to Pori from Tampere. The peripheral programme of the Congress consisted of exhibitions of Nordic art. The Congress received a great deal of publicity in the press both in the Nordic countries and elsewhere.

We thank the Ministry of Education for its financial support, which made the meeting possible. Also the Press and Cultural Division of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs gave its assistance, as did UNESCO; the Nordic sections of AICA; the cities of Helsinki, Tampere, Pori, Valkeakoski and Riihimäki and the art museums of these cities; and Skopbank. We extend our special thanks to Professor Maire Gullichsen; Mrs. Sara Hildén; Olli Valkonen, Director, and Leena Peltola, Assistant Director, of the Ateneum Art Museum; Mr. and Mrs. Gunnar Didrichsen; Lars and Anja-Kaisa Rehbinder; and the Finnish Association of Regional Fine Arts Societies for the assistance given by them. The officers of the Union of Finnish Critics contributed to the success of the Congress beyond the realm of arts, for which we thank them warmly.

Jaakko Lintinen

President

Finnish Section

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ART CRITICS

## LES THEMES

Le thème général du congrès sera "L'Art en quête d'un nouvel ordre mondial", thème recommandé par l'Unesco. Dans ce cadre nous nous efforcerons d'étudier et discuter

### L'INFORMATION SUR L'ART — UN PONT OU UNE BARRIERE ENTRE LES CULTURES

#### A. La critique et l'identité culturelle.

- L'art et les problèmes culturels des nations nordiques.
- Les relations entre les minorités ethniques et la culture du groupe majoritaire.

#### B. Le pouvoir des mots pour interpréter l'art contemporain.

- l'identité nationale, n'est-elle qu'un mythe dans le monde des mass medias? L'identité nationale, peut-elle se penser comme art significatif?
- nous sommes prompts à accepter l'originalité des minorités et des groupes ethniques de la société. Mais que faisons-nous avec les régions culturelles entières? Existe-t-il des valeurs significatives dans l'identité nordique? Avons-nous le droit de lier tels ensembles?
- des groupes divers, des identités divers fonctionnent souvent comme garantie pour les alternatives dans l'art. D'autre part, l'identité limitée peut entraver le développement. Ou bien existe-t-il une contradiction éternelle et fructueuse?
- que font les critiques? Parlent-ils pour un système ouvert ou un système fermé? Avons-nous besoin de leur langage pour encourager l'art ou le langage est-il devenu un pont inévitable entre l'art et le destinataire? Quel genre de ponts construisent les critiques? Démolissent-ils ceux-là même qu'ils on construits?
- comment fonctionne la communication dans le domaine de l'art?
- Les nouveaux medias efficaces, menacent-ils l'existence de petites régions culturelles?



## THE THEMES

The general theme of the congress is one recommended by UNESCO: 'Art in Search of a New World Order'. Under this heading we will concentrate on

### ART INFORMATION — A BRIDGE OR A BARRIER BETWEEN CULTURES?

#### A. Criticism and Cultural Identity.

- the art and cultural problems of the Nordic nations.
- relations between ethnic minority groups and major cultures.

#### B. The capacity of language to interpret contemporary art.

- Has national identity become just a myth in today's world of modern mass-communications? Can national identity be reflected in remarkable art?
- Although we are keen to sympathise with the special characteristics of minority and ethnic groups in society, is this still the case where whole or entire cultural areas are concerned? Are there any special qualities in 'northern identity'? Are we justified in forming an entity such as this?
- Various groupings and identities often serve to guarantee alternatives in art. On the other hand, a self-contained identity can hinder development. Could there be an eternal yet fruitful conflict here?
- What do critics do? Do they speak for an open or a closed system? Do we need their language as a support for art or, has the language become an inevitable bridge between art and the receiver? What kind of bridges do critics build or are they even breaking down those bridges which are being built?
- What role do mass communications play in the field of art? Do new and effective media threaten the existence of small cultural areas?



Dan Haulica, President of AICA, Roumanien

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DAN HAULICA

La géographie, sur le trajet des cartes et descriptions d'Atlas Universel, depuis Mercator, a spatialisé l'histoire même. Elle a mise en mouvement une mnémotechnie de l'itinéraire, lisible pour l'imagination, articulant, comme dans une enfilade de pièces bien ordonnées, la matière la plus tumultueuse du passé, les épisodes les plus insolites — la geste réverbérant par-delà les millénaires, d'Alexandre ou de César. Pourtant, pénétrer le Septentrion, le dominer géographiquement, n'obéissait pas aux mêmes habitudes de l'esprit européen, n'offrait pas un art de la mémoire, utile pour spatialiser le vertigineux de l'aventure. "Je vous félicite, messieurs, d'avoir aplati la terre!" saluait ironiquement Voltaire les membres de l'expédition de Maupertuis, envoyée par l'Académie jusque dans la lointaine Laponie! Sarcasme injuste, même si leurs mesurages sur l'arc de méridien avaient prouvé que notre globe était aplati au pôle; ce qui, au lieu d'aplatir le monde, allait en augmenter l'imprévisible. Dans la ronde plénitude de la Terre germent d'inépuisables horizons et le Septentrion, loin de se constituer dans la mémoire d'une évasion exotique, suscite, paradoxalement, les soleils d'innombrables consciences d'identité. L'oeuvre de cartographie unitaire qu'effectua la France sur son propre territoire, par exemple, impliquant le mesurage rigoureux du méridien et toute une vaste activité, étendue le long d'un siècle et demi, inscrivait, propitiatoire, à son point de départ, une confrontation hyperboréenne: l'abbé Picard, responsable officieux de l'entreprise, partait en 1663, comme pour un pèlerinage rituel, sur l'île danoise où s'élevaient les ruines de l'Observatoire d'Uraniborg, celui de Tycho Brahe. A l'aube de cette épopée de la précision scientifique, placée sous l'égide du Roi Soleil, la chimère qui exaltait l'exploit était un souvenir septentrional.

Episode à valeur de métaphore — car le catalogue inépuisable des richesses du monde — étoiles, espèces vivantes, éléments chimiques — est énormément redevable aux efforts du Nord, aux géants de la classification, à commencer par Tycho Brahe lui-même et jusqu'à Linné



et Berzelius. Pour ce qui est de l'art, n'est-ce pas toujours un constat de richesse, un inventaire des disponibilités actives qui nous réunit aujourd'hui à Helsinki, — createurs et critiques du monde entier? Sous le signe du respect de la diversité, de la diversité organique, qui donne une qualité exemplaire aux réussites d'intelligences merveilleusement efficaces: un Alvar Aalto, en premier lieu, pour ne citer que le plus célèbre des créateurs contemporains de cette nation à laquelle nous sommes venus, aujourd'hui, rendre hommage, patrie de beautés ineffables et sévères.

Patrie qui devient, sans suffisance, un territoire privilégié de la communication dans son sens le plus libre mais aussi le plus responsable, comme il sied à ces navigateurs vaillants sur les mers de glace. Il y a un siècle, en 1879, ce fut A.E. Nordenskjöld, l'explorateur né à Helsinki, qui trouva la route de Nord-Est ouvrant l'Arctique aux étendues du Pacifique. La voie âprement frayée à travers les menaces polaires symbolise aussi une vocation qui s'avère toujours plus actuelle sur le plan des relations humaines. C'est pourquoi notre Congrès se déroulera en son moment culminant, dans un espace illustré et en même temps cordial, dans l'espace bénéfique du Palais Finlandia — conçu, dirait-on, comme un brise-glace pour l'histoire contemporaine de l'Europe. Cette nef, candidement rassurante, Alvar Aalto l'a ancrée, sans grandiloquence aucune, dans la rade d'un avenir tonique; qui est, en Finlande, solidaire aussi d'un passé irréductible, témoignant d'une foi profonde, obstinée, dans les pouvoirs, dans la magie de la parole. Pour la prononcer, pour dire les runes épiques, la coutume ancienne voulait, dans les zones du nord surtout, que les vieux joignent leurs paumes en croisant leurs doigts et en balançant leurs corps, alternativement, au rythme du chant, vers l'un ou vers l'autre: métaphore vivante de la communication, indissolublement moulée sur un rythme obscurément vital — sur la fidélité de tout un peuple à égard des puissances irrepressibles de la parole.

Une Illiade découverte, vivante, au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, par un Schliemann ayant fouillé avec bonheur les profondeurs qui engendrent perpétuellement les poèmes — car c'est ce que fit Lönnrot lorsqu'il recueillit le Kalevala — le concevrait-on sans une foi opiniâtre dans le pouvoir de construire le monde par le verbe, par l'art? Lorsqu'il oublie trois



mots seulement de la rune magique nécessaire à la construction d'un navire, Väinämöinen descend dans l'empire des morts afin de pouvoir achever son travail. Noble exemple du scrupule qui veille à l'accomplissement, le mage du Kalevala pourrait nous servir d'emblème pour nos vertus les plus ambitieuses. Et pourtant, cette fois-ci, à Helsinki, nous n'oublierons rien d'essentiel, j'en suis persuadé, connaissant le travail généreux et persévérant fourni par nos amis de la section finnoise de l'AICA, à commencer par Jaakko Lintinen et Erik Kruskopf.

Le programme qu'ils ont organisé à notre intention nous offrira les éléments qui définissent un niveau de civilisation et un paysage culturel. L'originalité de ce paysage, ce n'est pas seulement au cours de notre confrontation avec les arts que nous la rencontrerons, mais aussi dans les interférences avec l'artisanat, avec le design et surtout avec la formule spatiale que nous révèle l'architecture, — avec sa fraîcheur sérieuse, robustement amicale, même lorsqu'elle est réflexive. L'architecture, Alvar Aalto la revait — dès 1938 — libre de toute contrainte formelle extérieure, apte à "prendre plainement part à la grande bataille de la vie".

C'est vers un but semblable que doivent nous conduire les ponts jetés entre les cultures dont nous allons débattre et qu'il s'agit de forger ensemble. Certes, comme toujours, les difficultés, celles de la découverte, même apre, ne sauraient manquer. Mais une promesse secrète veille sur nous, en cette saison des nuits sans nuit. L'été du Nord est là, près de nous, fragile et d'autant plus précieux.

.... Tous nous pensons, avec une joie intense, à cette semaine de haute amitié. Il en est temps, et cette parole se prononce en finnois — par une heureuse coïncidence — de même que notre sigle: AICA.

JAAKKO LINTINEN

The last time the subject of art and identity was discussed within AICA was in Ireland some time ago.

Identity has been one of the buzz words of the last few years. In fact it was not until the 1960s that this expression, which is a key word of our time, underwent a shift from use in the field of individual psychology to denote social groups, tribes, subcultures, minorities and entire nations as well.

The examination of uniqueness has often caused Scandinavia to take pride in the democracy of its art. Or it lies behind the fact that, say, New York may get wrapped up in its own self-sufficiency. In both cases there has recently taken place a clear awakening to a different kind of reality.

Scandinavians have spoken with strong self-assurance of the powerful originality and progressiveness of the underpinning structures of their art. Artists here have succeeded in achieving a special position in the Western art world. Strong artists' organizations in Scandinavia have been able to influence art policy, even to regulate and guide it. Pioneering work has been done here as artists have taken control of exhibition facilities or have instituted an artist's salary, as in Norway. And this is not all.

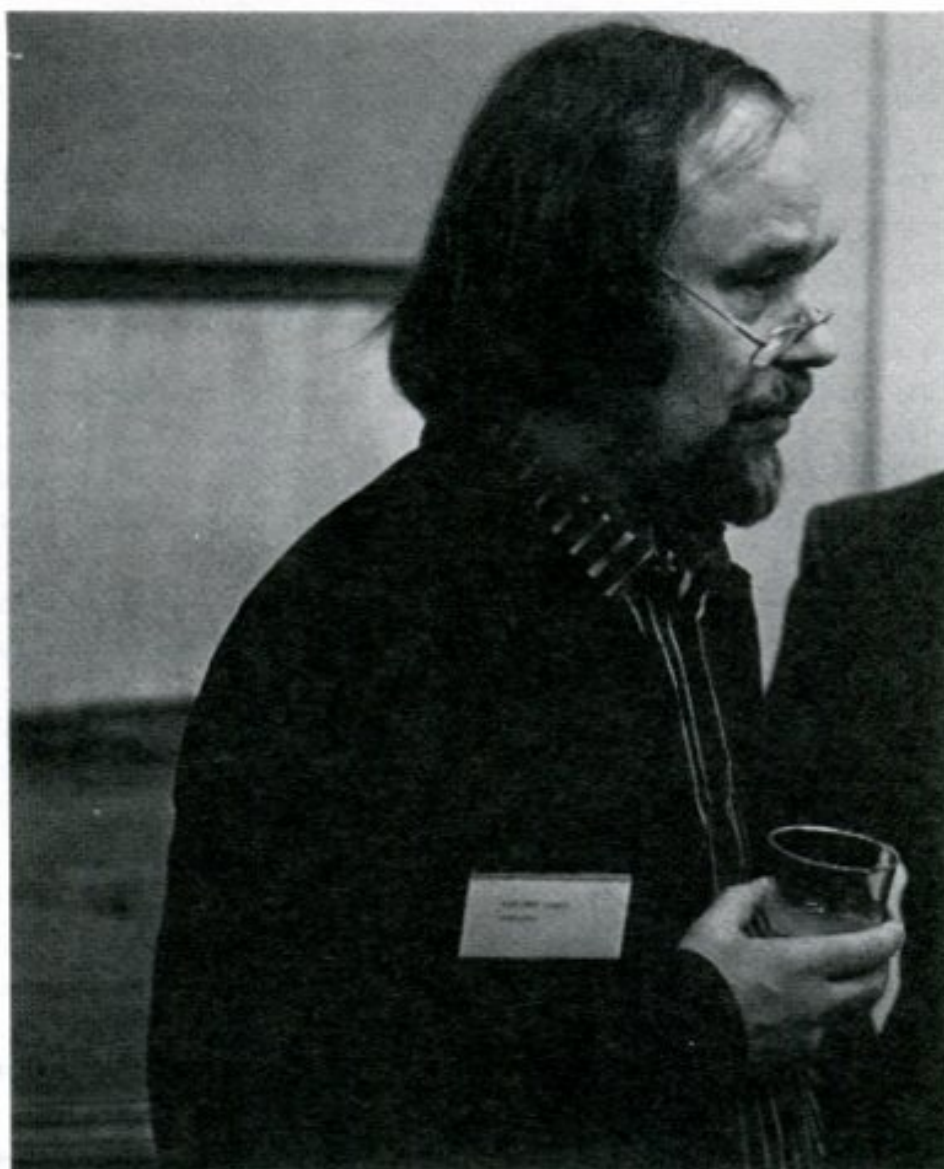
As appealing as this activity has sometimes been, people have also awakened to see the other side of the coin: the danger of conformity.

At the same time the art of Italy and Germany, in fact of both Germanies, has risen/been raised to the focal point of Western attention of the moment. And Italy's trans-avantgardia is of late one of the hottest catchwords in the West. What this term embraces, we shall hear more about from Achille Bonito Oliva himself.

What signs are these? Many hope that they are signs of a new internationalism rather than a sign of a new nationalization of art, God forbid.

These words, which I used in discussing art, are often fraught with ill connotations, as we know. Speech is used as a tool unto itself.





Jaakko Lintinen, President of the Finnish section of the AICA

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Often the purpose is not genuine dialogue, but rather the technical mastery of language. Language no longer reveals its meanings; it is used increasingly merely as a tool of the powers that be. It would indeed be important in these contexts to talk more about words, about language as the implement of criticism. We have accordingly sought to provide somewhat of an occasion for this purpose.

As organizers of this meeting, we hope to see here a true exchange of opinions, a debate. We also want an open airing of views regarding Nordic art but still more ardently do we hope that the framework of the discussions will be stretched out to cover broader contexts.

I am happy for the many interesting personalities who will read papers and present background material for discussion. I hope that the time will at least somehow be sufficient for the many themes given and also that in spite of the tight schedule, we shall be able to carry through the annual meeting.

I am delighted to see here the representatives of the French Section and I vividly recall the successful congress last autumn at Sophia Antipolis on the Cote d'Azur.

I believe that all our thoughts are also directed to Venezuela, where next autumn AICA will organize its next congress.

Finally I wish to thank AICA's untiring Chairman Dan Haulica and AICA's Paris Office for the strong support they have given to our congress.



**MADELEINE GOBEIL**

Madeleine Gobeil, Chief of the Artistic Creation Section, Cultural Development Division, UNESCO, thanked AICA for its helpful cooperation with UNESCO. She noted that several meetings had been held between UNESCO and AICA, although AICA is not actually a sub-organization of UNESCO. The contacts of UNESCO with so-called NGO's — non-governmental organizations — of which AICA is one, are important. Gobeil recognized AICA's invaluable aid in the organizing of the celebrations of Pablo Picasso's 100th anniversary.

She emphasized the importance of the next two years in the work of UNESCO and AICA. The themes for these years will include culture and the future, cultural heritage and artistic creation.

In Madeleine Gobeil's opinion AICA should pay special attention to young artists.

GUSTAV BJÖRKSTRAND

On behalf of the Finnish Government I wish to express our sincere pleasure of seeing this conference and its participants here in Finland. You are all cordially welcome. I hope the meeting will be a great success.

I would also like to thank everyone who has taken part in the organization of this important event.

There are many reasons for being pleased about having this 16th Congress and 35th General Assembly of the International Association of Art Critics here in Finland. Since our country is rather small and remotely situated, we are happy to receive such a large number of leading international experts from the different fields of art. Undoubtedly there are many things which we Finns can learn from you within the scope of the official programme of the conference and the general assembly and also through personal contacts.

I am happy that you have come to Finland just now. Spring is a favourable time of the year for visits to these parts of the world.

One of the main ideas in Finnish visual arts, architecture and design criticism has been to examine national basic elements and to experience nature. For the first time this was brought to international notion at the turn of the century. Another peak occurred in the fifties, when Finnish architecture and design achieved wide international recognition. The last few years have been characterized by international integration also in the field of culture. Everywhere suburbs look alike. In visual arts international fashions spread instantly from one country to another. In design, commercialism is gaining importance.

Nevertheless, national identity is not lost in Finland. Our artists continue to contribute fresh ideas on the international level. In Finland critics of art and environment are presently concerned with the strengths and many possibilities of art as media. These same concerns will also be expressed in this Congress specially when visual art criticism is being discussed. In this context several questions arise, such as: How does the communication of information function in



the field of arts? Is the media a threat to existence of small cultural areas? It is a good idea that these questions are being tackled. We need all attempts possible to find solutions to these concerns common to so many of us.

Typically, the cultural exchange between nations has many levels and many channels. To carry on co-operation, there are official institutions, organizations and individual contacts. This conference is one of the many ways to build up a better knowledge of the subject matter in question and of each other.

On behalf of the Ministry of Education I wish this conference, the general assembly and all the participants every success in your important work.



Peter Schjeldahl, art critic, USA

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## NATIONALITY AND ART

PETER SCHJELDAHL

Contemporary Scandinavian art, in the fields I am aware of, strikes me as extremely weak, and I wonder why. It wasn't always so. From Kierkegaard to Bergman, there was no lack of monumental achievers. Certainly, most educated Americans know and esteem Ibsen, Munch, Strindberg, and Sibelius, and perhaps Saarinen, Hamsun, and Dreyer as well. What happened to that tradition? What, for instance, has happened to the regional influence of Munch, an artist of intense relevance today in America, Germany, and elsewhere? Are Scandinavians indifferent to the challenge of their own heritage? In my brief exposure last year to the art worlds of Helsinki, Stockholm and Oslo, I frequently got the impression that they are.

The energies of many artists I have met in Scandinavia seem distracted or withdrawn, tending to focus anywhere except in the immediate thrust of their work. There are exceptions, notably the marvelous painter Per Kirkeby, and even he impresses me as self-protectively cautious in his ambition, as if only by holding to a quiet note were it possible to keep a steady initiative. There is nothing wrong with taste and restraint, which are essential to Kirkeby's special quality. However, his example serves to deepen the sense I get of a bad climate for art, a disposition of the culture that obliges artists to be extraordinarily tough and canny merely to preserve their individuality. The idea of having a genuine impact locally, let alone in the wider world, seems so unreal to many artists here as not to be worth talking about.

I know only a little about the problems of art in Scandinavia, but I believe I can see certain broad institutional and ideological aspects of them. One is the artificial condition of government patronage, a condition admirable in principle but depressive in practice. The accommodations made by Scandinavian governments with their artists appear to have worked out well for everyone concerned while working out badly for artistic vigor. It is fine for artists to receive career support, and even okay for governments to use art as a diplomatic export, as in the "Scandinavia Today" program in the

United States. But in this trade-off of self-interests, the independence of art is compromised, and art's expressive purposes are blurred. The result can be an atmosphere of public hypocrisy and private cynicism.

Cynicism, which is lethal to art, is a disease brought on by tolerating too many lies. The reconcilability of art and "national interest" is one lie. Another, opposite lie is the notion that art somehow exists above the vulgarities of nationality, in an ahistorical sphere all its own. The two lies may even prop each other up. An assault on the second lie is now underway in Europe, most remarkably in Germany. It raises a number of questions that may bear on the situation and the potential revival of art in places like Scandinavia, and I will deal with some of the questions in my remarks.

"Internationalism" is a dream so beautiful that it has survived much evidence of its falseness — perhaps especially in America, where it is one of the naive luxuries of imperial power, but I think not only in America. We want to believe that there is a type of consciousness — attainable through ideology or simple good will — that transcends accidents of birth and upbringing and functions in the cause of a united humanity. We will not surrender this consoling belief short of crushing demonstrations that it is empty. Just such demonstrations are given today — not only by political calamities, but also by the positive proof of art. The best art now is superlatively national.

When invited to address this congress, I was asked to discuss the identity of Scandinavian art. I have trouble doing this with reference to contemporary work because the identity I encounter seems fuzzy and incomplete. I can't keep it in focus long enough to have cogent thoughts about it. Frustrated, I find my mind wandering to tangential matters, such as the question of provincialism.

The forms and ideas in most new Scandinavian art spring from a vague international pool of forms and ideas that can be identified, in some variant, almost anywhere. But somewhere in the history of each form or idea is a moment, often associated with the name of a single important artist, when it was inextricably linked to an expression. Then the form or idea and the expression were identical. There was, in the strictest sense, an identity. My experience of the work is divided: part of it is displaced into the past. This is what



I mean by a fuzzy and incomplete identity.

Another way of stating the problem of fuzzy and incomplete identity is that the forms and ideas brought to the task of expression do not seem inevitable — as if a pair of pliers were being used to do the work of a hammer. A provincial culture is one in which tools and tasks are not fitted to one another.

Provincialism is a painful condition for the sensitive and ambitious. It can embitter. The worst sort of provincialism bitterly denies the very possibility of a real identity between any form or idea and any expression. It seeks to universalize provincialism, cynically declaring that any apparent exception to it is a fraud. (The attitude is: "I'm doing work as good as anything in New York, but they are conspiring against me because I'm in Chicago.") With great relief, I have encountered little evidence of this attitude in Scandinavia. The more prevalent face of provincialism here, I will take the risk of saying, is wishful. Scandinavians hope their art has some kind of identity. They hope this to the point of believing that it must be so, though they are at a loss to explain how it is so. It may strike them as a good idea to have a foreign critic come and tell them what their identity is.

But, even in the best of cases, you cannot say what an identity is, only that it is. Then you can say that it seems either complete or incomplete, satisfying or unsatisfying, and you can report whatever pops into your head while you are confronting the work that seems to embody it. What pop into my head while I am confronting new Scandinavian art, with its incomplete and unsatisfying identity, are thoughts about provincialism.

It may be helpful to shift our sights southward, to what is going on in Germany and Italy, two countries producing a certain amount of art whose national identity is both complete and satisfying. In the work of a Kiefer or a Clemente, I believe, one feels a perfect fit between form and expression, tool and task, such that what pops into one's head while one is confronting it is steadily relevant and inspired. The work has an identity wholly in the present, with ready access to the past and the future: a condition it shares with nationality as such. To think about Kiefer is, willy-nilly, to think about Germany, and the more one knows about Germany, the more precise

and provocative Kiefer becomes. One need not like Kiefer's work — though I happen to like it enormously — in order to register this effect. But perhaps Kiefer is not the clearest example, because his themes are explicitly German.

So think of the Neapolitan Francesco Clemente — who, true to the compulsive atomization of Italian culture, now lives in New York. Unless I am missing something, there is nothing so very Italian about Clemente's main theme, which I take to be a kind of personal and universal dance of sensuality and anxiety. Recently, however, I saw a show in Washington, D.C., of 17th-century Neapolitan paintings, and I was struck by resemblances in form and particularly in feeling between Clemente and such painters, previously unfamiliar to me, as Luca Giordano.

The point is not simply a matter of influence. Clemente has also been influenced by the art of India, without shedding much light on Indian national identity. The point is that, like leaves on a 300-year-long vine, Clemente and Giordano partake of a common sap, an identity. To put it another way, they share a secret: Naples. As often happens in such cases, when art leaps a gap in time, I was afforded a vastly increased appreciation of a kind of art that used to bore me — the Baroque in this instance — and I had a wonderful time with the show.

A discouraging irony about national identity, as about personal identity, is that if you feel compelled to think about it, you almost certainly do not have it. Identity — which might be defined as a deep agreement with oneself, such that what agrees and what is agreed with are the same — is a quality of mature being as redness is a quality of a ripe apple. This raises the question of how personal and national identity become fused in art.

It is not by an artist setting out to be "national," as witness the dreadful pastiches of various national and social realisms — art that, besides being bad, is in no true sense national at all. Rather, I believe the artist proceeds in the opposite direction. Art is most vitally national in its individualistic antagonism to prevailing fictions of nationality. The development of the artist passes through cosmopolitanism — through the city and its revaluation



of values — to the achievement of an identity which may take everybody, including the artist, by surprise. His nationality, like everything else about him that is authentic and unconscious, rushes into the vacuum formed by his rebellion. For this to occur, good luck in cultural time and place are required — luck that may be understood by looking at how it can fail.

Think of France. What finished Paris as the world center for advanced art? World War II, of course, but what aspect of World War II? I suggest that it was a split sensibility that, though it began earlier, was concretized by the Resistance: a political commitment to internationalism and abstract analysis divorced from the sensuousness, the erotic immediacy, of French culture as it is lived. Lost was the critical individualism of the classical French modernist since Manet and Baudelaire, not to mention the imposing integration of rigor and pleasure in Monet and Matisse. Lost, too, was the cosmopolitanism of a city where foreign artists could give, as well as get, cultural sustenance.

Since World War II, New York has performed the function once filled by Paris. This is the function of a place where all differences, personal and national, are casually accepted, and where these differences are subsumed to a shared adventure, a common pursuit of the new. Many of the Abstract Expressionists were European immigrants. Others, like Jackson Pollock of Wyoming and Los Angeles, were internal immigrants. I identify with generations of young Americans who, like Pollock, have wanted to escape their nation without actually leaving it. New York has been our solution, and it still is.

The economic and communications power of New York naturally reinforce its cultural role, but the phenomenon I am describing — the phenomenon of an individual emerging from a collective background, in tension and harmony — can occur in any city, however fleetingly. Think of the Christiania of Munch, a small, poor town in which a world-wide revolt of youth against received values took on specific tones and flavors. Loathing of and a need to escape the past, manifested in a Norwegian place, gave Munch a crucial orientation. They reduced his Norwegianness, but they refined it, too.

A painting subtly exciting to me is Munch's Inger at the Shore,

in the Rasmus Meyer Museum in Bergen. One of his last works in a Naturalist mode, it was painted in 1889. The scene is unremarkable: a girl in a summer dress sitting among rocks at Asgårdstrand. But something fantastic is stirring, or trembling, in the paint and the line. Within the overall Naturalist decorum, the rocks are faintly alive, like bodily organs suffused with blood, and there is a slight sinuousness, a hint of arabesque, in the contour of the figure. My hindsight sees the violent miracle of Munch's mature style about to explode. Meanwhile, however, there is just an ordinary Norwegian girl at a Norwegian shore on a Norwegian summer night, painted in the provincial style typical of Norway at that time. Inger at the Shore is an image of the dialectic of personality and nationality at an instant of excruciating tension.

Today this point is again being reached and surpassed, by artists including Kiefer and Clemente. In America, the most significant artist of the moment, I believe, is David Salle, with his cold-blooded reworking of the aesthetics of "New York School" abstraction in combination with figurative elements from the modern stockpile of dead and dying images. His work emits a withering hostility to inherited forms of both high and popular culture in the United States, with the result — which only appears to be paradoxical — that it is helping to revitalize an American tradition, compounded of Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art, that had seemed exhausted. Julian Schnabel is another, rather more problematic case. Eric Fischl and Cindy Sherman are two other artists doing important work. How lasting these new energies will be I cannot predict, but for the present America has national artists again — whether America wants them or not. The four artists I have named are passionately resented by many.

How might a resurrection of national identity occur in the art of one of the Scandinavian countries? In describing such identity as something that enters art unexpectedly — and therefore cannot be anticipated — I have come close to suggesting that it cannot be consciously aspired to, but that would be going too far. One works at developing a personal identity as one grows up, after all. How does one do that? Through recognition and emulation, trial and error.



The adolescent recognizes in an adult, his hero of the moment, the mysterious pressure of a fulfilled consciousness. He confuses this pressure with the adult's surface mannerisms, which he invests with charisma. "Maybe if I hold my fork the way he does," the adolescent reasons, "I will be a hero, too." This is the beginning, in a necessary mistake, of a process that will lead through many disappointments, bewilderments, and moments of fear to the glimmer of something very near to hand, the unsuspected self that was always there.

Similarly, a national culture locked in provincialism proceeds toward identity through a maze of projections. The process is carried forward by individuals who can withstand its contradictions. Arshile Gorky, the Armenian who became a pivotal figure in the birth of Abstract Expressionism and thus of an America-identified modernism, was regarded as something of a clown in New York during the 1930s, because he so slavishly imitated Picasso. An extravagant and dogmatic man, Gorky at one time declared it a sin to let paint drip or run, because Picasso kept his color areas neat. In 1931, a consignment of new Picassos arrived in New York, and it was immediately apparent that the paint dripped. Gorky's friends gleefully anticipated his embarrassment. Gorky looked hard at the paintings and said, "If he drips, I drip."

My point in telling this story is that the demystification of a dominant culture, like the adolescent's demystification of the adult, is accomplished only through an initial surrender to its mystery. Only by trying, and failing, to be one's hero does one become one-self. If I were a young Scandinavian artist right now, I think I would have German, Italian, and American heroes. I would bore my friends to death with raving about my heroes, and I would arouse the disgust of my countrymen with my loud contempt for everything Scandinavian. And through me, perhaps, something authentically Scandinavian would eventually find form.

I have been developing an extended metaphor of the nation as a maturing person. This is a treacherous metaphor, I realize. Nationalism is nothing else than a habit of attributing to a nation, which is an abstraction, the ego needs and instinctive drives of a concrete

individual. Thus we speak of a nation aspiring or feeling joy or being humiliated. The ominous aspect of this projection is that it does not include the senses of doubt and responsibility typical of personal life. It can lead, and has led, to the grossest follies and crimes, things of which no individual member of the nation could conceive on his own.

The return of nationality as a useful, even an unavoidable, term of reference for present high culture undoubtedly marks a historic regression. Much as the smoking earth of apocalyptic Germany comes back to haunt in the paintings of Kiefer, the bloody ghosts of tribal politics arise again everywhere. We thought we had gotten over all of that. Artistic modernism seemed to promise an inexorable refinement upward of the primitive and the local. But now we feel ourselves being sucked back down, because our ideas of internationalism and progress had too little of the truth in them. In flattering us, the ideas failed to take account of what we humanly are. This is a frightening moment, characterized by terrible loss of faith, hope, and security. Yet it may turn out to have been a wonderful moment for art.

To avoid misunderstanding, it seems necessary to insist on a distinction between artistic and political expressions of nationality. The first corrects the fantasy of national identity by grounding it in a life. The second carries the fantasy to even more irresponsible levels of abstraction. The first is healthy, the second is dangerous. The fact remains, however, that the rise of the one is often linked to the rise of the other. They are rising together today.



## CRITICISM AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

KARI JYLHÄ

Peter Schjeldahl has given a straight diagnosis on what it is that is paralyzing Nordic art. According to him, our art is suffering from a weak and defective identity. The symptoms of our art crisis are, for example, a hypo-critical attitude, cynicism and cliquishness. The unclear and imperfect identity of Nordic art seems, in the light of this study, to be due to the Nordic people being indifferent to their inheritance left to them by their old masters.

The other reason for the crisis could lie in the fact that the State in the Nordic countries has assumed the role of protector. This has created an artificial situation. It is a situation which is in principle, admirable, but in practice depressing. "That their careers receive support is a great thing for artists; it is also nice to see governments using art as a diplomatic export — good as happened in the USA 'Scandinavia Today' program. However, this bartering of art draws its independence into a questionable situation and the meaning of artistic expression grows cloudy."

The judgements expressed here by Schjeldahl are, he thinks, competent "at least in those areas of art he is familiar with." And that is an important qualifying remark. For if he knew, for example, modern Nordic music, he probably wouldn't call it weak. And what about literature? For our part, this is vital. New York's principal newspapers rated the Finnish National Opera's visit to the Metropolitan as being of the highest quality. Moreover, the new Finnish music was said to be a renewal of the traditional.

Has it so happened then — as regrettably it often does — that the doctor has visited his patient but had too little time to make a proper diagnosis? Thus, the diagnosis has been a hasty one and the treatment instructions given as mere routine.

Accordingly, could we have lost Nordic art's inheritance? Perhaps the renaissance of Edward Munch has created new romantic expectations of a special munch-art-egoism in Europe and the United States. To me, our own attitude towards the legacy of Edward Munch is far more

natural: his importance has been recognized here for decades.

Nevertheless, it seems that our younger artists are getting their shapes and ideas from a vague international bank of ideas; isn't this in fact an exact following of the Munch inheritance of "dashing into the empty space which the rebellion has created." And wouldn't art be — to quote Schjeldahl — "in its own conflict, essentially national" — in the sense that people generally understand the word. The young artists of the Nordic countries do have at present their German, Italian and American heroes. This raises certain problems, not in the least because different kinds of style-material have been freely mixed and perhaps the identity and connection of the materials to their original history and the then prevailing value-systems has not always been understood. But the dialectic is working.

In a sense, the "Scandinavia Today" program gave a contradictory impression of Nordic pictorial art's 'national task' and meaning. Art has been approved as an accessory to diplomacy and so takes on a status-value. But nordic artists are not — as Schjeldahl thinks — dependent on their national task or function. And neither is Nordic art.

It was, perhaps, a surprise to many people that the exhibitions were arranged and organized solely by the artists and their unions. This is a particularly Nordic phenomenon and has its own history of development. We have lived, here in Finland for example, through periods of national romanticism and national emphasis. But, with the arrival of the 50s, our art took on a low profile and the State's interest in supporting art was minimal.

Only that art which had a clear status-value received any support. 'Maecenas' work has never thrived here in Finland; neither have the taxation laws encouraged many sponsors of art. Trade in art-works began in the sixties and, at the same time, the character of art became more like merchandise. The artist started to depend on the prevailing — and fortuitous — quotations of art works on the art market. Thus, the artist soon started to support this existing source of his livelihood but received nothing in return. In the sixties, the radical art generation united behind new professional and cultural policy aims. The significance of this artists' freedom



movement was that it represented an attempt to make the artist free of the kind of compromises that were draining the vitality of art. And free also of compromises with the state. Salaries for artists — in part realized, artist pensions, an exhibition compensation system and a large studio building project started by artists were the results of the artists' non-compliant stand. In addition, this period also saw the publication of art magazines and books. At present, the artists' own unions have founded their own gallery work and also handle the selling of works of art. Thus, they are competing directly with the commercial galleries. As well as this, many artists are using their energy in so-called public education work. All these developments have resulted in the power of the State being slowed since the new type of artist would be difficult to deal with.

Taking this line to the end is a question of art's destiny and, in the Nordic countries, the work is unfinished and its results can only be evaluated after years or decades. But there is no return to the past.

Finally, I can't refrain from quoting the words of the late Finnish art pedagogue, Unto Pusa. He observed that we would "have to start cultivating art from a totally new base. And the old rule is that the cultivation must be wide as well as good. And our practical experience is that it needs about a thousand put to work before a sovereign master is born. And Pusa goes on: "the critics are expecting something marvellously ingenious, super-human; large and frighteningly brilliant, and they cannot see the broad scope of the aims of contemporary artists."

So it is essential that art has been created, and is still being created, and that this process can be continued.

## EXPERIENCES WITH THE EXPERIENCED SPECTATOR

HERMANN RAUM

I have the pleasure of speaking on a topic that touches likewise the subject of national, cultural identity as well as the role of art criticism. The national exhibition of contemporary art held every four or five years and which took place in Dresden for the ninth time from October 1982 to the beginning of April 1983 presented an extract of the latest achievements of the fine and applied arts. The artists of the German Democratic Republic rendered their account on what they were able to contribute to shaping the urban environment, to the working and living conditions, to satisfying the personal aesthetic needs, and to self-recognition of society on its development, its goals, and problems.

Traditionally, these exhibitions are addressed to a mass audience, to all professional and educational layers. At the same time, this exhibition, more than many others presenting contemporary art, is expected to compare peak achievements, artistic innovations, new problem solutions and problems submitted to society by designers and artists.

This task rules out to compromise with underdeveloped requirements on art, that is with revoking the artistic pretensions, which might easily happen while turning to new ranks of viewers, to a prospective but aesthetically yet inexperienced audience. We should rather say the ninth art exhibition was the third among the exhibitions to make extremely high demands: on the ability for a thorough study and exploration of complicated contents, on pondering over artistic forms the average viewer is not yet familiar with. The viewer was required to act as a dialogue partner. He was to be able to face the challenge of art, to answer himself the questions of the pictures, to think out ideas, to clarify his feelings, his opinions and attitudes in this dialogue, and to undergo changes both in his view of the world and in his relation to art.

More than one million people came to see the exhibition. We made a detailed investigation on the composition and origin of our



audiences in 1982 and 1983. First, I should like to say something about the observations and experiences we made concerning motivation. What made the million of people go to Dresden? Most of the visitors had to make considerable efforts and sacrifice a lot of spare time to get to Dresden because rigid economy measures on Diesel fuel allowed fewer busses to travel than with former exhibitions. Neither this handicap had restrained the invasion of the Dresden exhibitions nor the fact that great demands on the mental and emotional reception of the offer were generally known since the 1977/78 exhibition, all the more with respect to the next exhibition. Well known was the wearisome quantity of exhibits, the embarrassing variety, the strain on the eyes, brain and soul as well.

In a representative public opinion poll, 95 per cent of the visitors stated to have come to the exhibition on their own accord and initiative, among them also those who had come with their colleagues, friends, or families.

As rule, visiting the exhibition for one or two hours would not do. The average time to spend at the Albertinum, where paintings and plastic art were on display, took more than three hours. One just had to come again: every fourth visitor came several times. The act of contemplation involved the entire personality and a strong inner urge.

We realized that conditions like these made it both necessary and possible to study the new observer in a new way and to obtain significant information on the social, intellectual, and aesthetical mass influence of contemporary art. Moreover, new and more differentiated investigations on the behaviour and judgements in view of the representativeness and variety of the exhibition would enable us to make sure how far the cultural changes have become experience and reality in daily life, or, to put it into the words of our congress motto, if contemporary production of art can contribute to creating national, cultural identity.

The socialist development of the GDR was linked up with an educational revolution the results of which have to stand the test also in its commitment to art. The way one million visitors react on an exhibition of such high artistic level indicates last not least how far the society has already approached its humanistic goals. These goals

covers both, an ideal of education that includes differentiated urges for the arts and an active interest in the further development of socialist society and in the great conflicts on our globe. The visitor to the ninth Art Exhibition of the GDR was confronted with a great number of problem works which, unlike as practised by the public media, make him reflect on the challenges and menaces we are all facing, which asked him about his own attitude and for his readiness, as only works of art can do, to make an individual contribution, for example, to the defence of peace. I am sure we all agree that the origin and way of modern art in the last two centuries involved inevitably a deep and fundamental alienation from the broad public, inasmuch as there has ever been a mass public for great art, that is for art as art. The dissent of the work of art and the people served as a proof for progressiveness and thus for artistic quality. This provided also a restricting condition for cultural identity. Allow me to state these facts in a simplified manner, without referring to the numerous contradictions and modifications. There is a considerable library on this topic and a pile of opposing points of view.

It appears to be impossible for contemporary art which originates in accord with itself, i.e. professionally, to be committed to the highest creative criteria attainable and not considering the fact of a badly or not developed artistic insight, winning a mass audience at the time of its own making and becoming a necessity for this public.

It will be known to some extent that fine arts in the GDR traditionally is committed to social tasks. For three generations our artists have been linked up with the people they are serving and they want to be borne on. They consider this to be a major objective of their work. Based on these attitudes, the specific qualities of our art have developed.

I mentioned already that 95 per cent of the visitors to the Dresden Exhibition had come on their own initiative. 60 per cent had already seen the eighth exhibition and experienced that studying contemporary art is hard brain-work. The majority of the audiences came up to expectations, bringing with them their own and specific expectations. 80 per cent of the people questioned wished to see the whole variety of contemporary art; 40 per cent expected works of art to indicate



current problems; 39 per cent wished to learn about artistic experiments.

The GDR-public is used to its world being reflected by art or to re-discover it, in any case to receive a message to cope with. This is expressed by the fact that 64 per cent expect art to be intelligible, whereas only 14 per cent expect it to be true to nature, so to speak naturalism. Transformation of reality in a work of art is accepted as being appropriate to art by the majority of people. Although the understanding of the image as a copy is still wide-spread, there is an important trend to be noted.

Artistic methods going far beyond imaging, that is beyond a narrow-minded concept of realism, are more and more accepted consciously by the people, even determine their expectations of art. Art is being conceived and used as an alternative to everyday reproductions of reality, to the picture-world of the mass media. The formerly prevailing concept, frustrating so many artists, that a work of art merely has to confirm the existing picture of reality, the familiar look of objects, even the conventional forms of works of art to be appreciated and accepted as art has not yet disappeared entirely but is definitely being replaced by a quite different approach by the public.

Among the various forms the public was able to express its opinion on our art — sociological inquiries, a great number of thorough interviews, discussions in the groups of visitors, panel discussions all over the country, letters to the daily and weekly newspapers — I must mention also an action organized by the trade union of workers employed in agriculture and forestry. About 340 union members — land and forestry workers, mechanics, technologists, among them many women, came to see the exhibition as part of their trade union education. They were asked to write down their impressions and experiences in a small essay. The great majority did so with great enthusiasm. The results were amazing and we analysed them. The most frequent judgement was: much is entirely new to us — but art teaches us to see reality in a new light, raising many questions we ourselves would not put.

We are concerned here with representatives of a layer of the population that hardly gets in touch with originals of works of art, constituting regrettably the smallest group of visitors to the

exhibition. The open-mindedness and objectivity shown by these workers — men and women — in the sight of an overwhelming choice of new or even strange forms and contents indicates an understanding for the basic relationship between art and people which goes far beyond that of the numerically strong group of art experts. Somehow there must be a kind of general effect of the various forms of art criticism which we have not investigated so far. Most of the visitors from Dresden were a kind of expert public, not in the familiar sense though of critics, gallerists, museum people, art historians, artists, arts teachers, and collectors. The sense of expertness we met here originates from a number of various factors, such as the frequency of visits to exhibitions and museums which have become an established part of life for large parts of our population from all social layers. But obviously it is not so much the frequency of seeing works of art but the way of seeing them that produces an expert-like and impressive public. To begin with, the inquiry of 2000 persons showed more than half of the number of visitors to be regular exhibition visitors. As a rule they go to an art exhibition or museum four times every six months. 25 per cent even go five times or more often. 30 per cent had already seen the 7th Art Exhibition which shows that GDR-art has brought up its public of regular visitors. The regular visitor accepts each new exhibition as an event specially arranged for him, exploring the offer with personal commitment, with an urge for discoveries, and with critical faculty.

We have been aware of these trends since 1972. It began with people showing a lively interest in certain topics of pictures. Nationwide debates were initiated or rather induced by works of art which presented new social, sociological, spiritual problems, neglected by the mass media, in reproductive or other manners. Those discussions often ignored the fact that its release was art, though its cause indeed was far from being art. The artistic form thus was relevant for reception only as far as it revealed the content, the provoking problem; the form happened to be a vehicle only. Those works were of very diverse quality, but they stimulated and promoted the public and individual interest in the medium of art considerably by manifesting partisanship of art for the interests of the masses.



This kind of solidarity with the people became even more striking in the fields of applied arts and design where the accepted or refused offer of the artist is becoming a fundamental issue of shaping and organizing the real environment of life and work, where vital decisions are made for or against the quality of life and therefore decisive for the ability, necessity, and possibility of dealing with art at all. The interest of the masses in art can be explained only from these basic serving functions.

The second major step for universal acceptance and acquisition of contemporary art was that this concerned art as art. The complex, lively, and intensive communication among the visitors to the 9th Art Exhibition now included artistic originality, creative styles of composition and figuration, the various problems of form. We witnessed a process of learning which obviously happened voluntarily and with enjoyment. The specific concern of the interpretation of reality in painting and sculpture is appreciated much better. Undue demands of art and its notorious confusion with photography, literature, journalism, or social sciences are no longer significant.

Such progress of the audiences of art might be rather boring for artists or art critics who expect uncritical amazement of the spectator or no reaction at all, being satisfied with a pretended understanding and accepting virtually everything that appears on the scene, declaring it as being art. In that respect I readily admit that my subject cannot be of universal significance in the world of art and art criticism, nor can it attract general attention.

The trends I briefly touched concerning a wide-spread comprehension need, and desire for art among millions of people is of vital significance to us because they have become the decisive motivation for art production itself. It motivates the national cultural identity, not in a nostalgic-folkloristic sense, but on the basis of permanent artistic progress and socially-motivated problem-involvement.

The high percentage of young people visiting exhibitions of modern art is surely a world-wide fact and will be likewise appreciated by exhibitors as an encouragement. At the 9th art exhibition 80 per cent of the visitors were under 45 years of age. Figures like these are not so important as the manner and the way the young and younger

people associated with these works.

Five years ago, works difficult to understand or of provokingly problematic nature used to meet with laughter, indecent remarks, or at the best with shrugging the shoulders, at that time, however, by the older age groups who had grown up with narrow-minded attitudes towards art. In 1982/83 we met with a very quiet, contemplative, thoroughly and patiently viewing young audience.

This is due to two main reasons: educational factors having a long-time and combined effect (general education, aesthetic education, and particularly the primary effects of contemporary art itself) and the fact that the public, especially the young people are moved by the same worries and desires, problems and hopes as the artists, among whom the young ones are gaining more and more ground, young people who happen to come up to just these spiritual and substantial expectations with new, fresh, and often passionate formulations. The first-mentioned reason is supported by the fact that more than half of the visitors has a university or college degree and that almost half of them is active in the field of arts after their work. The second reason follows from the papers written by the guides about the 4 500 groups of visitors. I wish as many critics from abroad as possible would have taken the change of studying both, the exhibition and the visitors so that we could enter into an exchange of opinions to find out whether we are concerned here with an international or a specifically national phenomenon related to the particular substantiality of GDR art.

Considering the fact that two thirds of the visitors were under 40 years of age and that this section of visitors showed a distinct favour for modern art of the GDR, we can definitely conclude that the effects of the substantial contents coincided with an open-mindedness to new, so far unfamiliar artistic forms of expression which appears to be superior to that of the older generations. Approval of the development of our art by the population thus emanates mainly from the age groups moulded by the educational process of recent years, including the education rendered by art, and who are expected to be responsible for shaping society in the decades to come. Inquiries produced an entire equality in figures and reactions among



male and female visitors, also with respect to the level of education.

Art can't do better than taking this public very serious. This applies also to critical comments. General objections were raised almost only by people who stayed in the exhibition only for a very short time. General approval with the intentions and objectives, even passionate involvement were often linked up with severe and precise criticism coming, as a rule, from experienced visitors and in combination with deep-rooted knowledge. Skilled knowledge and commitment do not necessarily result in uncritical euphoria. Many artists have gathered useful experiences with these partners by inviting them to their studios, by relations of partnership with work teams, by their activities as heads of many groups of amateur artists, and by many discussions at exhibitions. Of course there is not only qualified criticism and relevant objections. Moreover, viewers' criticism is not conducted in the leading-strings of professional critics, it applies its own standards. On the one hand the visitor is ready and willing to grant the artist his subjectivity, his formal and spiritual experiments, explorations, and risks. He admits complicity and difficult complexity, contradictions, conflicts, and ambiguity, the unknown and unsolved because of their contrast to his daily life and experience, but partly also because of correspondence with his life — but in contrast with its representation by the mass media. Thus the unfamiliar look of art is attractive to him. Refusal hits the retreat into indistinctiveness, into the incomprehensible monologue the demolition of the bridges leading to reality and to the public, to the reality of life — how and wherever the spectator feels to observe this. One-sidedness in either direction is generally rejected if it is a general tendency. The public expects variety, variability, dialogues, differences and contradictions on style, trends, and positions. The spectator is used to make his choice and to shape his own ideas on art. An art of smiling, illustrating political slogans, superficial and clamorous acclamation would be met with opposition from a great majority. The audience of contemporary art calls for the total of possibilities and functions and is not satisfied with any kind of cut-out, because it actually and seriously needs as much critical, dramatic, mysterious, exorcising, tragic,

and altogether serious art as it was demonstrated at the ninth Dresden exhibition. But who would deny that people in our days, in this world of ours — and so they do in our country — also need encouragement, cheerfulness, entertainment, affirmation, relaxation, and confidence? And who would deny that art has been accomplishing just this almost all the time through its history and can do it even in our time — certainly as art only. The audience was found to favour works of art arousing sensibility and a wake sense for modulations in forms and subjects, making reflect problems, connections, circumstances, renewing the look of familiar things and facts, teaching to visualize ones world, the world altogether, in an unconventional manner. Favoured were pictures and sculptures provoking debates and conversations because they were formulations of experience which the people had felt but could not formulate. This includes the interpretation of national and proletarian history, original comments on the conflicts and changes going on on our globe, giving shape to the most distinct social and ideological elements of cultural identity.

The debates in front of the pictures were not so much concerned with agreement or disagreement but with getting into the innermost of the pictures, with revelation and interpretation, with cognizing the aesthetic factors acting. About a hundred guides, mainly students of history of art and art teaching, very young people in fact, as a rule, used to pick out the problem-involving works for discussion with their groups. They took the bull by the horns, so to speak, and more than in the past they talked and made people talk about the way art is being produced and about what makes them to be art. So-called meta-discussions, that is discussing the topics and contents of images without considering their aesthetic structure is no longer dominating, but still exists and will continue to do so to some extent.

In this connection I referred to the specific topics and substantiality of art in the GDR. Art, of course, always and everywhere has its contents and messages. The substance of art dealt with in the GDR is likewise not our monopoly. Even the positions, methods and artistic means ruling the treatment and figuration are not far from what and how artists in other countries are doing, which is reflected by the



internationally increasing response GDR-painting has received in recent years instead of mere misunderstanding in former decades.

The main difference is mainly due to what those contents mean to the audience, how far people are moved and activated by art as individuals and as members of society, and which significance and power the discussion gains with regard to society and its process. Is a specific offer responded by a specific desire and demand and vice versa? And how about the specific nature of the offer? Does it, based on a developed ability of delightful reception, lead beyond mere aesthetic delight?

The close connection between the ability of the individual for aesthetic reception and the social effectiveness and national functions of art has been handled and organized on the art scene — certainly also by art critics — more consciously. For example, the demand for private in contemporary art has grown continuously, the sale of works of art to individual citizens has increased quicker than the attendance of exhibitions, signaling a closer more intimate and conscious relation to modern art as a general phenomenon.

The institution "Staatlicher Kunsthandel" on the premises of the exhibition realized a turnover of 4.5 million marks, including 1.3 million for the exhibits, besides 9 800 drawings, watercolours and graphic prints at low prices and 945 sculptures, mostly in small sizes for private purposes, edited at reasonable prices. The artistic quality and value of the sales was just the same as of those exhibits which had to pass the rather rigid commissions of art judges.

Collecting contemporary art in our country takes place on a price level far lower than in the western countries and therefore has a broader basis in the economic sense, apart from educational and ideological causes and reasons. Like the wide-spread amateur activities in the field of art, art collecting is a planned and wanted result of the cultural development and art information, art education, art review, and criticism. It is stabilizing and dynamizing the system of cultural and social values and achievements, first of all as a development and cultivation of personality, following the orientation of society with the necessities of realities to come.

I have tried to explain that and how the numerous, abundant, and

active reception of the most advanced contemporary art functions as an expression and as a constitutioning force of national cultural identity. Very little was said about art criticism. The progress in reception we are witnessing, of course, could not come about by itself, but always with the help of art reviews, information, and criticism. Let me tell you first that we are not entirely satisfied with the role of the art critic. But at least the art critic does not handicap reception. Art criticism is by no means a barrier. It might be practised extravagantly and high-flown in places where it can do no harm to the audience. The professional quality of criticism has developed along with art production. The art critic has learned to respond on the actual artistic state of the art making process, to explain the richness of image in its subjectivity, unlimited variations and metamorphosis, to take care of what makes artistic pictures and sculptures different from other images, making them indispensable and irretrievable for human beings. Where criticism reaches the masses, the common reader, it can teach to enjoy art as art. Art criticism avoids increasingly its conventional primitive didactics, that is telling people what is to be seen on the pictures or what the artists are to paint. It aims more effectively on the capability of enjoying art. We think art criticism to be spread insufficiently, particularly by the powerful mass media. But we do not want the democratic nature of our work, which of course must be developed much better yet, not to be exchanged against a feuilleton that approaches the insider only. Neither should art reviews serve the vanities, a danger continuously present in our profession. What our art critics lack completely, is: persuading the reader and viewer, so to speak to sell the emperor's new clothes. Maybe the art critic sometimes also lacks flexibility, eloquence, and professional touch. Instead, however, he is truly honest, does not enforce any trends, and is unable to manipulate, although he rather looks himself like seeking for a bell-wether.

The political leadership of our country repeatedly and seriously manifested the social interest for a more active, wide-spread and effective art criticism. To put this into practice, which means having it on TV, in the daily press, in effect outside the narrow



specialized criticism and at a good level requires for a lot of more efforts to be made. What we are not lacking now is talented and well-trained young people.

How am I to describe to you how art criticism works in our country? Abandoning the merely descriptive method and to work for an understanding of artistic forms cannot be the whole thing. There is a long approach to that type of critical review, adjusted convenient, and necessary for the new spectator and for the expectant spectator.

Art criticism always must embrace two contradicting tendencies, especially where it is concerned with a reader who is both, pretentious and indigent, experienced and unsuspecting; common sense, an objective, precise exposure of the structures and determining elements acting like a scientific branch.

And: poetic power of conviction, infecting emotionality, educational eros.

Art criticism in our country has dialogical nature, especially outside the professional press. Since the art critic always has also various direct contacts to his audience, his conversational experiences and his knowledge of visitors' reactions will generally very strongly influence his texts. Apart from that he is *primus inter pares* in the often wide-ranging discussions of specific works among the readers. He will generally give answers to real questions.

When I said our art critics do not master the art of persuasion and are far from manipulative intentions I did not want to exclude, of course, that art criticism wants to convince. What is important that is to overcome false assumptions in viewing and valuating works of art, particularly those confusing art with something else. This is a very long process if you do not limit yourself to readers who are qualified due to their class affiliation or appear to be so.

Art criticism in our country is faced with the permanent task to make visible, understandable and open to experience the specific value and importance of the language of pictures in comparisons, differentiation, and contradiction to other means and media of information and communication. There are so many facts, circumstances, interrelations, and knowledge to be distributed and trained. Again and again you have to start from the beginning.

And you are never allowed to neglect the dialectic relationship between acquiring factual knowledge and the development of the receptivity and capability for sensual enjoyment, visual opulence, for the intelligence of aesthetical messages. Therefore it is of great importance for qualified art criticism as we need it to get a chance by sending the art students to the test stand of public art discussions, by letting them prove their abilities and knowledge as guides of different groups of visitors in great events such as the ninth art exhibition. Inevitably they must show there how to use scientific facts and methods in the basic fields, how to move people towards art and by art, how to argue, open doors to treasures, make people talk about their impressions, observations, experiences, desires, and difficulties, how to teach them judge, enjoy, conclude.

The numerous reports of the student guides are a rich source of unknown reasons and enlightenment of the socially concrete process of reception. We have to work it through to learn about our contemporary fellow citizen and his art, but also about the process of learning of the future art critics.

My statements were supposed to be about the concrete, new experiences of art life in the GDR and I wanted to avoid flying high too theoretically. Since the auditory comprises both critics and producers of art I talked also on matters which might possibly concern the feedback of art production. Perhaps I succeeded in explaining that the loss of response which modern art often suffers from, consciously, sometimes unconsciously or delightfully can be overcome. It can be overcome where cultural identity is not limited to a narrow intellectual elite, meaning more than arousing a general national emotion or conventional cultural self-confidence but aiming at living art, not yet canonized by historians or captured in the market, but directed and proposed to the actual purposes of the life of millions, inevitably including the artist.



## POUR UNE CRITIQUE DE LA CRITIQUE

JACQUES MEURIS

Depuis les études critiques de Vasari (1511-1574), considérées comme les premières affirmations d'une authentique critique d'art, jusqu'à la deuxième moitié du dix-neuvième siècle, quand intervient la rupture entre chose regardée et chose reproduite, les beaux-arts et les notions qu'ils appellent n'ont pratiquement subi que de légères transformations à la fois dans l'appréhension qu'ils offrent du "beau", dans les techniques fondamentales et les supports à partir desquels l'oeuvre se fabrique, dans la fonction qu'est censé remplir le tableau ou la statue. Lorsque transformation il y a, elle n'est en tout cas jamais fondamentale, ni ne remet en cause la notion d'art comme telle. La critique d'art, par le fait même, si tant est qu'elle existait au sens où nous l'entendons, n'a pas davantage changé profondément, même si le progrès s'accompagne toujours d'un élargissement de l'information, qui n'a cessé en effet de lentement se répandre. En fait, on constate que la critique, par un mouvement en vérité difficilement compréhensible, s'est appauvrie, s'agissant des beaux-arts, à mesure qu'elle se popularisait. On peut se demander si cette sorte de rétractation, qui est probablement à l'origine du dédain (réel ou feint) des créateurs pour l'exercice critique, ne vient pas principalement, d'abord, de ce que les facultés ordinaires de la vue ont fallacieusement porté tout un chacun à formuler un avis sur les oeuvres de l'art, faisant de chacun un critique au moins "d'humeur". Au surplus, le même phénomène a entraîné les organes d'information générale à ne considérer l'activité critique des beaux-arts que comme une activité occasionnelle et annexe, disposant à l'amateurisme, au contraire d'autres activités critiques, s'adressant à des oeuvres d'une perception communément moins assimilée.

Quoi qu'il en soit, les critères sur lesquels s'est fondée longtemps la critique d'art "académique", comme la critique de presse, sont restés jusqu'alors, largement ceux que ses historiens ont recensés, non sans exclusive d'ailleurs:

Critères de ressemblance dès l'avènement du portrait antique,

Critères idéologiques dès l'apparition de l'iconographie religieuse,  
 Critères "canoniques" liés au classicisme et à ses suites,  
 Critères de puissance apparaissant avec les premiers critiques  
 "modernes", dont Baudelaire (1).

Il y a des raisons de douter que ces critères traditionnels et  
 successifs aient été remplacés, en notre temps, par d'autres, plus  
 aptes à orienter une autre démarche critique.

#### Transformation de l'art/transformation de la critique

Les notions concernant l'art ont cependant radicalement changé avec  
 l'avènement du vingtième siècle. Des transformations majeures, comme  
 on sait, sont intervenues dans les rapports des arts plastiques avec  
 la représentation du monde, dans leurs relations à la "réalité",  
 dans leurs objectifs et, dès lors, dans leur fonction. Cette succession  
 de transformations indélébiles suppose, en soi, une transformation de  
 l'optique critique; elle n'est apparue que bien plus tard, et  
 partiellement.

Traduites en mouvements et en tendances, ces transformations de  
 l'activité artistique se formulent ainsi, dans les faits:

1. Fauvisme
2. Expressionnisme
3. Cubisme
4. Futurisme
5. Abstraction et Constructivisme
6. Dadaïsme
7. Surréalisme.

Sans entrer ici dans le détail des motivations de chacun de ces  
 grands mouvements perturbateurs, on peut concrétiser leurs apports  
 mutuels et concordants en remarquant succinctement qu'ils ont tous  
 provoqué une déchirure décisive de l'image traditionnelle en faisant  
 subir au référent une série de mutations allant de son affirmation à  
 sa négation en passant par sa dégradation. Ils ont ainsi concouru à  
 faire des productions des beaux-arts des éléments d'exploration et de  
 connaissance plutôt que des éléments de représentation. L'image, si  
 l'on veut, est passée du cadastre des propriétés au cadastre des  
 émotions et même, dans certains cas, du constat effectif d'un spectacle



donné de l'extérieur à sa mise formelle en équation.

Malgré quoi, l'activité critique est néanmoins restée largement tributaire, dans son appréciation, des critères énoncés plus haut. Et, accroissant encore sa popularisation, partant sa décadence, s'infiltrait insidieusement dans le domaine de la littérature jusqu'à en constituer une classe ou, pour le mieux, flirtait davantage avec l'esthétique de caractère philosophique. Si bien que c'est dans la mesure où la critique d'art se rapprochait, au niveau contemporain, de l'histoire de l'art (dont jusque là, le domaine était sagement préservé) et plus généralement, de l'histoire des sciences et des techniques (dont, jusque là, le domaine lui était quasiment interdit), qu'elle a pu se dégager du commentaire ponctuel et limité pour enfin introduire dans son exercice la notion de changement perceptible dans les produits de la création plastique et pour soumettre son jugement ponctuel aux transformations générales de l'histoire humaine. Ce sont, curieusement, les commentaires, manifestes et réflexions des artistes créateurs eux-mêmes qui en forment les premiers — et principaux — témoignages: écrits de Apollinaire, Marinetti, Elie Faure, Kandinsky, Klee, tracts dadaïstes, manifestes surréalistes, etc.).

Cette "philosophie de l'art" — termes dont on sait l'approximation — a atteint sans doute son apogée, en langue française du moins, avec André Malraux, Georges Duthuit, Etienne Gilson, notamment. Ces auteurs, en tant qu'observateurs du monde de l'art au moment où ils se sont exprimés, marquent sans doute la fin d'une perception basée sur une idée convenue de la peinture et de la sculpture qui ne tenait pas (ou à peine) compte des interventions transformationnelles inédites de media comme la photographie par exemple, ou de techniques auparavant inusitées, voire même du cinéma. C'est, aussi bien, l'autre versant qui doit nous retenir aujourd'hui, en ce que d'ailleurs, il voit encore croître la pression mutationnelle sur la façon de considérer l'activité artistique et ses résultats, phénomène récent qu'illustre bien le passage du concept "beaux-arts" au concept "arts plastiques" puis au concept "arts visuels". Il va de soi que ce phénomène modificateur provienne de l'action des artistes créateurs eux-mêmes, à l'origine de ces événements, après 1945:

1. Deuxième naissance de l'art abstrait et/ou non-figuratif

2. Défiguration gestuelle et lyrique
3. Nouveau réalisme
4. Pop art et Nouvelle image
5. Arts conceptuel, minimaliste, etc.
6. Arts de la performance, des interventions directes sur le référent et du constat
7. Photo-réalisme
8. Nouvelle "subjectivité"; Nouvelle figuration
9. Peinture "sauvage".

L'intervention critique sur ces phénomènes immédiats, si elle est quelquefois de deuxième ligne, est constante, rapide, efficace, lorsqu'elle parvient, précisément, à relier ceux-ci à une "actualité" plus populairement ressentie que ne l'est, en fait, l'acte artistique même. Sur la succession de ces événements, en effet, on peut d'évidence greffer différentes influences, et quelquefois concordantes seulement, qui ont suscité le changement, par des témoignages privilégiés. Mais il est clair cette fois que toutes ces influences ne relèvent pas seulement du domaine artistique:

1. Distanciation à l'égard d'une image "réaliste" affadie, même modifiée, à la mesure des interrogations nouvelles sur la notion de "réel" d'une part, d'"existentiel" d'autre part.
2. Expansion des moyens de reproduction et de report modifiant la notion d'"image".
3. Apparition effective de la télévision.
4. Annoblissement inattendu de la bande dessinée, de ses apports visuels et popularisation de sa "lecture".
5. Accession de la photographie à un statut propre et reconnu.
6. Attitude révisée à l'égard des "objets" via une réactualisation de la pensée de Marcel Duchamp.
7. Avènement de la notion "Art as idea/Idea as art".
8. Accession généralisée aux techniques audiovisuelles; développement de l'informatique personnalisée.
9. Mouvements de revision des antagonismes entre les sciences exactes et les sciences humaines.

Soit une intellectualisation accrue de l'acte artistique et de son résultat menant à une pression contraire, anachronique et sécurisante.



10. Retour à une tradition du métier, qui entraîne quelquefois, mais pas toujours, à un retour à des modèles passés.

#### La critique en tant qu'art/La critique en tant qu'idée

Si, s'agissant de la critique, on reconnaît d'évidence son incontestable participation, quelquefois décisive, à ces différents éclatements et surtout à leur propagation, et, dès lors, à l'établissement des bases d'une histoire commentée à chaud de l'art contemporain, il est clair que sa fonction propre n'est assumée en ce sens que lorsque la critique est, à la fois, "intelligente" et "intelligible". Ce sont deux constantes inéluctables qui dictent les termes mêmes d'une critique de la critique. En effet, la critique d'art est de moins en moins indépendante, si elle l'a jamais été, de l'art qui se fait au moment où il se fait et des raisons pour lesquelles il se fait. Ce qui souligne aussi bien que la critique doit nécessairement s'intéresser à l'environnement et aux conditions d'expression, autant qu'aux oeuvres. Dans la mesure où cette exigence n'est pas rencontrée, la fonction critique relève de la désinformation et détourne son action de l'utile prospection que l'on attend légitimement d'elle. C'est en cela qu'elle pose problème: son adéquation au temps où elle s'exprime doit être aussi forte que son appréciation des oeuvres que cette époque alimente. Ainsi, la pression "retro" peut être vue en certains cas comme l'aveu d'un échec (le cas de l'architecture, par exemple); elle est en tout cas le résultat conjoint du marché et de la critique dans une chasse à un public soucieux de confort davantage que de spéculation intellectuels; son surgissement prend la critique en défaut de conscience par rapport à son temps.

Dans le sens d'une réflexion moins banale sur l'activité critique, par ailleurs, les notions qui se sont déployées en support à un art "conceptuel" (c'est-à-dire pratiquement sans "oeuvre") pourraient bien aider à l'établissement plus rationnel de pistes pour une révision des théories en cours. Si "art = idea/idea = art", si la notion d'art se confond à la notion de technique, si la démarche créatrice qui mène à l'oeuvre est plus importante que son résultat, on peut poser la question de savoir si la critique, en soi, ne relève

pas en définitive des mêmes critères et des mêmes définitions. D'où qu'elle serait oeuvre d'art dans la mesure où elle serait "idée" et qu'elle serait idée dans la mesure où elle serait moins un compte-rendu qu'une motivation — pour l'exercice de l'art, pour l'exercice d'elle-même.

La critique est, alors, concept: une idée, une "vue de l'esprit", organisatrice en effet des perceptions et des connaissances, un véritable "atelier dans la tête" (Beuys).

Mais pas n'importe quel "concept" ... Dans un texte marquant(2), Joseph Kossuth, qui réfute Hegel et, pratiquement, toute la philosophie "continentale", explique que "la définition la plus 'pure' de l'art conceptuel serait qu'il s'agit d'une enquête (inquiry) au sein des fondements du concept 'art', tel qu'on l'entend". Idem, assurément pour la critique, ce qui mène à sa distanciation à l'égard de la philosophie et, partant, de l'esthétique conventionnelle. Car, explique Kossuth, l'esthétique, s'adressant à des opinions sur la perception du monde en général, est extérieure à l'opinion que l'on peut porter sur l'existence ou le fonctionnement d'un objet placé dans le contexte de l'art. Existence et fonctionnement; critique de cette existence et de ce fonctionnement... Opposant alors une critique "neuve" à une critique "formaliste", on en vient nécessairement à réclamer, comme Kossuth le fait de l'art lui-même, une critique qui ajoute "à notre connaissance de la nature ou de la fonction de l'art", l'une impliquant l'autre. Mais si Kossuth plaide en quelque sorte pour sa chapelle, et l'oppose dans son raisonnement à un art morphologique, cette critique neuve s'adresse de même manière aux formes de l'art autres que celles relevant de la conceptualisation. Il va d'évidence, par exemple, qu'elle peut aussi bien s'appliquer à un art qui rénove et contemporanise la tradition morphologique auquel, d'ailleurs, s'adresse également le questionnement sur la nature et la fonction de celle-ci.

#### Des pistes d'envol...

Sur la foi de cette "critique de la critique" dont ne sont ici exposés que les prolégomènes, un certain nombre de constatations ponctuelles peuvent être exprimées et un certain nombre de revendications



effectives peuvent être avancées.

1. Le constat d'une autre adéquation entre l'exercice critique et l'exercice philosophique exige, par son fait même, une réflexion inédite sur la fonction critique, ses critères, sa destination. Cela implique son langage, sujet d'innombrables gloses auxquelles on n'ajoutera pas ici, sinon pour noter qu'en effet, la technique critique encourage une technique langagière particulière. A cet égard, il faudrait sans doute examiner plus attentivement l'apport éventuel, à cette fin, de la linguistique structuraliste et des commentaires en plusieurs sens qu'elle suscite, aussi bien par rapport à l'écriture littéraire que par rapport à la notion de "lecture" appliquée à l'oeuvre d'art.

2. La notion de fonction, tant de l'oeuvre que de la critique, appelle inmanquablement la notion de "public" et d'"opinion publique" et des rapports entretenus avec eux par la critique. Outre, probablement, la nécessité d'une explicitation de la critique à destination de ceux qui la reçoivent, se pose de manière plus évidente la problématique des rapports entre artistes et masses, compte en effet tenu du déplacement de plus en plus sensible de l'art, de l'idée de décoration vers l'idée de "proposition", ce qui ne fait qu'accroître la difficulté, pour le public, de remplacer par d'autres les opinions "toutes faites" sur la notion d'art.

3. Dans la foulée de cette constatation, se pose dès lors le problème de la formation des critiques et de leur qualification, en même temps que s'accroît l'opposition entre critique dite "d'humeur" qui en appelle à une explication parallèle des oeuvres, la critique "de compte rendu" qui tend à décrire physiquement le travail de l'artiste, la critique que l'on pourrait dire "infra-historique" qui inclut l'oeuvre à l'environnement. Peut-être doit-on souhaiter un amalgame des trois directions dans la mesure où elle entraînerait une plus grande créativité critique en mêlant le sentiment, la sensibilité, la connaissance technique, l'approche des phénomènes socio-artistiques. Mais cette diversité met en cause deux exigences au moins: le talent personnel, l'intelligence du phénomène "art" et de ses composants. Ce qui pousse à réexaminer l'enseignement de la critique pour l'organiser là où il n'existe pratiquement pas, sinon

sur le tas, et pour le rénover là où, par hypothèse, il existe déjà. C'est un problème plus particulièrement posé au niveau des universités et des instituts supérieurs dont on peut imaginer qu'ils décernent un grade de "critique d'art" au même titre que d'historien ou ... de journaliste.

4. Impliqués encore, dans ce contexte, les rapports entre la critique et les artistes. Un aspect particulier de cette problématique repose sur l'équivoque: explicitation de l'art/explicitation de l'artiste. Qui entraîne des points de vue plus ou moins comparables à ceux qui se sont manifestés un temps autour de la critique littéraire: peut-on comprendre (et dès lors, commenter) l'oeuvre en dehors des circonstances de la vie personnelle de l'artiste? Ou bien cette information n'est elle pas — ou pas toujours — nécessaire? (Le "cas Van Gogh" est suffisamment illustratif à cet égard, jusque dans les disproportions qu'il a prises, menant à travers l'anecdote, l'approche psychanalytique, etc., jusqu'à poser le dilemme de "la folie comme oeuvre d'art"). L'apparition d'expressions et de moyens irréférentiels comme le conceptuel pur, l'art du geste, le body-art, le land-art, etc., pose d'autant problème en ce sens que l'oeuvre est, dès qu'exprimée, destinée à disparaître physiquement comme telle, ne laissant derrière elle que son souvenir — et la personne même qui l'a un instant créée, dans son individualisme existentiel.

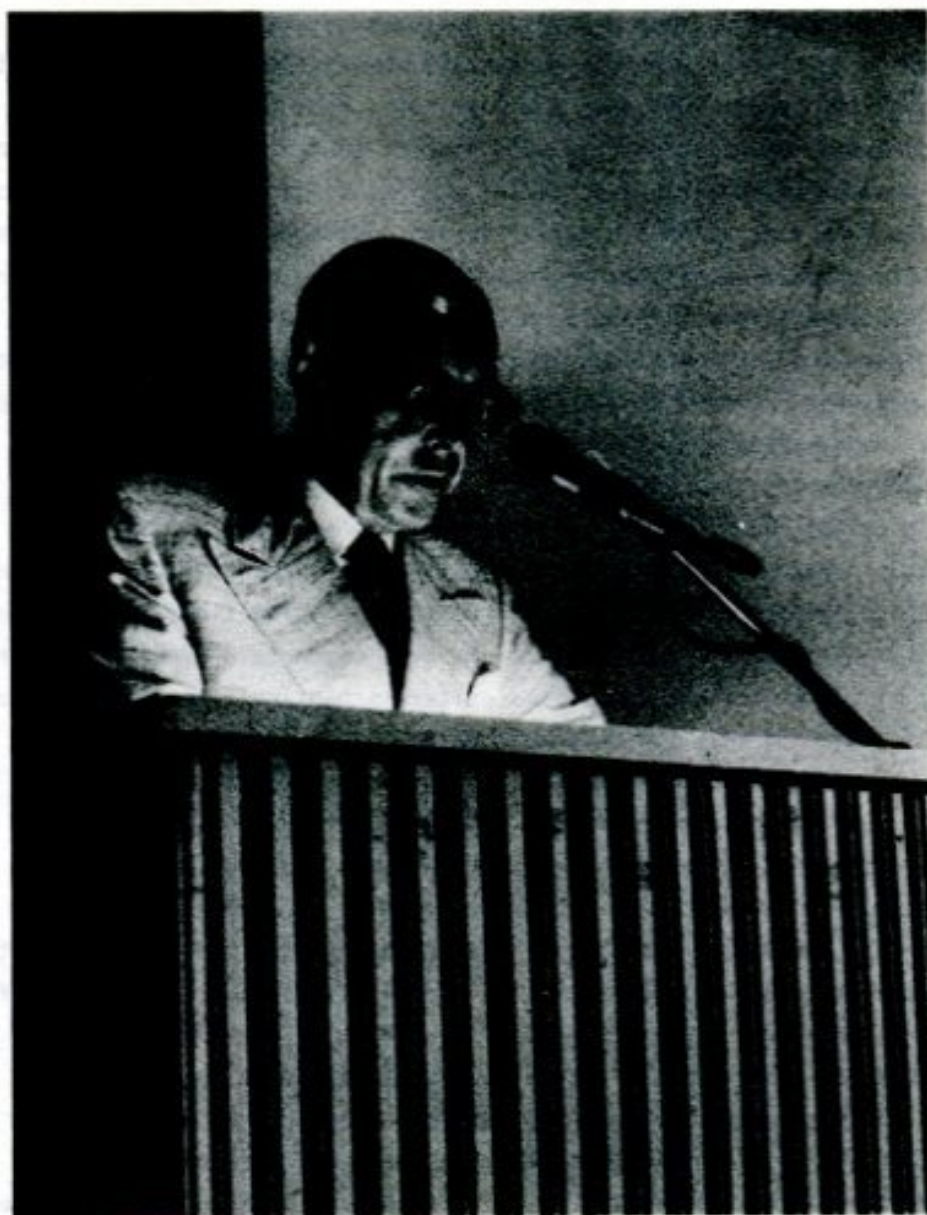
5. Il convient enfin certainement que la critique d'art occupe une place dans le large débat ouvert actuellement sur le thème "Science et conscience", singulièrement important en cette fin de siècle, et qui introduit la notion de hasard dans l'approche scientifique, par opposition au déterminisme classique. Il s'agit, en l'occurrence, d'un défi capital qui modifie aussi la perception de l'art dans un temps de grandes transformations idéologiques dans lesquelles la science joue un rôle manifestement important. Dans la mesure où les savants appellent un changement considérable du comportement scientifique "pour chercher un langage plus universel, plus respectueux d'autres traditions et d'autres problématiques" (Ilya Prigogine), on peut penser que la critique d'art, en tant qu'explicitation de phénomènes particuliers qui tiennent à la fois des domaines de la pensée et du sentiment, doit s'introduire quelque part dans cette tentative



réconciliatrice. La question se pose, bien entendu, de savoir où elle peut s'introduire, et comment, dans le débat dont on a notamment dit qu'il encourage une "écoute poétique" de la nature en réintégrant l'homme à l'univers qu'il observe...

Mais ce ne sont là, en effet, que pistes...

- (1) Voir à ce sujet André Richard: La critique d'art, Paris 1958, et Lionello Venturi: History of art criticism, New York 1936.
- (2) Art after philosophy, Studio International, 1969.



Göran Schildt, professor, art historian *Finland*

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GÖRAN SCHILDT

J'ai été chargé de vous présenter quelques points de vue sur la mission du critique, points de vue que nous autres, les représentants des petits pays et des pays périphériques, nous pouvons estimer importants. Beaucoup d'entre vous pensent peut-être que nos expériences ne peuvent se comparer avec celles que les critiques des grands pays de culture font et que la valeur de nos jugements est dans une certaine mesure proportionnelle au potentiel culturel de notre pays. Vous avez naturellement raison jusqu'à un certain point, mais je crois par ailleurs que les conditions spéciales qui marquent de leur empreinte le pays périphérique et ouvert à beaucoup d'influences peuvent donner des connaissances qui sont plus difficiles à saisir dans des pays plus grands et plus indépendants.

En ce qui concerne mes qualifications en tant que témoin, elles sont si embrouillées que je dois peut-être les récapituler brièvement. D'abord, j'appartiens à la partie de la population finlandaise qui est de langue suédoise, avec tout ce que cela comporte d'expériences sur les minorités et leurs problèmes culturels particuliers. Il se trouve de plus que je suis critique culturel en Suède depuis 30 ans avec l'observation de la vie culturelle finlandaise comme spécialité. Et cela m'a conduit à m'intéresser spécialement aux problèmes des immigrants de langue finnoise en Suède, pays qui leur est étranger. Une troisième corde à mon arc est ma vieille et étroite amitié avec le grand architecte finlandais Alvar Aalto, ce qui m'a fait l'avocat de son art devant des publics tant finlandais qu'internationaux. Enfin je vis depuis plusieurs décennies une partie de l'année en Grèce où je remplis la fonction d'observateur culturel et où je rends compte des conditions grecques pour un public européen.

Sur ce fond, il n'est peut-être pas surprenant que ma première remarque soit de souligner que le critique doit, devant chaque tâche, déterminer clairement avec qui, dans le cas qui l'occupe, il a ses raisons de se solidariser et avec quelle mesure il doit mesurer cette fois-là. Ni les critiques d'art ni les artistes ne sont des monolithes

n'ayant qu'un lien national, qu'une solidarité sociale, qu'une échelle de valeurs culturelles, qu'un but et qu'une forme de vie à faire entrer en ligne de compte. Ils participent au contraire à différents jeux avec des règles spécifiques qu'il faut essayer de comprendre avant de s'exprimer sur les actions des joueurs.

Par là je ne pense pas seulement aux divers jeux auxquels les artistes jouent. Le critique d'art peut ou doit lui aussi varier son attitude selon les circonstances. S'il est suffisamment convaincu de la valeur d'un artiste particulier, il peut même avoir intérêt à ne pas se tenir du tout à une distance critique vis-à-vis de l'artiste, mais à se solidariser avec lui dans toute la mesure du possible, à entrer en lui, pour voir ainsi comment il vit son oeuvre. C'est ce que j'ai essayé de faire dans ma biographie d'Alvar Aalto récemment publiée. D'élargir de cette manière sa propre existence en se consacrant à la vie d'une autre personne plus douée, cela a été pour moi, en tant que critique, l'une des plus enrichissantes choses que j'ai vécues.

La chose se présente un peu différemment lorsque l'on ne se solidarise pas de prime abord avec un artiste particulier, mais avec les valeurs plus générales que l'on pense qu'il tente de promouvoir. S'il est par exemple question d'un artiste qui traite le problème d'identité d'un groupe minoritaire, le critique doit le placer dans l'ensemble auquel le sujet appartient en jugeant ce que d'une part les membres du groupe en question et d'autre part les étrangers au groupe peuvent tirer de son oeuvre. Si nous prenons comme exemple les livres et les tableaux des Suédois de Finlande, je veux dire qu'ils ne sont pas destinés uniquement aux Suédois de Finlande, mais également à la majorité finnoise et aux suédois de Suède, entre lesquelles ils vivent. L'espoir de pouvoir construire des ponts — parfois en faisant appel à une sympathie compréhensive, parfois par des accusations et des appels indignés — marque à un haut degré l'art des groupes minoritaires.

Le problème est tout autre lorsqu'il s'agit de l'art des nations comme entités, par ex. l'art finlandais en général. Le critique doit-il juger cet art en pensant à l'impression qu'il peut faire sur un public étranger? En d'autres termes, doit-il poser des exigences internationales



à son égard, dire que Picasso et Chagall sont meilleurs que leurs épigones finlandais? A mon avis, ce n'est pas seulement inutile, mais c'est même une faute contre les règles du jeu. Je ne veux pas dire par là qu'il faut abaisser les exigences de qualité, que l'on doit être "plus gentil" envers les artistes provinciaux. Je veux dire que les exigences sont différentes. Picasso ne peut pas faire beaucoup pour définir une identité finlandaise, par contre un Espagnol peut se sentir attiré par la proximité de la nature qui se trouve chez le sculpteur finlandais Kain-Tapper. Kain Tapper est, autrement dit, une carte qui peut être utilisée dans deux jeux tout à fait différents. Il est d'une part un atout dans le jeu qui se déroule autour du besoin des Finlandais d'articuler leur identité nationale et d'autre part une carte en quelque sorte plus modeste dans l'effort de l'homme moderne aliéné et international pour renouer avec le cours de la vie biologique en se plongeant par la contemplation dans la nature.

J'ai parlé jusqu'ici comme si le renforcement de l'identité nationale était l'un des plus importantes tâches de l'art. A vrai dire, l'art a beaucoup d'autres missions qui sont souvent vécues comme beaucoup plus importantes. La question de l'identité nationale est surtout importante dans des situations où elle est menacée ou problématique. Elle est d'actualité dans des pays devenus récemment indépendants qui n'ont pas encore réussi à établir leur conscience de soi. Elle est d'actualité au sein de minorités qui vivent sous une pression extérieure. Cela peut concerner les Lapons du Nord de la Scandinavie ou nos gitans. Mais cela peut concerner aussi les 350 000 Suédois de Finlande, les 300 000 immigrants finnois en Suède ou généralement les émigrants dans quelques pays que ce soit. Pour les habitants de grands pays ethniquement homogènes, ce sont en revanche d'autres relations que les nationales qui sont importantes. Si l'on s'y intéresse en général à des identités de groupe, ce sont des relations régionales ou religieuses ou basées sur la couleur de la peau que l'on recherche, le sentiment d'être chez soi dans la ville ou la province où l'on habite, la solidarité au sein d'une secte ou d'une organisation.

En outre, ce n'est pas toujours par l'art, bien loin de là, que l'identité nationale cherche à se dégager. La communauté nationale

est beaucoup plus vécue, par exemple en Grèce et en Pologne, par l'intermédiaire de la religion que par des exploits culturels. Dans d'autres pays, c'est l'histoire glorieuse de la patrie, ses grands guerriers et rois-héros qui portent l'identité nationale. Il n'est pas étonnant que les réalisations économiques et industrielles soient associées à l'amour-propre national, mais il arrive aussi qu'on le fonde sur des performances sportives et des succès dans divers concours.

Etant un amateur de l'art, je ne peux pas nier que pour moi les pays les plus sympathiques sont ceux où l'identité nationale est en relation étroite avec les réalisations artistiques. C'est certes le cas de la Grèce, mais là le problème est que les réalisations artistiques remontent dans le temps à plus de 2 000 ans en arrière, alors que les artistes de notre époque y sont assez négligés. La sympathie mondiale dont jouissent des pays comme l'Italie et la France vient en grande part de ce que la conscience nationale que l'on y a de sa propre valeur est à un si haut degré associée aux réalisations artistiques dont tout le monde peut avoir sa part. Il n'est pas difficile de se transformer, avec une part de son cœur, en Italien ou en Français, puisque cela comporte principalement que l'on développe son sens esthétique et que l'on s'adonne à l'art.

Après avoir ainsi constaté qu'une association entre l'identité nationale et les réalisations artistiques n'est pas nécessaire, mais dans bien des cas possible, nous sommes mûrs pour examiner comment cette relation fonctionne en Scandinavie. Nous constatons alors que les deux vieux pays, le Danemark et la Suède, ont assurément la plus riche vie culturelle, mais que, malgré tout, l'art n'y joue pas un rôle aussi primordial pour la conscience nationale que dans les trois jeunes pays, à savoir l'Islande, la Norvège et la Finlande. C'est qu'il n'y a probablement pas de grand problème à être Danois ou Suédois. On l'a été si longtemps et c'est si naturel que les gens de ces pays peuvent porter leur attention sur de toutes autres questions. En Islande, en Norvège et en Finlande, en revanche, on n'a pas tant d'autres choses auxquelles on puisse accrocher sa conscience de soi. Les souvenirs des temps où l'on n'était pas maître chez soi, mais où l'on était gouverné par des autorités



étrangères sont encore si vivants que l'on veut ardemment manifester sa nationalité islandaise, norvégienne, finlandaise. Les anciennes sagas islandaises et les peintres modernes islandais, Ibsen et Edvard Munch, le Kalevala et Sibelius sont en conséquence d'aussi importants promoteurs de la confiance en soi des gens que George Washington et la famille Rockefeller le sont aux Etats-Unis ou Lénine et Jurij Gagarin en Union soviétique.

Il y a beaucoup à dire de positif sur l'association existence chez nous entre l'art et le sentiment d'identité nationale. On peut entre autres noter le soutien remarquablement généreux dont les artistes finlandais — tant les écrivains que les autres artistes — jouissent en Finlande. Il pourrait naturellement être encore plus généreux — nous avons encore, nous aussi, des artistes affamés — mais, si l'on compare les conditions finlandaises avec le soutien que les artistes reçoivent par ex. en France et en Italie, nous ne pouvons pas nous plaindre. L'Etat fait également beaucoup pour amener l'art finlandais dans l'arène internationale en organisant des expositions officielles et en finançant des tournées, manifestement parce que l'on estime que cet art est par son essence national. Le fait qu'il l'est véritablement provient des motifs susmentionnés. Ce sont en particulier nos designers, en premier lieu les designers de verrerie, de textiles et de meubles, qui ont réussi le tour de force d'être à la fois internationaux avec sophistication et presque romantiquement nationaux. On peut dire quelque chose d'analogue des trois sculpteurs que la Finlande s'est efforcée avec le plus de persévérance d'exporter au cours des dernières années, à savoir Harri Kivijärvi, Kain Tapper et Manu Hartman. Ils sont tous d'authentiques interprètes de notre caractère national avec tout ce que cela comporte de proximité de la nature et de confiance dans les matériaux du pays, le bois et la pierre.

Il y a pourtant en Finlande des artistes qui refusent à jouer le jeu étroit de l'art national et qui visent au contraire directement l'ambiance plus vaste de l'art international. Un exemple est Alvar Aalto. Il adopta en 1929 la devise NEMO PROPHETA IN PATRIA (Personne n'est prophète en son pays) et se joignit audacieusement au cercle d'architectes européens radicaux qui s'appelait le groupe CIAM. Ce

fut là que, dans un noble concours avec Le Corbusier, Gropius, Oud, Marcel Breuer, etc., il connut le succès et établit sa réputation. Vers la fin des années 1930, on considérait Aalto comme l'un des premiers architectes du monde à Zürich, à Milan, à Londres et aux États-Unis, tandis qu'en Finlande il se voyait mis de côté d'un concours d'architecture à l'autre. Le Museum of Modern Art organisa une grande exposition des meubles et de l'architecture d'Aalto à New York avant qu'il eut reçu une seule commande de construction à Helsinki. Il fit en d'autres termes ce que Picasso et Brancusi avaient fait en leur temps. On peut dire de tous les trois qu'ils étaient fortement marqués par leur origine nationale, mais que leurs pays ne se trouvaient pas au niveau de ce qu'ils voulaient exprimer, raison pour laquelle ils cherchèrent à s'introduire sur un forum plus avancé. Le fait que, par suite, après s'être créée une position internationale, ils furent reconnus dans leurs pays d'origine et qu'ils devinrent même avec le temps les interprètes de quelque chose d'authentiquement espagnol, roumain et finlandais ne contredit pas le fait évident qu'ils n'auraient jamais pu développer leur art s'ils étaient restés dans leurs pays. Certes, Aalto devint, comme Mahomet, avec le temps prophète aussi en son pays, mais il avait du faire un long détour pour y parvenir.

On peut dire qu'Aalto avait une attitude dans une certaine mesure ambivalente à l'égard de l'identité nationale. D'un côté il s'opposait aux générations d'architectes précédentes, à l'art national d'un caractère programmé de Saarinen et de Sonck et utilisa en revanche un langage architectural international — d'abord un néoclassicisme de nuance italienne, puis, à partir de 1927, le langage du cubisme de l'architecture rationaliste. Il présenta aussi une thèse ingénieuse selon laquelle l'internationalisme est nationalement légitime. Il disait que les architectes finlandais pouvaient emprunter sans gêne des impulsions à l'étranger, étant donné que les emprunts devenaient automatiquement et inévitablement finlandais une fois que l'architecte, le lieu de construction, le matériau et l'utilisateur des bâtiments étaient finlandais. Ses toutes premières créations dans le style international ne corroborent pas d'une manière très convaincante cette affirmation. L'immeuble du journal "Turun Sanomat", qui applique



les cinq règles de Le Corbusier pour une construction rationnelle, pouvait aussi bien se trouver à Paris ou à Prague qu'à Turku. Pas même sa fameuse oeuvre de 1929, qui a assuré son succès, le sanatorium de Paimio, ne peut avec quelque justification être qualifiée de nationale. Mais à partir du milieu des années 1930, les constructions d'Aalto deviennent spontanément et manifestement finlandaises grâce à l'emploi accru du bois également dans les extérieurs, l'adaptation aux conditions du terrain locales et l'introduction d'une conception de l'espace, qui part de l'expérience de la forêt finlandaise. A partir de maintenant Aalto est une carte qui peut être jouée avec autant de succès dans le jeu artistique national et international. Qu'en dites-vous? Est-ce que le "vase Savoy" n'est pas finlandais par l'association avec les contours de nos lacs et en même temps universel comme expression d'une conception biologique de la vie?

Personne ne peut contester qu'Aalto ait été un grand patriote. Il déclina toutes les offres alléchantes d'une carrière couronnée de succès en Amérique, parce qu'il croyait qu'il pouvait créer une meilleure architecture chez lui, dans son propre milieu. Son patriotisme le fit rêver sur ses vieux jours que la Finlande pourrait devenir un laboratoire international pour l'expérimentation d'une nouvelle architecture et d'un nouvel urbanisme respectueux de l'environnement. Il pensait même que toute la nation devrait orienter ses ambitions de façon à servir de modèle social et politique pour le reste du monde. Au moyen d'une planification responsable à l'échelle correcte d'institutions, d'industries, de villes, etc., il voulait créer un milieu bien équilibré pour des individus harmonieux, cultivés et libres. Ici, la perspective d'Aalto s'élargit à partir de la question de l'identité nationale dont ma conférence a traité en grande part pour embrasser un plus vaste thème qui forme le cadre principal de notre congrès: L'art en quête d'un nouvel ordre mondial.

La pensée d'Aalto sur la Finlande pays modèle était naturellement utopique, mais d'une certaine manière elle n'était pas irréaliste en ce sens que les inconvénients que la culture industrielle a apportés dans beaucoup d'autres pays n'ont pas encore fait perdre l'espoir chez nous au point qu'ils ne puissent pas être corrigés. La possibilité de faire de la Finlande un pays modèle était encore imaginable dans

les années 1950, lorsqu'Aalto présenta sa vision. Le seul ennui était que les Finlandais étaient exactement aussi déraisonnables et dépendants que les autres hommes à l'égard du processus aveugle de développement qui menace notre civilisation de disparition. C'est pourquoi le risque est grand que le message d'Aalto à notre époque demeure un beau rêve. En effet, il ne suffit pas que l'art recherche ou même trouve un nouvel ordre mondial. Encore faut-il l'appliquer.



# IN THE RIVER OF HERACLEITUS, A ULYSSES IN SEARCH OF A NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL IDENTITY IN ART

IAN VORRES

The title of my speech today is "In the river of Heracleitus, a Ulysses in search of a national and international identity in art".

Poetic symbolism put aside, this is an analysis of the parallel and often interwoven development of Greek national and international art.

"Panta rei" — everything flows, everything is perpetual change — was the universal motto of Greek philosopher Heracleitus in the 6th century B.C. The flow of centuries have proved him more than right in the history of human creativity. Yet within this ceaseless flow, this relentless change, which, Heracleitus contends, does not even permit one to step into the same river twice, there are, nevertheless, certain clearly discernible patterns that repeat themselves and which constitute the continuing thread of human history, linking the past with the living yet ever changing present.

One of the most persistent and recurrent patterns in the history of art and human creativity, you will agree, ladies and gentlemen, is the 'Ulysses Syndrome', the return of humanity and the Western world in particular back to Greece for spiritual and artistic guidance, inspiration and rejuvenation. Nobody can refute this irrefutable fact which is an endemic phenomenon of all ages in the history of art and western art in particular.

I am not going to enter into the usual hair-splitting over the exact meaning of what is art, what is national versus international art, the role of art critics and art historians etc. Thousands of volumes have been and will be written on these subjects without a hope for a general agreement. If anything, everybody agrees to disagree. I do not have to refer you to the innumerable examples in the history of art when the greatest art critics and connoisseurs not only totally misunderstood the artistic merits of their own age but the excellence of some of the greatest artists of all times. Suffice the example of the French impressionists at the turn of our

century. Even the sophisticated Athenians of the 5th century nearly ostracized the great Pericles and his architect Ictinus for building the Parthenon which they considered an expensive extravaganza. It is indeed fortunate that the artistic currents of the great river of Heracleitus are too powerful and irrepressible to be confined or directed by the whims of humanity or by the barriers of human opinion and political pressures.

"Art is proof for freedom" it has been said. Let art flow forth untrampled and unchecked. It is the greatest crown of liberty and human dignity there is.

Returning now back to Greece and the Ulysses Syndrome, one of the most persistent questions asked is why and for what reason has Greece and its artistic achievements remained the permanent magnet for most art. No convincing answer has ever really been given and the Ulysses Syndrome is thus destined to remain one of the great mysteries in the history of human creativity. Both national and international art, it seems, are solidly tied to the charriot of Greece, to varying degrees, as long as both national and international art live and flourish.

It really dazzles the human mind and confounds the imagination if you conceive, even for an instance, the splendor of the great panorama of human creativity, replenishing itself within the flow of time in the sacred springs of Greek mythology and culture. What luminous ages in art, what spectacular individual creations have not emerged from this repetitive pattern of the Ulysses Syndrome in the course of history!

The first sparkle of classical and Hellenistic art is already apparent as early as 800 A.D. in the great court of Charlemagne who was inspired by antiquity. Even during the so called Dark Ages of the 12th to the 14th centuries the flame of Greece flickered weakly yet steadily through the vaulted halls of Gothic and Romanesque Europe. This flicker of course burst forth eventually into the classical brilliance that enveloped the 15th and 16th centuries, the age of the Renaissance that continues to dazzle us even today. A cluster of radiant stars, outshining each other, filled our artistic firmament with immortality. Botticelli, Dürer, Raphael, Michelangelo, Dominico Theotokopoulo, Palladio, the Fontainebleau School, Primaticcio and



so many others immortalized in their art the general nostalgia for the mythology, culture and art of Greece.

Unchecked, the classical spirit sweeps the 17th and 18th centuries as well, the ages of the Baroque and the Rococo respectively, and this despite the claim of both movements to originality and historical independence. Their special mannerism, however, is deeply rooted in the mythology, landscape and mood of classical Greece. The Ulysses Syndrome is carried to new romantic heights by Caravaggio, Caracci, Bernini and Tiepolo in Italy, Ribera and Velasquez in Spain, while Rubens and Rembrandt carry the torch of Greece with monumental pathos and drama to the Lower Countries to the North. In France, Poussin, Watteau, Boucher and Fragonard languish dreamily in idyllic Arcadia, in the company of muses and cupids reliving the sweet sins of the ancient gods.

And as if the conquests of the gods of Olympys were not sufficient up to the 18th century, surprisingly enough the 19th too, with hardly a fight, fell equally prey to their irresistible charm and authority. No wonder the 19th century has been called "Das Klassizistische Jahrhundert" (the classicist century), immortalized by Canova in Italy, Thorvaldsen in Denmark, Klenze in Germany, the Palladian architecture in England, to mention only a few examples.

Coming now to the 20th century, its true face is still not fully revealed. Who knows, we might still have surprises. Its early roots, however, in the great works of such giant originators and pace setters like Gericault, de Chirico, Maillol, Cezanne, Kokoschka, Picasso, despite their trend for abstraction, are fed by the Grecian spirit, as far as simplicity of forms and compositions is concerned.

The Ulysses Syndrome appears thus to have survived up to our days as the most permanent pattern in the great flow of human artistic creativity. True enough, part of the same pattern is the recurrent reaction and opposition by national and international art to the Syndrome itself.

"Greece and always ancient Greece, never France! Never the 19th century! What a peculiar blindness!", wrote an exasperated French critic in the magazine 'L'Artiste' in 1831.

Yet bitter experience, throughout the ages, has shown that all

efforts to break free from the Ulysses Syndrome, to liberalize and nationalize so to speak national and international art, ultimately proved catastrophic, especially in the history of Western art. Inevitably degeneration and decline set in. Whenever the ancient gods were removed from their pedestal they brought down with them the age or times that dared perform the sacrilege. Our times, alas, serve as a conclusive and tragic example. For it is generally agreed that on the eve of the 21st century and in our own fin du siècle, national and international art, with few exceptions, are steeped in one of the greatest crisis in their history. In its frantic search for a new identity, totally severed from the past, contemporary art from Drip Painting, Op Art, Geometric Abstraction, Abstract Expressionism, Hard Edge, Neo-Dada to Décollage, Hyperrealismus, Magic Realism, Socialist Realism, Personal Mythologies, Computer Art and much else appears to be dissipating itself in a maze of shallow and ephemeral experimentations which have led to a total impasse. I will not be surprised if our own fin du siècle or the beginning of the 21st century will not be seeking the road back to Greece.

And why worry or have a complex about it? The great Picasso is the most uninhibited of all when he admitted at the close of his sensational career that if one would jot down on paper all the roads he had traversed in art and connect them with an outline, the form would represent a Greek Minotaur. Picasso was obviously not afraid of the Minotaur nor did he require an Ariadne to lead him out of the labyrinth. He was content to remain rooted in Greek soil. He had no worries over his Ulysses Syndrome. If anything it was this Syndrome that helped him reach the universal hall of fame.

Because of the unique role of Greek art in the destinies of international art (and with Greek art I do not mean strictly classical, as I shall point out very soon) contemporary Greek art is more closely interwoven with international art than any other national art I know. And this because most international art, as we have seen, is still sharing with national Greek art the same source for reference and inspiration. The great Ulysses Syndrome unites them both today as it has yesterday.

If international art has failed so far to cut its long ties with



the Greek past, Greek national art has obviously no reason for doing so at all. Up to this very day it is tied to its own past with body and soul. Like Prometheus, who gave fire and light to humanity, Greek national art is inescapably bound to the granite foundations of Greece's shining history.

I think it is time to examine closer and more historically this magic source of international inspiration.

Most people unfortunately are under the erroneous impression that the main and only contribution of Greece to international culture and art is the classical period. This constitutes, however, a great historical fallacy. They overlook the fact that Athens of the 5th century B.C., the so called classical age that still captivates us with its brilliance, is only a fleeting moment in the panorama of Greek art and culture, a mere 50 years between the end of the Persian Wars in 480 B.C. and the start of the Peloponnesian War in 331 B.C. which spelled the end of the Greek city-state and the predominance of Athens.

The 'Greek miracle', as it has been called, is not just limited to the 'Golden Age' of the 5th century B.C. There is, for example, the brilliant preclassical art and culture of the 6th century B.C., and before it the colourful Mycenaean, Aegean and Minoan civilizations extending back to about 3000 B.C. All have in one way or another, consciously or unconsciously, left their mark on international art of today.

Following the classical age, on the other hand, is the long period of Macedonian, Greek-Roman and Hellenistic cultures that did much in shaping the mood and spirit of contemporary man.

Christianity, influenced and influencing, reshaped and rekindled the Greek spirit into the artistic, religious and cultural brilliance of the Byzantine empire, which spreading eastwards and to the North shaped the artistic, religious and to a great extent cultural destinies of Russia and of Eastern Europe, and even reaching out to this beautiful country in the artistic tradition of the Finnish Orthodox Church.

The great beacon of Byzantium also illuminated for centuries Southern Italy, the Balkans and the whole Near East penetrating as far South as Ethiopia in Africa.

All the while however, through the flow of the millenniums, following a relatively independent and parallel course, the all embracing spirit of Greek folk art evolved, drawing colourful and substantial ingredients from ancient art and lore and from Byzantium, creating thus its own versatile character and artistic tradition. It is this folk art and culture which sustained Greece's national identity through the terrible burden of 400 years of Turkish occupation that started with the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and ended with the Greek Revolution in 1821 that established modern Greece.

It is a distortion of history to believe that during the 400 years of Turkish rule the artistic spirit of Greece was stifled or choked. On the contrary it took up the banner of resistance and self-assertion creating a plethora of decorative and architectural arts that constitute today a mainstream in the artistic history of modern Greece. Some of the most beautiful and representative examples of this folk art are scattered like jewels all over Greece, churches, monasteries, Aegean island architecture, pottery, wood carvings, ceramics, mosaics, icons, paintings, handicrafts, all of which millions of visitors admire on their pilgrimage to Greece today.

Greek folk art, through the centuries, proved a major artistic influence throughout the Balkan peninsula, the Near East and the Mediterranean basin in general. It also serves today as the main source of inspiration not only to numerous Greek contemporary artists, but to many leading European and American artists as well, most of whom work or have worked in Greece.

We can see thus, how through 400 years of Ottoman rule the Greek creative spirit survived, bloomed and conquered. By the 19th century the entire Turkish empire, administratively and culturally, was to a great extent in the hands of the Greeks, to the point in fact that Greece's leading historian at the time, Paparrigopoulos, seriously doubted the advisability and usefulness of the Greek revolution itself.

Greek folk art, in its spectacular spread and growth through diverse civilizations, seems to confirm the modern theory that folk art is ultimately the only art which is truly international and there is really no other art that can be defined as being national.



From our quick retrospective journey with Ulysses and the Ulysses Syndrome as our guide through the Heraclitian flow of time, we see how national Greek art draws its inspiration and its *raison d'être* from three distinct historic sources and which give it, so to speak, its special "Greekness". They are, Classical and Hellenistic antiquity, the Byzantine era and folk art as it evolved through the centuries.

This special "Greekness", however, is not easy to define, because of the length and complexity of Greek history and the variety of styles emanating from these three artistic sources. All three vary radically from each other in form and content. While preclassical, classical and hellenistic art, for example, stressed a balance of form and content, in Byzantine art content was only important while folk art stressed a naive approach to reality. Contemporary Greek art and its artists cope dextrously and successfully with all three sources in a variety of personal styles and expressions.

True enough Greek artists of today have a certain difficulty in assimilating and unifying into a single characteristic art the stylistic diversions of these three sources. What fortunately has come to the rescue of many is the all pervasive light and landscape of Greece. It is the exceptional clarity of this light and the stark landscapes it illuminates that captivates us today as it has captivated friends and conquerors of Greece alike throughout the ages. To many it is this light also that holds the key to why so many brilliant civilizations sprang from the parched soil of Greece. Today it serves as the fourth source of inspiration to Greek art, the source that unites and permeates contemporary Greek art, giving it its special "Greekness".

We have thus seen how strong and multiple the bonds of national Greek art are with its national heritage. The Ulysses Syndrome serves as both the cross and the salvation on which contemporary Greek art is bound. The Syndrome has served contemporary Greek art very well. While many national arts are going through a phase of crisis or decline, Greek national art, especially painting and sculpture, are flourishing to an unprecedented degree. As a leading collector of contemporary Greek art, I can assure you I find it difficult, if not impossible, to follow all the new promising artists that appear every

year. Neither has their Ulysses Syndrome in any way stifled their imagination, their individual styles or prevented them from exploring new directions in the international world of the avant-garde. Fortunately for Greek art the Ulysses Syndrome serves them well as a multiple source of inspiration, of rejuvenation and of national identity.

It is exactly this question of national identity which in younger countries with short histories becomes particularly vexing and disconcerting. I recall when working in Canada as a writer and art critic how this question seemed to haunt the artistic and literary circles of this dynamic country. Robertson Davies, one of Canada's leading literary figures, wrote about this problem recently thus: "Our national attitude towards literature and art is ambiguous. We ask gloomy questions about it: where is our great poet? When will our writers reveal our national identity? But when a book which is unmistakably about Canadians appears, it is greeted with some embarrassment. Our demand for a national literature is like an outcry for portrait painters in a country where nobody wants to be a sitter".

Of course in younger countries the near total freedom from the burden of the past and the continuous search for a national identity is in itself a refreshing source of creativity and experimentation. But the question is, as we have seen, where does this search ultimately lead to?

In Greece too, as with international art, contemporary artists try to break the bonds with the past and fully assimilate themselves with the various international schools. This is particularly understandable since most younger Greek artists study in Paris, New York and other international centres of art. Nevertheless, they are the exception to the rule. I doubt if they have a chance of ever fully succeeding.

As I mention in the introduction in the newly-published catalogue of the Vorres Museum, whether Greek artists stay in Greece, creating new concepts from their native rootstock, or live abroad where they are directly exposed to powerful new currents and revolutionary experimental movements, Greek artists of today invariably keep the



spark of their national identity alight, as their work clearly shows. For although they assimilate and interpret almost all the trends and "schools" of contemporary international art, they always retain those distinctive traits of "Greekness" that sets them apart from their fellow-artists in other countries. What is more, they always make us feel that we, too, are inseverably attached to the soil of Greece that is capable of absorbing all kinds of seeds, fertilizing them and giving them whatever scent and flavour it likes. This is what I regard as one of the outstanding qualities of the Greek spirit throughout the ages: its ability to receive, assimilate and transmute. This is something which, from my own personal observation, I have discerned in the work of contemporary Greek artists more clearly than anywhere else. As Greeks it makes us feel proud of our past, our present, and optimistic about our future.

Summing up the whole question of Greek national art today and its distinctive "Greekness", Greek art historian and critic Stelios Lydakis puts it as follows: "Those who can claim to be considered as truly Greek artists are the ones who, without being out of step with the age they live in (the time factor), do not ignore the tradition and background of their country (the local or environmental factor). That, after all, is their protective shell, and if they shed it they are, to all intents and purposes committing suicide".

Some contemporary Greek artists, of course, do try to commit suicide and some even succeed, figuratively speaking. Yet even this their success, if success it can be called, can be judged as a direct consequence, however negative, of their Ulysses Syndrome.

Ironically enough the greatest challenge to the Ulysses Syndrome in Greece today comes not from the artists and the intelligentsia but from the Greek public at large, the same public that through the centuries of wars and suffering had stubbornly upheld it. Enjoying an unprecedented post-war prosperity, yet basically undereducated, the Greek public, propelled by shallow materialism and a xenomania caused by ignorance, has set out unconsciously on an orgy of destruction in the superficial belief that whatever is foreign is fashionable and proper. As a result, villages, towns and cities are being haphazardly rebuilt, supposedly modernized, without respect

to the past or the traditional. Worst to suffer from this destructive onslaught of a "nouveau riche" consumer society is the folk art and the neoclassic style represented mostly in traditional Greek architecture and interior design. Non regulated or illegal construction has also played havoc with the historic Greek countryside. It has been said that Greece has suffered more destruction in the past fifty years than in all of its 5000 years of history!

The most tragic example of the destructive mania of the Greek public is today Athens itself. From a picturesque, neoclassic city of 400,000 before the war, the city has haphazardly grown into a cemented, non-descript monstrosity of approximately 4 million, which represents nearly half of the population of Greece. The city has also won the dubious distinction of having been proclaimed the most polluted city of Europe, endangering its great historic monuments and the lives of its citizens. I am sure Pericles must be turning in his grave in utter disgust. Professor Constantine Trypanis, a former Greek Minister of Culture, once declared in Parliament that if drastic measures are not taken immediately, Athens and the rest of Greece will be unlivable by 2000 A.D. His prediction is alarmingly close to coming true. Many measures, in theory at least, are being taken by the authorities but they are slow to come and are proving insufficient.

Fortunately many individuals, local groups and cultural societies are coming to the rescue of what can still be saved from the treasure-trove of Greece's past.

It is primarily, I believe, a question of re-educating or rather of reminding the contemporary Greek public of its historic duty to itself and to the world as the guardian of a great civilization. The creation of the Vorres Museum of contemporary and traditional Greek art, open now to the public, is a small personal contribution towards this aim.

On the other hand, in all frankness, I begin to wonder whether trying to perpetuate the Ulysses Syndrome, this artistic dependence on a past, is not becoming futile and self-defeating especially in our times. It is in a way like trying to swim against the onslaught of a new Heracletian tide. For this very moment one of the greatest achievements of mankind is taking place, passing, alas, nearly



unnoticed. Yet it is certain to change the course of art and our own destinies radically. Pioneer 10, the tiny spacecraft, is now pushing towards the edge of the solar system, over two and a half billion miles away, opening up the wonders of the universe to human comprehension. Will these immense new horizons prove the future magnet of all art? Will the grandeur of space and the exploration of the universe prove the Sword of Damocles that will finally cut the Gordian Knot of the Ulysses Syndrome? Or will human art, exhausted by the enormity before it, return humbly back to earth for solace and for rejuvenation? I am sure not even the great Delphic oracle could have given an answer to these questions. Time alone will ultimately tell.

Returning back to earth and with the Ulysses Syndrome as our guide, we shall now view through coloured slides some highlights of the Greek artistic panorama with special emphasis on the buildings, interiors and collections of the Vorres Museum, which you are cordially invited to visit when you next come to Greece.

In ending, may I express my deep appreciation for the great honor of addressing you today, not as an authority on art but as a collector and lover of Greek art, who is doing his share to save and preserve something of the glory that was, is and hopefully will be Greece.

MARKKU VALKONEN

I'm not at all positive that we could discuss national identity in plain and concrete terms. It's even more difficult to discuss the national identity implied in art. Nevertheless I presume that it's sensible to waste time in talking about these subjects.

Everyday experience can tell us that national identity is very often easy to discern. If you meet a Finnish male person abroad, you can immediately distinguish him from afar. His complexion is fair and his nose is getting more of the reddish brilliancy if the sun is shining. He is speaking very loudly, and he is dead sure that everybody wants to listen to him explaining the heroic deeds of yesterday. Usually this person is more or less drunk. If not, he remains relatively silent.

All in all, he cannot avoid being a bit vulgar or rustic.

In Finland at his home base he may present more sides of himself. At best you can find him emotionally warm, and before long his friendship tends to embrace the whole world. Especially when he is drunk.

It seems to be so that our Finnish male friend can experience his freedom and his satisfaction (only) when he is drunk. In this happy state of mind he won't bend his head before kings and generals and especially he hates to make a bow to a policeman.

When drunk our friend may be aggressive, but when he reaches the final state of the inevitable hangover he turns incredibly tender. A real Finn never cries, but if his bad condition cannot be relieved by a sip or two, he may shed a tear.

There are many Finnish works of art that have been created either under the influence of liquor or of the extreme lack of it. Only a hundred kilometers here northbound there are situated two famous art studios. The other one is called Intoxication and the other Hangover. A remarkable Finnish expressionist painter Tyko Sallinen haunted the Hangover and his friend Jalmari Ruokokoski used or abused the Intoxication.

Sallinen was a rough but tender person while his colleague tended to be easy-going and soft.



In both of them we can recognize something very typical of the Finnish identity. I mean biological aggression on the other hand, and almost sentimental tendency to find symbiosis with nature on the other.

Maybe you feel that sums up a banality, but I'm coming closer to my point.

In fact human identity is formed so early in a child, that he cannot do anything about it. He is programmed to a certain pattern of behaviour and feeling without having a chance to resist. And this inner programme is put in by the whole present tradition.

That's why it would be strange not to believe that these basic primary patterns have some influence in the production of art and in the way we appreciate art.

It is said that a Finn is having his opera by boozing. In this phrase there emerges the way how we mentally grasp art. We prefer art that is emphatically emotional or to some extent melancholical or approaching sentimentality.

We ask for difficulties if we try to create intellectual art, for we must make an extra effort to control our emotions. This effort can often be seen in the Finnish works of art. Besides, we are not good at quick witticisms and intellectual play.

A Finnish author once remarked that we have inherited our left hemisphere of our brain from the east and the right hemisphere from the west. Roughly speaking this implies that we have got our strong emotional character from the east and the drop of constructive intellect from the west.

Whatever the truth, we appreciate all that is well done, and in fact we are inclined to compete in the field of quality, not in the field of innovation. That's why we often lag behind the fresh ideas and movements in art.

Our weak self-esteem persuades us to nature and to symbiosis. Nature reveals itself as lost mother or womb, where we are anxious to return to, if somehow possible. It is quite reasonable to regard Finnish painting and sculpture from this point of view.

French psychiatrist G. Devereux has attempted to formulate clear theoretical statement on the subject of ethnic neuroses and psychoses,

the essential element of which is the idea of an ethnic unconscious. This statement concerns our theme.

I cite: "That portion of the total unconscious segment of the individual psyche which is shared with most members of a given culture in that ... society and culture permits certain impulses, fantasies and the like to become and to remain conscious, while requiring others to be repressed. The members of a given culture are likely to have repressed the same things and thereby to have certain unconscious conflicts in common."

It is Devereux's view that there are emotionally disturbed persons in whom the unconscious ethnic personality has not become so dis-organized as to incite them to wholesale rebellion against all social norms. While they are genuinely ill, such persons tend to borrow from their culture the means for channelling their subjective derangement in a conventional way.

To make sure, I don't want to mix psychopathology and art with each other, but it seems clear that if a person is trying to solve his inner conflicts in a constructive way — for instance by means of art — he resorts to his ethnic pattern.

Illness may be parallel to Prometheus Bound and art — anyway at its best — to Prometheus Unbound.

I readily admit that all I have previously said means simplifying our case, but when started I cannot let it go yet.

Mr. Schjeldahl was yesterday wondering why there seems to prevail a total lack of artistic achievement in the Nordic countries after Munch, Sibelius, Strindberg and Saarinen. I try to give one answer although I'm well aware of its being extremely abstract.

My guide here is Finnish neurophysiologist Matti Bergström. He has some time ago presented a theory concerning the behaviour of the so-called social brain-substance. That means he is not dealing with individual brain-functions, but considers all the separate brains in a society as a functional whole. In this big mass of cells he feels the laws of entropy governing.

Bergström contends that in the last analysis all the changes in a given society has one basic target: To increase the society's capacity of information.



In primitive societies this target was achieved by trying to increase the rate of birth, while in more developed societies there is a tendency to multiply the channels of contact between individual brains. After this phase there remains the effort to accelerate the traffic in the channels.

This function might include art as a modern necessity.

It may be that the Finnish society at the turn of the century reached the level on where it was impossible to raise the information capacity with the old ways. So art was recruited. Not children.

Please remember the old simile that parallels the creation of an artwork to bearing a child.

At the moment we are again increasing the rate of birth, but maybe this is beside the point.



René Berger director of the Art Museum of Lausanne,  
honorary President of the AICA, Switzerland

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## RAPPORT SUR LE PROJET DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE: LES IMAGES DE NOTRE IDENTITÉ

RENÉ BERGER

### Rôle de l'art dans la constitution des identités culturelles

Sans entrer dans les détails, il sied de rappeler que de tout temps ce sont les artistes, au sens large, et même quand ils ne portaient pas expressément ce nom, qui ont, sinon entièrement défini l'identité d'une civilisation, du moins contribué le plus fortement à la qualifier.

A preuve que pour nous les visages du passé s'établissent, certes, sur l'histoire diplomatique et militaire, sur le mouvement des idées, mais de façon éminemment privilégiée sur les oeuvres d'art qui nous sont parvenues.

Nul doute que tant la physionomie de l'Egypte que celle de la Chine ancienne ou, pour nous en tenir à l'Occident, le Moyen Age et la Renaissance se profilent avec précision à partir des temples, des palais, des tombeaux, des édifices sacrés ou profanes, des peintures, des sculptures, des objets dont le style (pour employer un terme générique) comporte un ensemble de traits distinctifs.

C'est ce que mettent en évidence partout:

- a. l'histoire générale de l'art par le truchement des livres et des reproductions
- b. les musées, par leurs collections et les expositions historiques qui y sont organisées
- c. de nos jours, le tourisme en général, le tourisme culturel en particulier qui l'un et l'autre amènent par dizaines de millions les gens aux lieux où ont fleuri les civilisations d'autrefois.

A noter que jamais les expositions n'ont connu pareille foule, témoin le succès des expositions de Tout Ankh Amon, de Ramsès II ou, tout récemment à New York, celui de la rétrospective Picasso (l'ordinateur réglant le nombre de visiteurs et fixant le jour d'admission).

La conclusion qui s'impose, et qui sert de fondement à la suite de l'exposé, c'est que l'art joue un rôle essentiel dans la détermination de notre identité culturelle et que la recherche de celle-ci est

ressentie comme un besoin de plus en plus répandu et profond.

C'est à cette double constatation qu'a répondu et que répond encore l'initiative du Conseil de l'Europe qui consiste à accorder périodiquement son patronage à une exposition européenne d'envergure dont la dernière, consacrée aux Médicis, a connu un succès retentissant.

Il importa néanmoins de relever que cette initiative du Conseil de l'Europe, toute légitime et féconde qu'elle est, s'en tient jusqu'ici au passé.

Le présent rapport expose un projet qui, tout en s'inspirant de la même motivation fondamentale, entend remédier à cette carence en élargissant le champ et la portée de l'initiative à notre époque. Le Conseil de l'Europe ne se réduit pas à une instruction historique; il prétend s'occuper du présent et vis-er l'avenir.

#### La mutation des temps modernes

Au prix d'un certain schématisme, il est possible de ramener cette mutation à cinq facteurs de notre histoire contemporaine:

- prépondérance de la science
- prépondérance de la technologie
- prépondérance de l'économie
- prépondérance de la politique
- prépondérance des mass media

Les deux premiers facteurs, science et technologie, tendent à s'universaliser et à s'homogénéiser, de même que l'économie, encore que celle-ci reste tributaire, dans une certaine mesure, des régimes politiques.

La situation est rendue d'autant plus complexe que les media tissent un réseau national, international, voire planétaire, avec toutes les interférences trans-nationales qu'impliquent les moyens électroniques.

Cette mutation comporte des vitesses différentielles entre pays dits développés et/ou en voie de développement, mais il est hors de doute qu'elle affecte l'ensemble de la société moderne.

Schématiquement encore, il s'ensuit des conséquences radicales:

1. une tendance générale à l'uniformisation culturelle, due à l'invasion toujours plus grande de la technologie dans notre vie



quotidienne: cf. le développement des ordinateurs, de l'informatique, de la télématique, de la télévision, de la robotique

2. des résistances individuelles ou collectives en vue de maintenir les structures historiques, comme instruments de sécurité
3. un sentiment de malaise généralisé du à une incertitude toujours plus grande
4. un besoin non moins accru de trouver ou de retrouver des éléments d'identité à la fois dans la mutation qui se produit et à l'intérieur de nos "flots de résistance".

#### Rôle de l'art et des artistes modernes

On peut se borner à rappeler la rupture historique de l'art moderne à partir de la révolution impressionniste, suivie d'ailleurs de nombreuses autres, tels le fauvisme, le cubisme, le futurisme, etc..., rupture qui a eu pour effet, entre autres, de diviser un public longtemps "unitaire" en deux, d'une part "l'élite", les "happy few", enthousiastes ou zéloteurs du changement, d'autre part le "grand public", caractérisé par son opposition au changement, son attachement à la tradition.

Cette situation est devenue encore plus aigue après la deuxième guerre mondiale, en particulier avec l'avènement et la propagation de l'art abstrait.

Elle se manifeste avec une acuité accrue aujourd'hui où nombre d'artistes recourent à des expressions issues de la technologie – cinéma, video, laser – à des matériaux de rebut – art pauvre, affiches lacérées –, voire à la chimie ou à l'écologie – land art, art écologique, etc...

La conclusion qui se dégage est que notre époque présente sous le nom d'art une diversité qui prend souvent figure d'hétérogénéité, dans laquelle d'aucuns dénoncent la confusion.

Cette hétérogénéité atteste néanmoins à la fois la vitalité des artistes, rarement aussi nombreux qu'à notre époque, et la recherche tant des spectateurs que des pouvoirs publics d'une identité en plein bouleversement.

Le rappel des pouvoirs publics n'est pas circonstanciel. Aussi longtemps qu'existait une certaine unité sociale, en gros jusqu'à

la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, la fonction socio-politico-culturelle de l'art semblait aller de soi.

De nos jours, grand est l'embarras des pouvoirs publics pour décider des commandes officielles, balançant toujours entre l'artiste "conventionnel" qui rassure, mais qui passe pour insignifiant aux yeux des gens avertis, et l'artiste "moderne" dont la modernité heurte le sentiment populaire.

Qu'on se rappelle les polémiques suscitées par la volonté de Malraux de confier le plafond de l'Opéra à Chagall ou la réprobation qu'a suscitée le crucifix de Germaine Richier à la Chapelle d'Assy, crucifix qui a du passer de l'autel au refuge de la sacristie... Les exemples pourraient être multipliés à l'infini; à chaque fois qu'il est question de décorer des bâtiments publics, la polémique reprend de plus belle.

#### Le "système" de l'art moderne

Jusqu'ici, j'ai envisagé les changements de l'art moderne dans leur contenu. Il convient d'examiner non moins brièvement le système dans lequel ils s'inscrivent et comment celui-ci fonctionne. Comme dans toute autre activité sociale, l'activité artistique met en jeu des agents déterminés qui opèrent dans des conditions elles-mêmes déterminées.

Pour ce qui touche l'art moderne, les principaux agents du système sont:

- les artistes
- les galeries et les marchands
- les collectionneurs
- les musées
- les critiques
- les media
- les foires d'art, nationales ou internationales (Bale, Cologne, Paris)
- les confrontations internationales, type biennale, triennale (Venise, Documenta, Paris, etc...).

Pour autant qu'on s'en tienne au régime dit libéral (Ouest et Japon), c'est la loi du marché qui règle au premier chef le système. La cote fonctionne comme étalon de mesure, étalon ambigu puisque s'y amalgament à la fois la qualité, la notoriété et le coefficient de l'offre et de



la demande; or la qualité ne va pas nécessairement avec les deux autres facteurs, pas plus qu'elle ne les exclut.

Tel qu'on l'observe, le marché de l'art participe de la fécondité et de la diversité qu'implique la compétition, mais subit aussi les limites de celle-ci. Le régime de la libre concurrence est stimulant; il tend néanmoins à entretenir et à encourager les "produits rentables" (ce que l'on dit et ne cesse de répéter à propos de la télévision en opposant les émissions de "grande écoute" aux émissions culturelles, les sondages opérant à l'instar de la cote). C'est ce que confirment les foires internationales d'art, telles celles de Bale, de Cologne, de Paris, qui sans doute se réclament de la qualité, mais qui fondamentalement, sinon exclusivement, comme le dit clairement l'appellation de "foire", fonctionnent comme des bourses, parfois comme des supermarchés.

Il s'ensuit une topographie préférentielle qu'on aurait tort de négliger. Pour m'en tenir à un seul exemple, l'hégémonie de New York et de Paris, "hot places" comme je les appelle par opposition aux "cool places" que sont les centres secondaires tels Londres, Düsseldorf, Rome, et les "cold areas" que constitue la presque totalité du tiers monde. C'est en effet dans ces lieux privilégiés par la concentration des moyens — marchands, media, expositions — que s'établissent les réputations et les cotes.

Il est vrai que le système compose avec d'autres facteurs qui cherchent à pondérer le marché de l'art, ainsi les critiques ou certains media, qui loin de souscrire à la loi de l'offre et de la demande, se comportent en analystes vigilants, ou encore les expositions-confrontations internationales qui, telles les biennales de Venise, Sao Paulo, Paris, Tokyo, Belgrade, Lausanne, etc., visent à fournir (ce qu'elles réussissent à faire dans une certaine mesure) une information différente de celle produite par le marché de l'art.

#### Rôle nouveau des musées

Les musées d'art ont pour fonction initiale la conservation de la mémoire collective qui, par opposition à l'écrit, est essentiellement constituée par la peinture et la sculpture.

Ils sont devenus avec le temps des hauts lieux, tant pour la

société qui a produit les oeuvres dépositaires de cette mémoire que pour les visiteurs dont le nombre ne cesse de s'accroître avec le développement prodigieux du tourisme. A Paris, le Louvre, à Florence, les Offices, à Madrid le Prado, autant de "trois étoiles" qui figurent aux programmes des menus culturels des agences.

A côté des musées d'art historiques se sont développés un peu partout de très nombreux musées d'art moderne dont la fonction, greffée sur celle des musées historiques, consiste à rendre compte de l'élaboration de la mémoire collective de notre époque.

Cette fonction répond à un double besoin:

- d'une part établir la continuité de l'art historique avec l'art moderne
- de l'autre donner au public l'image ou les images d'une identité culturelle qui se forme aujourd'hui dans la diversité et la mouvance.

Or, si la notion de musée d'art moderne est univoque, les institutions qui y correspondent sont complexes.

Ainsi que l'ont fait ressortir les travaux du séminaire de Delphes, leur statut varie considérablement: musées officiels, privés, fondations, Kunsthallen, etc... Ce qui détermine des vocations et des conceptions elles-mêmes diverses. A quoi s'ajoutent des moyens financiers très variables, étriqués le plus souvent, abondants quelquefois (c'est l'exception).

Ces disparates ne modifient pas la fonction essentielle de ces institutions, ni leur finalité, mais il est évident qu'elles exercent de lourdes contraintes sur le choix des artistes en particulier, selon qu'on a les moyens ou non d'acquérir leurs oeuvres. Il en résulte nécessairement, non seulement des disparates, mais des inégalités en ce qui concerne l'information sur l'art moderne. L'image de celui-ci qu'en donnent les institutions est le plus souvent conditionnée par les moyens matériels.

Cette situation est d'autant plus préoccupante que les musées tendent depuis quelques décennies à devenir, à l'instar de la presse, de la radio et surtout de la télévision, de véritables media.

Les expositions, telles les émissions TV, s'y succèdent sous la forme d'expositions des collections ou d'expositions temporaires consacrées à un artiste, à un mouvement, à un thème, etc...



Dans le premier cas, le musée recourt à ses propres collections, généralement par roulement; dans le deuxième, il doit surtout procéder par emprunts auprès d'autres musées ou collectionneurs, ce qui rend très souvent les frais d'assurance et de transport rédhibitoires.

Les deux formules peuvent d'ailleurs se combiner dans le même musée par la distinction de locaux ad hoc; ainsi le Musée d'art Moderne de la Ville de Paris et sa section de l'ARC.

Cette nouvelle vocation de medium est confirmée par l'importance qu'ont prise dans les musées de nombreuses activités d'animation et de services tels que, pour en citer quelques-uns, l'affiche, le catalogue, les cartes postales, les diapositives, l'audio-visuel, les publications de tous ordres, les relations avec la presse, la radio, la télévision, les visites-conférences, les manifestations annexes (théâtre, concerts, performances, actions), les budgets publicitaires, la location ou la vente d'oeuvres, etc... A quoi s'ajoute le merchandising artistique qui fournit à certains musées américains des sommes atteignant plusieurs millions de dollars (reproductions, bijoux, T-shirts, etc...); c'est notamment le cas du Metropolitan Museum de New York.

Cette vocation de medium a fait récemment l'objet d'une exposition intitulée symptomatiquement Mediamuseo (Montecatini Terme, 27-30 mars 1980); l'enquête a porté sur quelque 247 musées.

On peut en conclure que les musées d'art moderne, au sens large donné ci-dessus, constituent, avec les galeries, les collectionneurs, avec le marché de l'art en général, le réseau complexe dans lequel se constitue l'image de notre identité culturelle.

Or, pour sa part, le marché de l'art a, ainsi que nous l'avons vu, établi des "banques de données" ou "centres régulateurs" que sont les foires d'art.

D'un autre côté, les confrontations périodiques internationales — biennales, triennales, quadriennales — tentent à leur manière de fournir une information qui échappe partiellement à l'impératif du marché.

Encore faut-il noter que ces manifestations internationales, sans liens entre elles, sont en principe le fait d'une ville ou d'une région qui tirent avantage de leur initiative, sinon au plan pécuniaire,

du moins au plan du prestige.

Reste que le moyen le plus efficace, le plus équitable aussi de faire connaître l'activité artistique de notre époque et la recherche culturelle de l'Europe telle que l'art nous la propose, n'a pas encore été mis en oeuvre: il consiste — c'est l'aboutissement de notre enquête — dans la confrontation périodique des musées d'art moderne.

De par leur statut, leur vocation et leur fonction, et quelque disparates que l'on constate entre eux, ces institutions ont en propre et en commun un souci de légitimité à la fois dans le choix des oeuvres qu'elles acquièrent et des expositions qu'elles organisent, souci de légitimité qui leur assure, au sens large, une qualité de service public.

C'est sur la base de cette analyse que se fonde le projet intitulé "Images de notre Identité: les Musées Européens vous proposent..." .

Plus synthétiquement (le titre définitif est encore à choisir): le Musée imaginaire de l'Europe, ou encore les Musées d'art moderne au carrefour de l'Europe, etc...

## PROJET

### Observations préliminaires

Le mot "musée d'art moderne" doit être pris au sens large, comprenant institutions publiques ou privées telles que fondations, Kunsthallen, etc...

Le terme d'identité doit être pris dans un sens également large: il ne s'agit pas d'une identité préconçue ou normative, mais bien davantage d'une recherche d'identité, celle-ci se révélant de nos jours à la fois plurielle et dynamique.

L'accent mis sur l'Europe doit conserver un caractère de recherche lui aussi. Il ne s'agit pas d'opposer l'Europe à l'Amérique ou à quelque autre continent; il s'agit précisément de dégager certains traits distinctifs, qui peuvent par ailleurs s'universaliser, mais dont la nature et l'origine sont difficilement situables hors d'Europe: cf. le cas, devenu classique, de Picasso, qui exprime certes des caractères de notre société moderne, mais dont il est difficilement



contestable que l'oeuvre a ses racines dans son Espagne natale.

### Réalisation

A l'instigation du Conseil de l'Europe ou sous ses auspices, auront lieu des expositions-confrontations périodiques dont le but sera, en prolongement de ce qui a été réalisé pour les grandes expositions historiques, de faire le point et de dégager progressivement les visages de notre identité tels qu'ils apparaissent au fil de la création artistique de notre temps.

Ces expositions-confrontations, groupant un certain nombre de musées d'art moderne européens, de huit à douze selon les cas, seront organisées à tour de rôle dans un pays de l'Europe en un lieu déterminé pour une durée limitée (trois ou quatre mois selon les possibilités).

Le choix des artistes et des oeuvres sera fait par les institutions participantes qui constitueront le comité d'organisation avec la collaboration d'une commission désignée par le Conseil de l'Europe pour harmoniser les finalités selon le titre même de l'expérience "Images de notre Identité: les Musées Européens vous proposent".

L'accent étant mis, soulignons-le une fois encore, sur la recherche de l'identité européenne par et à travers l'art moderne.

Ce choix portera de préférence, mais non exclusivement, sur les achats d'oeuvres modernes faits par ces institutions, puisque l'achat constitue un acte public qui implique un triple contrat: avec l'artiste, avec les deniers de l'Etat, avec le public.

Il pourra également comprendre toute autre forme de présentation liée aux activités du musée: expositions temporaires, enquêtes, documentation, publications, recherches audio-visuelles, etc...

L'exposition qui en résultera permettra, outre une comparaison qui n'a jamais eu lieu, du moins de façon méthodique, de faire le point sur un certain nombre de problèmes communs à tous les musées: status, moyens financiers, organes de décision, rapports avec les collectionneurs, les critiques, les media, les galeries, catalogues, publications, etc...

Cette confrontation d'un type nouveau fera l'objet d'un catalogue-dossier novateur dans lequel se trouveront par ailleurs les

renseignements consacrés traditionnellement aux oeuvres et aux artistes exposés.

Pourront s'y ajouter des textes de théoriciens, de critiques, d'essayistes, susceptibles d'éclairer la démarche de la création artistique moderne dans ses rapports avec la recherche de notre identité culturelle.

Le catalogue-dossier se situe ainsi au moins à trois niveaux:

1. niveau de l'information par rapport aux oeuvres et artistes exposés
2. niveau de l'enquête par rapport au fonctionnement des musées
3. niveau de la réflexion critique par rapport au sens qui peut se dégager de l'exposition-confrontation.

Chaque exposition-confrontation pourra faire l'objet d'un ou de plusieurs colloques qui se situeront eux-mêmes à plusieurs niveaux:

1. colloques entre les responsables des musées en vue d'une confrontation de leurs institutions et de leurs activités
2. colloques entre théoriciens, critiques, essayistes, artistes, en vue d'une élucidation de la démarche de l'art moderne
3. colloques entre artistes et public en vue d'une prise de conscience réciproque.

De tels colloques s'inscrivent naturellement dans la visée de l'exposition-confrontation et celle du catalogue-dossier: leurs résultats pourront former un appendice à celui-ci.

#### Archives de l'art contemporain

Ces expositions-confrontations pourront donner lieu, outre les catalogues-dossiers, à la création d'une documentation raisonnée sur l'art contemporain, sous la forme de:

1. fiches
2. reproductions
3. collections de diapositives
4. bandes video

Cette documentation, qui aurait l'avantage de bénéficier de l'agrément, de la collaboration et de l'expérience partagée des principaux musées d'art moderne, acquerrait une autorité qui assurerait d'emblée à ces archives de l'art contemporain une diffusion dont la



légitimité s'imposerait rapidement.

En conclusion, et compte tenu de ce qui précède, le projet intitulé "Images de notre Identité: les Musées européens vous proposent..." prolonge l'initiative du Conseil de l'Europe concernant les expositions historiques en envisageant les moyens les plus efficaces et les plus légitimes d'une recherche de même nature par rapport à l'identité culturelle de l'art contemporain. Il remédie à un manque et répond à un besoin.

À une époque dominée par les media, sa réalisation permettrait d'assurer aux artistes et aux musées d'art moderne un rôle régulateur (au sens cybernétique du terme) en fournissant, à partir d'une expérience concertée, l'information susceptible d'éclairer la recherche de notre identité, information qui, selon Norbert Wiener, père de la cybernétique, "est un nom pour désigner le contenu de ce qui est échangé avec le monde extérieur à mesure que nous nous y adaptons et que nous lui appliquons les résultats de notre adaptation".

ANDRÉE PARADIS

Je suis d'accord avec René Berger; l'identité culturelle est une trappe mais c'est aussi une réalité dans certains pays. En particulier dans des pays qui traversent une crise d'identité nationale.

La politique se sert de l'identité culturelle pour faire accepter d'autres visées. Pour moi l'identité culturelle retrouve chez nos artistes — c'est le désir profond d'exister, d'être reconnus dans l'esprit qu'indiquait Markku Valkonen, de s'insérer dans la tissu du patrimoine culturel, universel. L'identité culturelle c'est de faire accepter ce pourquoi l'on se distingue. Ça surgit non plus d'une appartenance de la terre natale dont on est issu et qui reste la première source de toutes expressions, dans le besoin d'être soi-même et d'apporter à l'est et à la monde des idées, sa contribution.

Dans chaque pays il y a des artistes qui attendent d'être nommés pour avoir le droit d'existence et quand ils en ont, ils sont encore loin de la célébrité. Mais une fois nommés ils existent, ils ont le pied à l'étrier.

La force de New York — comme centre des arts actuels — est le génie de la promotion. New York est un règne de la publicité qui réussit à convaincre qu'on peint plus nouveau et mieux qu'ailleurs. Il n'y a pas actuellement de force de marchandise comparable à celle de New York. C'est une force établie autant par les marchands qu'avec la connivence de l'Etat.

Je reprends un argument de notre collègue Peter Schjeldahl, concernant le soi-disant climat crée par le patronage de l'Etat dans certains pays. Il n'y a pas d'artiste qui puisse vivre sans patronage que ce soit celui de l'Etat, celui des corporations, celui des marchands. Je ne dis pas qu'il s'agisse là de climat artificiel et stérile. Je crains bien d'avantage la médiocrité intellectuelle des milieux artistiques — la pauvrissement de la culture et le manque de la curiosité et les errantes philistines d'une certaine critique.

On a parlé de provincialisme avec une attitude négative — négligeant ses facteurs positifs. Est-ce que c'est juste de juger une oeuvre provinciale, si ce n'est "subir de la comparaison avec un prototype issu à une capitale". (J. Clair)

Encore une fois ce n'est ni important ni grave d'être jugé de



provincialisme. Si l'oeuvre ne porte pas toutes les traces flagrantes des modules enchainés.

Ce qui m'apparaît beaucoup plus grave c'est que l'oeuvre soit le prototype ou le produit d'une experience regionaliste et qu'elle soit dépourvue de qualités essentielles, comme le souci de la connaissance, de ce qui précède l'histoire à laquelle on doit ajouter même au foire de la rupture.

L'avant-garde, par sa soif de nouveauté, a besoin d'accumulation constante d'information - ce constitué à produire quand on n'est pas assez l'artiste la notion du temps. J'ai l'impression très forte que c'est loin des capitales et des centres que l'artiste pourra d'avantage se ressourcer en profondeur dans le sens de l'histoire et de trouver ses propres lois - loin de toutes les choses qui ne peuvent souvent donner qu'une illusion mensongère du progres.

## LA DOCUMENTATION DE L'ART MODERNE ET CONTEMPORAIN ET LA CREATION ARTISTIQUE EN TANT QU'UN FAIT SOCIAL

HANS-JÖRG HEUSSER

L'histoire de l'art, telle qu'elle se présente le plus souvent encore aujourd'hui, n'a à ma connaissance guère contribué au problème de "l'identité culturelle". Pour cela, son approche de l'art est trop étroite et trop spécialisée. Je ne prends donc ici la parole en tant qu'historien de l'art que pour exprimer mon insatisfaction devant cette situation, et pour avancer quelques propositions de modifications qui concernent en particulier le domaine de la documentation de l'art moderne et contemporain. Evidemment je suis conscient de ce que "l'identité culturelle" est un concept socio-culturel et relève, par conséquent, de la compétence de la sociologie, qui d'ailleurs en a discuté dans le détail comme de son contraire, l'aliénation. Mais l'intérêt scientifique à mon sens, loin de s'arrêter aux frontières des disciplines, devrait rechercher leurs liens réciproques — et l'art, la création artistique, la réception des oeuvres d'art sont directement concernés par les problèmes d'identité: l'art est, pour l'artiste qui le crée comme pour le public qui le reçoit, un moyen privilégié de la recherche d'identité et des tentatives de définition de l'identité. Renvoyer à la nature socio-culturelle du concept ne saurait donc permettre d'éviter la confrontation avec ce problème. L'"art" est, lui aussi, un phénomène socio-culturel; celui qui remettrait en cause cette évidence laisserait l'arbre lui cacher la forêt. L'étude scientifique de l'art, ce que nous appelons la discipline "histoire de l'art", devrait donc inclure systématiquement ces corrélations dans son champ d'observation.

Il semble que l'histoire de l'art présente certaines anomalies, parmi lesquelles une attitude défensive, remarquablement obstinée, envers la psychanalyse, et une tendance non moins curieuse à occulter la réalité sociale de la création artistique, c'est-à-dire à détacher l'art de la société. A côté de l'idéologie de l'art pour l'art, on a ainsi installé une histoire de l'art pour l'histoire de l'art; j'entends par là la tentative obstinée de fonder, contre toute



évidence, une science de l'art autonome qui ne s'appuie pas sur des sciences voisines comme la psychologie ou la sociologie. Cela n'était possible qu'en resserrant le champ visuel jusqu'à ce que tout élément perturbateur en soit exclu.

En fait, il y a toujours eu des historiens de l'art qui défendaient aussi une définition "hétéronome" de la science de l'art, et quelques unes des oeuvres les plus importantes de l'histoire de l'art ont en effet un caractère interdisciplinaire. Mais les hétéronomistes parmi les historiens de l'art rencontraient des difficultés importantes avec la sociologie et encore plus avec la psychologie. Ainsi, la psychologie de l'art pratiquée par certains historiens de l'art n'a pendant longtemps guère dépassé un stade initial correspondant à la psychologie prépsychanalytique. Ce n'est que ces dernières années que l'on peut parler d'une véritable réception de la psychanalyse.

Les contacts avec la sociologie ont été, quant à eux, beaucoup plus étendus et intensifs. Mais là aussi le développement ne fut pas suivi: on s'en tenait à une sociologie de type "sciences humaines", dépassée depuis longtemps par le passage à une recherche sociale empirique. Le sociologue de l'art allemand Rainer Wick explique cette attitude défensive — d'une manière sans doute simplificatrice — par le fait que l'historien de l'art se trouvait dépassé face à une sociologie moderne devenue trop complexe. C'est ainsi, selon Wick, que "les historiens de l'art qui ne considèrent pas leur discipline comme autonome mais cherchent plutôt à lui donner un fondement hétéronome, ont tendance, en ce qui concerne les questions sociales, à recourir sans évidence empirique suffisante à des modèles d'interprétation traditionnels, en particulier à des spéculations socio-philosophiques." Il en résulterait que la plupart de ces recherches, qu'il qualifie de pseudo-scientifiques, n'approchent guère les standards conceptuel, théorique et méthodologique de la sociologie contemporaine; dans une note, Wick précise qu'il vise ici p.e. Arnold Hauser.

Jusqu'à quel point cette situation de la recherche est-elle responsable des lacunes considérables et significatives que présente le flot de documents produit par les artistes, les intermédiaires et le marché de l'art? Cette question doit sans doute rester en suspens. Quelles qu'en soient les raisons, il apparaît en effet que sur des

domaines importants de la vie artistique moderne et contemporaine, le nombre de "documents" produits est faible ou même nul. Il en résulte que même en collectionnant avec une application impeccable tous les documents produits d'une année à l'autre, les centres de documentation ne remplissent leur tâche que d'une manière partielle et insuffisante. Leur zèle trouve en effet sa limite là où aucun document n'est produit; ainsi se constituent les lacunes documentaires qui contribuent à préparer les incertitudes et l'histoire de l'art future. Car dans ce futur également, la recherche devra s'en tenir aux matériaux disponibles. L'amnésie historique sera sans aucun doute le lot des phénomènes pour lesquels aucuns documents ne sont actuellement fournis.

Revenons cependant aux lacunes de la documentation artistique. Elles concernent en règle générale précisément ces informations dont l'on devrait disposer pour saisir la création artistique comme phénomène socio-psychologique. Les problèmes de l'identité, par exemple de l'identité sociale de l'artiste ou de l'identité collective des divers publics, n'apparaissent — par manque de producteur d'informations — que tout en marge de la documentation artistique.

L'art est une production sociale (un truisme pour les sociologues). Comme le dit Wick, les oeuvres d'art naissent dans la société, "elles sont déterminées par elle, et sont elles-mêmes socialement déterminantes". Dans cette mesure, l'art est "à priori social, même quand il se situe en opposition aux normes de la société". On peut en dire autant de l'artiste, qui n'est rien moins qu'un être étranger, voire supérieur à la société, comme le suggère le mythe de l'artiste, mais qui se trouve déterminé socialement jusque dans ses gestes antisociaux les plus extrêmes ...". Le sociologue de l'art Alphons Silbermann propose ainsi cette formule: "la création artistique est une production sociale". Cela ne signifie pas qu'elle le soit exclusivement, mais qu'elle le soit également (Wick, Reader p. 12). Mais cela implique qu'il n'appartient pas au bon vouloir des historiens de l'art d'inclure ou non dans leurs études des points de vue sociologiques. S'ils ne le font pas, ils risquent de ne pas voir les problèmes de leur sujet, ou de ne pas les saisir dans leurs



relations réelles, et d'en diminuer ainsi d'autant leur compréhension.

Le produit social que représente l'art aux yeux de la sociologie prend naissance dans un processus d'interaction sociale qui se laisse appréhender grossièrement sous la forme d'un triangle dont les sommets sont l'oeuvre, le public et l'artiste. Une histoire de l'art consciente de la nature sociale de son sujet devrait prendre en considération ce triangle d'interaction. Et une documentation qui voudrait préparer le terrain à une étude de l'art conçue nécessairement, par la nature même de son objet, comme une recherche interdisciplinaire, devrait donc chercher à documenter les phases individuelles de ce triangle interactionnel — oeuvre, artiste, public, quelques difficultés qu'une telle entreprise doive rencontrer là où la vie artistique ne produit pas automatiquement de documents.

Nous voulons maintenant éclairer rapidement les phases principales de ce processus d'interaction qui se joue autour de chaque artiste, et réfléchir à ce qui n'est généralement couvert ni par la production documentaire de l'appareil de médiation et de marché de l'art, ni par l'artiste lui-même, c'est-à-dire aux données sur lesquelles ne sont produits que peu ou pas de documents.

Commençons par la réception des oeuvres par le public! La documentation de la réception a trois aspects principaux:

1. La documentation des oeuvres reçues;
2. La documentation du public, respectivement des divers publics et du non-public de l'art (dans ce domaine Sven Sandström a accompli un travail de pionnier);
3. La documentation du processus de réception proprement dite, avec les questions suivantes: comment une oeuvre, et laquelle, est-elle accueillie, et pourquoi sa réception s'effectue-t-elle de cette manière?

De ces trois aspects de la réception, le premier est certainement le plus facile à documenter — et cependant il pose lui aussi des problèmes considérables. Nous butons ici sur l'existence de divers réseaux de réception: le circuit des musées en est un, les médias (c.à.d. la critique d'art) un autre, le marché et les galeries encore un autre, et le système des bourses, les sociétés d'artistes possèdent également un tel aspect. A chaque réseau de réception se trouve

correspondre une image de la production artistique différente. Je viens d'écrire un texte assez long sur l'art suisse depuis 1945. J'y mentionne environ 200 artistes suisses ou travaillant en Suisse: il s'agit presque exclusivement de ceux qui ont été présentés par les grands musées suisses et étrangers dans des expositions individuelles, ou collectives d'importance.

On obtient une image toute différente si l'on se fonde sur les critères du "Dictionnaire suisse des artistes contemporains": y figurent pas moins de 2182 artistes suisses ou actifs en Suisse. Cet ouvrage se base également sur la réception de ces artistes dans les réseaux de réception professionnels, mais selon des normes beaucoup moins strictes.

Le Centre de documentation de l'ISEA, quant à lui, recense plus de 5000 noms d'artistes suisses ou actifs en Suisse. Là aussi le critère d'admission est la réception: on ne documente que ceux dont les oeuvres ont été exposées une fois au moins dans une galerie.

Les nombres d'artistes "reçus" que j'ai cités: 200, 2182, plus de 5000, éclairent crûment les rapports de l'art et de la société, et nous donnent une première information sur l'entreprise artistique qui produit la documentation. Dans le succès documentaire se reflètent les hiérarchies. De manière générale, ce sont les 200 artistes d'élite qui sont les mieux documentés. Ce sont sur eux que paraissent articles, brochures, catalogues, livres, illustrés (notamment en couleurs).

C'est déjà beaucoup moins le cas de ceux des 2182 artistes du Dictionnaire qui n'appartiennent pas à ces 200. Quant aux quelques 3000 restants recensés par l'ISEA, leur création est en général complètement sous-documentée, c.à.d. que l'on ne produit guère de documents à leur sujet.

Certaines voix se sont fait entendre pour que l'on restreigne les efforts de documentation aux 200 élus. Pour elles, la "qualité" constitue un critère déterminant la dignité à être documenté.

Pontus Hultén a dit un jour très joliment ce que des médiateurs artistiques occidentaux entendent depuis quelques décennies par ce terme "qualité": "Il a toujours été très difficile d'établir les normes de la qualité", expliquait-il; "une des façons les plus convaincantes, cependant, est de s'en référer à la nouveauté de la



forme et du contenu" (P. Hultén: L'idée d'avant-garde et Malévitch homme de ce siècle: catalogue Malévitch, Centre Pompidou, Paris 1978, p. 5).

Le critère que formule Hultén est ici celui de l'avant-gardisme: il ne tient compte que du degré d'innovation. C'est ce critère qui a largement déterminé le jugement artistique des médiateurs professionnels au cours des dernières décennies.

En fait, il faut des raisons importantes pour qu'une institution s'impose la tâche de documenter 5000 artistes plutôt que 200. A mon sens, ces raisons ne manquent pas: la plus importante me semble résider dans le fait incontestable que tous ces artistes, toutes ces créations artistiques existent. Or une partie de ces 3000 artistes sont des jeunes qui satisferont un jour, plus tard, aux critères de réception des médiateurs professionnels: ce sont de futurs artistes de dictionnaire. Mais les autres? — Ils personnifient sans doute d'une manière ou d'une autre la faculté de persévérer, ou la trivialisation, deux attitudes qui ne sont pas moins significatives, à long terme, pour notre société, que la recherche de l'innovation.

Pour l'étude de l'art en tant que fait social, leur création est aussi intéressante que celle des artistes de qualité. Les institutions de documentation de l'art devraient donc absolument chercher à documenter cette production de masse puisque c'est précisément celle qui, faute d'être documentée par le marché de l'art, échapperait alors à la science.

La documentation des images de la production artistique actuelle, on l'a dit, n'est que le cas le plus simple de la documentation de la réception. Celle qui concerne le public est encore beaucoup moins documentée, et plus difficile à l'être. Il existe d'un côté une foule de documents sur la carrière d'un artiste; ils concernent ses succès au niveau de l'appareil de médiation de l'art, c.-à-d. des musées, des Kunsthalle, des galeries, des critiques, des médias, etc... Mais de l'autre côté, c'est à peine s'il existe des documents sur le public de ces institutions et sur ses réactions. C'est donc bien là que l'on devrait recourir à la sociologie de l'art et à ses méthodes d'investigation empiriques. Il est par conséquent nécessaire de passer d'un collationnement passif de documents à un approvisionne-

ment actif d'informations.

La recherche sur le public ne doit toutefois pas se limiter aux seules enquêtes statistiques, car elle passent à côté de la question essentielle du processus de réception: le pourquoi et le comment de la réception. A la question des attentes et des besoins du public qu'une oeuvre satisfait ou ne satisfait pas, la sociologie à elle seule ne peut pas apporter de réponse: il s'agit là aussi de prendre en considération des facteurs psychologiques qui eux-mêmes n'apparaissent souvent au jour que par un examen psychanalytique. Il s'agirait donc de définir les profils socio-psychanalytiques du public et de les mettre en relation avec l'oeuvre d'art "reçue". Evidemment d'énormes problèmes méthodologiques surgissent: ils ne pourront en aucun cas être résolus sans qu'on fasse le pas vers une recherche empirique, sur le terrain.

Par ailleurs, c'est à peine si les aspects essentiels de la relation entre l'artiste et la société sont documentés. Trois questions se posent ici:

1. Comment l'artiste réagit-il à la situation sociale dans laquelle il se voit intégré. L'une des réactions bien connues, p.e. est l'"escapisme" de l'art pour l'art. Sur ce point, on trouvera nombreux propos d'artistes rassemblés lors d'interviews, ou dans leurs propres écrits.
2. Pour quel public l'artiste produit-il et, en retour, quels sont les effets des attentes, des besoins et des exigences de ce public sur sa production. La théorie de l'art pour l'art a ici probablement un effet d'occultation puisqu'elle postule l'autonomie de l'artiste face à ce public, postulat encore influent aujourd'hui. Je ne veux pas non plus contester le fait que la plupart des artistes ont le sentiment subjectif de ne travailler que pour eux-mêmes et non pour un public. Il n'en reste pas moins que même les artistes de l'extrême avant-garde ont eu, dès leurs débuts, un public même restreint qu'on peut alors qualifier de "public d'avant-garde". Je prétends donc que l'avant-gardisme — et l'art d'avant-garde en général — ne sera compris que d'une manière rudimentaire aussi longtemps que nous ne prenons par ce public en considération dans nos études.
3. Si la deuxième question concernait le rapport de l'artiste au



public considéré comme classe sociale, c.-à.-d. le public taste, cette 3<sup>e</sup> question concerne maintenant le public personnel de l'artiste. En règle générale, très peu de documents sont produits sur ce sujet précis. Des listes de collectionneurs, p.e., fournissent ici des informations précieuses. Mais elles ne disent rien des motivations que ces collectionneurs ont à acheter cet artiste là plutôt qu'un autre. Seuls des interviews des profondeurs pourraient apporter des éléments de réponses.

La troisième phase du cercle d'interactions sociales de l'art, la création de l'oeuvre par l'artiste, est probablement encore plus mal documentée que l'influence de la société sur l'artiste. Que sait-on de la psychologie du processus créatif d'artistes pris individuellement, et que savons nous de la psyché d'artistes même très connus, de leur biographie intérieure, lorsque ces informations ne sont pas encore documentées par des remarques écrites ou prononcées lors d'entretiens.

Quant aux éventuels documents laissés par des artistes décédés, ils ne vous apportent la plupart du temps que des aperçus très fragmentés qui ne permettent pas d'en connaître les structures fondamentales. Si Alberto Giacometti, pour citer un exemple célèbre, n'avait pas décrit lui-même son expérience du gouffre, nous ne le saurions que par des allusions émises par des hommes de lettres qui furent ses amis.

Evidemment, nous pénétrons ici de plein-pieds dans le domaine de la psychologie des profondeurs. Il n'est toutefois pas nécessaire d'être un psychologue des profondeurs pour réunir des informations pertinentes dans ce domaine. Mais il s'agit de poursuivre une documentation active, car les documents pertinents pour la compréhension de la personnalité d'un artiste et du processus de création ne sont produits dans le commerce de l'art que dans des cas exceptionnels. Et même si un critique se donne la peine d'interviewer un artiste en profondeur, seuls de courts extraits de tels entretiens ne sont, en règle générale, publiés. Il serait donc des plus souhaitables que l'on documente les processus de création par des films et des vidéos.

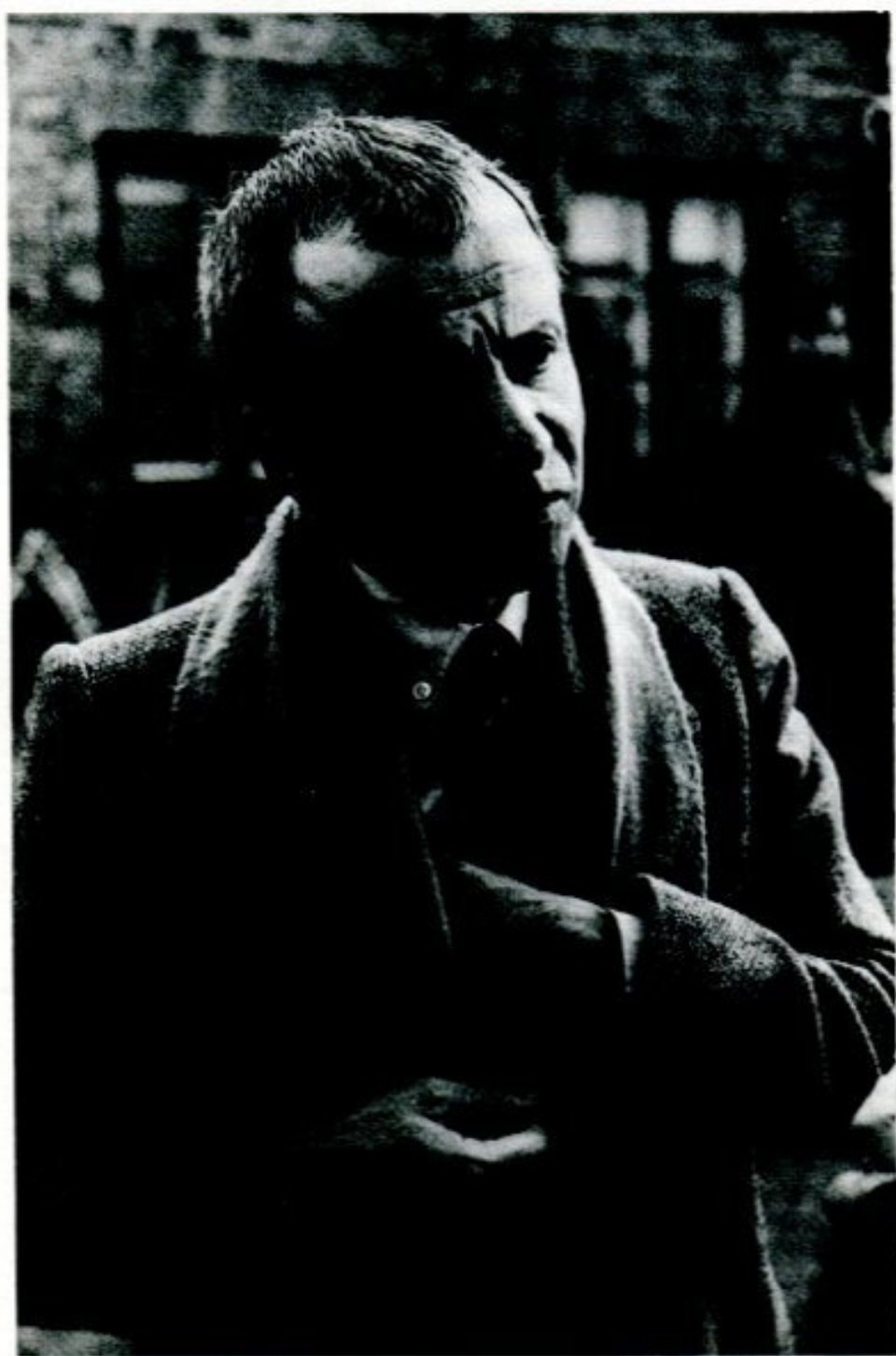
Je résume. La production des documents sur l'art moderne et contemporain comporte des lacunes significatives, des domaines centraux

de la création artistique comme cercle d'interactions sociales demeurant — à part quelques exceptions heureuses — sous-documentés. Si les centres de documentation se limitent à une documentation passive, ils renforcent cette situation unilatérale de l'information par leur activité et contribuent ainsi à créer les amnésies de l'histoire de l'art futur, ce qui, de toute évidence, va à l'encontre de leur mission.

Le passage à une attitude de documentation active, complémentaire à une documentation passive, suppose le recourt intense à des méthodes d'investigation corrélatives, telles que les théories et les applications de la sociologie et de la psychologie. Le passage à une documentation active paraît naturellement utopique actuellement. Mais le passage d'une spéculation socio-philosophique à la recherche empirique de la sociologie a du en son temps paraître tout aussi utopique. En règle générale, la plupart des centres de documentation sur l'art ont commencé depuis longtemps la documentation de l'art en tant que phénomène social, bien que de façon lacunaire. Il manque en fait simplement le courage d'être conséquent avec cette orientation nouvelle.

Certes, on peut argumenter qu'il faudrait laisser à la sociologie, respectivement à la psychologie, l'effort de documentation des domaines sous-documentés de l'art en tant que cercle d'interactions sociales. Toutefois ni la sociologie ni la psychologie ne sont préparées à cette tâche, cela d'autant plus que s'occuper du domaine artistique, tant pour l'une que pour l'autre, ne peut être dans le meilleur des cas qu'une tâche accessoire. On ne peut pas en dire autant de l'histoire de l'art. Il serait par conséquent beaucoup plus raisonnable, d'un point de vue scientifique et économique, que la science de l'art s'ouvre enfin aux disciplines voisines de telle sorte qu'elle puisse profiter de leurs contributions pour la compréhension de la création artistique et de la réception de l'art. Je peux tout à fait m'imaginer qu'une mentalité interdisciplinaire se développe à l'avenir autour de la documentation de l'art moderne et contemporain.





Achille Bonito Oliva, professor at the University of Roma, Italy

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## FROM THE AVANT-GARDES TO THE TRANS-AVANTGARDE

ACHILLE BONITO OLIVA

The vitalism of process art and the Cartesian exactitude of conceptual art derive in part from the specific connotations of a historical context whose productive optimism and expansionistic, economic euphoria allow art to preserve its hope for a better future. This outlook is the result of a historicist and rationalist residue which views history as a progressive path toward conditions of greater social and economic equilibrium. Art becomes the tool which, in the hands of the visionary, projects spaces of fruition that enlarge the field of individual and social sensibility, placing itself in reflective antagonism with reality.

In this sense, art preserves a functional and a functionalist valence which assimilates it to the dominant totalitarian systems — their politics, psychoanalysis and sciences — which, from their own point of view and according to their own plan, resolve the negative antinomy of the world. It is no coincidence that certain critical hypotheses have a moralistic connotation, repressive and masochistic, which, fortunately, is contradicted by a few of the artists' works. With puritanical obstinacy, these critical outlooks developed a cultural strategy geared toward the recovery of the social as an indisputable myth and value, and regarded linguistic militancy as a means of militant opposition of the system. Such art felt the urgent need to find a motivation, a qualification, a modification that would declare this attitude publicly.

The shining example, in this connection, is that of arte povera which felt the need to follow its own noun with the adjective "poor". This declaration of poverty occurs in relation to the context of Western society, geared toward opulence and consumerism. A rhetorically Franciscan and moralistic tension pervade this line of thought, which childishly dressed up as a guerrilla. In the wake of sixties' protests, it purports the possibility of an artistic experience that corresponds to and images of the first examples of guerrilla warfare that appeared in European and American cities. Thus art destructures itself to the point of going nude in its conceptual skeleton.

This self-punishing, masochistic attitude as a self-expropriation



of creative pleasure and its consequent eroticism, is the moralistic result of an outlook which sees art subordinated to politics. Basically, the artists of the sixties experienced the drama of politics and nature from this point of view. Their dogmatic attitude led these artists to consider nature a regenerative and liberating point of reference, as opposed to the repressive and artificial social sphere. They used the experience of nature to give art a political overtone. Naturalism, at times naive and didactic, simplistic and late-futurist, permeates almost all arte povera works; nature is seen as the primordial and virginal setting, the source of energy, and is opposed to the social setting, corrupt and excessively structured.

Paradoxically, this apparently experimental and flexible position toward art in the sixties conceals the brooding superstition of naturalistic and political dogma, from which derives a moralistic, static attitude, a middle-class preference for drama and ethics. Because of the inflexibility of this dogmatic position, art takes on a dramatic mask, the symbol of a frontal specularly with a political creed. Art becomes a hiding place, the place of an ideal indetermina-tion, which allows the artist to feel arrogantly sheltered from the utilitarian mentality of the world. To a reality firmly set in each of its functions, the artist naively responds with "untitled" works intended to preserve them from every mundane constriction.

To increase this indetermination, the art of the sixties accentuated its preference for abstract and non-figurative languages, convinced that this choice qualified its own actions in a direction that, by referring to its ancestors in historical abstraction, reaffirmed its progressive connotation.

The art of the seventies modified this naiveté, overthrowing the naturalistic subject matter of arte povera, as far as the purely grammatical presentation of the materials was concerned, in favor of a wiser cultural attitude. In fact, the prevailing tension was toward representation, toward a figurative narration that brought the reference to nature back into the arena of quotation, toward a recovery culturalized and filtered by historical memory of the languages of art.

The recovery of the figurative form arises from the need to overcome the pure presentation of materials in favor of a representation capable of greater cultural articulation, and therefore autonomy with

respect to the dictates of politics which conditioned the mentality of art in the sixties. The art of the seventies began a salubrious process of de-ideologization, overcoming the euphoric idea of the creative experience as an eternal process of experimentation and coercion of the new, by taking on a less spontaneist and more meditated tone. It is no coincidence that works began to have a title once again, that they were no longer afraid of seeking a communicative relationship with the world, adopting a linguistic form geared toward the figurative.

The dramatic thrust was somewhat mitigated by the introduction of an ironic accent which led the work off the ambitious and naive collision-course with the world along which the critique of arte povera was pushing it. Irony, like passion, which is liberated by parting, accentuates language's characteristic of laterality, and introduces the possibility of a further pleasure deriving from a work which does not deprive the spectator of its own presence and narrative capacity.

The historical situation of the seventies was determined by certain events that modified the preexisting cultural fabric of optimism and economic expansion. The Yom Kippur War of 1973 set off an energy crisis that brought the Western economy to its knees, and the crisis in ideological models, which culminated in 1977, swept away intellectuals and artists.

The perspective for progress anticipated by the various social systems and their corresponding cultures thus collapsed; a state of political indetermination arose which no longer provided a clear orientation and the comforting sense of a direction. Not all artists were able to respond to this political, moral, economic and cultural landslide. Some clung to the vision of a linear development typical of the post-World War II neoavant-garde movements, which found shelter and security for their unhappy consciousness in fidelity to the linguistic and ideological models of the historical avant-garde.

Others, instead, took note of the changes in the historical fabric and found it superstitious to cling to old certainties, now freed from the conditions in which they were produced. This desire to open up and go beyond the strict observance of the experimental rules of the avant-gardes, took root among young artists as well as among



those who worked in the fifties, sixties and seventies, whose work already expressed a willing and non-dogmatic attitude.

Naturally those artists who had previously developed the myth of a possible redemption of reality through art, remained prisoners of old superstitions, of positions correct from an earlier historical standpoint, now absolutely impracticable. Former ambitions prevented them from looking at the eighties with an open heart and a clear eye, each necessary in order to continue the adventure of art.

It is curious that the same superstitions seem to gnaw at the theoretical discourse of Lyotard, who, in his text on the postmodern condition, repeatedly speaks about "catastrophe," "fracture," "paradox," "discontinuous and non rectilinear evolution," with regard to historical output, and "production of the unknown" with regard to science: terms which seem to leave no doubt about the fact that the French intellectual seems to have left behind the grievous and genetic cultural baggage of the Cartesian tradition.

As far as art is concerned, however, he is unable to bring his own premises to their proper conclusions. Like Mannheim, he seems to avoid seeking a redeeming role for the intellectual and the artist at all, as though on one hand they must recognize the break in the linear progress of history and culture, and on the other must hide behind the superstitions of experimentalism in order to save their souls. But how is all this possible, when the catastrophe is generalized as well as semantic, and has therefore drained away any sense of activity or role? Lyotard, with a clumsiness typical of the tautologist and of the philosopher with a panoramic view of the gardens of artistic production, still grasps at the proud virtues of experimentalism, finding therein the possibility of a role, properly practised in other historical situations, but unfortunately impracticable in the situation which he himself describes. Shocked by the lack of functionalism in the art of the trans-avantgarde, he seeks refuge from it, regressing to the level of a debate from the fifties.

The cultural debate during those years sought a different way of looking at art in relation to the social: commitment and pure art. The commitment had to be entirely reclaimed from the wastes of neorealism and from Communist Party bureaucrats, and the autonomy of art from the adherents to neoavant-garde movements: on the one hand,

therefore, from figurative artists, and on the other, from abstract artists.

Abstract artists rightly felt much more affinity to traditions that were cultural, international, and libertarian; the tradition of historical abstraction and all the avant-garde movements of the beginning of the century. In this sense, experimentation marked a profound difference between abstract culture as the symptom of a progressive attitude, and figurative culture as the sign of the heteronomy and subordination of art to politics.

On the other hand, historical conditions offered hope for a better future, for the possibility of controlling the course of events through the idea of art as a means of modifying reality. For that reason, the tradition of the historical avant-garde was the correct and libertarian catch for a creative strategy capable of hooking up with the phenomena of social transformation. In contrast, the figurative tradition professed a static and inflexible reality, the image became the reductionist manifestation of a world too clear to perceive itself, and therefore easily reproduced. In short, the recovery of certain languages (abstract and figurative) was still symptomatic of a well-defined political position. But now?

In a generalized situation of catastrophe, the recovery of previous associations (experimentation = progress; the figurative = repression or regression) does not seem possible, as the very idea of progress has entered into a crisis situation; progress connected with a historicist culture which has passed through leftist positions as well, in particular those of the Communist Party. Is there any faith in the future, given that a plan or model for social transformation no longer exists, and that the development of history is no longer respectably linear?

The break in the tectonic equilibria of history occurred without warning. Without sufficient warning, how is it possible to take shelter in the snug harbor of experimentalism? The problem is not one of fighting history with cold steel, but rather of broadening the creative space, enlarging the arena of cultural revision and reaffirming the working character of art.

The trans-avantgarde is now the only avant-garde possible, in that it maintains its historical heritage behind the variety of the



artist's precautionary choices, alongside other cultural traditions capable of enriching its fabric. The critical discussion of the linguistic Darwinism of the avant-garde movements is not meant to destroy their glorious past, but rather to demonstrate how inadequate they are, in the present historical context, as a metaphor for resistance and political commitment.

Sixteenth-century mannerism demonstrated in an exemplary way that it is possible to utilize the great tradition of the Renaissance eclectically, by citing Renaissance perspective. Direct usage would have signified a nostalgia and a longing for an anthropocentric restoration, in a historic moment which had called to question the centrality of reason extolled by the geometric precision of perspective. The mannerist artist made an oblique and tormented use of perspective, through a quotation that decentralized its privileged point of view. The ideology of the traitor governs mannerist work, in art and in the other fields of scientific and cultural creation; an ideology that favors laterality and ambiguity. The trans-avantgarde revives this type of sensibility, through the recovery of linguistic models that are cited not in their original purity, but are subjected to an interbreeding that avoids any celebratory or apologetic tone which would otherwise signify an identification and an impossible regression.

This ambiguity is also the substance that supports the work of the trans-avantgarde, which oscillates between comic and tragic, between pleasure and pain, between the eroticism of creation and the cumulative horizontality of reality. Nihilism is therefore the correct starting point for the artist — an active nihilism that retrieves Nietzsche without any show of desperation. The pleasure is that of rotating away from the center towards x without grasping at impossible straws, piloting the currents of culture with instruments which increase the work's power to interbreed.

The European and American trans-avantgarde has developed, in different ways, a strategy that passes through the internationalism of the historical avant-garde movements, through the neoavant-garde movements, and finally through national and regional cultural boundaries. This means that the current artist has no intention of losing himself behind the homologation of a uniform language, but

aims at recovering an identity corresponding to the "genius loci" that inhabits his particular culture.

Today, identity is not measured by external parameters, but by factors which are intrinsic to the work of art. For European artists this identity submerges itself in a culture fabric that goes very far back, with a familiar past (the tradition of the neoavant-garde) as well as another more mythical and distant past rooted in the history of European art. But all this is not alienating, since the specificity of the citation is precisely what permits the recovery of the distant without any identification. What unites the various creative experiences is the overcoming, through eclectic usage, of the Manichean divisions between the abstract and the figurative.

The figurative is not the sign of an arrogant frontal gaze, optimistically sure of its ability to decodify the world, but the ability to lead the image toward the figurable, toward an expressive potential capable of breaking the security of the figurative into fragments which recall the manneristic attitude of eating up the entire past. It is a remastication of the past, but without hierarchies. In fact, the artists of the trans-avantgarde work from the standpoint of the present, without forgetting that they live in a mass society, barraged by mass-media images. These artists frequently combine various levels of culture, the high level of the historical avant-garde movements and the entire history of art, and the low level derived from popular culture, which also has origins in the culture industry.

This attempt derives from the urgent need to unify the disjointed levels of culture, to bring together the disjunctions on which neoavant-garde artists formerly worked, thinking they would be able to follow a line of experimentation laid out by the avant-garde movements of the early part of the century, guaranteed by those movements' political progressivism. Now that every guarantee has been broken, the artists of the trans-avantgarde are proceeding individually through all the territories of culture, defying all sense of measure and style.

Moreover, a phenomenological outlook regulated the creative work of the previous generations, leading them to the recovery of everyday materials, purified of their functionality and use value. This



phenomenological outlook is accentuated by the latest generation of artists, who no longer apply it to materials and compositional techniques, but rather to a non-currentness in painting and all those styles which had previously given rise to debate among the avant-garde movements, because they were symptomatic of positions which were political as well as cultural.

This accentuation of the phenomenological point of view is the result of a process of de-ideologization that is clearly evident in all fields of cultural activity. This viewpoint leads artists to overcome their terror of the noncurrentness of their expressive means, precisely because faith in the value of experimentation has declined. Painting is now re-acquiring a sense of experimentation that is not abstract and impersonal, but concrete and individual, measurable by the intensity of the result. Thus all styles of painting merge in the creative experience, which goes beyond any easy identification between the style of the work and that of the artist. Just as the artist, in his everyday existence, is surrounded by existential possibilities and potentialities, so the work, the consequence of his labor, is the product of a network of recoveries and renewals that shatter the proud and purist unity of a concurrent vision of art and the world.

The artists of the trans-avantgarde make use of a fragmentary and blissfully precarious outlook, made indifferent by the overcoming of a privileged perspective. This allows the work to acquire a variety of expressive possibilities, a richness of motifs that direct it toward a complexity, that is truly experimental in the sense that it tests a stylistic network made up of abstract and figural elements, without stylistic divisions. High culture and low culture are melted into one, fostering a cordial rapport between art and the public, accentuating the seductive character of the work and the recognition of its intense internal quality.

Painting styles are recovered as a sort of *objet trouvé*, detached from their semantic references as from every metaphorical association. They are consumed in the execution of the work, which becomes the crucible in which their exemplarity is purified. For this reason, it is possible to renew references that are otherwise irreconcilable, and to interweave different cultural temperatures. If parameters do

not exists for judging the work, then neither do privileged points of view for choosing between avant-garde and tradition.

Instead, it is possible to operate at the intersection of this age-old antinomy, gathering both polarities in the grip of doing. Doing means moving beyond the imperious demands of current events, into an effective balancing of expressive possibilities. Art does not rewrite its own history, or become an operation of nostalgic design; planning lines of thought in advance that have already produced their formal effects; rather, it grafts unheard-of hybrids and different dislocations of language with respect to their historical situation.

Design inevitably produces styling, a process of making beautiful forms which simplistically render art more palatable. The trans-avantgarde goes beyond this protective network, in the precarious sphere of eclecticism and interbreeding which continually challenge the sense of measure and the unequivocal experimental line of the avant-garde. The work is an organic segment that melts down all the scrap of art, transforming the rough slag into a gentle constellation, tempered to the intemperances of history.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF MISUNDERSTANDINGS

MATS B

When I received the invitation to this congress a few weeks ago, I was pleased to find that one of the themes to be discussed was the capacity of language to interpret contemporary art.

If we, at least for the time being, try to avoid the many obvious semiotic complications involved I think there still are a few aspects of this question that should be examined, and I would like to mention three of them.

1. How does the interpretation of a specific contemporary work of art affect that work of art?

Because of our professions we are all close observers of the enhancing importance and impact of the media, and it is quite possible that a critic can not only direct but also govern the reactions of the public. Today we are not primarily concerned with this question, but, as a way of approaching the theme of my contribution today, I would like to mention that there also is an enhancing possibility for the critic to influence specific artists, at least through the earlier phases of their careers, once he has interpreted their works of art.

2. Should an art critic "explain" contemporary works of art?

A large degree of the art criticism of today is demythologizing. As a consequence of the expansion of semiotics in the scientific world, as well as the expansion of Conceptualism in the world of Art, this demythologizing tendency has caused many art critics to "explain" the works of art with an almost educational zeal. But, if I may ask, are we really certain that this is the best way to interpret the art of today?

3. Does the artist, the art critic, and the public, have different criteria of exactness when they are interpreting a work of art?

We all know that the articles or the reviews we publish are written according to a set of rules, and that some of these rules have nothing to do with the subjects of the texts. How does this affect our interpretation? Does it, just as one example, happen that the critic uses an exactness close to truism just to be able to publish a readable text within a certain space?

While I was examining questions like this I happened to turn on the radio the other day... I thought about the concept of meaning, or rather the meaning of meaning, and I began to wonder if it really was desirable to isolate one single meaning in a work of art ... That single meaning could, I thought, be an extraordinary part in a text — but then I came to think about some of the artists I know, how they often contradict themselves in verbal language; why would they have disliked the rational dogma I heard on the radio?

I got quite confused, and I decided that my contribution to this congress would consist of a short study of the different relation artists and art critics of today have to the concept of ambiguity.

Throughout twentieth-century art there is a changing and expanding concept of the meaning of reality and a corresponding attempt to create a language of symbols and images by which to express it — a modern iconography. Throughout the same period there is however also another tendency present; since the very first years of Modernism a small group of artists have been working in a very conscious way with the implications of tautology, with the ambiguity we experience when confronted with a fact so total that it expels our interpretation.

Quite often, and especially so during the last decade, these works of art have been made in accordance with a formula recently expressed by Laurie Anderson. For her the best way to invent a tautology is to "let  $X = X$ ", and it does not seem to matter what this unknown factor consists of.

A paradox may, just like a tautology, reach us in many different forms, but whatever the form it still expels our interpretation. Since Marcel Duchamp we know that an object can be one thing and another at the same time, that a door can be open and closed at the same time, that misunderstandings can be crucial to art — and it is my conviction that a consciousness similar to the consciousness we are discussing here is evident in the very recent developments of painting in New York and The Federal Republic of Germany.

In recent years, many younger artists have moved away from the strict formalism of minimal art and the austere intellectualism of conceptual art. They have rejected the look for cool refinement in favor of diverse, highly personal styles which give rein to emotions and irony.



Expressionism and representation have emerged in vast array at the forefront of contemporary art. Artists are employing recognizable imagery, often laden with connotations and imbued with references to history, contemporary culture, autobiography and longscorned academic traditions of art.

Many of these artists retrieve historical subjects and styles with cavalier ease. They view "The Past" not with a paralyzing reverence but as a vocabulary, freely available for them to tap. These artists blend their use of history and convention with their complete understanding of the lessons of contemporary art. In their works, meaning (expressed in representational terms) does not take precedence over visual impact; style is never subsumed by subject.

Representational art, however, brings with it the question of interpretation. Current imagist works of art are often purposefully confounding, since there are usually no standard identifications or meanings for the depicted imagery, which often consists of banal objects.

The two young artists shown above are Walter Dahn and Jiri Georg Dokoupil of the "Mühlheimer Freiheit", a group of artists working in Cologne. The six members of the group share a large studio together, they work and live close to each other, and Dahn and Dokoupil especially have made it a habit to work together on the same paintings. Although this cooperation might be based on a joyful friendship and the seemingly eternal youthful optimism I think it also involves two more important aspects; as I see it their cooperation includes not only a wish to avoid "the unique touch" of the famous artist, but also a hope to disintegrate ego.

In this collective work of 1981 Dahn and Dokoupil make a jocular comment on the famous The Island of the Dead by Arnold Böcklin; instead of the calm and quiet mourning of the original their version is filled with happy expectations about the future existence. Once again they are together, and they wave merrily to the crania waiting on the beach.

It goes without saying that this pastiche has nothing to do with the pathos of older German expressionism. Many of the works of art that today are labeled "expressionistic" are in fact "emblems of

expressions". They are pictograms, and their different codes almost "melt down", they are mediated, made equal, and the artists who make them are oriented towards the consumption as much as the production of images.

To a young artist the consumption of images consists, of course, of a consumption of contemporary images from different strata as well as the consumption of older icons. As the communicative network between young artists of different countries now is tighter than it has ever been it is quite natural for them to use the characteristics of a far away colleague just to joke with him; they trust in the efficiency of the press, as well as in the efficiency of their own network, and they are convinced that the joke will reach the person it was meant to reach. In this painting Dokoupil has commented on the fragile surface, and the superficiality, of the work of Julian Schnabel by making a huge painting on layers of pasted books instead of the fragments of porcelain usually associated with the work of this painter based in New York.

This is an example of the art Dokoupil commented on: Blue Nude with Sword, made three years ago by Julian Schnabel. The terrifying giant balancing between the decisions to commit suicide or to accept his fall from the columns seem to have the obvious quality of a character in an almost forgotten classical drama; he could be an archetype indicating something we can not really decipher.

But the giant is a "found motive"; the original can be seen on millions of coffee-house paper cups of a certain brand distributed every day in the United States, and this reduces the powerful symbol to a vague stereotype of the popular mythology.

The impact of the motive is further reduced by the seemingly irrelevant treatment of the surface of the painting. We get the impression that the discrepancy is too wide to bridge, that Schnabel has failed to unite the different elements into a genuine work of art.

This painting was done the same year, and here Schnabel introduces another strategy. The intense brushwork could easily be mistaken as being "expressionistic", but as we notice the transparency of the motives, and the pink velvet of the background, the violent movements of the hand suddenly appear to float in front of the surface. The



grim reaper becomes nothing more than a sign, and the mediation of emotion, essential to expressionism, ceases. The intensity of an emotion is related to its complexity, and for Schnabel it is impossible to summarize a total world view in one unambiguous statement. He is working with the concept of style, and the moral, if it can be so called, is that all representations are more or less false, that reality eludes representation.

Julian Schnabel has cooperated on a few paintings with David Salle, another artist working in New York. To Salle this cooperation must have been quite natural; even when he is working alone his distinctive feature is the juxtaposition of elements.

On the example shown, I like Intransitive Verbs of 1982, we can distinguish three different elements indicating three different ideologies; to the left a line of unemployed workers are depicted in a somewhat depressive realistic tradition, to the right we see a male nude rendered with the seemingly neutral tradition of croquis, and floating in front of those grey parts we find non-representational forms with an evident origin in Modernism.

The manner of execution in this painting is cursory, almost indifferent, and that gives the imagery a distant expression. No attempt is made to bring out a salient detail here and there; the painting is made deliberately without emphasis. It is as if the artist is content with the idea of the image and that alone. He has an extreme consciousness about images and their impact, an alertness to the politics of style that makes style itself an overarching, underlying subject matter. His paintings seem to have an inheritance from conceptual art; they seem to have inherited conceptualism's disbelief in painting's efficiency. But in place of the moral fervour that armed the conceptual artists Salle, it seems, have inherited only disillusionment. Salle works with (and I quote) "a drama of comparisons instead of a unified, strong and generalized image". This quotation fits the paintings of Salle as the glove fits the hand, there is only one problem involved; it was first used more than fifty years ago when Eisenstein criticized the technique of montage used by D.W. Griffith.

Of course there are forerunners also to this vague sensibility.

Francis Picabia has been tagged as the inventor of the layered eclecticism used by Schnabel, Salle and others. Just like them he worked with an art of "intermezzi". He enjoyed the popular mythology of his time, and like them he also had an ironical consciousness of style. Picabia understood that the ideal of fragmentation is a high condensation, and he frequently received nourishment from the conventions of media.

His way of following his fancies reveal a disinterest in the final result similar to the momentary joys of Dahn, Dokoupil and other young European painters, and I am convinced that they not only accept, but also appreciate his famous recommendation that "one must be a nomad, pass through ideas as one passes through countries and cities".

If I dare to say that we have found a forerunner in regard to two of the noticeable aspects in a discussion about ambiguity and contemporary art there still is an aspect we must study; where in the history of Modernism do we find a forerunner with a tendency to disintegrate his ego?

In the beginning of my short survey I mentioned Marcel Duchamp, and it would be quite appropriate to crown him the most de-personalized artist of Modernism considering his suspension of art practice as well as his discreet private life, but I would like to complicate the survey by considering Salvador Dali worthy of the title.

In his case it is a disintegration made by division. Since 1930 he signs his works of art "Gala Salvador Dali", and their paraxodical symbiosis has also led to quotes like his dictum that "every good painter who aspires to the creation of genuine masterpieces should first of all marry my wife".

But the main reason to discuss Dali today is the fact that he is the only artist in classical Modernism to combine a disintegration of ego with an art practice involving layers of representation. In this painting of 1938, *L'énigme sans fin*, we can find six different layers, among them a resting man, a greyhound, a traditional still life, and, as the artist once wrote, "the face of the big, one eyed fool".

In this work, as in others, Dali has managed to compress the meanings of his images until they signify only the authority of his presence. Being art critics we know that presence, the projection of importance,



necessarily implies its opposite, an absence, the hallowness behind the projection, and this is precisely the point where I find a relationship between Dali and the young painters of today. The art of Dali, and the new paintings discussed here, is an art of deceit and manipulation, and as all artifice it needs an audience.

Dali has managed to find an audience because of his extraordinary optical ability, because of his supreme craftsmanship, and because of his exhibitionistic personality, but will the young painters manage to reach an audience; do they even want an audience?

This is where the art critic enters.

It is obvious that an important change is taking place within the visual art of Western Europe at this moment. As many of the artists involved tend to have a world view that seems to be quite different from the world views of many critics the interesting question now is how the art critics will react.

Will the role of the art critic change if we, as some of these artists claim, are entering a situation in history when the concept of evolution, of origin and originality within art will be replaced by an open field character?

Will the emphasis on ambiguity, juxtaposition and emotion among the artists lead to an art criticism less based on valuation and historical references?

Will the deconstruction of representative elements among the artists lead to an art criticism that deconstructs the ideologies that makes these elements the clichés they appear to be, and, if so, are we really the best candidates for such an important task?

Will it be possible for us to use our misunderstanding of the situation not only in a significant, but also correct way?

## FROM OPTEME TO SIGHT-SENTENCE

## TOWARDS A VISUAL GRAMMAR

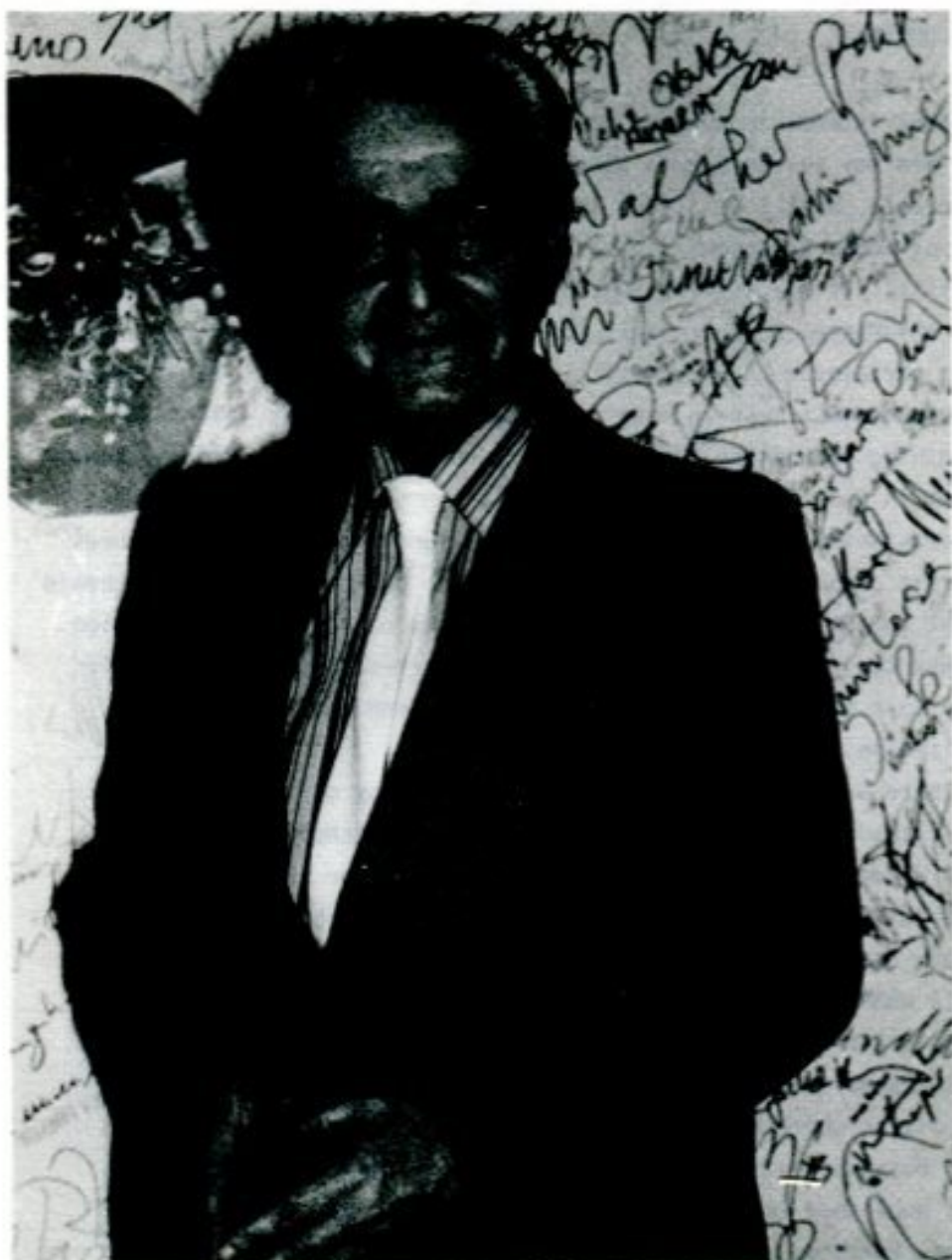
PIERRE ROUVE

This paper intends to outline the structure of a new visual grammar. Such claim may easily seem a blast of arrogance. It is in fact an act of reverence. What I will have to say is above all a tribute to the memory of Roman Jakobson, one of the founding fathers of modern linguistics. It may seem strange that an art critic should want to honour the Moscow-born scholar whose creed was: I am a linguist and nothing pertaining to linguistics is alien to me. If this far-sighted innovator had not been so modest, he could have just as well said: "and nothing pertaining to art is alien to me." It was indeed his early interest in Cubism and Futurism that put him on the road to a radically new understanding of the inner springs of language. Visual structures led to his reappraisal of verbal structures. But Jakobson richly repaid his debt to art. By unravelling the mysteries of verbal communication, he joined the select few who have shown to art-scholars a completely new way to a subtler understanding of the hidden essence of visual communication.

But there are also imperative local reasons why our homage to this modern Erasmus, the last of the great wandering scholars, should be paid in a hospitable Nordic land. Half a century or so ago, when an abominable tide of racial hatred swept Europe, Jakobson was forced to take once again the tragic road to exile. He had to flee from Czechoslovakia where he had been one of the pillars of the seminal Prague Linguistic Circle. And in this dark hour of distress he found shelter first in Denmark, then in Norway and in Sweden before reaching the United States where he soon became one of the luminaries at Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. But it was in Upsala that he published in 1941 his epoch-making study of children's language. For some of us this revelation of the structural laws of acquisition and loss of language became a true aurora borealis of the mind.

And for good reasons. More convincingly than any of his predecessors, Jakobson has made us witness the gestation of verbal grammar and the birth of verbal semantics. But what about the yet unborn visual grammar





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and visual semantics? This question loomed large on our mental horizon — all the more so because we were intuitively certain that art too is a language — a special kind of language, an unexplored sight-language parallel to the well-explored sound-language. But if art is a language, surely it had to be proved that art too is a system of logically related syntactic units and semantic rules. Nobody had yet done it — but Jakobson had shown us how it could be done. We had been shown that the entire building of verbal expression and communication rested on minimal sound-units, the phonemes — in themselves meaningless but necessary embryonic constituents of all future meanings. Could we not prove that there are at the root of all our visual experiences analogous minimal sight-units which we may call optemes?

We had been made aware that the structural function of phonemes is to be integrated into relatively more complex verbal entities — syllables and words — or rather syllabemes and morphemes, to use the more adequate terms coined by Polivanov and Baudouin de Courtenay. We knew how such syllabemes and morphemes generate increasingly more and more complex verbal configurations culminating in the constitution of intricate sound-sentences. Could we not demonstrate that the structural predestination of the optemes is to coalesce in more complex visual syllabemes and morphemes? They too would end in producing visual constellations capable of expressing the relations between a subject and its attributes — and therefore able to predicate logical and ideological value-judgments. And if this be so, are we not entitled to call these ultimate visual predications sight-sentences? After all, if we legitimately aspire at having our say on a new world order, we can only gain by putting our house in order.

A last doubt remains to be dispelled. It is tempting indeed to turn for guidance to piercing and persuasive analysts of verbally communicated expression. But, if we do so, are we not committing a methodological mortal sin by automatically transferring ready-made answers from one discipline to another? And, anyway, are not the questions which torment us, clumsy apprentices in visual analysis, outside the reach of the master-linguist Jakobson?

The answer to such anguished queries comes from most unexpected quarters — from Claude Lévi-Strauss who had met Jakobson during their wartime exile in New York. The eminent French anthropologist was



tantalized by what seemed to him at the time insoluble, strictly anthropological problems. But he was startled and elated to realize that "Jakobson non seulement s'était posé les mêmes problèmes mais les avait déjà résolus" — not only had Jakobson set to himself the same problems but had already resolved them". This decisive testimony does not mean at all that Jakobson was some sort of Leonardo reincarnated. It simply means that the analytical methods evolved by structuralist linguistics can be adopted and adapted by a wide variety of scientific investigations. This proposition has been proved right by Lévi-Strauss in anthropology, Monod and Jacob — in biology, Lacan — in depth-psychology, Althusser — in social philosophy, Gear and Liendo — in psychoanalytic semiology, Lotman, Ivanov, Ouspensky and the Tartu School as a whole — in cultural semiology. There is no reason why art-scholars should not be admitted in this multi-disciplinary brotherhood. Admittedly, they will be long awaited latecomers, but this delay is quite understandable. The system of verbal signs called language has been examined under more or less structuralist magnifying glasses for well over two thousand years. The system of visual signs called art has hardly been submitted to such scrupulous scrutiny. This neglect has resulted in a theoretical imbalance which is highly detrimental to the practical activity of all art analysts. An effort, however modest, to redress this imbalance is long overdue. And here it comes, tentatively attempting to chart the trajectory from optemes to sight-sentences. Unfortunately this exploratory journey will have to be made at a neck-breaking velocity. But I trust that this will not worry unduly an audience used to high speed. After all, the legendary Nurmi and this year's winner of the Monte Carlo Rally are both Finns. So — fasten your seat belts. Here we go.

Fig. 1      You are looking, so to speak, at the methodological circuit on which our demonstrative race will be run: a house, any house, this house painted by Friedrich Meckseper with outstanding lexical precision. The single visual items — roof, door, window, wall — are articulated with an unmistakeable clarity worthy of the best dictionary defining the words roof, door, window, wall. Furthermore, what you see on the screen enunciates the following propositions: "This is a house. The roof is on fire. There are two figures outside the house." Obviously,



Fig. 1

Friedrich Meuserper:  
House on fire



Optemus



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Fig. 2 Meckseper is in full command of a visual vocabulary. The question is: what exactly is the nature and the amplitude of this visual vocabulary?

A first hint at the correct answer is given by this disconcerting sight which offers itself to our sight. But what is it exactly? It is something drawn by a two years and five months child and this child tells us verbally what it is: house. But hard-core empiricists do not believe him. For them, this scribble is only a discharge of meaningless nervous energy and muscular tension. And so it is, up to a point. But there is more to it. And linguistics can help us realize what it is.

In their far-reaching study on the "Fundamentals of Language" Jakobson and Halle make it abundantly clear that the child's language begins with a "labial stage in which the infant speaker is limited to only one type of sound expression, to the single nuclear phonemes which cannot be dissociated in smaller and simpler units. These nuclear phonemes are usually transcribed by the sound binomial p/a or a/p — ap, pa: a root opposition of the minimal energy of the consonant p and the maximal energy of the vowel a.

Now we understand what we are looking at: this is indeed a nuclear opteme. In purely perceptual terms, such optemes appear either as colours or points expanded in lines or volumes. For reasons of brevity and clarity, this demonstration will be limited to monochrome linearity, but it must be stressed that the same evidence could be provided starting from any primary colour or elementary volume. In both cases, it will be evident that the minimal sight-units have a built-in generative potential urging them to evolve systematically into more complex categories of our visual language — much in the same way in which the sound utterance consonant/vowel strives to evolve into more complex, hierarchically superior grammatical patterns.

Fig. 3 This built-in propensity towards greater complexity is already noticeable within the strict categorial borders of the opteme — as we can see in this more elaborate endeavour by yet another two year and five months old girl. She too insists in her holophrastic speech — that is speech using only single declarative itesms — that this scribble is "house". Are these children entitled to say so? Is not the opteme essentially meaningless and therefore incapable of signifying a house or anything else?



Strange as it may seem, the answer to this question is most relevant to our understanding of certain problematic aspects of modern art and therefore affects our professional efforts to enlighten the ordinary art-beholder. This answer is bound to be in the negative, if we believe that visual significance is restricted to fully constituted, mimetic configurations — and optemes are certainly not such imitative mirror-images dear to "realists" of all kinds. But the answer is no less bound to be triumphantly positive — if we are aware that we are looking at optemes. And precisely because they are not chained to a dictatorially preordained significance, optemes are by nature open signs available to any meaning that may be assigned to them according to a strictly private communicational code. This is the case of our two children and therefore they have the right to maintain that these empirical scribbles are semiotic houses, presented according to their private codes which we, as beholders, may or may not share. More than anybody else, the critic has the duty never to confuse individual private codes with socialized public codes expected by prejudice or mere force of habit.

What emerges from this rapid semiotic digression is one of the fundamental laws of visual language: optemic exuberance is inversely proportional to communicational effectiveness. But this restricted communicational resonance does not necessarily invalidate the expressive impact of opteme-dominated pictures. If we bear all this in mind, we shall find it much easier to come to terms with the idiom of Wolls, Pollock, Appel, Soulages, Fontana, Mathieu — all masters of optemic eloquence deliberately sacrificing their communicational span for the sake of expressive self-satisfaction.

Such optemic reductionism is however the exception rather than the rule — as was the phonemic exclusivity of Marinetti's explosions of sounds in *libertà*, the Dadaist Ursonate of Schwitters, the Russian zaum or the Parisian "poésie concrète". The dominant rule — both in verbal and visual language — is that minimal units obey a natural predisposition to mutate along an ascending evolutionary spiral. And so isolated optemes evolve into visual syllabemes — random syntactic part-objects not yet endowed with full semantic autonomy. Such evolution is clearly visible in these eminently syllabic depictions of yet another house — this time by three years and seven months old children.

Fig. 4

Fig. 5 The mutational procedure is quite clear: the initial optemic opposition between straight and curved lines has mutated into a more structured contrast between open-ended and closed lines. As a result, visual splinters have been assigned a syntactically demarcative function while being prevented from becoming semantically identifiable visual entities referring to the roof, windows or walls. This disorderly visual assemblage corresponds to the arbitrary slicing of syllables in verbal grammar. There too syllables are half-way stations on the way from phomenes to lexically precise terms. The essence of such syllabification is best indicated by the etymology of the word. It derives from the Greek syllabanein - a curiously ambivalent term which means to break into parts but also to put together: break apart empirically - and put together conceptually - a procedure in many ways typical of our Zeitalter des Fragments - century of the fragment, to use Walter Hilsbecher's felicitous expression.

Fig. 6 But such syllabemic fragmentation, being a grammatically transitional stage, is constitutionally ambiguous: on one hand, closed lines are a first premonition of growing semantic adequacy; on the other - open-ended lines are a last remnant of syntactic self-containment. This ambiguity of syllabic accumulations is analogous to a child's prattle. It is - so to speak - the short lived visual chrysalid which usually turns into a butterfly - that is to say, into a coherent conglomerate unmistakably identifiable, be it visually or verbally, as a lexical entity. Meaningfree syllabemes aspire at coalescing into meaningful morphemes.

Fig. 7 This semiotic transfiguration is evidenced by the manner in which slightly older children set about to present visually the same topic - a house. Such drawings search for the border between meaning-free syntaxis and meaningful semantics. And to cross it, they rely on visible references known both to the producer and the beholder of the visual mark: wall, roof, windows, door, chimney. Progressively, the private code of optemes and syllabemes modulates into a public code by referring to existential experiences shared by the transmitter and the receiver of the visual message. By the same token, the cognitive equation between the presentified topic - a house - and its mode of presentation is neatly resolved, showing a firm grasp of the structural

Fig. 8

Fig. 9





Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

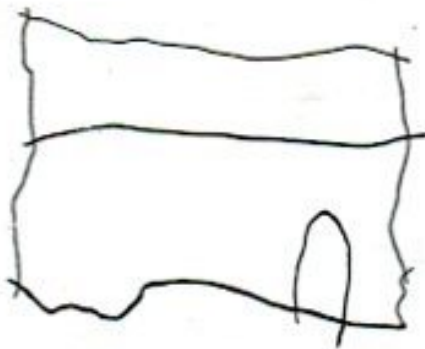


Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Sight - phrases



Fig. 11

• "I am in the house."



Fig. 12

Fig. 10 relations within the visual morpheme corresponding to the verbal noun "house". In this way, the visual noun "house" achieves its semantic independence and proclaims it in a socialized public code. The independent morpheme functions as a lexeme or, if you prefer, as an episteme — a carrier of larger or smaller amounts of cognitive information which can vary from exhaustive mimetic mirror-images like Meckseper's house to restricted evocative hints as this house drawn by a four year old girl. Arguably, the whole history of modern representational art from the Impressionists onwards can be restructured in terms of the variable quantities of semiotic information required by the changing public codes of visual communication. But in all cases, the road to more complex modes of visual communication is paved by the emergence of morphemes.

Fig. 11 But in order to be able to embark upon it, morphemes have to comply with a fundamental law of grammatical structuring which postulates that each grammatical category must be an outcome of the category which precedes it — and an ingredient of the category which follows it. Generated by syllabemes, morphemes generate predicative sight-phrases. This happens when the learner of visual language acquires the competence to predicate — that is to say, to manifest the relationship between a subject and its specific characteristics. In verbal terms, the sound-phrase is the minimal predicative unit — for instance "the house is big" — house being the subject, big the predicate — and is the relational link between them.

Fig. 12 But in visual precication — as in Finno-Ugric languages or in  
Fig. 13 Russian — the connector "is" can be omitted. The relation between subject and predicate is implicit in their juxtaposition. And this presentational procedure is the rule presiding over the constitution of sight-phrases. You see how a four years and two months old boy renders by pure spatial contiguity the complex predication: "I am in the house". The same predicative pattern is repeated when "the whole family is in the house". What matters in such predicative situations is not the actual visual repertory but the structural arrangement of selected morphemes in order to convey definitive relations — in this case the relation between house and family. Such relations can grow in complexity, but a child of five finds it already easy to present the





Fig. 13

"The whole family is in the house"

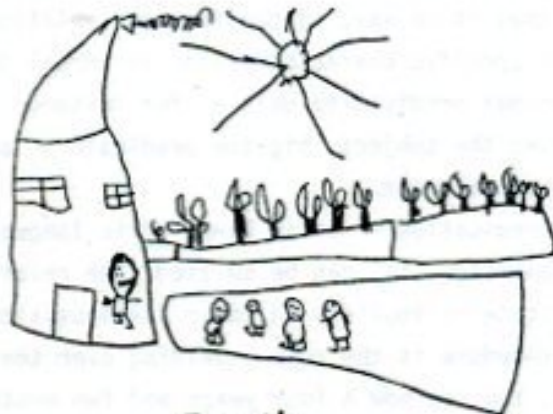


Fig. 14

"Mummy is in the house but the children are out".

Eight - sentences

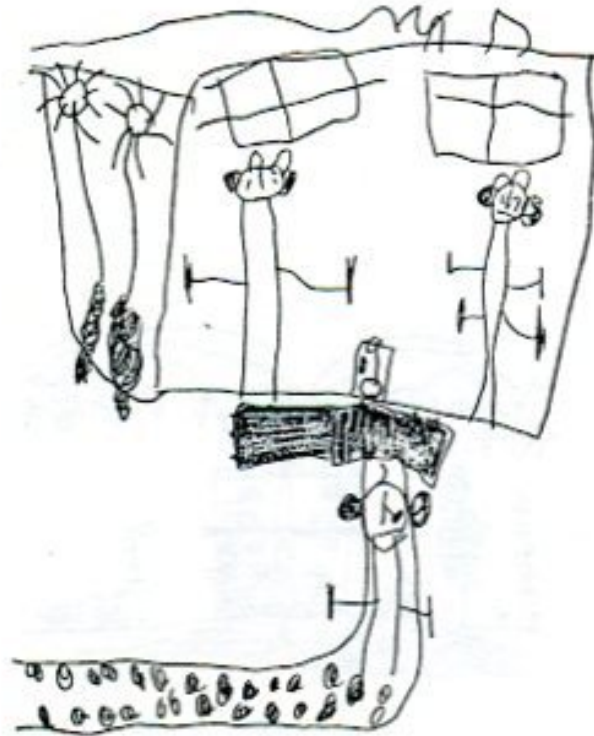


Fig. 15

"Mummy and Daddy are in the house but the child is going to school."



"Mummy and the children are in the house, but Daddy is out because he has left them"

Fig. 16



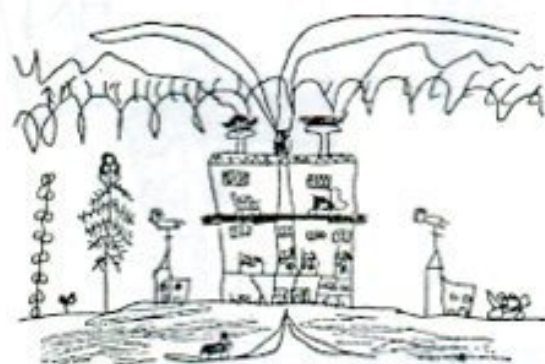


Fig. 17

- even more complex two-panelled predication, symmetrical but contrastive: "Mummy is in the house but the children are out". The syntactic opposition in/out supports the meaningful contrast between two semantically distinct sight-phrases. Such relational manipulation is even clearer in the intricate presentational symmetry of this visual statement: "Mummy and daddy stay at home while the child goes to school". Two minimal predicative sight-phrases are set side by side to produce a correctly co-ordinated composite sight-sentence. And once such a high level of presentational co-ordination is reached, the visual competence of a child of five enables him to tackle even a multi-layered, causally conditioned sight-sentence such as "Mummy and the children are in the house but daddy is not because he has left them".

However eloquent this logical narration may be, it would be a mistake to assume that complex sight-sentences enlarged by secondary clauses are brought about exclusively by involved narrative plots. It must be borne in mind that the semiotic essence of such sight-sentences is to present in spatial simultaneity manifold instances which sound-sentences can only describe in temporal consecution. Therefore even the most laconic visual topic can be explicated and orchestrated in most elaborate sight-sentences. This maximal free elaboration of minimal lexical units was not only the prerogative of the celebrated Cubist masters. It is also the prerogative of anonymous but alert children for whom the simple notion "house" is the spur for rich visual predications — such as these delightful evidences that their nameless producers have fully grasped the essence of visual grammar.

And with this poised Klee-like visual predication, our demonstrative trajectory from optemes to sight sentences has nearly reached its climax and its end. All that remains is convincingly to corroborate the correctness of this route. Once again the help of Jakobson is invaluable. In his Upsala publication he checks the graded language-acquisition against the progressive loss of various linguistic categories in pathological cases of acute aphasia. As a result of such clinical observation, he formulates the law that the loss of grammatical categories occurs in reverse order of their acquisition: the last to be mastered are the first to be lost.

The same rules govern visual grammar. This well-balanced standard





Fig. 18



Fig. 19



Fig. 20



Fig. 21



Fig. 22



Fig. 23



Fig. 18 sight-sentence has been produced by a normal child. But when an adult is the prey of schizophrenic disturbances, his visual sentences immediately lose their grammatical coherence. But within this initial chaos morphemes and optemes maintain their identities. Only when the psychotic tension gains in intensity, the morphemes explode in a flock of unrelated syllabemes. This semiotic regression is best expressed by René Berger's notion of "dislocation" proposed in a different context and epistemologically rhyming with Heidegger's *Verwesung*: not a mechanical subdivision but a pulsional dismembering destroying the internal cohesion of the morpheme. And finally when the patient is beyond redemption, there remains only the opteme, immutable and inscrutable. We have come full circle, back to the starting point of our journey. But we reach it now in quite a different frame of mind – not with our initial apprehension that the uncharted road which we were about to take may end in a blind alley but with a final confirmation that our road to visual grammar has been the right road. Our circular journey has not been in vain.

And yet our hopping forwards and backwards from optemes to sight-sentences may have seemed at times a mere display of theoretical acrobatics. But let not appearances deceive you. Theoretical optology yields also considerable practical dividends to be reinvested in our daily critical activity. The understanding of this systematic visual grammar exorcises the Romantic ghost of unfathomable creativity and enables us to grasp the structural difference between the productive tactics of the maker of an art-work and the analytical strategy of its beholder.

Fig. 24,25 The maker progresses from optemes through syllabemes, morphemes and  
 Fig. 26,27 sight-phrases to construct a cumulative sight-sentence. But faced with  
 Fig. 28 this woodcut by Kirchner the enlightened beholder deconstructs the final sight-sentence and regresses through its constituent sight-phrases, morphemes and syllabemes to its minimal units – the optemes. The maker's construction is predominantly but not necessarily material, the critic's deconstruction is exclusively mental. Intuitive insight and rational dissection blend in this mental deconstruction proposed by the nature of the observer and yet imposed by the structure of the observed. And because of this blend of freedom and compulsion, the grammar of



Fig. 24





Fig. 25



Fig. 26





Fig. 27

visual poetry reveals the poetry in visual grammar.

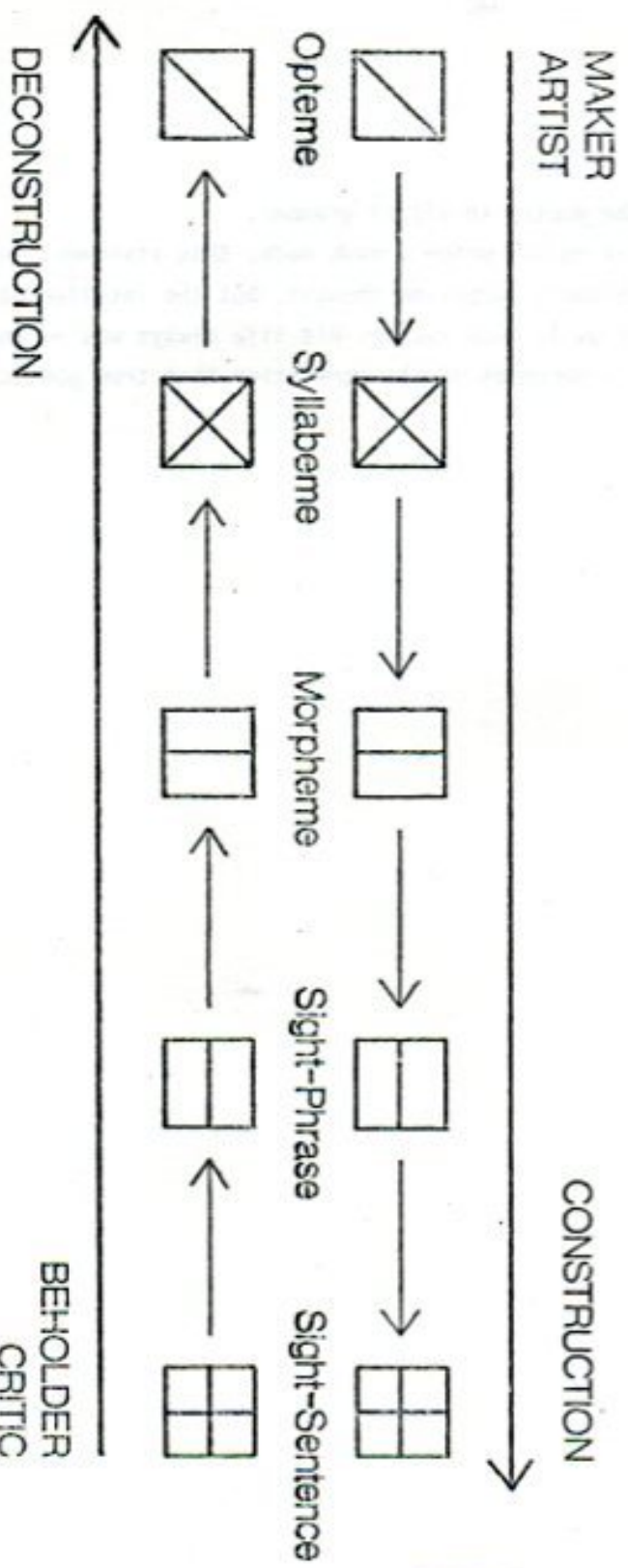
Like the most pertinent points which I have made, this statement is a paraphrase of Roman Jakobson's inspiring thought. But the intellectual legacy which he has left us is much richer. His life always was — and his work will always be a monument of the conviction that true poetics is ethics.



# FROM OPTEME TO SIGHT-SENTENCE TOWARDS A VISUAL GRAMMAR

## OPTOLOGICAL GUIDE-CHART

In memory of  
Roman Jakobson



Pierre Rouve  
London

## LANGUAGE AND ART

SLAVKA SVERAKOVA

David Hockney reportedly said that his fame is partly due to the fact that people find it easy to write and talk about his work.

Such statement begs the question what is it in art that determines the capacity of language to interpret contemporary visual art. In answering I shall use the word art as referring to the set of concepts "contemporary western fine art". In the beginning I have made several basic assumptions: that looking at art is also an interpretation, that the dividing line between descriptions and interpretations is blurred, that art tolerates incompatible interpretations.

Although I think I understand why some debates on art happily use terms like "art as language", "language of art" and "painting as a text" I do not consider the semiotic approach to be central to art. Characteristically art differs from spoken and written language by its presence, immediacy of appeal to the same sense organ and by its independence on the order in which we perceive its components.

In answering the question what is it in art that determines the interpretative capacity of language I consider the status, appearance, value and meaning of art.

My proposition is that if the works of art do not determine the four aspects solely in themselves they determine the need for a discourse.

Let us consider three examples:

André, Reef, 1966

Richter, 1024 colours, 1973

A slide taken in the street of Eindhoven in March 1981.

The two with the name of the artist are considered as art. the third one is not.

1. The artists arrived at propositions which were indubitable to them, but not at the propositions which were indubitable in principle. Viewed outside the art institutions and without the name of the artist attached, the two works of art cannot convincingly keep their status as art. Resulting diminished confidence of the works of art



forges the uncertainty what is and what is not art. Whereas the "knowing that this is the case" is firmly established by the works of art, the "knowing how this is the case" is fruitfully attended to by discourse.

(The above distinction refers to G. Ryle)

2. Denis Donoghue in his 1982 Reith lectures stated: "... the works of art no longer reveal in themselves the reason why they are the way they are ..."

(The Listener, Dec 9 1982, pp. 11 - 14)

Let us take the following three examples:

Oldenburg, Colossal Ashtray, 1975

Oldenburg, Two way plug, 1971

Oldenburg, Saw, hard version, 1970/71

If the "why" question is not answered by the sculptural metaphor, it does not mean that that metaphor is not central to the interpretation of what is referred to as the "constellation of conditions".

(J.L. Mackie)

Although we should not expect an exhaustive account of the conditions necessary for interpretation of the production and appearance of these works of art we should expect an account of the conditions — that make the works the way they are — to be sufficient.

3. Lucy Lippard admitted to "a conviction that if something is new ... and becomes relatively widespread, it is likely to be valid ..." (Changing, 1971, p. 28) even if she is aware that innovation may be either valid or corrupt or hidden.

Let us consider the following examples:

Johns, Painted bronze, 1960

Segal, Cinema, 1963

Hanson, Selfportrait with Model, 1979

John Davies, Man with a Ring, 1975

Rolfe, Performance (four slides), 1981

Havard, Flat Head River, 1976

Lembeck, Eagle Valley Music, 1978

Galagher, Black Map, 1980

Whereas the awareness of whether the innovation of the work of art is valid, corrupt or hidden depends on the discriminating powers of

the viewer and the kind of previous experience with art, the innovation itself renders the aesthetic experience inadequate. The rapid changes in the art scene lead to a sense of incapacity whenever we pose the question of the value. Without analysis and theoretical generalization we cannot hope to arrive at what Karel Capek in 1915 called 'aesthetic understanding' (*Estetika*, 1983, no. 1., pp. 45 - 47). In turn these two constituent parts of it cannot do well without language.

I am not making a point that the value of a work of art is not accessible at all in the passive contemplation. I am making the point that the sense of incapacity as a result of aesthetic experience cannot be at the same time de-stabilized by it.

My last point concerns the meaning of the works of art. When Elliot said "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone" (*Selected Essays*) he was thinking of the continuity of the new with the old. Yet he is hinting at some instability of meaning in the art. Recently the artists repeatedly issued explicit invitations to the viewer to complete the meaning that is locked in the work of art. If the work of art opens its constituent part to an arbitrary (more or less) completion, it may be thought of as being incomplete. But this view may be mistaking the call for interpretation of the meaning of the work of art for the admission of its incompleteness. If the work of art deliberately stimulates interpretative activity as a characteristic aspect of its own existence then it also determines the capacity of language to interpret.

The capacity of language to interpret art is from the point of view of most linguistic theories the same as the capacity of language to express the needs of a child asking for a glass of milk or of a scientist expanding the theories of black holes. In theory language reflects all the needs of its users. Yet we have to bear in mind two specific aspects of language:

1. that it often lags behind thought
2. that the needs, the specific needs mentioned above, may be limited to a small number of users.

People throughout the history complained about language. Paul Valéry has compared words to light planks thrown over the abyss. Goethe has



his Faust crying "Names are sound and smoke..." and Bergson accuses "this crude word" of crushing the "delicate and fleeting impressions" and of "interposing itself between the object and us" (Ullmann, *Semantics*, 1970).

The task to use something ordinary to interpret something extraordinary is daunting, but possible and necessary. Wohlheim reminds us that it is "beyond the bound of sense to maintain that a form of art could maintain itself outside a society of language users". By quoting him I am distancing myself from the scepticism entertained by artists who prefer inner vision and passive contemplation all the time.

Wohlheim's thought that the continuum of "a form of art" depends on it being inside the society of language users, leads to another aspect, referred to as "linguistic imprisonment". Wittgenstein put it as "The limits of my language would then mean the limits of my world" (*Philosophical Investigations*, 1953).

If on one hand people complain that language is too crude to handle such things as art, others complain of the power of language forcing us to see things differently. Statements like Dickens's on "tyranny of words" or F. Bacon's on "language bearing rule over men's mind" are typical. (Ullmann, *op. cit.* p. 154 and 251) Not less known to the language users is the treacherous permissiveness of words. Leon Steinberg quotes a charming example (even if lost when searched for in the translations accessible to me:). The words "painting merely" mean a failure when used by Vasari and similar words "simply painting" mean the highest praised when used by Malraux.

I conclude with a wish:

that the response in words to the call of art matches its strength so that those situations in art which may have strengthening or destructive effect on the way we live may not be perceived only dimly or not at all.

Pertinent to my wish is the Sapir - Whorf hypothesis which argues "The linguistic system of each language is not merely a reproducing system for voicing ideas, but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual's mental activity. for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock-in-trade.." (Ullmann, *op. cit.*, p. 251)

## THE EMANCIPATION OF MNEMOSYNE'S ADOPTED DAUGHTER AND THE FATE OF CRITICISM

(SOME PARADOXES OF THE DEGREES OF "VISUALITY")

ALTTI KUUSAMO

### The artist

There is a common quasi-intellectual belief that at present the artist has become an artisan again – the same kind of craftsman as in the Middle Ages. The truth is contrary.

In fact the history of an artist has been a constant process of emancipating the social spirit of the artist. We all know the beginning: First he liberates himself from the guardianship of the guild with the help of mathematics and other intellectual activities; after that he frees himself from the Court, little by little, and then from the classical iconography (little by little); from the history-painting and genre-painting, from representation of a coherent visual illusion and finally he/she liberates himself/herself from making exhibition art in favour of installation art and land art. In some cases this liberation leads the artist to represent his own life as a work of art.

It is important to notice that intellectual and social liberation cannot be separated from the visual emancipation.

Is the language of this liberation the language of specifying the visual language? It could be said that during this process the language of art has become more and more visual. Is this possible?

### The idea of visual grammar (the 'text')

We have seen the artist liberate himself with the help of his intellect and then seen him free himself from his previous liberation with the help of a new non-mimetic visual language. We can think that the syntagmatic level (contiguity) of the work of art is henceforth the object of the spiritual liberation (from the end of 19th century).

### The criticism (The fate of)

What is then the role of the criticism – if we think polemically that



A Diagram:'Old art'

(eg. 16th and 17th centuries)

A subject matter

(explicit, shaped)

humanist makes a  
programme for artist  
(literary sources)  
narrow text  
eg.

Artist (The work)

visual realization

Criticism

simple, brief,  
descriptive, biographical  
(eg. Vasari, Baglione,  
Bellori)

'New art'A subject matter

(implicit, unshaped)

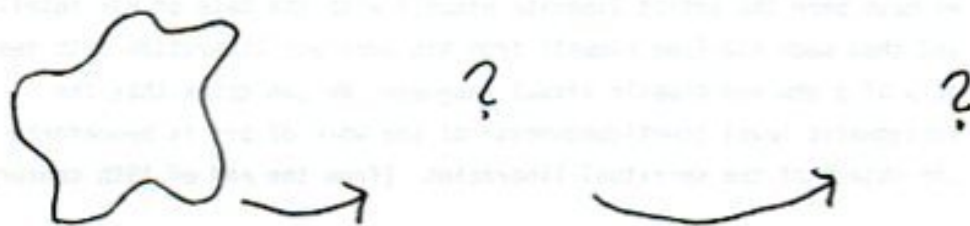
The implicit 'text':  
the world view of  
the artist and the  
exact outlook of  
'style' (ism)  
broad 'text'

Artist (The work)

visual realization

Criticism

complicated but not  
exact  
(general speculation of  
the role of world  
picture ruling)



there is no visual language as such?

It is some kind of semantic neutralization of the 'actual' visual character of the work of art (syntactic dimension). What else could it be?

The critic cannot inform us what is new in the work of art without the reference to the constant and familiar mental images of the public. Of course there are also conceptual prejudices of the critic.

Now and then there have been shouts against the 'literal' in the work of art. As I have tried to prove there are no standards concerning the degrees of visibility.



## FOUR QUESTIONS TO MR. ACHILLE BONITO OLIVA

KIMMO SARJE

Mr. Oliva, I have read your articles about modern art and 'trans-avantgarde', the concept introduced by you, with great interest. I'm really very glad to have in this congress a possibility and an honour to comment on your thoughts and to pose some questions.

First I wish to say that I agree with you in many questions concerning the development or the process of the modern picture art. Also my opinion is that image, individuality, expression, 'innerlichkeit', diversion, mobility in time and styles, discontinuity and pluralism are concepts which well characterise the art of our time.

As you see, I dare to interpret your doctrine of trans-avantgarde with few categories, though you have expressly warned not to do so. But to avoid rough simplicities I would like to ask you four questions.

1. Most of your concepts and slogans concerning the trans-avantgarde, as for example the concept of image, individuality, expression and mobility in time and styles, are typically romantic concepts and slogans. You like, however, to keep distance and criticise romantic ideas. Furthermore I have found out that you write of two kinds of romanticism: dramatic and domestic. So, how do you see the relation between the trans-avantgarde and the romantic tradition?

- - -

2. You think that the trans-avantgarde offers a possibility to oppose "logocentrism", the power of science and knowledge, in Western culture. How would you in general sketch the relation between science and art in the modern society? For example do you interpret science only as a repressive factor?

- - -

3. You write, if I have understood correctly, that as the general economy in times of crisis usually concentrates on old methods, so does art during times of change return "to its own specific role" and

concentrate "on its own forces". One could suppose that you think that the trans-avantgarde is some kind of an analogy to the reaganomic or the economic thatcherism? Perhaps this kind of manner of interpreting your idea is a little ill-disposed. But seriously. How would you describe the social, economic and political background of the trans-avantgarde? Or do you think it as an autonomous process?

- - -

4. And last. In your articles, I think, you have tried to form an aesthetic theory on contemporary picture art. Which philosophers have been most inspiring in your work?



## LA RECEPTION DE L'ART

GEORG JAPPE

Avant de parler d'une avant-garde, il faudrait définir plus précisément le concept de l'avant-garde. Certainement ce darwinisme linguistique mentionné par M. Bonito Oliva est un des aspects caractéristiques de l'avant-gardisme — mais pas le seul. D'un point de vue sociologique il faut voir que l'aspect primordial de l'avant-gardisme — tel que nous le concevons dans l'Ouest — est sans doute l'élitisme. Je me doute si sous cet aspect il y a ce transgressissement de l'avant-garde à la trans-avantgarde, préconisé par M. Bonito Oliva. Au contraire il me semble plutôt que cet élitisme qui se manifeste du côté de la création en temps ou isolérisme ce soit pas diminué dans le dernier temps ou elle n'a pas entièrement disparu du tout. Je pense que la conférence de M. Mats B. nous en a fourni des belles exemples de ne prendre en considération d'autre peintres qui font des allusions tout à fait du nature et élitiste. Je ne vois non plus un changement du besoin psychologique-sociopsychologique primordial de la production avant-gardiste. C'est à dire de la nécessité d'invasion constante. La production artistique de ces peintres italiens ou étrangers citée par M. Oliva ici et dans ses oeuvres comme exemple de la trans-avantgarde obéisse sans doute à la loi fondamentale de l'avant-gardisme qui est créée de nouveau. Ils ont créé — à mon avis — le nouvel art des années soixantedix. Leur véhicules pour arriver à de nouvelles images a été éclecticisme qui apprend une telle place dans la théorie de M. Oliva. En considérant que la trans-avantgarde a des points aussi fondamentaux en commun avec l'avant-gardisme, je demande à M. Oliva si la trans-avantgarde n'est pas une autre et pas nécessairement la dernière vague du phénomène social qui est l'avant-gardisme.

GEORGE JAPPE

Maintenant le transavanguardia est venu plus clair qu'au début - la côté révolutionnaire et la côté aussi amoral - ça ne veut pas dire immoral. Mais il y a aussi un côté de morale. Je pense que c'est là que beaucoup de critiques ont des difficultés; en pensant encore que la critique c'est quelque chose qui est à voir avec la morale. Il y a aussi quelques artistes qui en pensent.

Les théorèmes. Comment s'approcher d'une façon théorique aux oeuvres d'art et aux changements des oeuvres d'art. Une question qui est déjà relevée par M. Meuris en constatant qu'il y avait plusieurs ruptures dans le langage de l'art de cet siècle et qu'il y avait pas de ruptures dans le langage de la critique d'art.

Il faut bien préciser que bien sûr il y a eu de ruptures dans le langage. Il y a une différence entre Joyce et Proust. Mais le langage du critique qui veut être compris est toujours un langage conventionnel. Si j'essayerai quelque chose de vraiment équivoque apologue - personne va l'imprimer. Il faut toujours utiliser des mots conventionnels - convenables, expliquer à travers un langage qui est devenu un langage bourgeois - dans un sens établi et historique.

JACQUES MEURIS

Je ne sais pas si je dois revenir dans le concept de ruptures. C'est vrai que nous utilisons un langage bourgeois. Notre approche morale de l'oeuvre d'art actuel est peut-être un proche qui ne tient pas en compte assez des modifications de la morale artistique ou esthétique. L'introduction est faite d'une sorte d'amoralisme dans l'oeuvre d'art de non morale. Quand aux interventions qui tiennent une partie importante à la linguistique je voudrais simplement faire trois réflexions:

1) Nous discutons tant et nous invoquons tant des techniques et des philosophies de la parole et de l'écriture que on voit point un danger - le danger que le mot précède l'image et la parole précède le tableau. Le critique d'art pourrait finalement être un exercice dans soi et se passer de l'oeuvre d'art.

2) Ma deuxième réflexion tient à la démonstration de Pierre Rouve



L'intérêt que montre le dessin — l'évolutions de la pensée dessinée par les enfants, ou niveau aussi d'intérêt de la connection entre l'intention et la réalisation qui peut s'appliquer dans ce monde des enfants également aux artistes. La connection et l'intention de l'artiste et la réalisation de l'oeuvre — des moyens que l'artiste acquière par lui même et par les techniques pour exprimer ses intentions.

3) Le contact entre le critique et les artistes n'est pas un contact facile. La plupart de mes contacts avec les artistes — les entretiens enregistrés avec les artistes — montrent et quelquefois les artistes disent eux mêmes que l'artiste n'a pas à dire — que l'artiste ne dit pas — mais que l'artiste fait. Il fait un tableaux, une sculpture, une video...

De savoir dans la mesure où l'artiste fait et ne dit pas est-ce qu'il appartient aux critiques de parler à sa place. A partir de l'instant où on pose cette question on pose évidemment le problème des réactions de l'artiste par rapport au critique. Les réactions sont extrêmement diverses et qui — en dehors de toutes les amitiés que chaque critique peut avoir avec un certain nombre d'artistes — sont souvent des réactions durs. Le critique a souvent l'impression d'être l'ennemi de l'artiste plutôt que son allié. Pour un critique un artiste est un allié — évidemment — plutôt qu'un ennemi.

GEORGE JAPPE

Le problème du verbalisation du visuel qui est à la fois nécessaire et à la fois toujours reprend quelque chose du visuel.

Deux questions posées pour Pierre Rouve:

- 1) Pourriez-vous éclairer détailement quelle place pourrait avoir la fonction sociologique social de l'art dans cette système ?
- 2) Quelle place dans ce sens pourrait avoir un système de métaphore qu'on utilisé pour donner des orientations pour un publique assez large — pour l'être de la société.

RENÉ BERGER

Une remarque sur la complémentarité des exposés:

Concernant la démonstration rigoureuse de Pierre Rouve il me semble que — d'après Jacobson — il y a une possibilité d'utiliser un instrument dont il doit aussi il y a avoir certaines limites qui sont pas apparus suffisamment clairement. Il a mis l'accent sur le passage fondamental d'un code privé au code socialisé. Le model est effectivement applicable aussi bien à la langue qu'à l'art. Tout démarche de nouveau mouvement est exactement d'abord un ideolecte puis devient dialecte et enfin une langue. A propos du deuxième exposé de la complémentarité de laquelle je vous allusionné tout à l'heure, je vois que certaines dimensions doivent — ou devraient également apparaître. J'entends la dimension du plaisir, la dimension de la jouissance, la dimension de la valeur et aussi la dimension de la contestation ou du caractère de controverse telle qu'il est apparu dans le premier exposé — d'ailleurs de Bonito Oliva.

Est-ce qu'il est possible d'assimiler l'art à une langue ou est-ce que d'avantage un langage et une langue ne sont pas des choses identiques?

PIERRE ROUVE

J'ai voulu me limiter délibérément à l'antichambre de sémantique et à l'entrée de la poétique. Ceci pour répondre à remarques absolument pertinentes sur l'émergence d'une épistémologie d'une sociologie sociale qu'il vient de me soulever. Et il suffit d'avoir ou le moindre activité de Dan Hertzwelt pour se rendre compte qu'il nous apprendra dans ses collages à lire d'un côté la grammaire et de l'autre côté la superstructure logique qui s'en suit.

J'aimerais refaire de la main blanche à la main noire. La métaphore de l'arbre de Noël nous-appelle à lire quoi? À lire avant tout des morphèmes comme c'est le cas d'un arbre de Noël ou des morphèmes qui se constituent devant nos yeux par accumulations dans les collages. Donc, la valeur sociologique que nous attribuons tous avec notre admirations ne peuvent dériver que de cette agglomération de morphèmes et doptemes. La lecture idéologique est conditionnée par la lecture grammaticale. L'orientation — bien entendu — départ de l'espèce



d'équilibre que nous retrouvons entre l'élément privé et le code socialisé - telle qu'elle se rencontre parfois l'ennemi parfois frère dans le même oeuvre. Il est vrai que c'est avec une certaine gêne que je passe ce que gentillement René Berger n'a pas condamné comme le côté puritain par la contamination de mon exposé.

L'absence totale de la présence corporelle de la jouissance de cet moment où notre corps se sublime matériellement en demeurant totalement matérialiste dans une idéalité précisément à travers la jouissance, à travers le plaisir. Enfin que mon corps devient mes pensées et mes pensées dans le corps deviennent porteur de la valeur - créateur de controverse - défenseur des valeurs dans lesquelles je crois. Evidemment nous heurtons à la nécessité du langage social. Peut-on créer un langage social par définitions? Peut-il qu'un comité central décide un jour ou l'autre qu'on changera de langage. Les comités centraux n'ont jamais essayé de changer de langage. La loi de la socialisation peut être la suite des voix sous-terrains. C'est la voix du masque dont parle Lévi-Strauss. Et c'est pas certainement moi qui doute tout de toutes les causalités. Il faudrait que quelqu'un de plus subtile le fasse.

Il faudrait qu'une personne plus subtile l'accuse et défant en parlant de la valeur. Comme nous sommes en Finlande, nous pourrions rendre hommage à l'un des penseurs les plus subtils quand il s'agit de la valeur. C'est à dire au logicien finlandais von Wright, auteur de la logique de la préférence. Il base à sa façon "the theory of betterness" - "la théorie du meilleur". Nous parlons de l'émergence de la valeur d'une façon logique. Von Wright nous pose un problème assez curieux. Il en pose à la pensée Biner, bon - mauvais, noir - blanc, une pensée binaire. Il nous dit que chaque fois quand je dis bon j'implique mauvais - pire - meilleur.

Ces relations bon - pire - meilleur rejoignent une dialectique logique en dehors des prescriptions idéologiques - un autogénétisme de la préférence. Je suis un de ceux qui doivent beaucoup à ce penseur finlandais dont j'ai peut-être traîné la pensée subtile et profonde dans ce résumé si brutal.

GEORG JAPPE

Nous sommes revenus à l'identité critique et nous avons pensé sur notre métier et sur notre avenir et je crois que nous devons tous se rendre compte que la critique se trouve actuellement à la croisée des chemins.

Pop art était vraiment une identité nationale, artistique et critique à la fois. C'était la victoire de l'art contemporain accepté par la publique. En 1968 on a vu que marchand - directeur - critique - artiste - publique avaient un intérêt différent. Il y a eu comme une republique des artistes qui se reconnaissaient entre eux. C'étaient pas toujours les artistes les plus reconnus ou plus riches, quelques promoteurs des expositions y appartenaient et quelques critiques. Cette republique est en train d'être effondrée. Maintenant commence — comme j'avais fait une allusion avant — une grande victoire du marché avec une nouvelle valuation de l'image. Les critiques de la generation conceptuelle ont des difficultés d'accepter cet image sans problemes que Bonito appelait solarité. Pour les autres ça peut être aussi sacrificium intellectus. Mais un critique quotidien ne peut pas dire pendant trois ans non - non - non. Chaque de nous doit trouver une position ou bien dire que la légitimation c'est le succès ou bien prendre le cynisme que nous a proposé René Berger d'une façon bien ironique. Rester au pouvoir et faire le mieux avec les grandes institutions qui essayent d'avoir de plus en plus du budget. Faut-il être conseillé de ce pouvoir d'Etat ou bien faut-il aussi avoir le courage après d'avoir eu un certain pouvoir de reapprendre le rôle de l'opposition. Se demander est-ce que le critique est encore assez du critique — est-ce qu'il est encore assez alternatif, est-ce qu'il ne faut pas chercher — comme entre le Documenta 4 et 5 — un art tout a fait alternatif pour lequel il faut encore trouver les critères parce que le dilettantisme est très grand dans ces domaines alternatifs. D'autres critères — le marché sait très bien le qualité d'ou est-ce qu'il depart.

Les propositions théoriques que nous avons entendu ce matin de Jacobson — c'est bien imprimé, c'est un philosophe linguistique qui nous fait la leçon — c'est pas nous les critiques d'art qui ont découvert ça.

Je souhaite que le congrès de l'AICA discutera sur ces sujets sur un plus grand plan



GEORG JAPPE

Comment vois-tu ton identité comme critique — par exemple comme Restany — qui est la porte-parole d'une groupe plus ou moins tu étais le promoteur. Cette trans-avantgardia est en pleine victoire mais il ne faut pas nier non plus qu'à partir de la trans-avantgardia — Neue Wilde — New Figuration — Figuration libre — il y a eu une victoire du marché de l'art comme il n'y a jamais eu avant. C'est aujourd'hui plutôt les marchands qui font les choix aux biennales et la Documenta que les critiques ou le directeur du musée et toi tu es dans ce jeu là dedans.

ACHILLE BONITO OLIVA

(Translation from Italian by Pierre Rouve)

Rather than answering in detail to the specific questions which have been raised, I will attempt to present a global discourse covering all the points which have been brought into consideration. What is the political, historical, economical and moral context within which unfolds the trans - avanguardia?

If we want to find a starting date to the transformation of the sensitivity of the eighties, this date is september 1973. Sadly a date which has not been established by the merchants of art but by history itself. 1973 is the year of the Yom Kippur war between Israel and the Arab countries. This war makes the Arabs aware that they hold firmly in their grasp the petrol — a substance essential for western economy. A raw material which has been marketed previous to the Kippur was in a way — let us say — advantageous to the western countries.

With the Kippur war the Arabs began to make use of the petrol as a political deterrent — as a weapon with which to exert the pressure that would sensitize the awareness of the western countries under the drama of the Palestine situation. The price of the petrol grows as if spurred by East and in the same way the growth affects the price of petrol on the western market. This creates a big economic crisis in western countries. A crisis which makes a point of discussion of the productive optimism of western countries. And I would rather say the optimism of western civilization as a hope which considers history as

a progression towards a better future.

And therefore the energy crisis determines the model of the crisis of the remaining models of development in the West. The energy crisis does also create a crisis of the political models. The parties of the left — even *les partis de la gauche* — are really taken by surprise by this development. The European left, too, has been pierced through and through by historicist optimism. And that had happened because it considered history as a linear progression towards better conditions.

This crisis of political and economical models implies also an identity crisis for the artists and the intellectuals. To the productive optimism of Western civilization was related the experimental optimism of the artist. The idea of the *avanguardia* — the historical avant-garde — was to find in the development of the fifties their own model. And that happened because the historical avant-garde were vehicles of a social utopia. Hence the Darwinist model, the evolutionist idea of the avant-garde. The idea that one should start from the models of our ancestors and move upwards.

At the moment when the productive crisis of the West and the linguistic darwinism enter into a crisis, the artist loses his bearings and finds himself without the appropriate horizon.

The trans-avantgarde is the assumption of a creative pragmatism which transcends old models which have been presented. And if the artist of the historical avant-garde would refer only to the linear of the past now, the trans-avantgarde has a pluralist start, like a referential point, through the cultural nomadism and stylistic eclecticism.

The instrument of the avant-garde is the quotation; the borrowing from the previous languages of the previous avant-garde. A borrowing which extends to the whole territory of the history of art and not excluding anything in the international territory of the avant-garde as well as in the regional territory of the artist.

It is a kind of neomannerism which intends to recoup the various styles of art. The technical instrument of this recuperation is painting. Through the manuality of this recuperation, this activity, the trans-avantgarde artist recoups both the figuration and the abstract art of the past, and remains outside the contradiction



between the figurative and abstraction. This borrowing from the history of art is an operation which does not entail any nostalgic feelings, and this is the difference between the historical mannerism of the fifties and the neomannerism of the trans-avantgarde today.

The historical mannerism was quoting models of the renaissance for which it has nostalgic feelings and with which it intended to identify. An impossible identification, which has led to the madness and the death of many an artist. As far as the trans-avantgarde is concerned, there is no nostalgic feeling, there is only one type of quotation which aims at the style and not at the model concealed behind the style. And in this sense it is quite impossible to promote an identification between the transavanguardia and the romanticism. The romanticism has as a starting point a sublime idea of the self from the idea of the absolute. In the transavanguardia there is on the contrary the pleasure of the relative, of the fragment, and the pleasure not to fly high. The pleasure to intertwine high styles of art and low styles of civilization. A creative pragmatism which has shed all purist and puritanical ideas of its proper models, which does not appease national culture to international culture. It does not operate on linguistic homologation but the search for the deep roots.

Naturally this type of creativity is not a savage creativity, and it is perfectly aware of the cultural context which surrounds it. It assumes as a metaphor the law of catastrophe. The art as a productivity of catastrophe, as a rupture of equilibria of the interpersonal language through the eruption of individual imagery. A non-programmed and not previously projected break of the rupture of language, a production of fragments, and that is why Nietzsche is the relevant philosopher of the transavanguardia. And precisely because it is so aware of its transitory present it may well turn out to be the last avant-garde.

As far as M. Berger's statement concerns, I would have preferred to hear the critical motivations which have led to this statement so that we may avoid metaphysical implications in the statement.

## DEUX REMARQUES

RENÉ BERGER

Deux remarques — l'une à l'intention, ou à l'adresse de Bonito Oliva. Il récuse le darwinisme d'une certaine pensée critique pour y substituer — me semblait-il, et je m'excuse de brutal — une métaphysique du marché de l'art. Alors ma question est très précise: il s'agit simplement d'un autre type de darwinisme qui est le darwinisme économique.

Deuxièmement concernant l'autre exposé: le problème de l'interprétation et de la signification me paraît aujourd'hui lié en facteur dont il n'a pas fait mention et qui est qu'aujourd'hui.

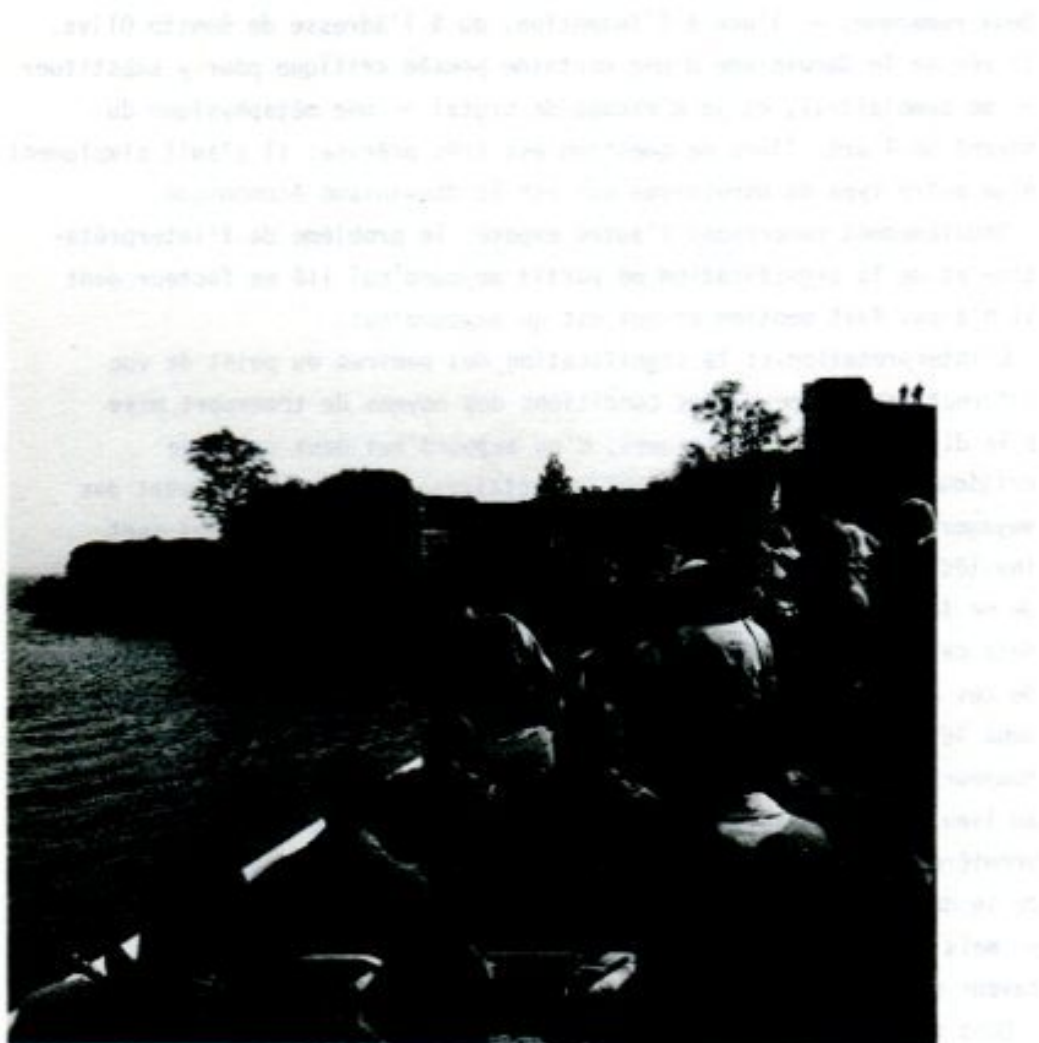
L'interprétation et la signification des oeuvres du point de vue internationale dépende des conditions des moyens de transport mise à la disposition des critiques, d'où aujourd'hui deux races de critiques: il y a les critiques sédentaires: ceux qui ne peuvent pas voyager et les critiques que j'appelle telanthrope — ceux qui sont invités sans cesse partout, c'est à dire dont les voyages sont payés. Je ne les rénonce pas puisque je fais partie un peu de cette catégorie. Mais ce que je veux mettre en évidence c'est la conséquence philosophique de ces deux types: ou le sédentaire ou le telanthrope — le nomade. Dans le premier cas l'histoire de l'art et la critique d'art ont toujours privilégié l'axe diachronique, l'axe historique, l'axe lié au lieu que l'on habite. En revanche aujourd'hui — et cela pour la première fois dans l'histoire — le critique de l'art qui a les moyens de se déplacer crée un type de critique qui privilégie l'axe synchronique — mais au moyen d'une vue rapide, très souvent superficiel à la faveur de la vitesse même des déplacements qui l'accomplit.

Donc deux points que je retiens: le premier le darwinisme du marché et le deuxième point: le changement de la signification à partir des moyens de transports accélérés.



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The Suomenlinna fortress islands

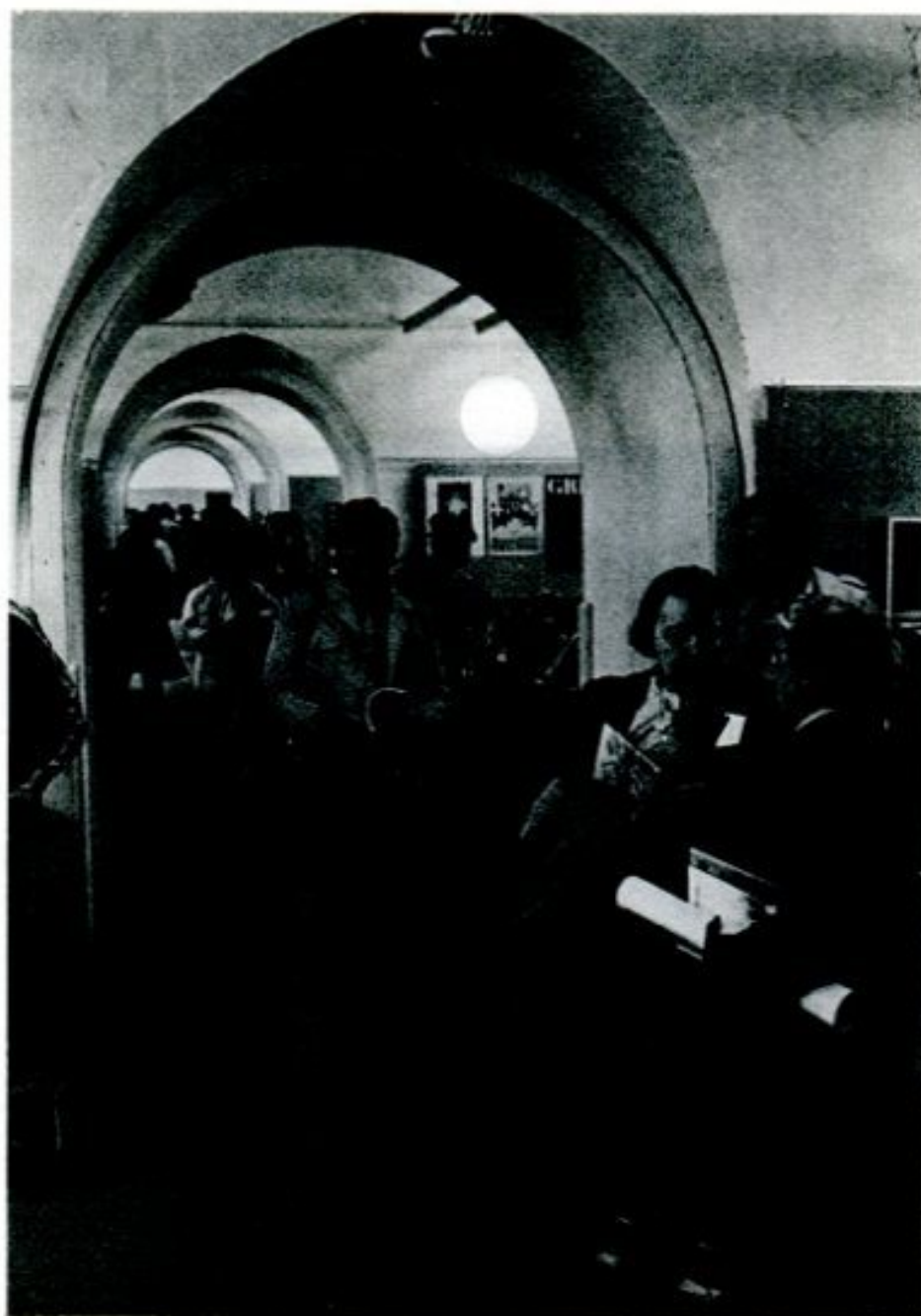






Visit to the Nordic Art Centre in Suomenlinna

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View down the main hallway, looking west from the east end.





Finlandia Hall, where the joint discussion with IAA was held

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DAN HAULICA

We are friends and yet enemies, or friendly enemies, the creators and the critics, but there are those who will sometimes cry out: What is criticism for? But in today's society art is no longer the self-evident communicable part of the society it used to be. Therefore it is important that the IIA should meet with critics. Therefore we have for example created the kind of exhibition that we call the Paris-Paris and it is therefore part of art function to bring the idea of what criticism, what art is for, and the function of us is to have the world ask later: How could we have lived without that?

It is a profound necessity of our times and it is all the more urgent in this time and age because we have got so much of what makes the face of life rather ugly today, and therefore we need specialists, those of beauty and those who create beauty, to do something about this, and as our colleague said that is is not cities that make art but art that makes cities.

It is art that needs to change the image and the face of cities. We find ourselves, whether we want it or not, confronted with these urgent problems. Whether we approach them face to face we find ourselves confronted with these, and our action ranges from town planning to every other aspect of city life. Before coming here I attended an extraordinary UNESCO conference, and I recognized what type of work had been carried out by UNESCO, what an enormous effort to safeguard the archeological legacy of various countries needs to be done and it is important not only to do it for the purpose of conserving ancient art works, it is important to enable artists today to create more art, and it is an important part of our society. It is also an important part of general research. We need specialists, not only specialists to go through the technicalities of raising and cataloguing and granting subsidies but we need something with a destiny in our culture, and with life as its destiny. It is also Alvar Aalto that I am going to invoke here. He said in a text written before the war already that we have to eliminate all artificial restraints on architecture so that architecture would become a more living part of the struggle for life.

This struggle for life has to be carried out with indefatigable energy. The struggle for life which for one thing means respect for



differences. This is something which is part of the program of UNESCO. It is important for us both as critics and as creators not to forget this respect. And this problem of cultural identity that we have to solve for ourselves is something that still remains to be solved in the 20th century although it has been thought about for such a long time. And it is by no means resolved. Even in countries that have been luckily enough able to constitute a national unity, a cultural unity, there are always cultural identities within cultures, within even the same nationality so that there will be continuous minorities forming and there is always room for multiple dialectics, as one of the greatest poets of our century said.

He also said that diversity is a tremendous source of energy, for culture and for life in general. And respect for diversity is hard work and it is difficult and important to be able to participate, it is important to give each part of the diversity, each divergent part, the respect it deserves. It is important that we do not impoverish our own life by concentrating on the divergences but that we cause the sum of these divergences to be a wealth. This wealth is something that we have to show exactly how much we are capable of. Internationalization or globalization could become a kind of inertia, it could also become impoverished culture, but this is not necessary because we can turn this very globalization of things into wealth so that we can learn from each other's diversities. When we think of the modern spirit of Africa, it is not its function to avoid subjectivity at this point because it is by doing concrete things that we will find solutions, and not by denying our own subjectivity, not by denying our divergences. We can actually enrich ourselves, and this is something that we can benefit from.

It is not possible to have a kind of identity badge that we wear; particularly for critics it is a question of a slow process of finding our own identity, and to find an unpretentious stance and approach, because any critic should know that it is not possible to solve any problems in a definitive manner and it is not possible to do it too quickly. It is not possible to solve anything by a shrugging of shoulders. One of the most beneficial means in which we can try and come closer to solution is to face problems, to talk about them together, like we have been talking here about geographical identity. When we talk about

geographical differences this gives us a concrete manner of examining things, and then we have something concrete to show for our differences.

This is why this type of articulation that we also call provincialism can be very demanding and very enriching. You know all that the North has often been dreaming of the Mediterranean, for example Goethe said that he had not really been home before he had seen the Mediterranean, and there are many similar or many different ways. On the other hand European history and culture has developed in such a way as to put the northern cultures in their right — it is from the North that came freedom against slavery of the older cultures. And said when defining Europe that the kind of movement between north and south is still going on. It is for us to turn these cultural phenomena into real dialectics and it is our task therefore to be aware of these great geographical and cultural entities. I do not mean by that that we have to catalogue the various kinds of units but to be aware of them and therefore we have dared this year to have two conferences: in the North, and this autumn we are going to have a meeting in Latin America, and that meeting is to be a confrontation where the problems that are relevant to Latin America. It is for this reason that we want a confrontation that will be lively so that we can see all the problems in various parts of the world. UNESCO has tried to create a kind of synthesis of culture created in the past 20 years and also to enable countries that in the cultural sphere have been ignored by the major countries. Therefore we should go outside of the market countries so to speak where all of the arts publications and publicity is taking place. There are many parts of the world that are not very well known in terms of their culture and that should be known. In order to accelerate the process through which the creativities of those cultures should be better known we should go there and have these confrontations. Because there are enormous potential resources or resource potentials in so many parts of the world there are surprises that are going to mark our future.

Madame Kaalund who is our Danish representative and who is the chairman of this session has pointed out in an article that there is so much art which is not put to its right in Africa and in Asia. The potential of those places has not nearly been allowed to flourish. We must be able to face this reality. There have of course been exhibitions, for example the Biennale is very important, but also going to Latin America and going



to Australia is an important part of this so that we can see the various experiences and backgrounds, so that we can add an intellectual dimension to our activity that should take us beyond our rather noisy and very published cultural activities in the cultural centers of the world. But the fact that we have got a meeting of this type, that we have got all these associations of which our representatives here are already part, of Utopia come true, because this enables us to meet on a friendly basis; that is certainly already a major step in the right direction. I said at the opening session of our conference that we need practical institutions. But before UNESCO existed there was a kind of an idea office where there were Herman Kreisle and others, and whose task was to collect initiatives and ideas, and you can see that that kind of an idea would be a very attractive and a very nice one. You can also see the distance between that kind of a small fragile institution in comparison to the complex network that we have got today, which is very good in itself, but it also contains the risk of becoming bureaucratized and too heavy to handle. But we can use the network and it can become enriched. But we can also enrich each other, we can as artists become more critical and as critics become more artistic.

The situation today is such that the kind of abyss that has existed between artists and critics no longer is. What is very wrong is the lack of understanding between artists and painters. For example in French there is a saying, "stupid as a painter". That is an expression of the misunderstanding or the lack of intellectual grasping of what artists are trying to say. Gris said that it is a good artist who knows what he is doing. Today artists in fact are aware of what they are doing and not only for themselves but they are also able to express, to communicate it. Sometimes it seems like intellectual games-playing but it is a very important process. On the other hand the critic has become a person whose function is becoming more necessary this century than last century. Last century somebody defined criticism saying that the critics are the creators of non-ideas or the non-creators of ideas. Their function was that of destroying rather than upholding. But today that is no longer the case. Because today the critic's function is to interpret and illustrate what is being said, because the critics have become more and more creative, or they feel more a part of the creative process today than what used to be the case. This is why approaches

now are more varied both on the part of the artists and the critics.

When we look at paintings by Picasso for example there is a presence of plurality. There are many different approaches and the approaches have to be more flexible and subtle. Barthes' idea of knowing how to savour a work of art is important. I think that this new perspective on intellectual exchange of views is anachronistically coming too late. We could also see that a cause and effect in critics and artists are not really valid. For example when we talked about provincialism in Portugal, this was not a question if provincialism can just be a way of accepting what is coming – it may also be transforming or having it go through a regional or provincial filter.

Provincialism is also a question of relativity because we cannot just apply the criteria of quantity to it. For example a net of very very small centers spread over a large area can certainly have a world-wide or global effect, and I think that therefore we must be aware of not only quantitative effect, but we must see where it is going on, because in Europe we often have the disease of looking at things chronologically. For example when we look at a work of art we immediately look at the date. This was made five years before that one, or this was when the artist was of a particular age. We tend to do this too much because I think that there is such a discord first of all between what is going on in one part of the world at the same time as something else and therefore comparing the dates of two works of art in different parts becomes irrelevant.

I think that we have spent too little time on examining and measuring not only the field that we are facing, not only looking at new ways of what is being produced but we also have to be aware of the gaps that we have left. We have to look at the large entities and not at the small details and we have to look at perhaps even modest applications that are part of a larger movement, and a conference is only something which is supposed to inspire us and give us food for thought.

It is in this spirit that I would like to first of all thank our colleagues and friends from the AICA for one thing to have this joint meeting and giving us their resolution for consideration. We are going to consider this resolution together and it will certainly be with great pleasure that we will remember this Helsinki meeting. I think that we will be very happy to remember this meeting. There is somebody who said of the Finnish language that it has such an incomparable capacity of



describing what happens in nature, and he compared this with poetry and quoted a Finnish poet, Koskenniemi, and the speaker is reading the French translation of a Finnish poem but the interpreter is not to attempt to interpret the poem into English. But this is a kind of description that talks about the present and gives us hope into the future.

## THE POLITICS OF ART: CENTRES AND PERIPHERIES

KALervo SIIKALA

Lightly-made promises tend to lead to awkward situations, as did the one that brought me here now to deal with the question of the relationship between the centres and the peripheries in the world of art.

At this interesting meeting where, I am told, the international associations of artists and art critics meet in conference for the first time, I am an outsider and sadly lacking in qualifications: I can speak neither from the standpoint of the artist nor the critic. As a writer of sorts I am, however, in a position to respect and fear the critic and my work in cultural diplomatic circles in Finland and the Nordic countries has often led me to ponder the question of the relation between the centre and the periphery, the tension between them, the way they influence one another, the struggles and the co-operation in the various walks of cultural life, not least of all in the field of art.

In politics, economics and the arts, world affairs are led, and development trends are determined, by the great centres, the great powers, the great cities, the great banks, industrial and commercial companies. They have vast resources at their disposal, large populations, the possibility to specialize, control of the latest technology in the fields of production as well as communications. Indeed, many people are of the opinion that the great centres use their position of power unscrupulously for their own benefit, depriving the fringes, the peripheries, of their natural resources, their raw materials, population and talented individuals, leaving them impoverished, suppressed, devoid of development and hope.

What, then, are these centres which have determined and determine still the trends, which, among other things, dictate the fashions and the aesthetics of the day? The Athens and Rome of antiquity, the Florence and Venice of the Renaissance, the courts and commercial centres of the new age, from Amsterdam to Prague and Vienna, from St Petersburg to Paris and Madrid are the cornerstones on which our western culture is built. Art flourishes in a symbiosis of money and



power; if we add good taste and trends favourable to the arts to these two factors, we get great art, the great periods of art. Competition between the centres advances the conditions under which artistic creation thrives: churches and castles, paintings and sculptures, theatres, orchestras and museums serve as feathers in the caps of the prince and the bourgeois merchant. Art flourishes when it has its commissioners and its purchasers. But there is always a limit: the money is exhausted, enthusiasm wanes, art ossifies, begins to repeat itself, congeals, loses its interest and dies.

In the century which followed the great French Revolution, art came under new masters, new patrons, new enthusiasts, new buyers: the nation state and the middle classes. Nation states competed in all other areas, why not in art too? They all had to have their National Opera and National Theatre, art museums, national literature and so on. Composers, painters, writers, etc. were hoisted onto the pedestal of national pride. They were aware of their value, as full of self-importance as the politicians. Statues were erected to them. Newspapers and journals, growing in importance, were eager to discuss questions of art. A professional body of art critics was born. The profession was launched by the philosopher of Enlightenment and encyclopaedist Denis Diderot who, in 1759 began to publish reviews of the big Paris exhibitions of painting and sculpture in his *Salons* series. Diderot, by the way, lived for a while in our neighbouring city of St Petersburg, now Leningrad, where his great library is still extant.

And while we are on the subject of Leningrad, there is reason to mention, for the sake of completeness, that the Russian Revolution also placed art in the hands of new masters: the dictatorship of the proletariat which, after a brief period of experiment, demanded and got art which could be understood by the working man and which depicted the social struggle in the idealistic light of socialist realism. The completely different directions which the development of art took in the Soviet Union and in the West illustrates best how the development of art is tied to the prevailing socio-economic situation.

Modern art, as Ortega y Gasset excellently points out in his essay "The Dehumanization of Art" (*La deshumanization del arte* — 1925),

was born out of a revolt against, even a hatred of, the old art and its traditions. In order to live and develop at all it had to turn and bite the hand that fed it — the nation state and the middle classes. It became part of the function of art to irritate the middle classes. Art had to be detached from their values. As soon as the middle classes began to understand modern art, it was no longer modern: the knife had to be driven in deeper or into another spot. This is the road we are still on. What is known as modern art has become or aims to become dehumanized and freed from social reality. It is beginning to form a system of symbols comparable to those of mathematics, developing according to a law of its own which is not even intended to be understood by all. Luckily for the typical member of the middle classes there are such things as museums and big exhibitions of historical art whose enormous popularity show what the so called silent majority thinks of art.

Socially, modern art is a marginal phenomenon and, as to their socio-economic position, those who practice it very often belong to the proletariat — which does not, indeed, mean that none of them will become millionaires. Income differences among artists are greater than those of any other profession. Art is the last sphere of human endeavour which is controlled by the untamed laws of social darwinism. The politics of art are the politics of existential anxiety: there is always a taste of blood in the mouth.

This century the world of art has been controlled by Paris, London and New York. They have dictated the fashions, the direction in which the system will develop. Since the second world war Paris and London have lost a good deal of their influence, the centre of gravity has shifted to New York which is also the world centre of advertising and the visual media.

In south Manhattan, the district of South Houston or Soho, several thousand artists live and work within a half-mile radius of the Green Street Café. There are some four hundred art galleries in the area. New ones appear at the same rate as the old ones go bankrupt. This incredible Mecca of modern art can be explained in part by socio-economic factors. The area had previously been one of light industry which has since moved out. This left a lot of the kind of relatively cheap space that the artist needs. There are a lot of



universities and art schools in New York where artists can find teaching work, and publishing and advertising to provide extra income. There is a brisk market for art in the city: there are a lot of buyers, a wealthy upper middle class. I was told a few weeks ago that art is doing better than baseball.

The London journal *The Economist* recently published a wide survey of New York and pointed out, among other things, that to achieve an international reputation nowadays an artist must first make the breakthrough in New York. The artist who has not worked for at least a certain period in New York is easily classified as "provincial", the journal claimed. The *New York Times*, *The Village Voice* and a number of specialized publications are the arbitrators of information and appraisals of what is going on. They are read all over the world, as is the *International Herald Tribune*, which follows world politics, the stock exchange and the world of art with extreme care.

New York is of international importance. But the members of the artistic community are by no means all citizens of New York or even Americans. The importance of German and Italian painters in particular has grown considerably over the last decade.

In earlier days Paris was an arts centre of similar magnitude, a city whose power, likewise, lay in its internationality and in the breadth and versatility of its artistic community. They fled there to escape war and revolution or came to study. Düsseldorf too, during the period of idealized landscape painting, was an international centre which left a deep mark on painting in the Nordic countries. Such centres there have been, and many more.

Last summer at a world conference of Ministers of Culture in Mexico City arranged by Unesco, the French Minister, Jack Lang, strongly attacked American dominance in the fields of culture and communications. He had taken the offensive in an attempt to restore the position of France and Paris in these fields. It remains to be seen whether it will succeed. In the early stages there was a great deal of money, at least, put at its disposal.

In art as in economics there is another tendency besides that of the centre, centralization, centripetal force: it is centrifugal force. The people of the big cities seek their way to the surrounding rural areas only to succeed in turning them into suburbs. People dream of

their cottage in the mountains, their islands, their sheep farms, their old local schools or some other place of refuge; a castle in Spain, château d'Espagne, where they can flee the spiritual and physical wear and tear of city life. Artists can fulfil this dream more easily than others. They are not tied to the technostucture and its work times. They know how to live cheaply, some even grow cabbages, lettuce and potatoes or actually raise those proverbial sheep, the symbolic animals of freedom in today's world. The periphery is no longer uncomfortable. There are electric lights and roads almost everywhere. Distances in time are minimal. If I start a journey from here just now, I will have reached the Faeroe Isles or Iceland, Scotland, Wales or Ireland, the Aaland archipelago or Finnish Lapland by this evening. I could be in Greenland or Alaska tomorrow.

The dream of the periphery was born during the first industrial revolution: Paul Gauguin and Tahiti, for example, or the Finnish artists and their wilderness villas at the beginning of the century. The second industrial revolution has made the realization of the dream easier than ever before for more people than ever before.

The periphery offers those well known Benedictine luxuries which you can no longer find in the big cities for love nor money: silence, space and light. Furthermore it offers a vantage point: enough distance from the trends and phenomena of the age. Distance helps to reduce to basics and condense, to concentrate on the essential. Some of civilization's essential features, its basic ideas, are often most clearly discernible at the fringe areas of that civilization, where distance and poverty force them to concentrate on the essential themes of their culture and to avoid the numerous variations which the rich centres can afford.

What is more, the periphery is in no way devoid of its own creative power. It is there that the small tradition of ethnic culture thrives and makes itself felt, in contrast to the great artistic tradition originating at the courts. African art, Eskimo — or Inuit — and American Indian art, the art of the Lapps, etc. have given a great deal to Western art, and what they have to offer has certainly not been exhausted. Here in Finland our Finno-Ugrian tradition has, at certain periods, given direction and inspiration to the whole of our artistic life. Here I am referring for the most part to the themes



and values of our national epic, The Kalevala, but also to the artifacts and building traditions of our peasant culture.

Geographical distance and a sparse population naturally present the artist working in the periphery with problems. It is troublesome and expensive to keep up with general developments in art. It is necessary to travel, to see works of art and meet others to avoid the danger of sinking into provincialism in the pejorative sense of the word. For the artist working in the periphery the journey to the art markets is long and awkward. He or she must arrange exhibitions in the centres to find appreciation and buyers. And lastly, the periphery can only badly satisfy the artist's most basic need: the need for all-round, objective and pertinent criticism. Either there are no critics at all or they are few, often already predisposed to viewing things in this way or that.

To overcome these problems requires mobility, the ability to be present at a number of places both in spirit and in the flesh. The politics of art, for this reason, must be the politics of mobility, of free trade and of low intellectual protective tariffs. Art must be international — which does not mean the same as cosmopolitan in the commercial sense. The centre and the periphery must be able to participate on an equal footing in international dialogue and international exchange, in the construction of our Tower of Babel known under the name of culture.

In practice this kind of programme means supporting art and the conditions in which it can flourish in an open international spirit, not only to ensure an income and good working conditions for the artist, but also to cover the expense of travel, freight, insurance and exhibitions. Just as important as the mobility of artists is the mobility of critics and the distribution of books and other literature dealing with art beyond national boundaries.

In Finland and in the other Nordic countries we have aimed to apply these principles through practical cultural policy. Public funds are used to support the organization of exhibitions abroad — exhibitions of work by artists who are not necessarily acknowledged masters, long dead. We are happy to receive foreign exhibitions, artists and critics. Arrangements might be made by museums, galleries or artists' associations. In addition to public funds, private business has, over

recent years, begun to show interest in supporting ventures of this kind. The Nordic countries have jointly established a Nordic Arts Centre on the island of Suomenlinna, a venture whose aim is to promote co-operation and the exchange of ideas among the artist communities of the Nordic countries at the same time as providing an environment conducive to artistic creation and innovation. One important practical aim is to put studios at the disposal of visiting artists. The travelling artist cannot, like the scientist or writer, work in a hotel room.

The late René Maheu, former Director General of Unesco, whom I consider as my teacher and a friend, liked to speak of man in his universal aspect, meaning those scientists, artists, teachers and other intellectuals who work to advance the aims of Unesco through international non-governmental organizations. You, who are congregated in this hall, whether you are from the centres or the peripheries of art, represent art in its universal aspect; you are breaking down barriers and building bridges between nations. I wish you success in your work and thank you for your attention.



SALOMON WANGBODJE

My understanding was that I was to speak for about 9 minutes. I interpret this to mean that I can speak for less or a little more than 9 minutes. However, I feel honoured to be invited to speak on an important theme that deals with cultural identity, art and criticism. It is an intricate theme for discussion and my approach in this short presentation is to take a broad view of these three aspects of the theme: cultural identity, art and criticism. International conferences of this nature in my view serve many useful purposes. At least they provide for us an opportunity for interaction among people from various corners of the globe. We lastly hope that if we could meet more frequently and engage in dialogues, many problems facing my country today can be solved or at least reduced to a minimum. It is my belief however, that international conferences summoned to discuss important issues where resolutions are passed and action is not followed are compared to knowledge that is acquired and is not put into use. Such knowledge is useless knowledge. This brings me to this particular conference which attempts to look at the problems of cultural identity, art and criticism. I am not sure if we can do better than most other international organizations which take positions that are not implemented. These issues we are discussing today have political, cultural and economic dimensions. The implications of this is that we may solve one without the other. That leaves us with the whole problem. I hope that at least we can make a start. Let me start with the complement of my colleague who said he liked my national costume when we were just introduced. I believe this is one positive way to assert my cultural identity. My contribution is short and direct, but I hope it will stimulate discussions that will lead to a useful action on the worthy subject.

Cultural identity is a sensitive issue particularly among nations whose recent colonial experience has tended to dehumanize them. It is also a sensitive issue among minority groups and culturally disadvantaged people. Let me explain that my definition of minority is not confined to small groups of isolated islands that are grafted to larger groups. There have been instances where larger groups of people can be treated as minorities, where their social and cultural pride have been disturbed by a ruling minority. The case of the blacks in South Africa is an example.

The freedom of the majority has been curtailed by a white minority to the extent that the blacks have no say in how they are governed and where they cannot assert their cultural identity in a meaningful way. The position in many African countries today is such that long after gaining political independence, economic and cultural independence have eluded them through devices such as political and economic alignment that are continuing to tie the newly independent countries to the apron strings of their former colonial masters. It is on that dissent that the contemporary African artist has in mind and continues to engage in creative activities. He is likened, with apologies to my friend professor Hesebel, to a man who is sitting between two stools, living in a region where he is confronted with a choice between traditional norms and contemporary realities. The problem of identity is even more real for him. He may decide that a return to the past is a means of reestablishing his identity. This thought is modified either by a genuine desire born of nationalistic feelings or it is dictated by the need of the moment to satisfy his patron who is often the European tourist who will buy anything because it represents the European idea that what is primitive is African. To him contemporary African art is not original but a mere extension of the European idiom. The often quoted influence of African art on Picasso's cubist period was often described by the Western critic as "inspired" by African sculptures, even where direct copy was evident or discernible. But if an African artist does anything that has any remote resemblance to a known European artist, he is said to have copied. The European is inspired, the African copies.

The second group of artists falls into this category. He is often western-trained or has attended western-type art schools in his country. He is inclined to take a more realistic view of the internationality of contemporary art which has no firm boundaries. His view is dictated likely by his tool of production, his mode of training, and the economic realities of his region. His training has been essentially confined to a study of art without a strong foundation in the study of the history of art, esthetics or criticism. This aspect of the artist education has been generally neglected. Hence the almost complete absence of art criticism in Africa.



The critic is recognized as a powerful and necessary link between the Mecca and the consumer of art. He has the responsibility to inform and educate as well as champion the cause of art and artists. This is particularly modern, at a time like this when new movements and directions are occurring at such dazzling speeds that the public is left far behind. The critic should therefore attempt to bridge the gap between the artist and his audience. Criticism for it to be taken seriously should be honest and function, thus leaving none in doubt as to its mission in a world where everybody appears to be in such a hurry and there is no time to stand and stare. For the minority and the culturally disadvantaged majority who have something valid to say in a world that appears not to treat them justly. It will seem reasonable to support the artist who is concerned in such a sensitive issue as national identity and whose only weapon is his art. It is a potent weapon for through his communication ability a universal emerges. It can say so much with so little. It is the voice of reason, and it should be listened to and heard.

## ZAMBIAN DELEGATE

I come from a country called a Third World country. First let me place a few questions or a few points. In the first instance I regard an art critic in the western sense as somebody who stands for the total neglect of contemporary African art. He appraises the wrong concepts and misinterprets the African cultural values in the western societies. To a large extent an art critic contributes to the utter callousness and selfishness of his own society in appreciating our cultural values. He has set himself as the artistic of the universal esthetic values of mankind. Secondly I opt to disagree with one of the speakers who said that power and money are in most cases signs of great development in the world of art. That is a total misconception of reality. I have one very good example and that is the Republic of South Africa where western powers invest heavily and there is a lot of money which is being used. Instead of promoting culture, art has been used as a great machinery of suppressing the majority of the people. He has got a very great past view of anything that is not western, in any creative form. Anything outside the western world is regarded as inferior. In fact he has no time for such things. I am afraid that critics in Europe are some of the worst culprits in this area. They have no time to look at anything African or exotic. Anything which comes from Africa is treated in the concept of its historical context and from that point of view, a wrong point of view. And anything which is judged is judged in terms of western civilization. In this case I see the artifice of intellectual discrimination and the perpetuation of pressure overtones in terms of our cultural values vis-à-vis the western concepts of civilization and culture. What should be borne in mind is that in Africa we have our own art critics but they sort within the system and they don't stand for something which does not stand for progress or the various art forms. They stand to develop all the various art forms in the societies concerned.



## TUNISIAN DELEGATE

I have prepared a few thoughts on the idea whether a dialogue between the artist and the critic is a confrontation or communication. This seems at first an easy question to answer. Be this dialogue in writing or not, it must always be a communication. It will always give an idea of what the critics' assessment of the situation is and as far as the artist is concerned it will be either asserting his own viewpoint or becoming fixed in his own idea. But the dialogue will take place and when we examine the question further we will realise that the answer is not as easy as we first think. The social functions of the critic are at the same time analysis, assessment, judgment, promotion, advancement and so forth. The functions are so various and they depend so much on the social context in which they are made. At the same time a dialogue between the critic and an artist is only one of the functions of the art critic and it is not necessarily the most important, because even if this dialogue is important it can take place via a detour as well and the critic is only a mediator between the creator and those who receive the creation. It is for the critic to interpret art for a larger audience, particularly when it comes to contemporary art, that is the principal task of the critic. All the other functions are derived from this main function of interpreting art to a larger audience. In this relationship, what should be the orientation of criticism, what stance should the critic take? Here we have to begin to examine what kind of role the critic will assume, will he be a businessman on behalf of the public, is he supposed to analyze or judge or assess as closely and scientifically as he knows. The critic must be as communicative as possible because that is the main function of the critic. And this is particularly important in the sort of social conditions where art is intellectually produced seemingly outside the realities of that society. Art is the reflection of a very wide social spectrum and this corresponds to an analogous function in the critic's work so that for every social function, for every type of function that art has, passes on to the critic who passes it on to a larger audience. But that is not the same thing as communication between the artist and the critic. The dialogue between the critic and the artist is a dialogue between professionals. Both work professionally in the same field that is art, and this means that

professionals do not always have to agree on certain ideas. A typical word used in a certain context or a singled out word is enough for professionals to understand each other, and it does not have to be interpreted. Although artists and critics talk to each other as professionals there are some divergencies with various aspects... the artist is the creator, the producer, the doer. He is the one who creates the work of art and he is very familiar, very intimate with all the details of the creative process. He is the one who produces the signs and symbols and metaphors. His view is not that of an analyst. His view is always a synthesis of his own art. He looks at the work of art from the point of view of the production, and in this way the artist is the professional. But the critic on the other hand looks at the ready product and usually has a wider knowledge of the historical development of certain tendencies than the artist but his task is that of conveying the idea of a work of art from the artist's point of view also. He is not in the same way engaged in the productive process as the artist, but the process of creation is always an objective phenomenon. He is outside it, he has to do research in it and in this sense we can say that the critic is not a professional, and in that sense the dialogue between the artist and critic is not necessarily a dialogue between professionals because they are not professionals in the same way. Many details of the creative process remain incomprehensible to the critic because he cannot throw any light on why the artist has done this rather than that and why he has used this shape or form or color rather than another one, and it would have been impossible for the artist to do it in any other way, and the artist may not be able to verbalize why. But nevertheless the critic knows a number of things that are very important for the larger audience to know. For example, what the historic background of a certain school or tendency is, or what sort of a message is conveyed. Usually the critics are more familiar with the circumstances than the artists and therefore the dialogue of a critic and an artist can also be a confrontation because they do work on art from a very different point of view. This confrontation between the artist and critic means that the artist becomes aware of criticism and also becomes aware of the value or lack of value of his creation, of his work; what the social importance or international importance of his work is. In this type of dialogue the artist finds his place in the society. But when we



look at the commercial aspect of art we can see that the understanding between artist and critic often breaks down. Art in the largest sense of the word is a most important criteria for national identity, the particularities and peculiarities of each cultural identity. Art is a way of interpreting various kinds of social phenomena and its importance on the national level, that means in so far as it provides identity for the whole nation, depends on the whole of social sphere because art alone cannot replace other social functions. It is impossible for artistic relations or art to work in a society where nothing else works. Art is rather a reflection of the entire mentality and this development is in my opinion a very important one. Even if these identities are not strictly national it does not mean that if it is inspired from across the frontiers it is not an improvement. Is this national identity a barrier that should be dismantled or is it an impulse that could give impetus to further creation and would uphold a system where each individual is freely able to develop? National identity can become a mission not through the development of mass media but through the fate of an entire nation. When we think of mass media we can see that it can certainly strengthen the sense of national identity. We have many examples of that and it is in fact mass media that are able to convey a lot of things that are important within each culture to the audience at large.

## TUNISIAN DELEGATE

I would like to say that the art critic is an institution of art as well as the artist is. Culturally speaking, both are necessary. Immediately after the Second World War there was a flourishing all over the world of pseudo art and the same happened obviously to art criticism. We were at that point drunken with freedom because fascism had been overcome, war had finally come to an end so that we were completely giddy with success, and obviously then art would also be giddy or would be taken by vertigo. Well, we can also see what other cultural forms have been taken since that. We have seen how many galleries, how many museums have been started at that time. Everything seemed to be allowed, everything was being done, and this was in many ways just an adventure in bad taste and of course the art critics joined it. Today reason is finally assuming its own role. What are the Third World countries or developing countries going to be doing? Well, we follow the west whether we want it or not. We are more or less forced to. We are lagging a bit behind and therefore in Third World countries the pseudo artist is still rampant and there are also pseudo critics. An art critic can be a sports reporter or anything at all, he is just told by his boss that you write on this exhibition and tomorrow you write on a sports tournament or whatever. He does not know anything about it. He can just throw flowers on the entire process. This is a reciprocal crisis of pseudo critics and pseudo artists. Unfortunately it is being fed by ignorants. Because the thing is that if we go on lying and lying and lying we will finally end up believing our own lies. These pseudo artists and these pseudo critics take themselves seriously and they achieve to believe that they are critics and artists. But a real art critic is a very important person with an analytical role, a noble role. He is an art consumer who is privileged above any other kind of art consumer and he helps other people consume art. But to consume it in the correct manner. He must be cultured and educated himself and he must have taste. It is not enough that he be able to write but he must be able to discern and distinguish as a good art critic. He must be able to manipulate the work, the material, himself, whether he has done any artistic work himself he must know something about the actual process. You cannot be a critic with just a pen. Rather than being a conductor the art critic should really be an analyst.



FAIK HASSAN

It was fortunate that we have this meeting today: joining the forces of the artists with those of the critics. I feel that these forces actually somehow converge in me because I just happen to practice both arts, if you consider criticism is also an art. I want to say that I find the statement that the critic is there to interpret the artist to a wider public a false statement. In fact I think the critics in this hall should protest because it somehow gives them a second class status regarding the act of creation. I know Belac who once said that he who can create, creates; he who cannot, criticizes. Now this may be a clever statement but it is absolutely false. Could actually the critic who launches himself onto a world of images and pictures in order to say something be a self-appointed interpreter, a self-appointed go-between between the artist and the public. He is a creator in his own right, a creator who is stimulated by the visual experience of art works into saying things that the artists do not necessarily say. If the critic were less important because he only repeated or just put in words what the artist put in picture or in sculpture, then he would certainly be only an echo of an artist, which of course he is not. If that were so, Plato and Aristotle would be of much less importance and relevance to civilization than Phidias or Aischylos.

The critic is a man who puts into context, into intelligible context the works of an artist or the works of art, so that a wider significance can be derived for the whole of civilization. A critic is therefore a man whose ideas can only be enhanced by giving examples from visual art, from works that can be seen or touched, but actually in order to achieve ideas that do not lend themselves necessarily to an image, to a picture or a sculpture. And hence the importance of the critic, otherwise the critic would be no more than a journalist or a reviewer of exhibitions which of course an art critic is not at all.

If we talk about cultural identity, actually the painter contributes toward making concrete a kind of cultural identity which can only be thought in context, which can only be isolated, which can only be concretized by the critic. It is the critic who brings up the cultural identity that may be visible in the artist's work. The critic is just as important a creator as the artist, sometimes in fact he may be even a more relevant creator to our civilization. As a matter of fact, if you look at the artists in any country and the critics in the same country, what will you find? You will always find that there are many artists but very few critics, because criticism in itself requires training, a discipline, an intellectual breadth, a knowledge and a power of expression that gives him a superiority of his own and makes his place much higher than that of a mere so-called interpreter. That is a point I have always wanted to raise in a context where the poor critic is relegated to a second class status as I said. So the artist thinks that he can do without him. The artist cannot do without the critic. Mind you I do not say that the artist necessarily learns from the critic. I do not think the artist learns anything from critics. So critics do not flatter themselves into thinking that they are teaching the artists. They are not. The artist is a self-created genius. He is a man who generates his own fire. The critic is another fire that actually happens to merge in the fire of the artist into making the whole thing significant to our civilization. This is one point I wanted to make in reference to what my previous colleague said and in comment to what Mr. Haulica said very aptly actually.

The other point I want to raise in a way related to it, is on the question of a center and a periphery, and here I am really talking more as an artist but also probably as an artist with critical training.



Mr. Siikala gave us a very interesting and very beautiful analysis on the situation of art in modern times. I think he was right all the way through, I found nothing that I could pick holes in. But I found his symbolism of center and periphery very significant to you all present here coming from the four corners of the world in order to exchange ideas about your work as artists or your work as critics.

So many of us are actually on the periphery if the center is New York or sometimes possibly Paris or London, actually all of us or most of us, probably 90 per cent of us are quite on the periphery. Now that does not mean necessarily that we are isolated. There is a constant gravitation between center and periphery. It is a gravitation between the periphery and the center that would make the center viable, but the center itself cannot survive without the periphery. The center in modern civilization has become an economic one. It is a market. Certainly it is a market of talent, certainly very often a market of good ideas. But still it is a market in money terms, in economic terms. The periphery is where real art is very often created to be attracted towards the center, to make the center viable. Now I do not claim that artists in Nigeria or Iraq or India or Latin America are necessarily better artists, better painters than those living in New York. But I can tell you that I am sure that the artist in New York would feel himself sort of in mid-air without the art of these very regions I mentioned. The whole process of modern art, the whole revolutionary process that has been taking place in the last 70 or 80 years actually has been a process put into motion by the periphery. It was not the arts of London or Zurich or Munich or Paris that actually revolutionized those painters who lived in those places. It was the arts of the faraway places that shook the foundations of a tradition that was really 2000 years old, a tradition based on classical painting and sculpture, and on Renaissance painting and sculpture, on the Greek and the Roman model. It was the models taken from Egypt, from Mesopotamia, from Mexico, from Latin America, from Negro Africa, it was these concepts, these ideas of art, these ideas of creativity that suddenly turned the table for the artists in Europe. The artists in Europe started to create in styles and under the influence of the arts of the periphery in order to enrich the center. So the artists of the periphery are not feeling alienated or isolated because the center is still the place where you can sell your art or you can

propagate it. Admittedly a painter in India or Egypt or Latin America may not be able to sell at the prices that are fetching in these markets. The ideas I feel are still germinated on the periphery and the artists should never feel that because the center is far away from them or beyond their reach or because they cannot travel to it, that therefore they should be alienated from the world of creative concepts, of creative thinking or creative feeling. Perhaps it is a good thing when we talk about cultural identity and a better place for us to live in, that we talk about the relationship between criticism and art. All this becomes significant when we know that the periphery is alive and should always remain alive and that the relationship between center and periphery is a dialectical one. It is often promoted by the critics themselves who bring to attention hidden motives or hidden basic ideas that become significant in a world context. So to all the artists who come from the periphery to the center I would like to say: Good luck to you in your efforts. Be sure that the world is watching you wherever you are. Of course the people in the center are also worthy and they are actually in the focus of our attention, but our relationship with them will always remain a dialectical one and fortunately a creative one.

RENÉ BERGER

It is quite clear that I am only talking for myself in this debate. What strikes me is that when artists and critics or any other professional groups meet, the discussion takes an ideological turn. I'll tell you two unpleasant things. First point: any artistic process is hard. A work of art can sometimes be a gem of beauty — a beautiful object — but it is always a piece of merchandise and we must see this as a reality because if we ignore this, we will not be facing up to reality. Second point: our identity which we like to talk about is not a unitarian or simple phenomenon. This concept also derives from complexities, ambiguities and tensions. Therefore we could say, what does the identity of everyone consist of today, in today's world? It should be submitted to a close examination of universal character. Our identity has undergone a technological change and we have to be aware of another power which



operates in arts, too, and that is finance, economics. World economy certainly has an influence on art as well as on cultural identity and we cannot talk about cultural identity without taking into consideration these various layers that are antagonistic to each other. If we talk about center versus periphery, this is no scholastic entertainment for the sake of talking about something, because this is the reality: we are either exiled in periphery or else we are the subject of some kind of folklore. I think that the kinds or realities, the kinds of claims certainly legitimately put forth by many Africans are certainly true, because many of these works of art have been first recognized by a number of critics either in Europe or in America. That is not the important part. When we talk about art and criticism as absolutes, we talk about non-temporal aspects, we find the predominance of a number of movements which have succeeded each other and which constitute the determining influence at any given moment.

Today the trans-avanguardia for example, and I can see that Bonito Oliva is in the room, perhaps we could ask him now how a movement like this was born, who promoted it, and I mean promoted it in the best sense of the word, and why did it become so successful. Here you have got somebody in the room who could answer not to the question what is an artist, what is a critic, what is this or that value, but you have a chance now to ask somebody who is one of the actors in this process: Why did this group become so successful?

It is imaginable that certain forms of activity on the periphery is found to have an impact on contemporary history. It is possible, it is probable. And here I am again thinking of Africa, how often the products of third world art actually become objects of tourism, and this tourism in fact kills the identity or kills the soul of the product. We should also see who the actors are that could have an impact on this play, and I think that we are now here in a situation where we would have an opportunity to put precise questions and have precise answers about specific questions in Europe, in the United States, in Italy, in Germany. I am sorry if this was a bit unpleasant to tell you, but I think we should come to terms with it.

MORRIS KESTELMAN

I want to address just a few remarks to you, not only on the grand subject of identity which has been treated very eloquently by various speakers, but on the other question of the difficult relationship between the critic and the artist. Large claims have been made today as though the critic could be equal as a creative force to the painter. I have to express with regret that I am disagreeing with my friend from Iraq. I think that he has totally idealized the function of the critic. I would like to say that the reality is really largely very different. Let me put a simple question to you all, to the critics, too; they might like to think about this. If you take the 20th century and think of the marvelous *épanouissement* of painting in France and then turn your attention to the marvelous production in New York, a whole score of wonderful painters that have a great influence. You could think of how many names if I ask you to remember, names of great artists? Hundreds probably come to your mind. How many critics would you be able to remember in those times? Very unlikely now, I do not want to run down the function of the critic, he has his place, he has his importance. If I think of great critics who left a mark on the understanding of painting I think of people like Baudelaire, I think of people like Apollinaire, I think of people like Manon ... Although originally either poets or playwrights or novelists or painters in their own right, it is from that basis that they are able to offer something very very valuable. And I dare say, I do not want to run the art critic down but the reality in modern times is that the growth of power of the art critic has become enormous, in some sense his influence is surpassing that of the painter. When you think that critics are constantly writing highly influential prefaces in very prestigiously printed catalogues paid for by highly industrialized and commercialized very prestigious galleries. The critic has a function there which one can begin to question. The production of prestigious books again which are part of the whole situation. Moreover, the critic is frequently being asked by galleries and museums to choose artists who will be shown. That is a pretty terrifying thing. I would like to put this point to the critics: they should have really a rather humble situation vis-à-vis the painters.



MICHELLE CONE

I am both a participant and an observer in this formidable so-called art scene at the center. I just want to make a brief statement about this notion of center versus periphery and to describe perhaps for you what center means. What it means in fact is that it is a center of the competition for the most attention, both on the part of artists and on the part of critics. Now what does it mean, attention? It means a desire for limelight. What is limelight? Something that is very hard to live with. So the options of a New York artist or critic is to be constantly able to stand limelight, success so-called. Or, if limelight does not come forth, to withstand being ignored. And I think that in either case this center lacks total appeal.

YEOH JIN LENG

I would like to go back to the theme of this session here in connection with cultural identity, art and art criticism, what cultural identity is supposed to state. There is not only one kind of cultural identity, as we already know, there are other kinds of cultural identities in different parts of the world. Now value systems are not based on one kind of cultural idiom. It may not be just based on a cognitive area of humankind, but there is the other spiritual, meditative and affective domain of humankind which determines the kind of cultural identity for different kinds of people.

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Finally, on art criticism with consideration of these multidimensional kinds of value systems that exist in the world, I would just like to say that all we know is that writing need not move from left to right, but writing can move from right to left, from top right hand corner down to the bottom and towards the left. And finally, just to close this, because of the tendencies that exist based on economics and other things that have been expressed, I would like to just quote a Chinese sage who said that "a lot of people tend to appreciate art through their ears."

GEORGE KOCH

Just a few observations. This has really been quite intriguing. Particularly the last comment from my colleague, and I would like to pick a point. It seems to me that as individuals working in the arts, whether we are a critic or practitioner as a painter or a sculptor, that one kind of the things that we are constantly faced with is dealing with some kind of a bias that we may have. I have been fortunate to work with many performing artists in my work, and the symphony and orchestra musicians in the United States have developed the concept of blind screening for selecting players in their orchestras and symphonies. This has increased dramatically the number of minority and women musicians in those institutions. I am not sure what vehicles might exist for our profession, but it seems to me that the first step is to recognize that some bias does exist in one form or another, and with our creative abilities seek ways in which to screen those. I do not have an answer here but I think the process or understanding the process might be one of importance to us here today.

I feel a tendency with contemporary art that there has been a clamoring on the part of the consumer for more knowledge about the artist as an individual. And some critics, I think particularly in the United States, have begun to confuse the person and the art, and those tend to get quite mixed when they are presented to the public.

A comment about the session today: One of the things that I think that social science has learned in the last 20 or so years is, when dealing with social conflict, or any conflict, the most important thing is a dialogue or a confrontation, the ability for the people involved to be able to share their thoughts whether we agree with them or not, but the ability to do that, because none of us will be influenced by these feelings or concerns unless we are able to experience them. I think that sessions like this certainly go a long way towards achieving that.



SOLOMON WANGBOJE

My comment is very brief. One aspect of my interest on what we are discussing today was the question that was raised at the General Assembly of the IAA. That is the flow of creative work from the South to the North, that is, from Africa to Europe. I observe that two kinds of art works come from Africa to Europe: the traditional and the contemporary. It is my observation that the contemporary works of art hardly receive any measure of interest either in the printed or electronic media in the West. On the other hand, traditional works of art which are usually packaged by governments, from one government to the other, receive a lot of attention and praise. And I wonder whether this is a convenient stand on the part of the West to assure that you do not create tensions between countries. If a country brings a work of art to another country you have to praise it in order to assure that the relationship is cordial.

The other thing that interests me in this respect is that perhaps the the kind of attention that is given to these packaged works of art is also given to individual exhibitions that come from Africa or Third World countries into Europe. It is not always governments that make decisions that affect people, it is sometimes individuals, and you can never tell who that individual will be. Maybe the artist who you have ignored.

KALervo SIIKALA

There is not really much to say. I think the gentleman from Zambia did not like the proposal I made in my speech that art flourishes in a symbiosis of money and power, and he was referring to the case of South Africa, which certainly has money and power but my knowledge is not very prominent in the field of art. But there was a qualification in my statement saying that art flourishes in a symbiosis with money and power — if we add good taste and trends favourable to the arts to these two factors, we get great art. I do not think that in South Africa there are trends favourable to the arts nor maybe good taste, I do not know, I have not been there. Anyway one does not hear about the good taste of the republic of South Africa. Otherwise the discussion has been very interesting. Coming from a sister organization of yours which is the international PEN — PEN meaning poets, playwrights, editors, essayists and novelists — I am astonished by the easiness by which you swallowed without contradicting many of the provocative statements of this paper. I can now consider this as being confirmed by the joint session of AICA and IAA, unless of course you did not bother to contradict the stupid statements — but this alternative I leave out of my calculations. I feel very happy to have been here this morning with you.

DAN HAULICA

Thank you for having given me the floor again. I am just going to say a few words. It was stimulating for all of us to hear how frank we can be with each other and I think it is a very good idea that Mr. Siikala spoke to us in the way he did. But I was very impressed also by what René Berger said. I think that when it comes to self-awareness and Finnish identity I would reprimand my colleagues for a kind of inferiority complex which appears as very severe self-criticism. I think that I have seen this tendency earlier. There are so many different civilizations in front of us, before us, that it is very easy for us who come from smaller countries to be embarrassed about our national



culture. I think that a lot of truths have been said here but I also think that we have expressed a number of prejudices. For example when we talk about the relationship between Africa and Europe I think that the judgment on Europe was a bit too harsh, because I do not think that it is true that Europe is only trying to undo its bad conscience vis-à-vis Africa. I just think of the German exhibition that took place with a lot of African and other Third World artists. As I come from a European country that has never been a colonial master it is easier for me to speak in this manner. I think that it is true that there is a lot of prejudice against Africa but I do think that we should also not try and bend over backwards the other way because we have to be aware of what the reality is. There is something that may appear a bit paradoxical when we talk about provincialism and when we talk about the dialectics between centers and provinces or peripheries. I think that René Berger emphasized that we need to concentrate on a specific aspect of what periphery is not and when we talk about peripheral areas we should see what they are. They are not necessarily Third World countries, they can also be wealthy countries such as Switzerland. For example one of the Swiss critics said that Switzerland exports talent and imports reputation, because all of the artistic reputation of Swiss artists is created outside Switzerland. It is true that it is difficult to be in the limelight as one of our speakers said. It has also been said that this is a kind of limelight that we are perhaps in for ten minutes and then after that it is past. But the thing is that the artist has an obligation to go beyond this, and what is difficult is to dismantle the hierarchy of center and periphery, because we think of artists who wanted to be in the periphery. When we think of one of the greatest painters of the 20th century, the Italian Morandi, who refused all his life to go to Paris, and he remained in Bologna, his native Bologna, for all his life. But he was certainly in contact with French painting so that it is possible to persist in remaining in the provinces but not being provincial. This is not metaphysics because provincialism is not a question of geography only. Because there is something to be said for the feeling of being in the center of the world or in the center of action. And therefore in all 20th century culture we try to abolish the periphery by making communications much better so that anywhere one can feel to be in the center of action. But I think

that we should try and find a tendency which would reconcile these two opposites to each other. I think that the true talent lies in being in the periphery and acting and feeling as if you were in the center. And this I call personal metaphysics, not adding any pejorative overtones to that word. When we accuse those in the centers for holding too much power I think that those accusations are rather unfounded. Critics are rather weak, too, and the tasks that we have, both those of creators and those of critics, are so enormous that we can only face them by admitting that we are rather weak all of us, or in a weak position.

#### DUNBAR MARSHALL-MALAGOLA

So as to strike on a note of agreement between us there is one area in which our interests coincide entirely. I shall talk for the benefit of those who do not know France very well. There are two cultural aspects, the pétangue, which is a kind of game which is played in villages, and pastis, which is a drink, and then in provincial towns in the summer there was once a pétangue competition. The prizes for the winners was, 1st prize: a bottle of pastis, 2nd prize: half a bottle of pastis, 3rd prize: a magnificent work of art.

#### FRENCH DELEGATE FROM THE AIAP

I asked to speak here because in my quality first of all as a painter and as an architect, I have been interested for a long time over the past 20 years on the communication between artists, industry and architects. This morning I listened very attentively to the comments made but unfortunately communication did not take place the way we wanted. For architects particularly it is very often the case that the architect is not asked in the beginning to join, and with painters this is the same case. We as architects do need artists. Today I think that you must be aware of the problem of communication, and we must be aware of or we have actually put into effect some of our projects so that we



brought a team of artists and architects working together. Architects have for example said that they want to work with a specific artist and that the artist can also interfere or intervene with certain designs in the buildings and also give an impression of what kinds of materials should be used. We have talked about contemporary materials, and we have talked about traditional materials that we all know, but it is quite clear that industry is going to develop so quickly that new building materials are being developed all the time, and artists must be aware of this as well. I think that artists and architects should together form operational teams so that these would be actually positive groups, so that there would not be the kind of frustrating situation where each person is only contacted to do his part of it when the others are wholly finished or have made their decision which they will not move an inch from. I think that we should not wait until the next, for the next three years, until we have our next meeting. I think that we should start doing something immediately.

Now I would like to appeal to the critics. I think that critics should be the ones who should be more aware of this lack of communication between architects and artists, and I think that the critics here could do something. I think that very often critics talk about art and architecture as two separate fields. More should be written about the integration of artists and integrate them into the entire process. There are countries where this situation is much much better. Therefore we could learn from other countries and above all this should be taken into consideration in Third World countries so that they can do it on their own terms rather than be imposed on from the outside.

We would like to thank Mr. Dan Haulica for his brilliant presentation, as well as the speakers who often were right in one way or another. This morning we heard talking about a contention between artists and critics. We hope that today's meeting will constitute a marriage between these two groups and that the periphery will no longer be periphery in the negative sense of the word. I think that there are many people in the

AIAP who have thought about this already. I would like to ask you a question. I think that we need a publication, we need a review or we need something that we could do together. I think that a joint publication would be like a marriage licence between AIAP and AICA.

Thank you for this noble wish. I think that this would certainly be a very good beginning of cooperation, and I am going to quote one of my professors. He was a brilliant critic, and he said that a person who does not believe in criticism does not believe in his own strength. I think that we should now pass onto the subject that was chosen for this afternoon. We should have a round table discussion on minorities in the Arctic regions. There are members of both AICA and AIAP present. I think that this is going to give us some variety in our program and certainly this is a concrete way of beginning to deal with some of the problems that we have been talking about with minorities.

**BODIL KAALUND**

We are still talking about cultural identity, art and criticism, and the main idea of setting up this panel from the Nordic national committees has been what we call to sweep in front of our own doorstep. It is a Nordic expression, maybe you know it, meaning that you should not worry about the dirt in front of your neighbour's doorstep before you have swept your own. I hope you understand our sentence here. We want to focus upon three problems: to be a small nation, to be an immigrant artist, to be an ethnic minority.



GUÐBJÖRN KRISTJANDÓTTIR

When I begin to speak of my country I would like to begin by pointing out that Iceland is not a minority in the sense that the country has had a relative independence since 1918 and real independence in 1944, after having been under Denmark for a few hundred years. Our situation is not that of a minority living inside a dominating and domineering larger community. We all speak the same language, Icelandic, which used to be the common language for all of what today constitutes Scandinavia. But we have been asked to participate in this discussion because we are the smallest country that has applied for AICA membership, which we did recently. I would like to point out to you that Iceland is an island in the North Atlantic. Its area is approx. 100 km<sup>2</sup>, and its population is 220,000 inhabitants. Iceland was for a long time a virgin country of whose existence none knew, but in the 9th century the country was discovered by Vikings, who were then expanding their culture. When it comes to Icelandic civilization, Iceland is known above all for its literature. The Saga, written in the 13th or 14th century, are the best known of Icelandic culture. The Saga describes the arrival of Vikings in the country. Nowhere in Europe can we find anything comparable from the same period, and the sagas are still being admired today for their beautiful style. The second contribution of Iceland is the work of Snorre Stotlersson, historian and writer who wrote Hemskringlan. This is a work which talks about the Norwegian runes and explains what the poetic meter and rhythm of old Norse and Scandinavian literature is. If we compare this world with the Mediterranean it is very different obviously. This literature is unique and rich and has given the Icelanders their cultural identity which is very strong. And these sagas are still being read and quoted in Iceland.

In the field of visual art Iceland does not have anything comparable to that of the sagas. At the end of the Middle Ages a period of decline began and Iceland lost its independence, and for centuries visual art in Iceland was essentially popular, with a few exceptions. In the 19th century a new artistic wave, national romanticism, started again but only in the 20th century did a real change take place. Half of the population of Iceland now lives in the capital of Reykjavik, which has a rich artistic life, and this is partly due to the fact that having seen how artistic creativity was stifled, from one point of view they are now beginning with new energy to participate in modernism. Traditional

popular art does practically not exist any more in Iceland but we have artists who have tried to find stimulation and inspiration in the art of the great artistic centers, first in Copenhagen, then in Germany and later in Paris and New York. A museum of modern art was founded in Reykjavik, and there are also collections in smaller towns and lately, a museum of living art has been created, and it establishes contacts with foreign artists.

Despite the vitality that we can note in Iceland in the 20th century there are so many Icelanders who still fear isolation, and this isolation is certainly felt by artists who must create for a very small audience, and I am going to give you an example of this. Recently the film industry has started in Iceland. Three films were sent to the Cannes film festival. But if film is going to be profitable, or break even, it needs 110,000 viewers, which means that half of the country has to see the film. And if we cannot do something about this kind of situation because we are such a small population, there is the risk that all kinds of artistic life is stifled and therefore we must remain open to outside influences. My conclusion therefore is that we have to launch ourselves into the 20th century, into modernism, because we are poor in popular traditions.

#### MATS ARVIDSSON

For lack of the real thing, which would have been an artist or critic from the Faeroe Islands, I would try to give you a very brief picture of what is going on. The Faeroe Islands has 50,000 people living on some small islands in the middle of the Atlantic, between Iceland and Scotland. Like Iceland, it is not really a minority in the true sense of the word. It is not an ethnic minority living among a greater and more powerful culture. It is just a very small and isolated community. Politically it belongs to Denmark, but there is a very strong feeling of independence and of a separate cultural identity in the Faeroe Islands. Culture is a very important means, a very important tool in this struggle for identity and independence. There is a vigorous literature in the Faeroe Islands, in the Faeroe language, I do not know



what it is called really – Faeroese or something. There is a host of magazines, newspapers and books published in this language. And there are also visual arts. Now this art on the Faeroe Islands is a branch of the general Scandinavian art. It is also a very young art. There were forerunners at the end of the 19th century, maybe. But the man who is generally considered to be the founding father of Faeroe art, the painter Samuel Johansen Michenes, died as late as 1976. So in the Faeroe Islands we have an art history of all in all about 40 names, and half of them are still active and working. They are almost exclusively painters. I think there are 3 sculptors and three or four artists working with graphic arts. The rest are all painters. And they deal mostly with the dramatic and fantastic landscape of the Faeroe Islands.

The conditions on the Faeroe Islands are obviously not the best for the creation of an art of some kind of international importance. But there are one or two painters in the Faeroe Islands of Scandinavian relevance, at least, or they would have been important Scandinavian painters if they had been better known, but they are virtually unknown even in Scandinavia. So in the Faeroe Islands it becomes very clear how different the needs and the conditions of the periphery are from those of the center. The criteria of New York or Paris just do not apply in Thorshavn. So as an artist in the Faeroe Islands you can feel rather suffocated from the smallness of the environment. So I was told by most artists I met on the islands. And as a critic you can become rather confused as I can tell you from my own experience. But there is another aspect to this smallness of surroundings, and it is that art is very important in the Faeroe Islands. People are interested in art, exhibitions draw huge crowds of spectators, and art is commented and discussed by the general public in a way that I have not seen in any of the great art centers of the world. And to be an artist is also a respected and respectable profession in a way that is much more so than in Stockholm, for example. And people even buy art. Most of the people. I have never seen a town where so many homes had so much art as in Thorshavn. So in the Faeroe Islands art is a tool for this cultural identity which is very hard to retain if you do not have a means to formulate it with. And art is that tool. There was a quite wide-spread pessimism among artists on the Faeroe Islands about the future of Faeroe art. There was a sort of general feeling that the place is really too small to support

a varied and living art. And what the outcome will be nobody knows. It is not a matter of great concern to New York or Paris or London what happens to Faeroe art. But I think it is almost a question of life and death for the 50,000 people who live in the Faeroe Islands.

#### LAZAR DIMITRIEVICH

At present in Sweden there live and work as professional artists quite a large number of artists from different countries. They represent new influences and impulses from outside with their creativity and their cultural background. Sweden as well as the nother Nordic countries is known for its freedom, its democratic principles and tolerance. In such a society there are quite good chances, possibilities for artists to express themselves and to develop their creativity. But there also exist certain problems of immigrant artists, problems that are worth being discussed. The immigrant artists have the same rights as Swedish artists born in Sweden. For example, an immigrant artist can be a member of the artists' organization without being a Swedish citizen. I would like to discuss the concept of immigrant artists in Sweden. At once the concept seems to be both clear and diffuse. What does 'immigrant artist' actually mean? It is a kind of surrogate product. For when creating the concept 'immigrant artists', meaning artists from different countries living in Sweden and existing as immigrant artists, you can take the risk of creating a certain ghetto and by the same time decrease possibilities for Swedish cultural life to integrate influences and impulses from outside that have entailed along with these artists having immigrated from different cultures. Art is universal in spite of these ethnic features, that is why it may be adequate to integrate but not to assimilate the new influences. Those who are called immigrant artists demand to be taken seriously, to get all possibilities, to be an active part of the Swedish cultural life, to be able to express themselves in a professional way. That also includes giving them the possibility to take part in official commissions, to get newspapers to review various exhibitions, that is to say to take them seriously, and for art critics to give a professional recognition. What is not good for them is the fact that they



often are dependent of immigrant organizations and associations economically aided by the state and local government for their amateur activity in Swedish cultural life. They want to be regarded as professional artists with the same opportunities and responsibilities as their colleagues born in Sweden. In these views the Swedish artists' associations can help them with their loyal support. The fact is that an immigrant artist can be a member of Swedish artists' organizations even though she or he is not a Swedish citizen. The condition for membership is that you are or that they are permanently living in Sweden. There are both state and regional patches, committees as well as the Swedish artists' fund and the Government Council of the Arts that buy art from exhibitions, and these committees comprise artists from the Swedish artists' organizations. The same applies to committees involved in official commissions. There are different kinds of scholarships, as well as a new experimental project that aims at providing the artists with a kind of basic subsidy. That is extremely stimulating for artists in Sweden. Immigrant artists have the right to get the same financial subsidy as their Swedish colleagues. The artists' organization has fought hard to improve the living conditions of Swedish artists in general. Immigrant artists, or part of them, are active in the artistic life of their new country, Sweden. Many of them have become Swedish citizens and have strong roots in their new country. Some of them are serious artists with high qualifications. They must be taken seriously in a situation where granting financial support is concerned as well as in giving commissions and opportunities for exhibitions.

There are also certain realistic problems that must be considered. The Stockholm galleries often avoid exhibiting immigrant artists. They are allergic to their odd names. They justify their action by saying that it is difficult to sell art by immigrant artists. There was also one gallery that used to have immigrant artist exhibitions, but it gave up a month ago. The reason for this was that the gallery was unable to continue. My gallery has been boycotted for a long time, said one of its owners, a Swedish lady, to me. At the same time the majority of art critics from newspapers in Stockholm avoid writing about exhibitions by immigrant artists. They really write very rarely of them, and when they do, as in the case of André Nemes, the fact remains that he has been an established artist in Sweden for a very long time. An

exception to this is the art critic from the Stockholm newspaper Svenska Dagbladet, who has no prejudices.

In this so-called just country, Sweden, immigrant workers have realized their rights. They have good work and homes, their children have free education in their mother tongue. Only the immigrant artists have to fight in order to get a place in the sun and realize their rights. Their specific profession may be one of the reasons that this has happened. We wish that the Swedish art organization KRO would do more to improve the situation of professional artists from different countries, from different minority groups by using solidarity. They have indeed done a good job, and I am convinced that they will continue to do it. Proof of this is the fact that I am sitting here today at this congress together with my Swedish colleagues. I have the opportunity to explain some of our problems as a representative of the Swedish section. I am a Swedish citizen with cultural roots from the old culture of Balkan. I feel it is a duty to illustrate some problems of minority groups and in general their interests that are important for Swedish cultural life, for we feel that immigrant artists are, as all other artists, necessary people. One fellow countryman who came to Sweden in order to earn money said that we represent a Don Quixote philosophy. They laugh at us and say: "You must not deal with arts in Sweden. You have to work and earn money."

Thus we have the same problems as our Swedish colleagues. We count on the future and we will fight together, for sometimes it is worth being a Don Quixote in our destructive and quite inhuman world.

BODIL KAALUND

I am dealing in a way with both problems, that of belonging to a small nation, and I will also talk about Greenlandic art. Being a Danish artist I could easily have made a lecture about our cultural difficulties in Denmark, and that means in the field in which the Danes are living. Because our destiny has always been to function as a sort of gateway, from the time of the Stone Age and through the Bronze Age and medieval times up to this century. Denmark has been the gateway to the other Nordic countries, through which artistic influences have come from



Germany, France, Italy, Greece, influences which have been cultivated and some have been assimilated, others not. In our time influences will come to all of us from television, from movies and video, so the routes have been changed. Believe it or not, Denmark was once the superpower of the Nordic countries. Even England has been a Danish colony, not for a long time, but it has happened. Part of that field in which the Danes are living. We are still in close connection with the Faeroer Islands and Greenland. We are together in a sort of commonwealth, Faeroese and Greenlandic delegates are members of the Danish Parliament but they too have home rule. But we are talking about culture, and it is a fact, and I am really feeling guilty that I mention it, it is a fact that the Danes have been imperialist in many ways or we may use the term used by Johan Galtung, "soft imperialist." The educational language for higher education for example at the Academy of Art or the University is Danish, and young art students will get their first impressions from museums and exhibitions in Denmark. You just heard about that one artist. She started in Canada and in Halifax and in Oslo, but she is the only one. Others will go to Denmark. Now let us focus on Greenland and on the development of Greenlandic art, on the Eskimo routes and the European influences, on continuity and discontinuity. And I want to point out that I have looked upon the isle of Greenland with the eyes of a painter, not with those of an ethnologist or anthropologist. I am going to show you very fast some slides about Greenlandic art and I sincerely hope that you will agree with me that artists and people in the Nordic countries receive a lot of inspiration from the Eskimo way of expression, and that its influence is also supported in so many ways by our contacts with the Sami culture. Then I will have my personal statement about the art in Greenland. I will read this while we are looking upon the slides. And it has a headline

#### THE ARTISTIC NECESSITY

Bodil Kaalund

I want to remind you from what kind of society did the art we admire today arise. Expressive figures of people and animals beautifully carved in bone, ivory or wood. Not from a close-knit, permanently settled society with written laws and statutes, but from a society of hunters,

as you saw in the movie. Hunters who wandered over an immense area from the Bering strait to East Greenland following the movements of the game, divided up into small groups, sometimes even single families. It is inconceivable that a uniform cultural tradition could arise and be maintained over so vast a land area through 5000 years. And the conditions were harsh. Merciless climate, ice-locked waters the year around, ten months of snow and cold. To survive there, to manufacture bone and stone tools, and with them kill musk oxen, caribou, whales, walruses and seals seems worthy of our admiration. And that there was surplus enough both spiritually and materially to produce works of art is even more wonderful. Here you have works of art made by the needle.

One asks immediately: but what is art? Is it art to decorate your clothes and your tools, to carve small figures as amulets for protection, is that conscious art? Admittedly, the boundaries between art and artisanry are fluid. Just as they are between individual works of art and magical figures whose appearance is prescribed. Nevertheless, I will reply that yes, it is art. And what is so impressive about Eskimo art is precisely that it originated in a hard and frugal life, often on the edge of existence. And that it was necessary to make tools with great skill and artistic ability, and just as necessary to create pictorial expression for spiritual concepts. The fact that the small figures radiate vitality and the will to live is for me proof that art arises out of necessity. Art is not merely the frivolity of a society of abundance. Art is the nucleus of our existence. By concerning ourselves with these works of art we can approach an understanding of the inhabitants of the Arctic regions, of their thoughts and existence.

This one made by a Greenlandic artist in 1818. He ran away on a Scottish ship, came to England, wanted to be an artist, and he came back as an interpreter, and he has made this lithograph, and it is just to show the discontinuity. That situation where the Europeans came and they made some commercial deals of exchange with the Eskimos and a lot of things started up, and maybe it was curiosity or commercial interest, or both, I do not know, but that illustrates it very good, you can see the Eskimo himself in the background with a top hat, and he is just trying to exchange some shirts made from cotton and some beads and mirrors. So it is in a way a better situation. And from now on you will have some works made in the material, well, new ones, modern ones,



European ones, paper, but wonderful pieces of art, too, as this one for instance, made by a hunter, Aron, who was too sick to go hunting and then he started to paint and write ... and woodcuts have been a tradition in Greenland, this one is made in 1860, a famous book picture from Greenland made by a Greenlander. Now we take a jump to the Greenlandic artist Hans Lynge who was the first leader of the graphic workshop in the capital of Greenland. Now it is called the Art School of Greenland and it is run by the home rule. And this is a very new lithograph. You can see the difference between the hunting life 20 years ago in East Greenland, and now you have a lot of buildings with television antennas and so on in the capital, and many of the Greenlanders may feel a little out of their own culture. The last three ones are dealing with sculpture from what nowadays is contemporary art, and you remember maybe the first wooden figure with many faces. This is made from softstone but it has some of the same qualities and the single figure, and the beloved animal, and the last one a small bird

What I am very fond of is that such a small bird, you can find it in the collections in Cambridge, in Paris, in Minneapolis, and you can find it today, so the continuity is there, and that is why I hope that you will agree with my opinion of Greenlandic art: They are alive, the artists, although they have had a lot of influences for 200 years.

HELEN DUFFY

As an independent artist, critic and exhibition curator I work in Ontario, a multi-cultural province where ethnographic considerations often raise particular questions for the writer who attempts to interpret contemporary work by Canadian artists of Indian, Eskimo and Inuit ancestry. My province is a vast territory that could accommodate the whole of Western Europe, from the Iron Curtain on one side up to the Scottish Highlands on the other. Visiting an Ojibway Indian artist in his northern Ontario studio sometimes a flight requires distance equal to the one between England and Berlin or Milan. To the ancestral home of my Inuit — or Eskimo — friends, the journey is far longer and more complicated than a flight to Helsinki.

I would like to begin my short talk with a prose poem by Chief Dan George — with words that sum up what the native people of Canada not only feel but experience in their daily life.

I quote:

"I was born a thousand years ago,  
Born in a culture of bows and arrows,  
But within the span of half a lifetime  
I was flung across the ages  
To the culture of the atom bomb —  
And that is a flight far beyond  
A flight to the moon."

In Canada at present we are witnessing the emergence of a new generation of Indian, Inuit — or Eskimo — artists who eloquently questions not only its territorial and political rights but also its access to the world of contemporary art.

We observe the emergence of a still tentative and new "aesthetic tradition" that can easily be traced back to the mid 1950's and early 60's.

Though the idea of "image making" within the Arctic region of the North-West Territories has been in existence long before the arrival of Europeans to our continent and is said to be at least 2.800 years



old, it cannot be touched upon in such a brief commentary. I am concerned with the aesthetic sensibility of the contemporary painter and sculptor who is presently searching for new directions and symbols.

Acculturation is a two-way process. The assimilation effort of the young artists seem essentially to produce temporary dislocation; it is a breaking-down process in order to produce a new identity and, eventually, a new order.

The distinction between Art and Craft did not exist in early native cultures. "Things of beauty we make with our hands" sufficed to cover objects made for utilitarian use or ceremonial embellishment for display and enrichment.

Our first generation of sensitive, talented and hard-working university or art-school graduates has laid the foundation of a new art expression rich in imagery and form that is both traditional and contemporary in source.

Meaning for these artists derives from living in the 20th century and accepting the irreversible trends of progress in the field of plastic arts.

The handling of their chosen medium, whether it be oils, acrylics, watercolours or mixed media, is consistent with their personal philosophies. This leaves individual expression and the individual means of communicating thought and sensibility to aim at goals outside the native traditions. Being modernists, they carry the privilege of appropriating fragments of their cultural background to form an amalgam strictly reflective of their own identity.

Unlike hand-crafted objects that have been and still are being created within communal traditional boundaries, this new art has no utility but exists only for aesthetic contemplation. It does not conform to the cultural milieu from which it rises. It transcends native culture and quite frequently enters into a collision course with deep-rooted taboos linked to ritual and symbolism.

Whereas a highly sensitive and committed Western artist like Joseph Beys is at liberty to invoke the spirit of shamanism, the North American artist of Indian ancestry would not be in a position to explore such metaphors.

No matter how sincerely he believes himself to be an independent

artist of the technological age, no matter how strongly he might assert his freedom to explore new avenues of thought and impulse — he fears the harsh criticism of his own people more than the judgement of the art critic.

The Canadian critic faces a most difficult and delicate problem at this time. We are confronted with a growing movement that has not yet found a solid foothold in our society. When reviewing solo or group exhibitions, we are testing not only our own knowledge and certain ethnographic considerations, appreciation of the subject, but also our subjective viewpoint as a vehicle of finding the truth. And that is what I hope to find.

Now to the Sami people...

ROSE-MARIE HUUVA

I am the president of the Sami artists' organization. We are very glad that we got the opportunity to join the IAA congress and the discussions here today. During these days we have met many artists from different parts of the world and learned that many artists have similar problems as ours. There are between 50,000 and 100,000 Samis, living in the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, and they are one of the oldest ethnic groups of people. Sami taita, Sami art, has roots to the rock paintings and to the different paintings of the shaman drums,



but also making things needed every day. It is not only to make them as useful as they can be but also making them as nice as possible. That is also art. And I am going to show some pictures.

This is a color of a woman's dress, and it is embroidered with pewter thread and this special pattern belongs to a dress from the southern parts of Sami land.

This is a drinking vessel and it is made of birch tree and inlaid with reindeer horn and carved with knife and as color there is alder bark — you make a mixture of that color. And as you can see the form of the drinking vessel is rounded and that is very specific of our different things that we make.

And this is a knife, and of course this is not a knife that we use every day, because this has already been too fine to use every day. It has become art.

And here is contemporary work by my colleague, and he uses the old patterns from the different things that we make, and these patterns are from the south areas of Sami.

And this is a picture made by Niklaus Lund, he was one of our early painters, and he started his work with carving pictures on ordinary knives and other everyday tools and such, and then he got other materials, he got paper and pen and oil colors and he started to make pictures like these. There are also other Sami painters, Juhan Tuuri was one of them and also Johan Saavio.

And this is a copy of the handle of a shaman drum and this is now used as a door handle in one of the public buildings in the north.

This is a textile, and here you can also see the different signs from the shaman drum and those signs are embroidered with pewter embroidery, and the textile is the same that we use in our clothes.

This is another textile for a public building. This is the northern light in pewter embroidery.

Many Sami artists are also very concerned and very aware about what has been happening in our areas, and often in their work you can see that they are expressing these things.

As a Sami artist you are dealing with different problems. You might be working quite alone in a district where you live with contemporary art, and the people do not always understand what you are doing. The contemporary art is not being fully accepted and appreciated among our own people. It is very important for our artists to get travel grants to go and visit other places and get impulses from outside. And also to study our own culture we have to travel far away to big museums where collections of Sami old things are. There are no art galleries in our areas, and it is quite difficult to make exhibitions. We have experienced it during these years. And when exhibitions of Sami art are going outside, sometimes people who are not Sami are making these exhibitions and sometimes they perhaps do not show the right picture of us, of our culture. We do not have art education among the Samis. Today we are forced to go to other places, out of our areas, for art education, and this education is built on other, foreign values and has other roots than ours. And this sometimes means that our young educated artists lose their cultural identity.

We today have a Sami art center in Marsi in Norway, where Hans Ragnar is working, and we are trying to get exchange with other artists from what we call the Fourth World countries. We have recently had one artist from Greenland up there for two months. It is very important for us to get these exchange programs. We do not want to be isolated in our area.

Among the Sami and Greenlandic artists we do not have art critics of our own. Our art is criticized by critics from other cultures, who might not be aware of the cultural background of the artists, and this might mean that the critic does not understand the expression of our art.

As you have seen on the photos, it is natural for the Sami artist to express himself in different ways. One artist can not only work with art but also write or perform music, play theater, and different things. This might be a result of our way of living. In order to survive you were forced to learn to create in different ways. This is the strength of our art. Sami taita, Sami art, inherited art, living art.



NILS-ASLAK VALKEAPAA

I am happy to say I have come quite near from another real center of the world. I am not so far away from the North Pole. Sun is shining now days and nights. We believe that the Samis are one people, we believe that we have the right to exist as a people, and we wish to live in such a manner that tomorrow we can also look foreigners straight in the eye and feel without shame that we are Samis. We have a heart full of courage and belief in tomorrow. Together today for our children tomorrow. During these days here, dear sisters and brothers, we brought a love letter to you. I shall read it now by Finnish language and I really hope that you accept it and send this love letter later on as a resolution under the name of our joint meeting to the governments of Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark.

The Greenlanders and Lappish artists present here represent the original peoples of the Nordic countries. We have discussed the situation of active artists in our countries and give the following statement: Art is part of our way of life. We carry our culture within ourselves. Art is an expression of our feelings, of our thoughts, of our ambitions. Our fear is as great as our wish to survive. Therefore we must give future artists the possibilities of being inspired by the same thoughts as we. That means that we also need our own artistic education and training. We hereby express the wish that we be allowed to exist and have our own training in our own art, that we could receive support for our work for an artistic association, that our area be enriched with galleries, that we could have our own pavillions in international Biennales and other exhibitions of that type, and furthermore that our artists be given the economic possibilities of practising their art.

Now I give this our love letter to you.

BODIL KAALUND

Well, I would have with pleasure given it to the government of Denmark but I cannot do that. But we can maybe tell the Swedish, the Norwegian and the Finnish that it was acclaimed very much here, and let us try to work further upon it.



Ailu Valkeapää, artist, singer, writer, Finland

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## A HOT LOVE LETTER FROM THE NORTH

NILS-ASLAK VALKEAPAA

The Greenland and Same artists present in the Finlandia Hall on the joint day of artists and art critics expressed a wish that the indigenous populations of the North be provided their own training in art. The communiqué issued also included a wish for regional art galleries and for pavillions for the Greenland and Same people in international biennales. The artists of the North need financial support in order to be able to engage in their art.

The communiqué stated: "Art is part of our way of living. We carry cultures inside us. Art is a desire to express our feelings, our thoughts, our wishes. We have a fear which is as great as our hope to survive."

NILS-ASLAK VALKEAPAA

We together here with people say that you can give it also in Copenhagen.

BODIL KAALUND

All right. I will do that. To the government in Greenland and to the government in Denmark.

OLGA SCHMEDLING

I am from Norway. As you can see, I am not on the program. It is Iver Jåks who is supposed to come here but he will not have the possibility to come here today so I shall speak on his behalf, but I shall then speak as a critic, not being a creator the way he is. Being Norwegian I represent the cultural majority as opposed to minority which consists of the Lapps. But being an art critic I represent the minority before the majority consisting of artists. This is a phenomenon. Because this activity is at the periphery of other human activities, artists, painters and sculptors themselves also constitute a minority. Even Jåks, the Lapp painter, has had exhibitions in our capital Oslo. Therefore it is possible to compare him with Norwegian painters, and he is for us a representative of the periphery as compared to our center Oslo in the same way as any Scandinavian at all is from the periphery in comparison to New York. It would be quite interesting to try and throw some light on this opposition or polarisation of center and periphery, because it is a relativity. I think that before this kind of assembly it would be very difficult to define what exactly is strictly national and what is not. In the Nordic countries we have artists who speak a plastic language, an international plastic language, and others who are much closer related to the traditions of their own national country. But with the level of communication that there is today, we cannot call us purely Scandinavian, we are Europeans, and we are also citizens of the world to a certain extent, and therefore the notion of periphery



should not be taken on a linear level. Center and periphery have both undergone crises, and we think that the same threats are prevalent all over the world, and it is important to reject too linear ideas and then be open to novelty. We have to create a new concept of anthropological nature, which will be the accounting unit of our time when we talk of art.

HANS RAGNAR MATHISEN

I would just like to inform you that Sami people would rather be called Sami people than Lapps, even in French and English. In fact the term Sami like the Inuit instead of Eskimo is already spreading, and we are grateful for your understanding. The other point I would like to say something about is, there is probably confusion in the concept of minority, and what people like the Sami and the Greenlanders represent. In fact the Greenlanders are the vast majority in Greenland, but they are indigenous people. Now indigenous is a term adopted by the World Council of Indigenous People founded in 1975, as people who are descendents of the first people in an area and who do not control the political situation in the country in which they live. Thus the Sami people are an indigenous people in Norway, Sweden, Finland and the USSR, and, unfortunately, we do not have the position we would like to have. In fact it is a great step forward for us to be represented here in an international congress. Our language is not accepted, does not have even official status in our own countries. For example the Norwegian language, they have two Norwegian languages, one a constructed one, one traditional one. Well, I do not mind that but we do have our own language which is indigenous and a very old one in the north. It does not have accepted status. So that shows that art is ahead of time also for us.

GERTRUD GUSTAFSSON

I would just like to pose some questions concerning the relations between art critics and artists belonging to minority groups. They do not have to be answered. I just consider them. Is it certain that the best solution is to get special critics for the minority groups, that is one critic for Samis, one for Indians, one for Inuits, and so on? And what happens then with the critical task which also means to take a distance to the work of art. Do the minority artists want to be considered as artists or as belonging to an ethnic group? The art critic often works in a center, that is in a cultural district center, a bigger city. He or she has seen many kinds of art, has read a lot about art, has travelled a lot and so on. Therefore he or she gets necessarily a wider point of view than if he or she lives in the periphery. Is that always bad? Cannot a partly diverging way of looking, a lack of total solidarity with the artists, create a necessary dialogue? Is the critic to deny his knowledge? Or hide it to the artist and the reader, if this knowledge shapes distance to the work? Do we not need many kinds of critics, as we need many kinds of artists, and do you not want to think very carefully before you throw away one or another kind of artistic debate because one way of looking is supposed to be elitistical, or whatever it might be called. The great difficulty is rather that you simply do not know everything, or even anything, about the culture of minority groups. It is hard to get any information, and the best cure for this is of course to see more exhibitions of the art of minorities, to read more interesting text about them, and being able to do this the art critics in the periphery ameliorate their ability to criticize, in the good sense of the word, ameliorate their sensibility and their writing skill so that they can make themselves believed. Another problem which also Rose-Marie Huuva took up, is connected with this; is the possibility for the minority artists to show their works in the center and in the periphery. But here we are leaving the field of art criticism because the art critic has as hard as the artist to influence this. We reach the field of commercial judgments and the judgments of the politics of culture, and I think it is more often there you find the problem than between the art critic and the artists.





## LAZAR DIMITRIEVICH

I want to answer a question by Miss Gertrud Gustafsson. It was the question, do the artists from minority groups want to be accepted as artists or as an ethnic group. I have to answer quite certain that we, called invandrarkonstnärer, immigrant artists, we want to be accepted as artists, not as ethnic group, because we do not have the same problems as Sami people. We have without any doubt, if we can say, double identity, the structure of the old culture we are coming from and the new one we have in Sweden. So this is the main problem for us, as I put it in my speech today. And concerning the getting hard information, I believe that probably I trust it you could not get enough information, but there are some colleagues of yours like Olle Granath, who writes in Dagens Nyheter, who has quite a lot of information about culture of the immigrant artists and who wrote and only once in his life about invandrarkonst, immigrant artists, when they had the exhibition in Salon Liljevalchs. I am very surprised and unhappy that this art critic, who is today the chief of the Modern Art Museum, has never felt to write of any immigrant artist in Sweden. I have to repeat again, there are some very serious artists living in Sweden from different cultures.

## BENGT OLVANG

I would like to pick up the glove that Gertrud Gustafsson threw. Because I think she is not totally right in her suggestion, because I think we have not thought about during this exposé of the problems of minorities. We as art critics also have ideas which we will promote, we have an ideology and we therefore promote that type of art which is to our own heart and do reject other sorts of art which we do not agree with. That is very special thing for an art critic and I do not think anybody can be called an all-eater. You will have this ideology and you will have this role as a promoter of a special sort of art. I also talk about the problems as an art critic in Stockholm and looking for exhibitions made by invaders and minorities because I have noticed that I have written



and read about some of them, but not all. For instance at Galerie Latina I have taken out sometimes and I have written for instance about Latin American exhibitions and so on. Other exhibitions I am cured against, because they do not appeal to me and some of them even have that reactionary image which I reject. So for that reason I think also the minorities need to have promoters of their ideas not just because of ideology but also because of cultural identity and cultural traditions, which you know much more about than we do. So I do not think it is possible for an art critic to be that open-minded so that we take all to us. On the other hand we can also think that we fight with you but need a person who can speak for you and with your own terms and there comes the last problem which are the papers and medias who are interested in getting you space and time and to express this.

HERMANN RAUM

I feel encouraged to make an intervention to the lecture of Mr. Siikala, he told me to be here this afternoon, I hope he is. I feel encouraged by the specific contributions to this afternoon session on the general topic of centers, peripheries and minorities, especially since Mr. Siikala in his latest words underlined his gently provoking interpretation of world politics and art. When I commented in Dublin on the topic of international and regional art, a topic embarrassingly often returning to the table of debate as you can see, then some of the speakers from leading western countries, knowing the thing distinctly from an inner circle, called the contemporary situation a kind of cultural colonialism. Cultural colonialism was paralleled with political, military and economic colonialism in all its faces and thus has not disappeared, only continuously changes its appearance. Direct robbery is not its main activity any longer. In its new strategies and means it is no longer busy in the old colonies only. Changing its faces also has changed to new centers its fundamental power, which Mr. Siikala described in its connections with money and power. Mr. Siikala did not use the word cultural colonialism, he even did more than avoiding this. In his words, what he describes looks like the normal way of worldwide cultural

progress, just as this phenomenon is being announced and interpreted by the leading speakers of those centers. Representing an overwhelming power floating all economically minor nations with the means of so-called international art.

I am not blaming Mr. Siikala for his view because he did not say anything wrong. Nor do I argue idealistically upon or against concerned realities. But we should not forget other realities. For instance that the majority of artists and particularly their public have to deal and struggle with entirely different problems than how to get informed quickly about what is going on in the centers or how to become accepted in these centers. We can easily call the names of 20 or 30 countries and even more nations where this entirely different cultural reality is, because there is an entirely different social and political reality. What we saw this afternoon just through a tiny but impressive spotlight onto this complex problem. I am not going to say anything against increasing travelling, meeting, studying and cooperating of artists, critics and among them on international levels and in those centers. There cannot be too much information of personal experience. Because the picture we get from some of the powerful mass media distorts and falsifies cultural artistic realities as often as it does with politics. There are indeed so many inspiring experiences in multinational plans, workshops and symposia, both for instance in our country and abroad, with our artists and designers participating successfully. This in particular in cooperation with our Finnish friends. For instance in Kuopio but also in many other places. But this is something different from what Mr. Siikala meant when he spoke about pretendant interdependencies between the so-called art centers and the so-called art peripheries being a system of world politics of art. And the increase of communication between centers and peripheral regions might not overwin but in effect stabilize cultural colonialism. So increasing economic exchange and integration of the big powers of money with the underdeveloped regions under the ruling circumstances does not always overwin inequality but stabilizes those powers' international influence. The frame and rules of interdependence nowadays is set by the strong once more underlining the affluence that I am far from denouncing the importance of great art centers of our time or their inspiration for the cultures of this world and the culture of my own nation, too. I



just intended to suggest when we meet next time, whenever and wherever and whoever, let us talk about in the spirit of this afternoon, the various realities of world art which, compared with New York or Cologne or Milan are of at least equal importance for the people, for their struggles not only on cultural identity but also for their bare existence as human beings and nations. Let us just remember some Latin American countries, or Palestine or Belfast or South Africa.

DAN HAULICA

I think that there is one privilege that minorities have and that is that you can wear these beautiful dresses of yours and that is a privilege that actually makes a lot of non-minority people rather envious. I think that in most countries governments are now beginning to be aware of the sorts of needs that we have been talking about. I think that an exchange of views is valuable. The time has come when most people are open for this sort of discussion and become curious of other civilizations. When it comes to ethnical minorities, cultural minorities, we might perhaps find that the Arctic minorities are in a unique position because of the Nordic countries who have shown such a good attitude towards other peoples, and towards cultural minorities and cultural identity, because that is what we mean by identity. Identity is not something that pushes us towards horizon but it is something that we have within us. Having it is also recognizing that others and we know it is something that is profound and it is deep inside. I think that what we have seen and heard this afternoon makes us think of the richness and the wealth of the various perspectives. We talked about the marriage or engagement between critics and artists. I would suggest that other type of marriage, I think that AICA should marry the far-away island of Iceland because we have finally now taken Iceland as a member, Iceland has applied for membership. We are not going to marry Iceland with a ring on the finger but I think that by having Iceland among us we are going to have more complementary views exchanges. Our Icelandic friend gave us all of her cultural background which explains why Iceland wanted to belong to AICA. She also explained to us how important it is how the Icelanders had travelled far and wide before becoming an isolated and peripheral people, they had travelled as far as Constantinople. I think it was Burgess who made a comparison between Iceland of the sagas and Spanish Morocco. These two do complement each other. I think that is very important for us to know and to have this new point of communication. Spain brings to mind the paradox of, they say why Europeanize Spain? Why could not we Africanize instead? And to what degree are we actually without our own knowledge European-centered when we talk about everything, we tend to do it from a European point of view. Denmark, for example, has become known for a lot of contributions, the most famous,



the most known Dane was not Hamlet. It was through Shakespeare that Hamlet became known. There is an entirely reversible movement. For example in the studio Chagall one could see the Seine and he saw the night and he said when he saw the lights reflecting ... this reminds me of a certain kind of light that one finds only in the north, and I have seen it in Stockholm, and I think that a light of a certain climate is not only a physical light, it is also an inner light which we feel.



Raoul-Jean Moulin, general secretary of AICA, art critic, France

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## PROPOSAL

### JOINT PROJECTS BY THE IAA AND AICA

It is recommended that co-operation between the two organizations should be intensified and that this co-operation should be brought to practical level. Both the organizations are intensively involved in promoting the position of pictorial art. Both the organizations are also acutely aware of the difficulties and problems of this artistic medium in contemporary world. The position of the small, national cultures are in danger to be levelled by the effective distribution of commercially orientated mass cultural business. It seems that the best way to counterbalance this development is to strengthen the position, knowledge and understanding of visual expression as encountered in the different cultural spheres of our world.

Both the IAA and the AICA are acutely aware of their power to reach only a limited even though an expert audience, however, their power to encourage and promote the dissemination of contemporary art in all its various forms should not be overlooked. And by doing this the organizations can work for the best of both artists, art public, society and even the whole world at large.

### THE PROPOSALS FOR CO-OPERATION

1. The IAA and the AICA will publish together as an experimental project a series of art publications each of which would be devoted to the visual expression of one of the five cultural regions as defined by Unesco. In these publications an attempt to analyze the historical background of the visual art of the region in concern, its position in today's society as well as its future perspectives should be made. The position of artists and critics within the region in concern should also be scrutinized. Attention should also be given to the presentation of the national collections of art and the way the media

is covering art.

Special attention should be given to the analysis of the myth and ritual tradition of the given culture as well as to what extent the traditional elements play a role in the visual expression of contemporary artists.

In the first stage the series of publications could consist of five special issues each devoted to a regional culture, for instance, by choosing a country as an example of the visual culture of the region that is studied.

If this information would be well received, the two organizations could continue the project and jointly launch a more detailed analysis of the given theme.

The programme could be started during the Unesco's Year of Communication and defined as a pilot project within the Unesco.

2. The IAA and the AICA will jointly organize an international art exhibition devoted to peace in the world. The exhibition would be realized in the following manner:

Each national committee of AICA will choose an art critic who is in charge of selecting an artist/a group of artists whose work would represent the nation/people in concern. The art works to be shown in the exhibition would not necessarily need to describe a theme that is connected with peace. Instead the whole exhibition, as such, would be devoted to peace.

The first showing of this exhibition would coincide with the proposed world intellectual conference to be convened by Unesco "for the intellectuals and artists from all over the world to analyze ways in which co-ordinated action could be taken to place their works, their creations and their talents in the service of peace". (Mexico Conference 1982; Recommendation no. 172.)



16EME CONGRES ET 35EME ASSEMBLEE GENERALE  
DE L'ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DES CRITIQUES D'ART  
HELSINKI ET TAMPERE, FINLANDE  
26 MAI — 1 JUIN 1983

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PROGRAMME PLANNING GROUP

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THE 16TH CONGRESS AND THE 35TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ART CRITICS  
HELSINKI AND TAMPERE, FINLAND  
MAY 26 — JUNE 1, 1983

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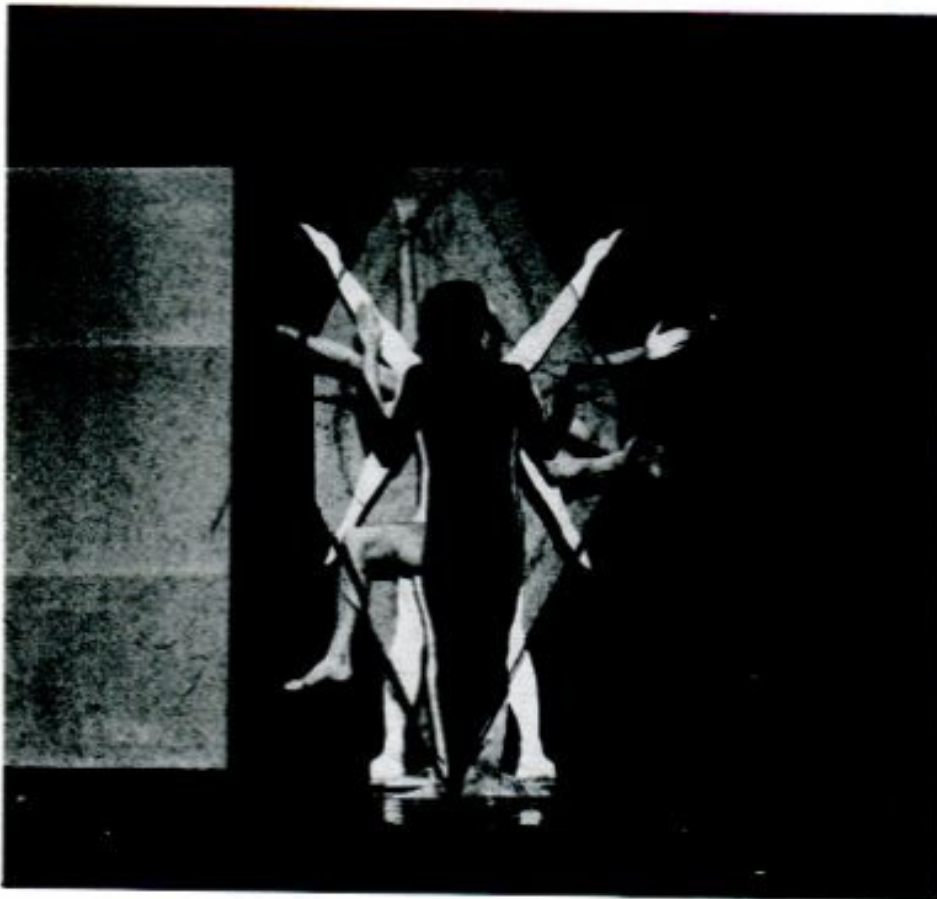
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ORGANISATION/ORGANIZATION

Organisation internationale/International organization:  
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Organisations hôtes/Host bodies:  
La section finlandaise de l'AICA/L'Union des Critiques Finlandais  
Centre Nordique des Arts  
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THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ART CRITICS  
HOLDING AND TRUSTEES, FINLAND  
MAY 25 - JUNE 1, 1961



1. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1997; 277: 100-105.  
 2. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1997; 277: 106-111.

Performance by Jack Helen Brut.

## PROGRAMME

### WEDNESDAY MAY 25

- 10.00-16.30 Registration in the Old Students' House
- 15.00-18.00 Meeting of the Board of Administration in the Old Students' House
- 19.30 Departure by bus from hotels for Hvitträsk
- 20.00 Visit to Hvitträsk, a studio house designed by Eliel Saarinen and his colleagues at the turn of the century. Reception provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 21.30 Return to Helsinki
- 22.00 Possibility to dine at town

### THURSDAY MAY 26

- 8.30 Registration in the Students' House
- 10.00 Opening of the Congress in the Students' House
- 11.00 Welcoming cocktails provided by the Union of Finnish Critics
- 12.30 Lunch at Vanhan Kellari
- 14.00-17.00 First session of the Congress  
"CRITICISM AND CULTURAL IDENTITY"
- 18.00 Departure by bus from hotels
- 18.15 Visit to the Museum of Finnish Architecture and the Museum of Applied Arts. Cocktails.
- 20.00 Visit to the Nordic exhibition "Borealis" at the Helsinki Art Exhibition Hall.
- 21.00 Departure for Gallery Bronda
- 21.30 Visit to an exhibition of Finnish art in Gallery Bronda. Buffet-supper provided by the gallery
- 22.30 Departure for hotels

### FRIDAY MAY 27

- 9.00 Departure from hotels by walking
- The second session of the Congress  
"CRITICISM AND CULTURAL IDENTITY"



12.00	Lunch at Vanhan Kellari
13.30-15.30	Congress continues
15.30	Performance by Jack Helen Brut
16.00	Departure for the Ateneum by walking
16.15	Visit to the exhibition of contemporary Finnish art "AKT" at the Museum of Art of the Ateneum
17.00	Departure by bus
17.15	Visit to the exhibition of Lappish art "Sámi Dáidda" at the Sinebrychoff Museum of Art. Cocktails
18.00	Departure by bus for Meilahti
20.00	Visit to the exhibition of Finnish art 1900-1960 and opening of the exhibition of contemporary Finnish art at Helsingin kaupungin taidemuseo (Helsinki City Museum of Art)

#### SATURDAY MAY 28

8.30	Departure by bus for Tampere
9.30	Visit to the exhibition of the Artists' Association of Finland at the Finnish Glass Museum in Riihimäki
11.00	Visit to the Hattula medieval church
12.00	Visit to the summer art exhibition of the Union of fine art associations of Finland in Valkeakoski
12.30	Lunch offered by the Union of fine art associations and the municipality of Valkeakoski
13.30	Arrival in Tampere
14.30	Departure by bus for the Sara Hildén Museum of Art
15.00	First session of the General Assembly at the Museum
19.15	Departure by bus for the Town Hall
19.30	Reception provided by the municipality of Tampere at the Town Hall

#### SUNDAY MAY 29

9.00	Departure by bus for the Sara Hildén Museum
9.30	Second session of the General Assembly
13.30	Lunch at Restaurant Merirosvo
15.00	Departure by bus for Pori



Visit to the Pori City Art Museum

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- 17.00 Visit to the Villa Mairea by Alvar Aalto at Noormarkku.  
Cocktails.
- 19.00 Visit to the Pori City Art Museum.  
Reception provided by the municipality
- 20.30 Departure by bus for Helsinki
- 23.30 Arrival in Helsinki

# MONDAY MAY 30

- 9.00 Departure for the Students' House by walking
- 9.30 The third session of the Congress  
"ART INFORMATION — BRIDGE OR BARRIER BETWEEN CULTURES"
- 13.00 Departure for the Finnish-Swedish Cultural Centre in  
Hanasaari
- 13.30 Lunch in Hanasaari
- 15.00 Visit to two exhibitions by the IAA in Hanasaari  
Regional meetings
- 16.30 Multivisio by Douglas Siven on the art and life of  
Akseli Gallén-Kallela
- 17.00 Departure by boat for the Suomenlinna fortress islands
- 18.00 Excursion on the islands
- 19.00 Visit to a Nordic art exhibition "The Nordic landscape"  
at the Nordic Arts Centre
- 20.00 Buffet and programme on the island: performance by  
Record Singers, music etc.
- 22.10 Return by ferry for hotels

# TUESDAY MAY 31

- 9.00 Departure from hotels by bus or by walking
- 9.30 Joint discussion with the IAA in Finlandia Hall  
"CULTURAL IDENTITY, ART AND CRITICISM"
- 13.00 Lunch
- 14.30 Continuation of the congress  
A panel consisting of representatives of minority cultures
- 17.00-18.30 Reception offered by the Finnish Ministry of Education  
in Finlandia Hall
- 19.30 Departure by bus from hotels

- 20.00 Visit to the Didrichsen Museum of Art  
 21.00 Supper provided by the SKOP Bank of Finland at  
 restaurant Dipoli

## WEDNESDAY JUNE 1

- 9.30 Third session of the General Assembly in the Old  
 Students' House  
 12.00 Lunch  
 13.00 Alvar Aalto excursion in Helsinki and Espoo  
 14.30 Reception by the municipality of Helsinki at the Town  
 Hall  
 Conclusion of the congress and the general assembly  
 Departures



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Performance "The White Man" by Roi Vaara

Asko Mäkelä, art critic  
Erkki Pirtola, art critic

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## En Finlande, la critique s'interroge

Le thème qui avait été mis à l'étude lors du dernier congrès de l'Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art, *L'Art en quête d'un nouvel ordre mondial*, a fourni aux participants l'occasion de réfléchir sur les problèmes de la critique concernant l'identité culturelle.

Il s'agissait de définir l'attitude de la critique nationale et internationale à l'égard du phénomène des régions et des relations—ou de l'absence de relations—que les régions entretiennent avec les centres ou avec les capitales artistiques. Dans les pôles fortement structurés, la partie se joue grâce à l'information qu'assurent les mass média, la publicité et l'activité du marché de l'art. L'art des régions en est tributaire, que ce soit celui des pays nordiques européens ou nord-américains; il s'établit des liens avec des centres tels que New-York, Paris, Düsseldorf, qui n'offrent, semble-t-il, aucune autre alternative que de refléter, de répéter sans cesse, des formules dont le contenu finit par s'amenuiser. Avec le résultat qu'on trouve maintenant dans à peu près tous les musées d'art moderne du monde, des œuvres ternes, dépourvues d'originalité et de toute intériorité, et dans lesquelles l'absence du rapport profond entre l'artiste et la culture nous prive d'une vision d'ensemble sur le vingtième siècle.

On a tendance à confondre identité nationale, qui a partie liée avec l'histoire et la politique, et identité culturelle, qui échappe à ces territoires et qui, selon l'important témoignage de Michel Morin<sup>1</sup>, cherche à créer son *propre territoire imaginaire*. A défaut de cette direction, l'identité culturelle risque d'être un piège, de servir des intérêts qui lui sont contraires; surtout, elle est le plus souvent mal définie. On aimerait bien la situer mais, par nature, elle échappe aux cadres. Au fond de cette volonté d'identité culturelle, extrêmement complexe, il y a le désir de mieux se connaître, d'exister pour l'Autre et, si possible, d'être reconnu. Il y a aussi, selon René Berger, président honoraire de l'AICA, un besoin de résistance individuelle ou collective à une tendance à l'uniformisation culturelle due à l'invasion toujours plus grande de la technologie dans notre vie quotidienne. En définitive, c'est l'art qui joue un rôle essentiel dans la détermination de notre identité culturelle, et non l'inverse.

Quand on pense à la Finlande, plus qu'à son destin politique, c'est à ses artistes qu'on demande une image. Les architectures puissantes et intégrées d'Alvar Aalto, celles d'Eliel Saarinen, qui a également exercé une influence sur l'architecture américaine, y contribuent; de même, les œuvres de ses musiciens, Sibelius, par exemple, et celles des compositeurs contemporains. On ne peut s'empêcher d'admirer ses jeunes peintres qui s'acharnent, malgré une critique exigeante, à trouver les voies authentiques de la création; en performance, le Groupe Jack Helen Brut redécouvre le sens de l'esthétique, et, en sculpture, Mauno Hartman et Kain Tapper traitent en maîtres le bois des forêts finlandaises. On évoque également l'art des Sami, populations de l'extrême Nord qui ont aussi des sculpteurs reconnus pour leurs travaux sur les bois de rennes et les œuvres d'artisans à qui l'on doit les formes pures des objets de la vie courante, ornés généralement de dessins, de broderies; on admire la vivacité et la beauté des tissages et les œuvres des peintres qui créent une imagerie voisine du réalisme et du fantastique, tels Nils Nilsson Skum, qui évoque les déplacements de rennes dans les grands espaces, et Reider Säristömmi, le prodigieux coloriste d'une faune rutilante.

Le pouvoir de la critique, c'est le pouvoir des mots mais, pour le chercheur-critique, c'est une responsabilité d'apprendre à mieux connaître le contexte d'une œuvre pour bien la situer. Nous sommes prompts, il est vrai, à accepter l'originalité des minorités et des groupes ethniques, mais apportons-nous le soin nécessaire à l'étude de la création artistique des régions culturelles entières? Cet exercice, qui exige autant de patience que de doigté, est tenu de s'appuyer sur un système ouvert afin de favoriser constamment la mise en valeur de l'art. Le problème de la verbalisation du visuel demeure toujours entier; c'est un éternel recommencement qui fait du critique non pas un interprète, mais un créateur stimulé par une œuvre et qui dit des choses que l'artiste ne dirait peut-être pas nécessairement. L'œuvre vit aussi d'interprétation.

La critique est-elle un moyen de communication indispensable pour assurer la vie de l'œuvre? En principe, oui. C'est un des moyens quand elle réussit à jeter un pont entre l'art et le destinataire. En Finlande, la réunion de l'AICA a constitué un forum de discussion sur le rôle de la critique au moment où l'art semble vouloir créer le champ d'un nouvel ordre mondial. Pour le président Dan Haulica, il faut d'abord songer à construire des ponts entre les cultures sans minimiser les difficultés, mais en s'inspirant de l'esprit de l'Association qui est essentiellement tolérante, curieuse de toute forme d'opinion et d'expression, et entièrement vouée à la participation, au respect et à la compréhension.

1. Cf. Michel Morin, *L'Amérique du Nord et la culture*, Montréal, Hurtubise HMH (Collection Brèches), 1982.



## Form and Function/84, Finland

Riitta Nikula

— Almost 200 art critics, museum experts, scholars and journalists from around the world gathered in Helsinki and Tampere in May-June for the 16th congress and 35th general assembly of the international art critics' association AICA.

Jaakko Lintinen, chairman of the Finnish AICA division, directed the enormous workload of the organizing committee. The ultimate responsibility for the congress rested with the Finnish Critics' Union; in Finland critics of all art forms are organized in a single trade union.

Jaakko Lintinen, Erik Kruskopf and Markku Valkonen had built the programme around clear themes and headings. The general theme of the congress, 'Art in Search of a New World Order', was recommended by UNESCO. The sub-headings the speakers

were expected to concentrate on were 'Criticism and cultural identity' and 'Art information — a bridge or a barrier between cultures?'.

### A frightening moment

There were a dozen main speakers at the congress and numerous comments and replies were made. The speakers were not tied down too much by the definite themes. The beginning of one talk rarely tied up with the end of the previous one. The problems of cultural identity, which turned out to be the central theme, were most closely examined by the American *Peter Schjeldahl* and the Finn *Göran Schildt*.

Schjeldahl's opening lecture 'Nationality and Art' proved hard

*Critics and artists  
meet in Finland*

## Art in Search of a New World Order



*The Nordic Arts Centre on Suomenlinna houses the first studios for visiting artists from Nordic countries. The artists can use the facilities free of charge for two to six months at a time.*

to swallow for many listeners. His introduction caused lengthy debate: "Contemporary Scandinavian art, in the fields I am aware of, strikes me as extremely weak, and I wonder why. It wasn't always so."

Far too little notice was given to the last few paragraphs, in which Schjeldahl summed up the future perspectives for the problems he had analysed as follows:

"The return of nationality as a useful, even an unavoidable term of reference for present high culture undoubtedly marks a historic regression. Much as the smoking earth of apocalyptic Germany comes back to haunt us in the paintings of Kiefer, the bloody ghosts of tribal politics rise again everywhere. We thought we had gotten over all of that. Artistic modernism seemed to promise an inexorable refinement upward of

the primitive and the local. But now we feel ourselves being sucked back down, because our ideas of internationalism and progress had too little of the truth in them. In flattering us, the ideas failed to take account of what we humanly are. This is a frightening moment, characterized by terrible loss of faith, hope and security. Yet it may turn out to have been a wonderful moment for art.

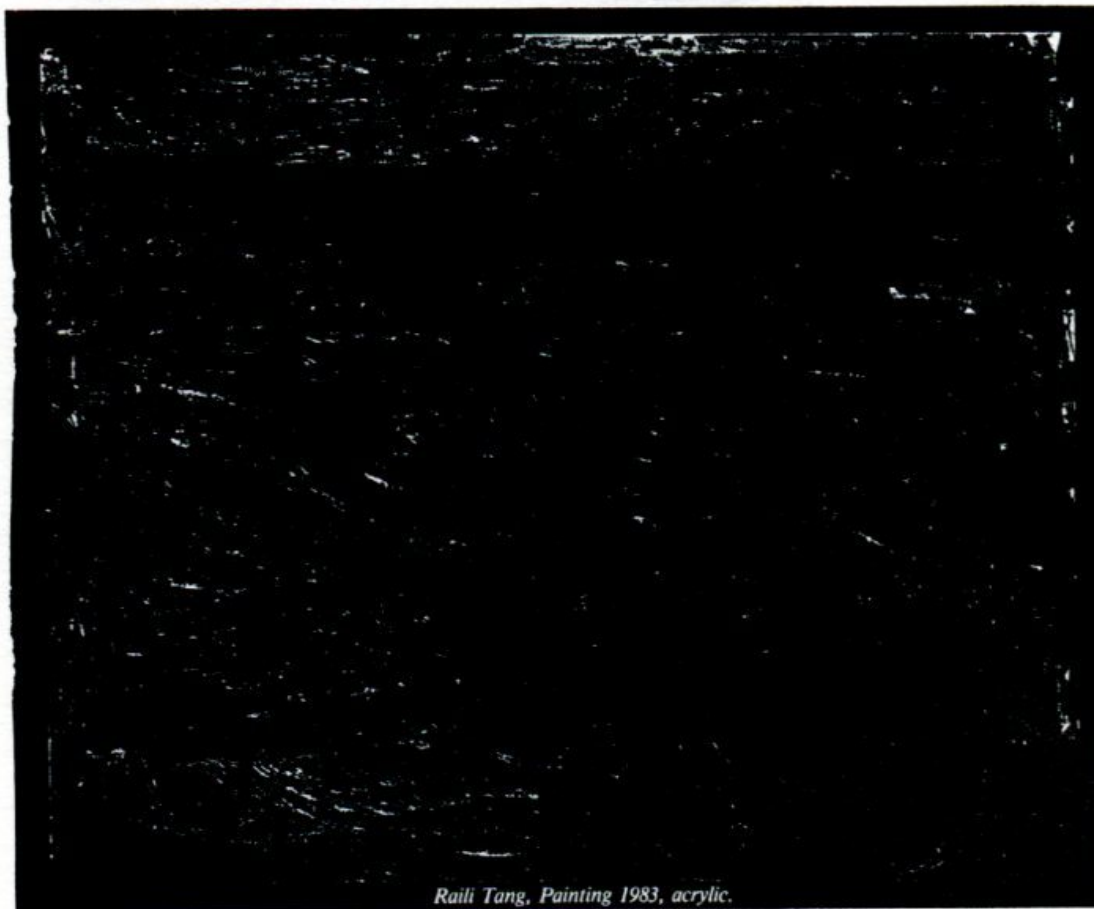
"To avoid misunderstanding, it seems necessary to insist on a distinction between artistic and political expressions of nationality. The first corrects the fantasy of national identity by grounding it in a life. The second carries the fantasy to ever more irresponsible levels of abstraction. The first is healthy, the second is dangerous. The fact remains, however, that the rise of the one is often linked

to the rise of the other. They are rising together today."

## Intoxication and identity

When Markku Valkonen defined Finnish identity as the various stages of intoxication, he may not have gone deep enough in explaining all of the Finnish art his foreign colleagues were genuinely interested in.

The true focus of the AICA congress may not have been in the speeches after all. In official and unofficial discussions on national identity and information, the same wide dead end was always arrived at: it was agreed that good art is always both national and international. The blunt edge of the conceptual equipment presented no obstacle to seeing art.



*Raili Tang, Painting 1983, acrylic.*



For Finnish artists the main significance of the congress was certainly the fact that many seasoned researchers and critics were in their midst for a week. During the congress, a wide selection of Finnish art was on show in exhibitions. In Helsinki there was the large, varied AKT-83 exhibition at the Ateneum, a small, concentrated exhibition of Lapp art at the Sinebrychoff gallery, many excellent private exhibitions, a wide general survey of 20th century art and an entertaining adventure with the title 'Movable Tuonela' in the City Art Museum in Meilahti. The congress also featured an excursion to Tampere and Pori. Alvar Aalto's Villa Mairea gave critics something to talk about in all languages for the remainder of the congress. The Finns had the fascinating opportunity to hear their guests' analyses of the mediaeval wall paintings in Hattula Church and of Kain Tapper's modern sculptures alike.

No wonder not many felt like spending much time in the congress hall at the Old Student House in the heart of Helsinki. The place was well-chosen; it was easy to escape the talking to look for art. The atmosphere was relaxed and direct throughout; you went to have a look if you thought the subject or the speaker might be interesting. If the talk did not live up to expectations, you went for another round of the town.

The Finnish weather was exceptionally kind to the AICA congress, the early summer dewy and verdant. The evening arranged by the Nordic Arts Centre on the fortified islands of Suomenlinna will surely be remembered by many even when they have forgotten the name of even the last lecturer. The late night sun shining horizontally through the small windows of 'The Devil's Church' lit up the birch branches which decorated the dimly-lit room. The critics and artists, who had been brought there by boat from Hanasaari, sat on the floor in perfect harmony. Pedro Hietanen played the accordion, and vast quantities of Baltic herring, Ostrobothnian 'cheesebread' and Koskenkorva vodka were consumed.

## Art and criticism as commodities

The congresses of the AICA and

International Artists' Association (IAA) were arranged simultaneously for the first time in Helsinki, and the two organizations had the opportunity for a long overdue debate. This took place in the Finlandia Hall on the last day under the title 'Cultural identity, art and criticism'. The atmosphere was warm, the most enthusiastic speaker calling for the long engagement between artists and critics to end with a magnificent wedding. The organizations, both members of UNESCO, share the same objectives, and the status of art in an increasingly commercial and technological world is their greatest concern.

In the general discussion the artists emphasized the concrete problems of national cultural identity. The representatives of the northern minority peoples demanded art instruction of their own in their own region, in the midst of their own traditions. Everyone was moved when *Ailu Valkeapää* sang in Lapp style after the discussion. One was obliged to believe in the force of native culture and forget the shoddy touristic artiness of the slides shown on the subject.

The Nigerian artist *Salomon Wangboje* put in a few weighty words. He reminded us that the rise of Cubism is explained in terms of European artists having been inspired by African sculptors. Modern, trained African artists, however, are always being criticized for borrowing from European art. The terminology is clear, the approach one and the same, said Salomon Wangboje. "The European is inspired, the African copies." The Swiss professor René Berger, honorary president of AICA, brought the discussion back to cold reality several times. He drew definite frontlines at the Finlandia Hall. "Money is a reality. It is a most important element of identity. Art and criticism are both commodities, and tourism amputates the art of the Third World. There is no room here for scholastic terminology." □



Pekka Kauhanen,  
*The Dog* 1982, bronze, stone,  
sheet iron.



## Kraftfält i Finland

Den aktuella finska konsten har en oerhörd bredd och vitalitet, kunde jag konstatera då konstinstitutionerna gav vad de hade inför konstkritikernas (AICA) och konstnärernas (IAA) internationella kongresser i maj i Helsingfors. Det var nästan svårt att smälta överflödet. Ändå är jag inte säker på att finsk och nordisk konst presenterades helt rättvisande. Jag återkommer.

Finland först: Jag tycker mig kunna urskilja tre tyngdpunkter, tre dynamiska kraftfält, som delvis flödar in i varandra på ett fruktbart sätt.

Först: här finns den starka känsloutlevelsen, häftiga vibrationer och scener som hetar till och tar fram det som ligger djupt ned i medvetandet. Många konstnärer har en expressiv, fantastisk inriktning med rötter både i personliga erfarenheter och i den historiska situationen. Jag tänker t ex på *Outi Heiskanen*, *Leena Loustarinen* och *Olli Lyytikäinen*. Konstnärerna berör konflikter och tabun. Friktioner uppstår.

Nära denna inriktning står det stora intresset för konceptkonsten, för jordkonsten,

för installationer, för att röra vid och hämta kraft ur urgamla myter, som t ex i *Movable Tuonela*. Betydelsefull i sammanhanget är också Tom Sandqvists bok om jordkonst och myter Konst. Mull. Myter., 1982 – en inspirationskälla.

Den konstruktivistiska/konkreta/abstrakta traditionen i Finland – ibland med informella eller expressionistiska inslag – har också en mycket stark ställning. Ibland kan tyvärr denna konst få ett tycke av sober, ofarlig design.

Till dynamiken i landets konstliv hör avgjort också att några av de intressantaste konstnärerna just nu är kvinnor, *Outi Heiskanen*, *Leena Loustarinen*, *Marika Mäkelä* (se artikel i kommande nr av Paletten), *Helena Pykkänen*, *Marjatta Tapiola*... Nya teman tas upp. Gamla teman tas upp på ett nytt sätt. En vidgad inriktning på arbete i grupp.

### AKT 83

Den 13 oktober 1983 öppnade ARS i Ateneum, en stor utställning med internationell samtidskonst. AKT 83 på Ateneum var en jättevisning av finsk nutidskonst. De två utställningarna har varit tänkta som pendanger. Avsikten har varit att ge en repre-

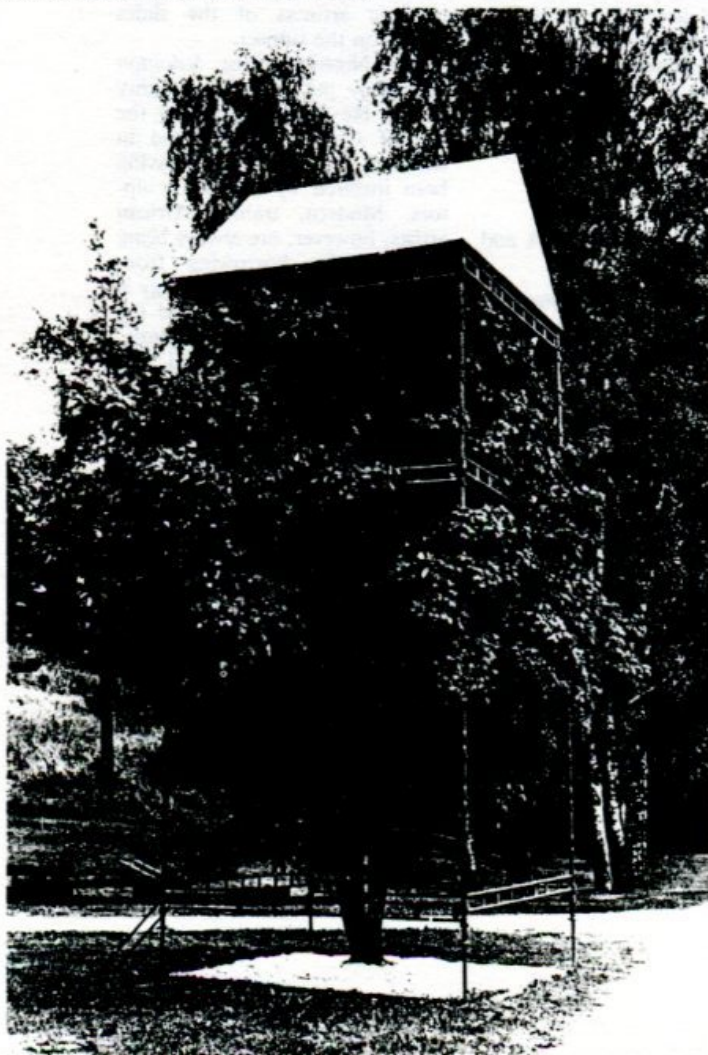
sentativ bild av den finska konsten i dag. Påfallande var att politiskt engagerad konst med socialrealistiska förtecken – som under många år hade en dominerande position i landets konstliv – i stort sett lyste med sin frånvaro. I det avseendet tror jag att denna utställning var representativ för situationen.

AKT 83 innehöll många intressanta konstverk men var ojämn och hade som utställning vunnit på en koncentration kring en bärande idé. Första rummet med verk av *Johan Scott*, *Tor Arne*, *Hannu Siren* och *Paul Osipow* blev till en mångdimensionell, rikt klingande enhet. Även *Martti Aihas* rum med skulpturer var en intensiv upplevelse. Men det var t ex tråkigt att inte *Helena Pykkänen*s skulpturer fick en mera samlad och förtätad presentation. Hennes kärlekspar, *Gianicolo*, är utförd med yterska känslighet och inlevelse. De fyra älg huvudena, med titeln *Älgfara*, i brons och i olika stenarter är fyllda av naturens magiska krafter. De manar åter fram besvärjelserna inför forntida skulpturer och hållristningar.

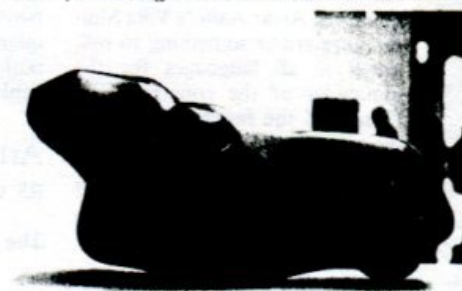
### Borealis

I Borealis ingick tre konstnärer från var-

Matti Aihha, *Beskyddat Träd*, 1983. Foto: Sakari Viika



Helena Pykkänen, *Älgfara* 1982, diabas. Foto: Christian Chambert

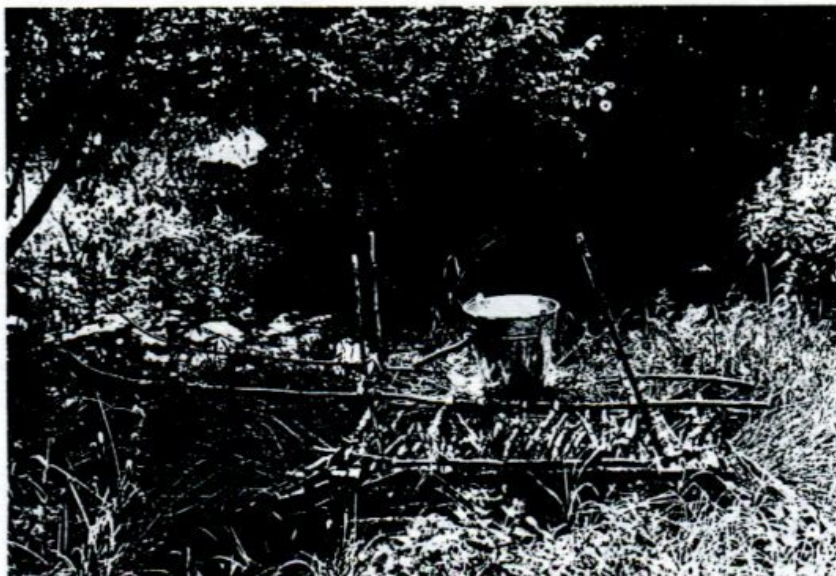


dera Danmark, Finland, Island, Norge och Sverige samt en från Färöarna.

Borealis betyder nordlig. Utställningen var sammanställd av Nordiskt Konstcentrum. Nordiska Konstförbundets nationella sektioner hade lämnat förslag på konstnärer. Det slutliga urvalet svarade Tage Martin Hörning för. En gedigen men försiktig samlingsprodukt. Bristen på djärvhet i urvalet och i presentationen kändes förlamande i synnerhet som Borealis innehöll många fina individuella insatser, t ex *Ásgerdur Þúradóttir*s monumentala textilier och *Gitte Dæhlins* skeptiska, förundrade och ensamma nutidsdockor. Av de svenska konstnärerna var det bara *Kristina Elanders* målningar som kom till sin rätt, medan såväl *Franco Leidis* som *Alvar Janssons* verk fått en mycket olycklig placering.

Framför allt fäste jag mig vid *Leena Loustarinen*s märkliga, glödande romantiska landskap med urtidsdjur – sfinxlika leoparder. (Se Paletten 1-83). *Sköna systrar, kommen högt upp på de starkaste klipporna, / .../ vi äro de minst väntade och de djupast röda, / tigerfläckar, spända strängar, stjärnor utan svindel*. (Edith Södergran, *Violetta Skymningar*... ur *Dikter*, 1916). I *Leena Loustarinen*s bilder finns tidsperspektivet och det känsliga nuet. Ja, i hennes bilder finns den suveräna vildhet som Edith





Hannu Väisänen, *Offerkälke*, 1983. Foto: Sakari Viika

Södergran skriver om och som också strålar ut från Helena Pyllkänsens älgskulpturer.

#### Nordiskt landskap

Många av de intressantaste finska konstnärerna utgår från naturen.

Landskapskonst var också ämnet för utställningen på Sveaborg. *Kain Tappers* skulpturer har en stor konstnärlig täthet, liksom *Roj Fribergs* och *Karl Axel Pehrsons* sällsamma arbeten. Men även denna visning bar spår av ängsligt kompromissande kommittéarbete. Det hjälper inte att katalogen innehåller fängslande texter av Karel Čapek och av Bo Carpelan. Var är de samlande pedagogiska greppen? Var finns visionerna?

#### Movable Tuonela

Movable Tuonela ägde rum ute i naturen, ute i landskapet. I Tuonela samlas de som nyligen dött. Området är svårt att nå, men vi skall alla dit. Movable Tuonela, rörlig död; liv och död når varandra. I Movable Tuonela fick myterna fritt spelrum i naturen. Det var ett alternativ till vårt superteknologiska samhälle. Här fanns lundar för avlidna. Tuonela, dödsriket, är ett begrepp i Finland. Vi möter det bl a i Kalevala och hos Edith Södergran, t ex i *Ankomst till Hades*, ur *Landet som icke är: Se här är evighetens strand! här brusar strömmen förbi! ...! Död, varför tystnade du?! Vi äro komna långt ifrån! och äro hungriga att höra, / vi hava aldrig haft en ammal som kunat sjunga såsom du. För att kunna leva måste vi besöka Tuonela, för att förstå de stora sammanhangen och för att kunna inse våra begränsningar. Vi måste tillbaka till våra rötter. Naturen är den stora livgivande, gåtfulla famn ur vilken människan och kulturen växer fram.*

Medlemmar i den avlidna gruppen Record Singers utgjorde kärntrupp. Deltagande konstnärer var Martti Aihla, *Mirja Airas*, *Riikka Hahti*, Outi Heiskanen, *Anne Kauppi*, *Jan-Olof Mallander*, *Pekka Nevalainen*, *Sakari Viika*, *Hannu Väisänen* samt många medhjälpare.

Här finns enkla material – brädor, staket av käppar, ris, stenar... I det melankoliska

duggregnet blev riskojorna till tempel. Den finska naturen talade med mig. Denna landskapskonst gav mig ett mycket starkare och djupare intryck än utställningen på Sveaborg.

Martti Aihas *Beskyddat Träd* bestod av en öppen konstruktion, krönt av ett spetsigt tak, placerad runt ett stålligt träd. Människan är beskyddad av husen. Här beskyddas ett träd. Det hindras i sin växt av taket. Hindras människan i sin växt av husen? När jag såg detta toppridna träd insåg jag ännu mer hur fantastiskt det är med alla träd som får sträcka ut sina grenar i full frihet. *jag talar sakta med de fångna träden! och tröstar dem ibland* (Edith Södergran, *Det gamla huset*, ur *Dikter*, 1916).

Movable Tuonela visade på de nära tingen. Hannu Väisänens *Offerkälke* offrades till naturens gudar för att ge säker färdväg under den svåra vintern. Vad är mera typiskt för det nordiska vinterlandskapet än sparkstöttingen? I Movable Tuonela hittade vi en spark som reste sig upp mot skyn med medarna ner i myllan. Den blev till ett monument över fattigfolket i den karga glesbygden i gammal tid. När jag ringde upp Jan-Olof Mallander och frågade om Movable Tuonela sade han bl a att det är lite grann av fattigmansteater. Han nämner i ett brev *Arte Povera*.

Den amerikanske kritikern och poeten Peter Schjeldahl höll under AICA-kongressen ett föredrag med titeln *Nationality and Art*, som blev mycket omdiskuterat. Peter Schjeldahl ansåg att det knappast finns några betydande skandinaviska konstnärer efter Ibsen, Munch, Strindberg och Sibelius. Han beskyllde de nordiska konstnärerna för feighet. Bl a var det ekonomiska skyddsnät som finns för konstnärerna i våra länder en effektiv broms mot djärva individuella utspel. Något kan det ligga i den analysen. Varför inte ge t ex Leena Loustariinen fritt spelrum istället för att ge Peter Schjeldahl rätt genom en försiktig *Borealis*? Precis som Clement Greenberg och flera andra amerikanska konstkritiker värderar han konsten i världen mycket orättvist med utgångspunkt i den västerländska avantgardismen och framför allt har han ett enö

USA-centrerat perspektiv. Den finska, isländska, färöiska... konsten måste naturligtvis i första hand lyhört bedömas utifrån de sammanhang där den växt fram.

I Hattula kyrka med sina ca 180 målade fantastiska bildframställningar från tidigt 1500-tal frågade jag Peter Schjeldahl vad han ansåg. Jo, detta var den mest spännande finska konst han sett. Min tolkning. I Hattula kyrka finns en överväldigande färg- och formriktighet, en kraft, en konsekvens och en fabuleringsförmåga som nästan omsluter besökaren. Detta saknade Peter Schjeldahl hos konsten i våra alltför solidariska och konstnärligt nivellerade skandinaviska samhällen.

En oförglömlig scen utspelade sig när Peter Schjeldahl utanför programmet gav sig iväg i den bevingade flygfarkosten på Outi Heiskanens linbana, döpt till Duvornas landningsplats. Här lärde sig duvorna, dvs de nyligen döda att flyga. För Peter Schjeldahl fick den våghalsiga färden ett dramatiskt slut, då han kom i obalans och fick fåta sig fri ur farkosten. Associationerna rasade genom mitt huvud. Leonardos fantastiska flygexperiment, Don Quixote och väderkvarnarna, Paul Klees bild från 1905 med hjälten som bara har en vinge. Vilken ironi. Vattendraget bredvid linbanan blev med ens Tuonis älv, dödsfloden, och Peter Schjeldahl förvillande lik den förolyckade hjälten Lemminkäinen, den finske Peer Gynt, i Kalevala. Skulle moder natur (eller Outi Heiskanen som framträdde som fruktbarsid vid invigningen) kunna locka till sig honungsbiet, att bringa henne den helande salvan från himlens höjd, bortom Karlavagnen och Sjustjärnan?



Outi Heiskanen och makterna spelade sitt spel. Och Peter Schjeldahl har själv prefigurerat hela händelsen i en dikt, *Sköra länkar II*, publicerad i BLM 1967:7. *Allt detta är flygning eller ett missförstånd! som har växt sig lättjefullt under en eftermiddag.*

Nej, ta inte detta så rasande bokstavligt. Tuonela var ju rörlig (movable), stod för förändring, övergående skede och uppvaknande insikt. Där kunde mycket hända och du själv drogs in i det mytiska spelet om liv och död. Efter Peter Schjeldahls anförande med amerikanskt färgade glasögon – innehållande några sanna ord men spestat med åtskilliga droppar hybris – genomgick han en dramatisk personlighetsutveckling i den finska konstens och i den finska naturens sköte. Förstod han att Movable Tuonela i all sin allegoriska uppfinningsrikedom och livsvisdom var en motsvarighet i vår tid till de rika scenerna i Hattula medeltida kyrka? Även duvor – alla vi dödliga människor – måste lära sig att landa.

Christian Chambert



## Kultur

Konstkritiken i de svenska dagstidningarna är ett undantag — i många andra länder har konsten avförts från det offentliga samtalet och hänvisats till specialtidskrifterna. Men tenderar inte den svenska konstkritiken att bli alltför tolerant och utslätande? Behöver vi inte i själva verket en hårdare kvalitetsdebatt? Frågar Ingela Lind, efter att ha deltagit i en internationell konstkritikerkongress.

# Konstkritiken — för solidarisk med konsten?

I TYSKLAND och Frankrike håller konstkritiken på att bortrationaliseras från dagstidningarnas kultursidor. Galleriutställningar kan inte längre påräkna recensioner. Den bedömning som förekommer berör huvudsakli-

## vänster x

gen stora institutionssatsningar. Sensationella delar av konstlivet glimtar ibland fram på nyhetsplats eller på folk-i-farten-sidor, men seriös kritik återfinns snart enbart i fackpressen.

Konsten har helt enkelt avförts från det offentliga intellektuella samtalet. I de stora språkområdena har kritikerna ännu ett forum i florin av specialtidsskrifter, men för att försörja sig skriver de texter till gallerier, konsthandel och annat som dyker upp. Få har råd att hålla sig med den oavhängighet och intellektuella integritet som exempelvis Svenska konstkritikersamfundet kräver.

En tysk kritiker som jag träffade på en nyss avslutad internationell kritikerkongress i Finland beskrev resignerat hur dagspressen övertar TV:s kommersiella nyhets- och marknadsvärderingar. Även den seriösa litteraturkritiken hotas.

I Sverige håller sig rikstidningarna fortfarande med en fortlöpande konstkritik, men antalet tjänstetimmar krymper sakta. Endast toppen av konstlivets isberg syns nu på kultursidorna. Kritiken delas upp på flera personer, och övergripande ansvar ersätts av flera subjektiva urval.

Allt detta har förmodligen lett till mer läsvärda artiklar, men samtidigt kommer situationen snart att bli ohållbar för konstkritikerna. För även om arbetet har förändrats i praktiken, är öppdraget detsamma. Antalet utställningar har fördubblats på några år. Konstlivet sjuder och publiken strömmar till i stora mängder. Konstkritikern är klämd mellan det gamla kravet på heltäckande information, konstnärers och utställningsarrangörers PR-behov i ett käre ekonomiska klimat och mediäläge, läsarnas hunger efter konstpedagogik, avancerad kritik och utblickar samt ett ännu helt otillfredsställt behov av granskning av hela det växande massbildsfältet.

Samtidigt som konstkritikertjänsterna krymper växer alltså deras område. Konstkritiken tenderar att bli litet av varje eller ingenting särskilt av något för någon. Är det då inte lika bra att denna hybrid försvinner?

Jag tror att kritikerinstitutionen är oersättbar, i all synnerhet i ett så litet land som vårt. Även i

Centraleuropa har de flesta förlorat på att konsten avförts från det offentliga intellektuella samtalet. Marknadskrafterna är hänsynslösa, nyhetsjournalistiken nyckfull och fackpressen rudimentär. I Frankrike finns visserligen rader av konstdagskrifter, men eftersom recensionerna publiceras långt i efterhand och bara når ett fåtal, blir konstnärerna helt beroende av galleriernas PR-apparater. Kritiker "köps" också i stor utsträckning, och detta gör att allmänheten förlorar förtroendet för konstlivet.

Modellen med anställda kritiker som med ett fortlöpande ansvar strävar efter intellektuell integritet och obundenhet är en förutsättning för att konsten ska tas på allvar i samhället. Föreställningen om konsten som mode, artefakt eller salongsnöje ligger alltid och frestar.

Dagskritiken i Sverige är alltså en märkvärdig kvarleva. Men paradoxalt nog utnyttjar vi inte vår frihet, utan blir alltmer toleranta och överslätande. Den kvalitativa bedömningen ligger numera huvudsakligen i själva urvalsprocessen. I stället för negativ kritik väljer vi tystnaden, ty det förefaller omoraliskt att på ett litet utrymme lyfta fram det dåliga på det godas bekostnad. I detta ligger en rädsla för maktmissbruk och en solidarisering med konstnärerna — den mest eftersatta gruppen.

Men frågan är om inte denna "solidarisering" är en björntjänst. Värdekriterier redovisas sällan, och för läsarna måste bedömningarna synas ockulta och kritiken irrationell. Framför allt går den stora delen av konstlivet fri från granskning.

På kongressen utdömde den amerikanske kritikern Peter Schjeldahl den skandinaviska konsten som trist och osjälvständig, skapad i en atmosfär tolerant mot halvlögner och dubbelmoral.

Det mesta av hans kritik är lätt att avfärda som New York-provinsialism. Att den konst som visas på de bästa gallerierna i New York har högre kvalitet än den i Stockholm är statistiskt självklart och resultatet av en oerhörd utslagsmekanism. Men det jag däremot träffades av var att han beskyllde oss för tolerans. Var går gränsen mot likgiltighet, frågade han.

Behöver vi inte en hårdare kvalitetsdebatt nu när de statliga subventionerna stagnerar och ett urval måste göras?

Betyder inte konstkritikernas vaga solidariserande med konsten i allmänhet i själva verket att vi bidrar till att den viktigaste konsten drunknar?

INGELA LIND



LOOK AT FINLAND 3 1983



Two artists in a dimly lit setting, possibly a studio or gallery.

Scandinavian art lies outside all this. We have long wondered why our own artists and works of art are not recognised for their true value outside our own sphere. Apart from a few big names, no-one knows what is going on here. Why is it that no Scandinavian artists are ever shown in exhibitions such as Dokumenta? We in Scandinavia have an inferiority complex, and particularly so in Finland. Our relationship with the Big Outside World is a constant source of concern. On the other hand, it is clear from this distance that many of the new trends and artists launched from the major art centres are of a somewhat dubious or transient nature. They are more a function of the promotion system than anything else. It is also clear, particularly to some of us critics, that some of our best artists are made of more enduring stuff than many of these trendy 'fly-by-nights'.

We are therefore left wondering why we out here on the fringe of things have not won proper recognition for our cultural achievements. But perhaps times and values are changing rather more in favour of fringe cultures. *Scandinavia Today*, especially the music, was certainly a success. But what about the visual arts? Our major exhibition of art from the Golden Age

and Paris, and especially the Dokumenta exhibition, act as focal points, helping to set new trends.

'Internationalism', however, is no longer an issue. Quite the contrary, in fact, there are clear trends towards 'nationalising' art. The idea is not so much to take up or create national themes and myths, but rather to promote young artists of today and to get them started abroad in the major art centres. This is particularly apparent in countries like Germany, France and Italy. Art in these countries is promoted with great determination, both in dialogue with and in competition with the rest of the Art World, e.g. that in New York, where the entire market revolves around private business.

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### Every artist is a minority

by J. O. Mallander

The Art World has its own centres – places where new works of art are sponsored and shown, bought and sold. New trends are launched with much energy, money and enthusiasm. The best known art centres are New York, Berlin, Paris, Milan, Basle and perhaps Tokyo. Certain big exhibitions, like the Biennales in Venice

evoked an enthusiastic response, though it seems that contemporary art exhibitions won little attention from the media and only a few shrugs from the critics.

It is against the Finns' nature to go in for aggressive marketing of their art. Finnish art is also difficult to export; this would mean taking it out of its natural setting. We thus have to rely on the need of people in the major art centres to relax, and hope that they will visit Scandinavia and Finland to explore the scene here.

A step in this direction was taken by the Finnish branch of the International Art Critics Association (AICA) at its seminar arranged for the world's art critics in Helsinki last May. A similar seminar was arranged by the Artists' International Association at Hanaaari near Helsinki. The two got together for two days of discussions at Finlandia Hall, Alvar Aalto's

splendid symphony in marble. It proved to be an extraordinary event. Just eight years ago, Finlandia Hall had been the setting for the European Security Conference. The discussions this time were largely concerned with cultural identity – minority cultures, and the barriers and bridges between art and language. Most Finnish art galleries and museums had staged exhibitions for the occasion, with the best in both traditional and contemporary art, which the assembled delegates were invited to see. A book entitled 'Finnish Visions', presenting Finnish culture, art, design and architecture, was also brought out for the seminars. Perhaps our cultural identity will be better known around the world as a result.

In his opening speech, **Rene Berger**, president of the AICA and director of a museum in Lausanne, stressed the importance of promoting culture, 'the collective memory', and through this our own identities. He called for more work along these lines in



Two of the main forces behind the art critics' conference in Helsinki this spring: AICA president Dan Haulica, (right) and Jaakko Lintinen, vice president.

museums. He suggested regular exhibitions on national, Scandinavian and European scales, exhibitions within a UNESCO context, and so on.

The idea would be to counteract superficial trends and exploitation by multinational systems. In his opening address, the Finnish critic **Jaakko Lintinen**,

editor of the magazine *Taide* and one of the main organisers of the conference, pointed to the achievements of the Scandinavian system of democracy. He told the delegates that Scandinavian governments have started to support the arts and artists, that artists have formed their own associations and

Artists and critics on a visit to Suomenlinna.





## ON THE TOWN

The delegates from Africa took a tougher attitude. Most of them reacted against what they felt was Western selfishness and arrogance towards their own cultural heritage and art. "Culture is a sensitive matter for us in the former colonies," said professor **Wangboje** from Nigeria. In European minds, Africa is synonymous with primitive, and primitive means Africa. "When Picasso borrows from some other artist he is said to be inspired by him, but when an African paints like Picasso, he is said to be copying him."

**Dan Hauilica**, president of the AICA, pointed out that the true artist must go beyond competing for the limelight. Wherever he is he has to act and work as if he were in the centre of the flux. A Japanese painter quietly suggested that we are all really searching for a cosmology.

But 'every artist is a province', as **Sune Nordgren** pointed out in the catalogue to the exhibition Borealis, a display of the work of 15 Scandinavian artists in Helsinki Art Hall. 'Every artist is a minority'. Scandinavian minority cultures had a great day in Finlandia Hall. Some of the most urgent voices were those of the Greenlanders and the Lapps. Lapp culture is sadly neglected.

The Lapps have to go to cultural centres if they wish to see collections of their works of art. But interest in the arts and crafts of people such as the Lapps is on the

increase. One of the most interesting exhibitions at opened up their own channels for communications. "New York can be very provincial too," he noted.

"Art politics are politics of existential anxiety," said **Kalervo Siikala** of Finland's Ministry of Education, the man behind much of Finland's cultural exchange. "There is always both tension and exchange between centre and periphery, though the two should be able to meet on equal terms and engage in dialogue." After discussing the arts in relation to money and power, and in relation to centres such as New York, Mr Siikala pointed to the trend for gifted and creative people to move out of the big centres to the peripheries where they can enjoy the luxuries of peace, space and light. These very luxuries are something Finland can offer a-plenty - the country's hidden capital. "Being a certain distance from the world's major centres helps us see the essential aspects of the various movements and to concentrate on them," said Mr Siikala.

The role of provocateur was taken by **Peter Schjeldahl**, poet and influential critic from New York, formerly with Village Voice and now with Vanity Fair. "Your art is unclear, provincial and uninteresting, except for a few original artists," he claimed. "The support system might be fine for democracy, but it does not work for artistic vitality." He recalled some of the older

artists such as Munch, Ibsen, Strindberg and Sibelius, alongside Eiel Saari, Bergman and Dreyer, all of whom are well known in the United States. Unfortunately, Schjeldahl did not see much contemporary art here during his stay. Nevertheless, he felt that the mental climate here is not very encouraging for talented artists with greater ambitions. One essential feature of art, claimed Schjeldahl, is that it should react against international illusions: only then has art a meaning.

Perhaps the 'star' of the seminar was the Italian art professor and theoretician **Achille Bonito Oliva**, promoter of the much-discussed trans-avant garde art movement. This new and 'wild' form of painting is now spreading rapidly from Italy to the rest of the world's art capitals. "This trend starts in and thrives on a crisis," claimed Oliva. Much of its vitality comes from the feeling of impending catastrophe. Trans-avant garde breaks away from most styles and the linguistic Darwinism that rules so much art, along fixed, prefabricated patterns of meaning. Oliva saw the role of the true artist as that of a herdsman, roaming the fields of post-modernism and using whatever stimuli he finds interesting. The trendy modern artist needs a great deal of money to fly around the world; thus only those who can afford to be 'with it' are included, said one German critic in response to Oliva's talk.

tended by the seminar delegates was on Lappish Dada art. "Your beautiful dresses are proof that there are no cultural walls between us," one distinguished artist told the Lapps. The Lapp poet and singer **Ailu Valkeapää** expressed the need for support for Lapp culture. "We want to live so that we can look foreigners straight in the eye," he told his audience. Later, in a most moving performance, he sang a Lapp 'joik', a spontaneous non-verbal song, for the assembled critics and dignitaries.

Much more was discussed, of course, including the eternal problem between artist and critic, though without any solution being found, at least not at the Finlandia Hall gathering. At Hanasaari, though, **John Galtung** took a radical view, claiming that critics are completely obsolete! In his speech, Galtung took a very positive stand on art and creativity in general, extending its vital importance to the development of a new world order, his main theme. Artists will perhaps take on a more nomadic role, traveling round the world like businessmen, but creating unity through meaningful communication in all the apparent diversity of today.

Finland is a place where one can also come and relax in the natural beauty of the countryside. The beauty of Finland in early summer made a deep impact on these distinguished connoisseurs of beauty. A trip to Pori and Villa Mairea (another of Alvar Aalto's famous buildings and now a private museum) was a memorable experience. One German critic, also a keen ornithologist, wanted to see some of the rare birds found in Finland, including the elusive osprey. This type of exhibition is rather more difficult to arrange, but by a combination of hard work on the host's part and sheer good luck he managed to catch a glimpse of this majestic bird early one morning beside a Finnish lake. He now has a much better understanding of where Finnish art and culture come from.

Afterwards there was a party in one of the cave dwellings called the 'Devil's church' in Suomenlinna.





## 4 KULTUR

Kulturredaktör Peter Curman  
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Konstnärskonferensen i Helsingfors utsatts för en konstnärlig provokation. Som vitmålad byråkratt med vit dokumentportfölj intar en ung konstnär en plats på podiet. Den östtyske professorn i bakgrunden fortsätter sin redogörelse för det exempelösa publikintresset för röstställningar i DDR.

# Kavla upp ärmarna!

Finns det en nordisk identitet, och vad skulle den i så fall vara bra för? Det var en brännande fråga på AICA:s (den internationella konstnärskongressens) kongress i Finland nyligen.

De finna världarna hade med en effektivitet, som vida övertärfar svensk dito, försatt oss med ett material som borde ge oss alla möjligheter till ett ställningsstagande. Där fanns två utställningar av nordisk samtidskonst, en om finländskt avsnitt och en om samisk konst. Dessutom en generalinledning av finländsk konst 1900-1960 med biföljande bok om finlända visioner i konst, arkitektur och design och skulptur utflykter till alla konstnärliga centrat i södra Finland.

Men svaret på frågan blir självklart olika beroende på ideologi och utgångspunkt. Den amerikanska kritiken Peter Schejdel skildrade såväl som hela den nordiska konsten efter Munch och menade att den saknade både egenart och kvalitet.

För att kunna vara genuin måste man enligt hans uppfattning befinna sig i världskulturens centrum, såväl New York, och där tävla om kopieringsguld. Först då skulle man kunna se sin egen särprägel och uttrycka den klart.

Schejdelns perspektiv var förhållande närt i sin imperialistiska framtoning och det var lätt att påvisa att han saknade såväl kunskaper som kritisk insikt om de ekonomiska strukturer som styr förhållandet mellan centrum och periferi.

### Glider undan

Men problemet här inte så mycket lättare om man glider undan Schejdelns rundpallar. Vad är då exempel kvalitet och vem bestämmer det?

Det svar, som tycks undertryckas av den vidvuxna floran av konstnärliga uttryck, är att det finns flera olika kvalitetskriterier och smakcentra. Det blev särskilt tydligt när vi talar om minoritetskulturer och invandrargrupper. För varje kulturgrupp har sina speciella traditioner och sociala ritualer. Varken symboler, färguttryck eller

"Vi befinner oss i en ideologisk vågval. Men de som tror att historien tar slut med Thatcher och Reagan misstar sig..."

konstverkets användning kan förstås av den som inte känner dessa traditioner, och de kan därmed inte värderas utifrån.

Esteletiska värdeomdömen fungerar bara inom en given kulturkrets, vilket Schejdelns årmängd är ett tydligt exempel på - liksom min egen osäkerhet när jag ska bedöma exempelvis jugoslaviska eller latinamerikanska invandrarkonstnärer.

### Färligt för landet

Ett annat svar hänger samman med nyttan av en kulturell identitet. Ett mycket intressant och betydande exempel kommer Jaakko Lintinen med i den nämnda skriften "Finnish Vision".

Han påvisar nämligen att den typiska dova, kända färgpaletten i finsk mållingskonst var ett utslag av den konservativa, för att inte säga reaktionära finska nationalismen, som odlades av agrarpartiet och som riktade sig lika mycket mot sociala jämlikhetsträvanden som mot industrialisering och urbana livsmönster.

En sådan nationell identitet är alltid i grunden färlig för ett lands utveckling. Men det finns givetvis en nationell sammanhållning som kan vara progressiv. I dag är det rätt uppenbart att en inhemsk kulturutveckling står i motsättning till den internationella navelisering som bland annat sprids med importerade TV-program och europeiska skulpturer eller kommer till uttryck i samtyckta barnböcker, där figurerna inte får ha speciell hud- eller hårfärg och lekarna måste var ytterst allmängliga.

### Coca-Cola-kultur

En nationell identitet i den meningen innebär alltid att man står vakt om den personliga identiteten och ger människorna möjlighet att utveckla sig individuellt på trots mot den globala musak- och Coca-Cola-kulturen.

Dock kan man upplätta ett konstnärerna i hög grad väcklar mellan nationella och internationella perspektiv. Det finns en mycket stark tendens bland yngre konstnärer att anknyta till den romantiska och måleriska traditionen från 1950- och 1960-talen. Dock förnekar man att man haft någon direkt kontakt med till exempel Cobbe gruppen.

Inte desto mindre är det samma känsla för det mystiska ljuset, de skimmerande koloristiska nyanserna i det nordiska skogs- och gölndska-pet, den "ledniska" ursprungligheten i de gamla byggnaderna som nu formuleras av till exempel Tom Lüd i Norge och Olavi Lantti och Marika Mäkelä i Finland som av informella representanter för två decennier sedan.

Marika Mäkelä, som hade en mycket vacker utställning i Helsingfors där ljuset bildade grotor inne i en tät struktur av vegetation och stenblock, skulle helt och hållet föreställa den romantiske Tursten Andersson som stod inne i ett hasselstam och målade näktargalsens sång, när jag första gången mötte honom 1961.

Och Helena Pykkänen, som skulpterar alghuvuden med stenåldersgarnas känslighet, är inte långt från den stämning som materialprimitivisten Kari Tapper genererar med sina mjuka eroderade rastockar.

### Gett upp hoppet

Ä andra sidan försöker minst lika många unga konstnärer förmoda sig i den internationella strömning som kallas transavantgardism eller postmodernism.

Enligt termen skulle det betyda att de hoppat av modernismens låg och gett upp hoppet om att vidareutveckla någon av dessa traditioner. Kritikern Achille Oliva från Italien, som skrivit en bok om fenomenet, förklarar att orsaken till denna attityd låg i bristen på optimism inför

samtidstidens utveckling. Allt för många tvivlade på att man kunde påverka skeendet med hjälp av konst, så som nästan alla konstnärar under 1900-talet förväntat.

Om han har rätt, vilket inte är alldeles omöjligt, betyder det att de häftiga, expressionistiska och anarkistiska formuttryck som nu är vanliga i Köpenhamn och Stockholm lika väl som i München och New York är ett sätt att skära av alla traditioner bakåt och framåt.

Den existentiella ångesten, intensivt upplevt på rockkonserter och liknande tillställningar, får sig en historisk dimension. Den drabbar här och nu. Individuellt och skild från sociala rörelser. Självklart har den då heller inget bemäland.

Men en liten bläck på materialet säger oss att dessa gränsoverskridare ingalunda är så historielösa som de påstår.

### Mäktiga pantrar

Leena Luostarinen, som gör mäktiga pantrar och skulpturer i ett varmt glödande skymningsland, har till exempel en målerisk känslighet och en symbolisk uttrycks-kraft som skulle varit osäkrar utan traditionen från Gauguin, Munch och en hel rad nordiska expressionister.

Petter Zernström, som lanseras som pionjär bland de häftiga, borjade i varje fall som en furusocialistisk samhällskritiker. Kristina Elander är fortfarande kvinnokämp och så vidare.

Min tro är att postmodernismen snart kommer att inlemmas i den modernistiska traditionen. Men bristen på samhällsoptimism och utopiska visioner kvarstår naturligtvis som ett djupt trauma.

Det som är tydligt är att det inte finns någon social rörelse som konstnärerna kan lita sig på. De hoppfulla vågorna av reformutrustik och revolutionär nydanarver på 1960- och 1970-talen har ebbat ut. Vi befinner oss i en ideologisk vågval. Men de som tror att historien tar slut med Thatcher och Reagan misstar sig helt säkert. Kavla upp ärmarna!

Bengt Olväng



# Fram för konstens egenart!

De internationella världskongresserna i Helsingfors — bildkonstkritikerna och konstnärernas — är nu avslutade. En höjdpunkt blev måndagskvällens informella gemensamma fest i "Pirunkirkko" på Sveaborg. Här fick

båda grupperna närkontakt — det var en varm, uppsluppen stämning under gråstensvalven, då folk bjöds på "exotisk" finsk mat: surt bröd, ost och strömming nedsköljda med brännvin och vatten.

Det blev en kväll att minnas kring dragspelsmusik och ringdans i tecknet av en helt annan kultur än den som de flesta av deltagarna känner till. Och här bjöds alltså på ett av de fåtaliga tillfällen, då kritiker och konstnärer kunde träffas och umgås okonventionellt och spontant.

Det som för övrigt väckt beundran bland utlänningarna är att de fem nordiska länderna tillsammans lyckats planlägga, finansiera och genomföra dessa kongresser. Tisdagens gemensamma program i Finlandiahuset tillät också de nordiska länderna att presentera sina speciella problem. Genom att ta del av dem och de lösningar som man nått här, kan framför allt andra små länder känna igen sina svårigheter och lära något av de nordiska erfarenheterna. T.ex. i Finland är konstnärerna mycket mer organiserade än i de flesta andra länder och staten har utvecklat speciella modeller för att stöda konsten och konstnärerna.

Uppmärksamhet väckte också samedlegationen som företrädde 28

samiska konstnärer och i en resolution krävde att den samiska konstens ställning skall stärkas. I sina färgglada dräkter och åtföljda av Valkeapääs joikande gjorde de starkt intryck.

Debatten på tisdagsförmiddagen belastades inte av konferensleda trots att kongresserna redan har pågått en vecka utan var mycket livlig om än något splittrad.

Anföranden hölls av bl.a. ordföranden för bildkonstkritikerna Dan Haulica från Rumänien, forskaren och konstnären Salomon Wangjobe från Nigeria medan Finland företrädades av avdelningschef Kalervo Siikala från undervisningsministeriet.

## Afrika kontra Europa

Professor Wangjobe gick åt den vita minoriteten på den afrikanska kontingenten och sade att de vita ödelagt stora befolkningsgrupper

sociala och kulturella självmedvetenhet i Afrika.

Wangjobe jämförde den afrikanska konstnären med en människa som sitter på två stolar — konstnärens vardag består av tradition och verklighet. Också fria afrikanska stater är bundna vid sina tidigare herrar och det är svårt att helt komma ifrån det europeiska inflytandet, sade Wangjobe.

En av de många snedvridningarna inom den europeiska konsten förekommer då man talar om intryck. Enligt Wangjobe är det vanligt att tala om intryck då en europeisk konstnär kopierar eller tar efter afrikansk konst men då en afrikansk konstnär tar intryck heter det genast att han tar efter. Wangjobe påpekade att det sägs att Picasso tog intryck av afrikansk konst när han i själva verket efterapade den.

Afrika kontra Europa togs också upp i andra anföranden och exempelvis Zambias representant uttryckte ett önskemål om att man borde komma ifrån att granska afrikansk

konst ur europeisk synvinkel.

Frågan om kritikerns ställning togs också upp under tisdagens debatt. En professor från Irak hävdade att en kritiker är lika skapande som en konstnär, lika viktig när det gäller att skapa identitet. Professorn fick mothugg av en brittisk konstnär som påpekade att otaliga konstnärer är inskrivna i historien medan antalet kritiker är ytterst få. Dessutom har dessa kritiker som numera omnämns i historie-skrivningen ursprungligen varit skrivande konstnärer tillade britten.

Beaktar man kongressen som en helhet stod förmodligen prof. Johan Galtung för den största behållningen på det intellektuella planet. Hans föredrag refererades i söndagens Hbl. Kulturkolonialismen var den term han använde för den orättvisa världsordning som är rådande. De stora länderna dikterar vad de små ska göra. I stället borde varje land och dess konstnärer få existera på sina egna villkor.



# Transavantgardismia ja semiotiikkaa

## Kriitikosta nomadiksi

Taidekriitikot pääsivät maanantaina kulttuuri-identiteetin käsitteestä kansainvälisen kongressinsa toiseen teemaan, määrittelemään kielen mahdollisuuksia taiteen tulokinnassa.

Vanhalla ylioppilastalolla olivat nyt äänessä alansa Euroopan huiput, omassa tieteesään pitkälle erikoistuneet kriitikko-semiotikot, jotka vaihtoivat keskenään valaistuneita käsityksiään milloin taiteen tulkinnasta, milloin sen selittämisestä.

Äänessä olivat mm. semiotiikan oppineet Pierre Rouve, Slavka Sverakova ja Altti Kuusamo. Semiotiikan kannalta puhui lisäksi ruotsalainen Mats B. ja huomion kohteena olivat myös taiteen yleisö, kriitikot sekä itse taiteen tekijät, taiteilijat.

Päivän ja samalla koko kongressin eittämätön pääalustaja oli Achille Bonito Oliva, transavantgardismi-käsitteen luoja ja italialainen taidekriitikko, jonka teoriaan kongressin osallistujat kohdistivat useita vastaväitteitä ja kysymyksiä. Yksi kysyjistä oli kriitikko Kimmo Sarje, joka esitteli Bonito Olivan transavantgardismin eilisessä lehdessämme.

Ruotsalainen Mats B. puhui väärinymmärtämisen tärkeydestä. Mats B., 28-vuotias kriitikko, toimittaa Tukholmassa *Moderna museet* -lehteä.

### Menneisyys on taiteen sanakirja

Mats B. esitti kolme kysymystä. Kuinka tietyn nykytaideteoksen tulkinta vaikuttaa ko. taideteokseen? Pitääkö taidekriitikon ylipäätään yrittää oman aikansa taideteosten selittämistä? Onko kriitikolla ja yleisöllä eroa näkemyksen tarkkuudessa taideteosta tulkitessaan?

Hänen johtolankansa oli, että väärinkäsitys taiteessa on täysin olennaista. Kaiken A ja O on Mats B:n kannalta taiteilijan ja kriitikon suhde, heidän suhteensa moniselitteisyyteen; käsite viittaa taideteokseen jota ei voi enää tulkita.

Jo Marcel Duchamp muistutti meille, että tietty taide-esine voi merkitä useaa eri asiaa yhtäaikaan: taulussa kuvattu ovi voi olla avoin, mutta voi se olla myös suljettu.

"Tämä moniselitteisyys on juuri sitä, mikä tänään ilmenee yhtä lailla sekä New Yorkin että Länsi-Saksan uudessa taiteessa", Mats B. tähdensi.

Nuoret taiteilijat eri puolilla maailmaa kieltävät nyt minimalistaiteen formalismin ja käsitetaiteen kuivan intellektualismin. Heille taide on hauska, persoonallisesti tunteenomainen ja samalla ironinen tapa työskennellä. Menneisyys on tämän päivän nuoren taiteilijan ehtymätön sanakirja.

Taidehistoriaa saa käyttää harkitsematta hyväkseen, eikä siihen nyt suhtauduta kovinkaan suurella kunnioituksella.



Italialainen kriitikko Achille Bonito Oliva saarnaa kollegoilleen transavantgardista. Mats B. Ruotsista (oik.) kuuntelee vielä tässä vaiheessa.

Esimerkkinä nykypäivän tyyppisestä nuoresta taiteilijasta Mats B. mainitsi Walter Dahnin ja Jiri Georg Dokoupilin, saksalaisen maalauskollektiivin, joka on tehnyt iloisen kommenttinsa mm. Arnold Böcklinin tunnetusta maaluksesta *Kuoleman saari*.

### Uusi ideologia: huulia ja kliseitä

Alkuperäistaulun kalseuden ja kuolemanrauhan sijasta kollektiivimaalaus huokuu onnea ja iloista tulevaisuuden toivoa. Mats B:n mukaan Dahnin ja Dokupilin maalaus on pelkkä huuli. Mitään tekemistä sillä ei ole aidon Böcklinin tai ylipäätään saksalaiseen ekspresionismiin liittyvän perinteisen päätöksen kanssa.

Samalla tavalla huulia ja ironiaa viljelemään pitäisi kyetä myös kriitikon, joka Mats B:n mielestä parhaimmillaan edustaa samaa uutta sukupolvea kuin hänen hahmottelemansa taiteilijakin.

"He ovat paimentolaisia, jotka kulkevat kaikkien taiteen ideoitten kautta samalla vaivattomuudella kuin he kulkevat eri maitten ja kaupunkien kautta."

Mutta: tuleeko uusi taide todella vaikuttamaan kritiikkiin niin, että kriitikot ovat mukana luomassa ideologiaa, joka perustuu kliseelle kuten taidekin? Mats B. heitti haasteen Vanhalla AICA:n kongressissa arvokkaasti istuville kollegoilleen, jotka yleensä edustavat vanhempia sukupolvia kuin hän itse.

Transavantgarde, 70-luvulla syntynyt italialainen ja yleiseurooppa-

lainen taideilmiö, sekä sen teoreetikko Bonito Oliva ovat tämän kongressin yhteydessä saaneet paljon huomiota osakseen.

Monet ovat yhtä mieltä siitä, että 80-luvun taidetta, on se transavantgardea tai ei, luonnehtivat Bonito Olivan käyttämät käsitteet mielikuvitus, yksilöllisyys, ajallinen ja tyyllinen liikkuvuus ja moniarvoisuus.

Mutta mikä on Achille Bonito Olivan oma identiteetti kriitikkona, kongressissa kysyttiin. "Eikö transavantgardismi ole juuri tämän hetken taidemarkkinoiden voitto, mikä taas määrää nyt kaikkien biennaalien, triennaalien ja dokumentojen linjan?"

Kysyttiin myös: "Mikä on transavantgardismin historiallinen, taloudellinen ja moraalinen tausta?"

Transavantgardismin ja taidekaupan yhteisen menestyksen Bonito Oliva kielsi lyhyesti ja jyrkästi. Sen sijaan nykytaiteen kriisiä transavantgardismi hänen mielestään juuri heijastaa. Nykytaiteen kriisi taas on osa laajempaa kriisiä, maailmankatsomusten ja poliittisten ajatusmallien kriisiä, joka hänen näkemyksensä mukaan käynnistyi 70-luvulla arabien ja Israelin välisistä yhteenotoista ja niistä johtuneesta arabien öljykriisistä. Historiallista kehitysoptimismia ei sen jälkeen ole ollut maailmassa, ja transavantgardismin johtava filosofi on Nietzsche: "Ehkä juuri siksi tämä on viimeinen transavantgardismi taiteen historiassa, ehkä viimeinen filosofian suuntaus."

MARJA-TERTTU KIVIRINTA



Uusimaa 1.6.1983, Finland

# Kuvataiteilijat ja arvostelijat kohtasivat Helsingissä

Suomi on toista viikkoa isännöinyt kahta kansainvälistä maailman-kongressia: koolla on Kansainvälinen taidejärjestö IAA sekä Kansainvälinen kuvataidearvostelijain liitto AICA. Tiistaina Finlandia-talo oli kohtauspaikkana, kun molemmat liitot ensi kertaa olemassaolonsa aikana kokoon-tuivat yhdessä.

Teemana oli Kulttuurin identiteetti, taide ja kritiikki. Asiaa ovat omalta kannaltaan pohtineet niin IAA:n kuin AICA:n kokousväki, edelliset Espoossa ruotsalais-suomalaisessa kulttuurikeskuk-sessa, jälkimmäiset Helsingissä Vanhassa ylioppi-lastalossa.

Kokousväsymys ei tunnu IAA:n eikä AICA:n väkeä vaivaavan, sillä aamupäivän kokous keskusteli vilkkaasti alustusten jälkeen. Iltapäivä oli omistettu paneelille, jossa puhuttiin pohjoisten vähemmistöjen asemasta.

Tiistain alutajat olivat AICA:n puheenjohtaja Dan Haulica Romaniasta, osastopäällikkö Kalervo Siikala sekä tutkija ja kuvataiteilija Salomon Wangjobe Nigeriasta. Osastopäällikkö Siikala puhui taiteen keskuksista ja periferiasta eli syrjäalueista, prof. Wangboje mm. tilanteesta, jolloin määrällinen enemmistö voi olla vähemmistö, kuten esim. Afrikan maissa.



*Taidekritiikot ovat jo puhuneet pitkään ja hartaasti alaansa liittyvistä asioista ja jatkoivat edelleen tiistaina Helsingissä. Tiistaina puhuivat mm. Suomen Kalervo Siikala (kesk.) sekä kriittikkoliiton puheenjohtaja Dan Haulica. Vasemmalla Rene Berger.*

## Tilanne Afrikassa

Salomon Wangboje totesi, ettei kulttuurin välttämättä tarvitse olla yksinäisellä saarella ollakseen vähemmistö. Valkoinen vähemmistö on tuhonnut suurten kansanryhmien sosiaalisen ja kulttuurisen omanarvontunnon Afrikassa.

Puhuja vertasi afrikkalaista taiteilijaa ihmiseen, joka istuu kahdella tuolilla: perinne ja nykyhetken todellisuus ovat hänen arkeaan.

Valtiollisestikin vapaat maat ovat sidoksissa entisiin isäntiinsä, eurooppalaisesta vaikutuksesta on vaikea päästä kokonaan irti.

Eurooppalaisista monista vääritymistä kuvataiteen alalla puhuesaan Wangboje mainitsi, että on tapana puhua vaikutteista, jos eurooppalainen taiteilija kopioi tai matkii afrikkalaista taidetta, mutta kun afrikkalainen saa eurooppalaisia vaikutteita, puhutaan kopiosta.

Sanotaan esim. että Picasso sai vaikutteita, vaikka kyse oli suorista kopioista.

Arvostelijaa professori piti tärkeänä linkkinä taiteen tekijän ja yleisön välillä. Kriitikon vastuuseen kuuluu tiedottaa ja kasvattaa.

Taide on voimakas ase, ja tätä etenkin silloin kun taiteilija on huolestunut kansallisesta identiteetistä alistetuissa oloissa. Sen viestit, sen kielikuvat ovat suunnattomat. Se on järjen ääni, jota tulisi kuunnella, sanoi puhuja.



Kansainvälisen taideliiton (IIA) ja Kansainvälisen kriitikkojen liiton (AICA) kongressit Helsingissä päättyivät yhteiseen päivään Finlanditalolla.

Kaksi toisilleen välttämätöntä ammattiryhmää kulttuurin alueella vai taiteilija ja hänen liepeessään roikkuva kiittämätön rakki?

Mitään lopullisia vastauksia ei tietenkään saatu, toisuus kun riippuu tilanteesta, mutta meheviä puheenvuoroja kuultiin sitä enemmän ja niitä liepee viikon varrella jo vaihdetun ravintolaympäristöissä.

## Hellä, kärsivällinen, itsepäinen

Kriitikkojen liiton puheenjohtaja Dan Haulica luonnehti suomalaisia isäntiä helliksi, kärsivällisiksi ja itsepäisiksi. Taiteilijoita ja kriitikoita hän luonnehti veljiksi, jotka turhaan joskus kiihtyvät.

- Taiteen syvin olemus on se että se herättää erilaisia ajatuksia. Kriitikko tulkitsee näitä ajatuksia.

Tästä oltiin yleisökeskustelussa kuitenkin eri mieltä Irakin edustajan mukaan kriitikko on samanlaisen luovan prosessin läpikäyvä henkilö kuin taiteilijakin ja suotta väheksytty vaativassa ammatissaan.

Haulica korosti puheensa myös sitä, että Eurooppalainen traditio on ehkä liiankin sidottu kronologiaan. Täytyisi pitää mielessä, että esteettinen nautinto on ta voitettavissa ilman, että lainkaan tiedämme koska jokin työ on tehty.

## Kulttuuri-identiteettiä luomassa

Professori Solomon I Wangboje Nigeriasta korosti kulttuuri-identiteetin tärkeyttä etenkin kansoille jolla on siirtomaamenneisyys.

# Luova vai tulkitseva kriitikko



□ Nigeriläinen Solomon Wangboje.

Kaikissa kulttuureissa eivät vähemmistöt ole syrjinnän kohteena, vaan esimerkiksi Etelä-Afrikassa pieni valkoinen vähemmistö polkee mustan kulttuurin jalkoihinsa.

Afrikkalaista taiteilijaa hän luonnehti mieheksi joka istuu kahdella tuolilla. Hän voi valita tradition ja nyky-päivän välillä. Hän voi palata menneeseen ja muovata sen avulla itselleen identiteetin. Tämä paluu voi lähteä aidosta kansallistunteesta tai sitten se tapahtuu eurooppalaisia turisteja varten, jotka riemuitsevat kaikesta primitiivisyydestä mitä Afrikasta löytävät.

Hän kiinnitti huomiota myös nimityksissä olevaan ristiriitaan. Kun eurooppalainen taiteilija kopioi afrikkalaista taidetta, kuten esimerkiksi Picasso eräällä kaudellaan, hän "saa vaikutteita". Jos afrikkalainen taiteilija tekee työn joka vähäkkään muistuttaa jonkun eurooppalaisen virkaveljen töitä hän ei "saa vaikutteita" vaan "kopioi".

Myös Henry Nkole Tayali kiinnitti huomiota länsimaisten kriitikkojen tapaan arvioida afrikkalaista taidetta. Se etteivät he ymmärrä tämän päivän afrikkalaista taidetta johtuu suuresta itsekkyydystä. Länneistä ohjataan Afrikkaan paljon rahaa, mutta usein sitä käytetään sorron välikappaleena. Afrikkalaisia kriitikoita hän kritisoi siitä että nämä ovat usein systeemin palveluksessa.

## Luovuus ja rauha maan päällä

Taiteilijoiden maailmankongressin päätöslauselmassa kiinnitetään huomiota rauhaan ja luovuuteen. Ranskan aloitteesta koskettellaan myös taiteilijoiden verotussysteemiä. Islantilaisien aloitteesta vedotaan UNESCO:n jotta se järjestäisi erilaisia symposiumeja aiheena "Luovuus ja rauha maan päällä". He esittävät myöskin luovien työpajojen perustamista.

Japanin taiteilijoiden aloitteesta syntynyt vetoisuus kaikkiin kansakuntiin täydellisen ydinaserisunnan puolesta ja tekemään soti-muksen ydinaseiden tuottamisen ydinkokeiden ja uusien ydinaseiden sijoittamisen välittömän lopettamisen puolesta.



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