

RECENT PROCESSES OF CREATION IN CONTEMPORARY ART?

In several various texts I have already dealt with the problem of the processes followed during the creation of the works of art¹. My observations have concerned up to now a general consideration of these processes as far as they apply to a wholesome view of the issue. However, facts seem to encourage an updated and specified vision thereof, due to the dramatic changes which have taken place during the last century in the field of technically assisted artistic creation, and which have deeply influenced the way of processing of the artists in each and every artistic field. One might even assert that, in certain domains, traditional creative processes have grown unbelievably diverse, thus opposing the accepted relation between the artist and his work to a quite inedited, and still unscrutinized connection between these two factors of artistic creation that affects even the deep structure of the work created.

In order to evaluate the intimate method of organizing the work of art in respect with the artist's inspiration, one has to go back to the dialectics initiated, at an ontological level, by Aristotle, between *potential* and *actual* being on the one hand and *coming to be* on the other hand. A rough piece of marble potentially contains the form the artist is able to shape into it. The form itself is the actual outcome of the process of coming to be of the statue finally instaured. The artist's work consists in dialectically combining his own intention with the rough shape that the material (in this case, the marble) suggests to him. The statue shaped is, according to Aristotle, a final cause, whereas the sculptor himself is an efficient cause. In addition, the processes where the artist goes through towards his aim imply the interference of the totality of mental faculties, mainly including imagination, memory and reason itself, not to mention the role of will which assures, together with reason, the coherence of the process of creation. This dialectic entails a series of subdialectics comprising errors and corrections (if possible), hesi-

1. Cf. E. MOUTSOPOULOS, Vers une phénoménologie de la création, *Revue Philosophique*, 86, 1961, pp. 261-291.

itations and progressions, omissions and completions etc., which are nonetheless as momentous and important as the main one². They often interfere with each other and are generally closely related to the exceptionality and specificity of the particular work of art, which is being instaured.

The case of a sculptural work implies two complementary, but still contrary processes, depending on the material used. In the case of the marble, the artist progressively releases out of the rough material a pure form by successively carving parts of this material that are hiding parts of this form. In the case of the plaster used as a provisional material of this respective material aiming at instauring e.g. a bronze statue, he progressively adds parts of this respective material to complete the form he intends to mould. In both cases, he proceeds by consecutive steps that are obviously different from each other but, due to the unity of his intention, seem to be integrated into a continuous progress, especially when the work has been completed and is contemplated as such³. The proceeding considerations are respectfully valid at the level of all arts, as they have been consolidated in their traditional expression along the centuries. They obey both to strict rules and to tendencies to overwhelm the latter, without, nevertheless, disturbing each one's own nature which consists in promoting and aesthetically, i.e. creatively, validating rough materials: colours, sounds, words etc. by using them in order to instaure unique works of art which are intended to function as irrepeatable models and standards for the evaluation of works of practically lesser importance which may be qualified as mere artifacts⁴. The irrepeatability of artistic masterpieces resides in the fact of their surpassing and overwhelming traditional standards and rules to enhance its originality and uniqueness⁵.

The confrontation of the rough material by the artist has been compared by Theophile Gautier to a corporeal struggle as he exorts him to «*Struggle against the Carrara (marble), against the hard and rare Paros (marble)*»⁶. The same exertion has been similarly exposed by Romain Rolland, who an-

2. Cf. IDEM, La finition de l'œuvre d'art: contraintes et licences, *A filosofiae as sciências*, Rio de Janeiro, 1978, pp. 22-24; Alternative Processes in Artistic reation, *Proceedings of the 8th International Wittgenstein Symposium*, Part I, Wien, Hölder, 1985, pp. 367-377.

3. Cf. IDEM, Le vide esthetique: essence et structure, *Real World Design*, Univ. of Helsinki, Lahti Research and Trading Center, 1997, pp. 101-104; "L'artiste, createur et critique", *Critique et Différence*, Tunis, Soc. Tunisienne d'Études Philos., 1990, pp. 551-552.

4. Cf. IDEM, Vers une phénoménologie de la création, *loc. cit.*, esp. pp. 280 if. Permanence et alternances dans la création artistique, *Mélanges Pierre Somville*, Liège, Éd. de l'Université, 2007, pp. 11-20.

5. Cf. IDEM, Le viol des symetries et le *kairos* comme *metron* de l'art, *Metrum of Art. Third International Conference on Aesthetics*, Kraków, Jagiellonian Univ., 1991, pp. 134-137.

6. Cf. Th. GAUTIER, *L'Art, Émaux et Camées*, (1852).

alyzes Beethoven's repeated, dramatic attempts to achieve the elaboration of the main theme that was dominating the "*Marcia Funebre*" of his *Eroica*. The use of X-rays has allowed to reveal, under finished surfaces of paintings, the existence of elements precedently designed or faintly indicated and subsequently erased due to some «regret» (this is the proper technical term), but still emerging after the adequate treatment of the painting's surface. One may multiply such examples concerning the totality of the arts. They make evident the continuity of the artist's intention to produce a really new and inedited form, which indicates each time a uniquely experienced and unequally expressed situation⁷. One may encounter similarities of such processes in the domains of all the arts, with the respective specificities due to the particular nature of each one of them, namely when one has to do with arts which combine structural and performing aspects: music, dramaturgy or dance, whose nature is more complicated than that of the visual arts, since they require the mediation, between the creator and the contemplator, of the interpreter who is equally submitted to restrictions in respecting certain rules imposed by a style or even by the creator himself (composer, dramaturge, choreographer)⁸.

These views on artistic creation have been steadily valid from antiquity up to the beginning of the XXth century. Since then, the implication of new technologies in the processing of artisting creation has contributed, at first timidly, then, progressively, in a more and more extensive way, to a radical change of both the aims and the processes of artistic creation as well. The invention of photography, for instance, has rendered useless the mimetic similitude of painting to reality. Likewise, but in a contrary sense, the invention of the phonograph has little by little rendered possible the imitation of natural sounds. This has been qualified as a revolution in art, and it certainly was, since it has «engendered incredibly new artistic forms which have inspired further ones, due to the correspondence which has always existed between the different arts»⁹. This general tendency has attained a degree of excess after the massive intrusion of informatics in everyday life and especially in artistic activities, thus influencing incredibly even the meaning of artistic creation. Traditional artistic instruments such as the scalpel, the paintbrush or the lyre and the flute, which had served artistic activities since

7. Cf. E. MOUTSOPOULOS, L'expérience esthétique: Contemplation et expérimentation, *Revue de Synthèse*, 1963, pp. 303-305; "L'œuvre d'art et son statut de témoignage", *Diotima*, 18, 1990, pp. 99-100.

8. Cf. La liberté d'expression esthétique, in IDEM, *Poiésis et Techné. Idées pour une Philosophie de l'Art*, vol. 2: *Instauration et vibrations*, Montréal, Montmorency, 1994, pp. 95-97.

9. Cf. E. SOURIAU, *La correspondance des arts*, Paris, Flammarion, 1947, pp. 86 ff.

centuries, have been replaced from one day to the other by computers or by synthesizers, depending on the pretended needs of each individual art.

The result of this change is a general tendency towards producing works in motion. Motion has, of course, always been the essence of music¹⁰ and of the performing arts in general. Nevertheless, motion devices have also been used by creators within the range of visual arts in order to combine two or three dimensional space with a fourth temporal dimension, through rotation of the accomplished form either around a pivot, to create a four dimensional impression, thus evitating a circular ambulatory prance of the viewer, or around a fixed extra thin suspension device such as does the armillary sphere representing the universe rotating around itself one way and the other and imagined by Plato¹¹, as well as the complicated systems of reversed trees with their leaves imagined and executed by Calder. In any case, all of these artistic products relied on some mainly mechanical expedients, be it the force of soft wind.

The status, if any, of moving forms created by electronic means is entirely different. They are not stable any more, but continuously changing, thus suffering perpetual alterations due to the easiness and the velocity with which the instruments that produce them can vary their own effects. Such products may be qualified as flowing images that emerge instantaneously through alteration, variation, modulation, inflection, shift or diversion. They lack stability, which is the main quality of the ontological conception of essence, since they are under a permanent flow. It would be wishable to capture one *kairic* view of the whole process of their coming to be and give this instantaneous image the possibility to be proved permanent, persisting, constant. Such an eventuality depends exclusively on the initiative of the artist or of the person manipulating or merely operating the computer. Capturing a prominent and decisive moment, as the French impressionists had already tried to do, would have been a tempting seductive and conclusive experience; but the experience of a moving, flowing and uncaptured fiction is far more seductive to the eyes of both the operator and the viewer, even if it lacks any essential consistence and Kairic character, since it also lacks stability. Its gradually changing character makes out of it a fluent coming-to-be which will never surpass its potentiality to reach an actuality. Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian will remain among the last genuine users of traditional means in order to produce consistent figures expressing fixity and durability together with movement under control. On the contrary,

10. Cf. E. MOUTSOPOULOS, *Masses and Intervals in Plato's Timaeus, Diotima*, 30, 2002, pp. 26-29.

11. Cf. PLATO, *Politicus*, 270 a.

artists like Nam June Paik or Bill Viola remain voluntarily evasive as far as their thematics and their artistic conducts are concerned. Potentiality will for ever remain the only actuality of electronically regulated artistic proposals. In the field of music, the revolution had already begun with the aleatory processes inaugurated by Karlheinz Stockhausen towards 1950¹².

The dramatic shift stated in the various domains of art due to the artists' use (or misuse) of electronic devices to assist their inspiration and their performing skill undoubtedly opens new paths to the artistic activity of our times but still remains at the level of experimentation. I will never substitute the traditional way of conceiving and exerting artistic activities and will even reinforce their usefulness and the practices of their use. One should be extremely careful while operating accordingly to their fascinating suggestions. The method of trials, errors and corrections successfully practiced in all the sectors of human activity including artistic activity and rendering in the main framework of the complementary processes of which the work of art is the precious outcome should never be abandoned, even because of the seduction exerted upon the artists' consciousness by suggestions such as those automatically forwarded by electronic devices have to be avoided or, at least submitted to critical evaluation. Inconsidered acceptance and the temptation of easiness are the worst enemies of genuine artistic activity. Artists should, then, beware of their direct or indirect presence in the particular field of their energy.

Contemporary art is both a challenge to and a stake of human consciousness. The era of electronics and informatics which nowadays humankind has already penetrated in is strongly dominated by automatisms of any kind. This entails that the human spirit, taking advantage of incredible facilities provided by complicated devices, tends to totally depend on them in an extraordinary display of intellectual laziness and disdains to rely on its own critical faculties. This unwise attitude is being extended to artistic activities. Processes of artistic creation are, at the most, submitted to a programming and then inconsiderately follow prescriptions forwarded and imposed to the artist. Thus, music, for instance, is suggested and imposed, not composed any more. The criterion of the human ear is rejected and disappears. The same occurs in regard of the criterion of the human eye. Artistic forms are merely been given beforehand, not critically elaborated, conformingly to an aesthetic taste that is predominant in each society and results in the development of a certain particular style¹³. Processes of artistic creation, dialectically intricate, seem not to be valid any more. Happily, traditional

12. Chr. CHRISTOU, *Art Today. Problems, Tendencies, Characteristics, Perspectives*, Athens, Academy of Athens, 2006, pp. 203 ff.

13. Cf. E. MOUTSOPOULOS, *Converging Aesthetic Experiences or: On Style*, *Annales d'Esthétique*, 15-16, 1976-1977, pp. 164-168.

processes are still accurately and rigorously followed in spite of the use of, misleading means and tend to assure artistic perennity. Contemporary art is by no means a dead art; it tends towards its own transfiguration¹⁴, provided it is not passively seduced by its unbelievably rich eventual possibilities and takes advantage of the teachings of the past.

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14. Cf. IDEM, L'art contemporain: mort ou transfiguration?, *Actes du VI^e Congrès d'Esthétique*, Bucarest, 1972, pp. 109-113.