

As a practical matter designation of Slovenia and the Czech Republic as one country would have three significant practical effects:

First, because the GSP law requires that at least 35% of the value be added in the exporting country in order to receive GSP benefits, it would permit a wider range of products that have value added in both the Czech Republic and Slovenia to receive GSP benefits.

Second, because the GSP law requires that goods are shipped directly from the GSP-eligible country to the United States, it would permit processing of Czech or Slovene goods for reexport to the United States while maintaining eligibility.

Third, it would join Slovenia with a well-regarded "economy in transition" in the American eye. Slovenia would be clearly separated from the chaos in ex-Yugoslavia. This could provide a needed incentive to trade and investment from America with synergistic effects for both the Czech Republic and Slovenia. *An appropriately worded Presidential Proclamation itself may be one of the most significant gestures undertaken to date to stimulate bilateral trade.*

One difficulty in seeking one-country designation has been expressed to me by the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. USTR recognizes that such bilateral trade agreements may be a step undertaken in anticipation of membership in the European Union. The current agreement between Poland and the European Union, for example, may give members of the European Union preferences over U.S. investors and exporters. This could ultimately jeopardize Poland's status as a GSP beneficiary. Such problems may not, however, exist with Czech and Slovak Republics and Hungary, thereby making "one country" designation possible. Nonetheless, the concept that Slovenia may deny most favored nation privileges to U.S. traders and investors in its drive for membership in the European Union should also be understood as a warning concerning potential future bilateral problems.

### *Conclusion*

The possibilities are good for further cooperation between Slovenia and the United States. Many Slovenes look forward to a more active role by the United States in the Slovene economy. Slovenia needs America's commercial expertise and would also welcome a more differentiated trading partners. Americans who are familiar with Slovenia similarly would welcome a more active role of Slovenia in the U.S. market. Ultimately close cooperation will be better for both countries.

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ALEŠ DEBELJAK\*

## No alternative: postmodern art and exigencies of business

The focus of this paper is the mechanism of postmodern art's failure to uphold the standard of modernist art, that is, its negative-critical relationship to society at

\* Dr. Aleš Debeljak, asistent na FDV v Ljubljani.

large. Characterized by a social autonomy, an aesthetic innovation, and a progressive development of expressive styles, modernist art historically emerged as an alternative world to the capitalist market. Modernist art's critique of capitalism thus took place inside the institution of autonomous art. In contrast, historical avant-garde movements (Surrealism, Futurism, Constructivism, Dadaism) at the beginning of the 20th century tried to destroy the institution of art *tout court* since their programmatic translation of aesthetic ideals (beauty, freedom, truth) into the life-world was believed to become possible by way of radical social revolution.

In contemporary corporate capitalism, *only half of the historical avant-garde program was realized*. The aesthetization of life-world occurred through the commodified products of culture industry without the corresponding social transformation. Instead of critical challenge to the hegemony of corporate capitalism, the postmodern institution of art offers the opportunity for art to simply mirror corporate values in a passive-regressive manner. The postmodern institution of art can therefore no longer contain a potential for art to be a negative and critical counter-image of society. Our theoretical position, unabashedly informed by critical theory, can be admittedly described as nostalgic remembrance of the things past. Still, it is our hope that it contributes, if in a minor way, to an unending search for strategies by which a promotion of *substantial values of truth, beauty, freedom, and justice*, embedded in modernist works of art, can be carried over into the present situation without giving up on either the individual autonomy or social solidarity.

Postmodernist art is a paradoxical product of creative force released from direct social purpose or mediated ethical obligation that characterized historical avant-garde. What started before World War I as avant-garde artists' involvement in the reshaping the future of their societies, had subsided by the early 1970s into acknowledged resignation that art has no inherent capacity to contribute to social change. It was this loss of critical and Utopian projection into the future, that transformed the historical avant-garde from an ethical into an aesthetic movement in its postmodern incarnation. True enough, this turn could have had a positive consequence. Adorno maintained a slim hope that the works of art which have been

"... certified by tradition and public opinion as understood /might/ underneath their veneer of intelligibility withdraw back into themselves and become completely incomprehensible" (Adorno 1984a: 179).

However, the inflation of interpretive discourses, facilitated by the rising tide of mass education, academic institutions, scholarly journals, and specialized publishing houses after World War II, has rendered even this paradoxical hope unrealizable. Such an educational, institutionalized discourse is a site of symbolic struggle which aims to produce or be associated with the production of valuable cultural goods contributing to a mediation between the art and the society. Unlike art which generates aesthetic objects, the educational discourse produces consumers of art. Through education for consumers of art, the individuals receive a set of classificatory and conceptual instruments or differentiating habits which enable them to understand works of art. In the final analysis, the control of dynamics and

location of these symbolic struggles (universities, galleries, museums)<sup>1</sup> implies the right to define the needs and perceptions of the consumers of art. Scott Lash points out the crucial importance of this sanitizing discourse by emphasizing that

"... the visitor to an art museum without any such training or differentiated habitus uses the classifications with which he or she perceives everyday reality to perceive the work of art" (Lash 1990: 242).

Such discourse includes the art works of historical avant-garde and aesthetic modernism in the circuit of interpretation, canonization, restoration, and marketing, thus ultimately contributing to the conceptual neutralization and sanitization of "the aesthetic Utopia"<sup>2</sup>. By turning avant-gardist and modernist abstract-hermetic character back into something popular, hence acceptable for the easy reception and consumption on the mass market, *the institutionalized interpretation integrated and thus silenced radical artistic dissent*. Modernist art was therefore robbed of its negative-critical potential and became little more than a decoration of the dominant social order. The alleged process of "free" democratic access to the works of avant-garde and modernism, leveled out through the corporate domination of gatekeeping system (universities, museums, galleries, and other art-related institutions) therefore turned into a subtle social-cultural control. The forces of advanced capitalist market proved to be more effective than political censorship since

"... by communicatively apprehending the essential freedom of modernist art, turning its abstract and hermetic character back into something familiar, the discourse of interpretation silences the protest of modernist art. Canonization always brings with it a restorative element. However much interpretation seeks to lead art into the universality in which it ideally participates, interpretation nevertheless forces art into institutionalized conceptions. The discourse subjugates art to the principle of utilization" (Burger 1986: 102).

The aesthetization of the life-world further eliminated the distance between art and life. Artistic expression is forced to disintegrate in the face of the universality of the aesthetic dimension. The protest of modernist and historical avant-garde art becomes therefore null and void when the aesthetic forms and artistic techniques find their easy application in the circulation of capital. It is therefore possible to point out that the postmodernist institution of art involves the blurring of boundaries between all objects and forms of consciousness, so that there is no privileged, separate place to be claimed by the art works. Having thoroughly integrated art works into the circulation of the capital, the radical commodification of art completes and in turn paradoxically confirms this obliteration of difference between spiritual and material, artistic and non-artistic objects and corresponding states of mind.

<sup>1</sup> Bourdieu on whose work Lash heavily draws, writes: "A cultural product – an avant-garde picture, a political manifesto, a newspaper – is a constituted taste, a taste which has been raised from the vague semi-existence of half formulated or unformulated experience, implicit or even unconscious desire, to the full reality of the finished product, by a process of objectification which, in present circumstances, is almost always the work of professionals. It is consequently charged with the legitimizing, reinforcing capacity which objectification always possesses, especially when, as is the case now, the logic of structural homologies assigns it to a prestigious group so that it functions as an authority which authorizes and reinforces dispositions by giving them a collectively recognized expression". (Bourdieu 1984: 231)

<sup>2</sup> A noted defender of modernism, Lionel Trilling for example refused to teach Joyce, Kafka, Proust and other modernist authors in his seminar at Columbia University because he did not want to contribute to their universal sanitization and the taming of their radical artistic negation. (Howe 1967: 59–82)

The postmodernist measurement of art entirely in economic and commercial terms does not regard art works for their historical, transcendental, or aesthetic values. Instead, it reduces them to the level of absolute commodity. "Absolute turned into absolute horror", as Adorno would have it. In this context, the commitment to form, so prominent in the historical avant-garde and modernist art, ceases to inform artistic production. Witness Adorno's warning:

"... the concept of form draws a qualitative and antagonistic dividing line between art and empirical life, the modern variety of which is denying art the right to exist. In this situation, art's fortunes are tied to those of form; they will live or die together." (Adorno 1984a: 205).

Inasmuch as everything is aesthetically styled, art cannot make any impact. Art works cease to represent "the totally other" of society. Because art can, in the new postmodern context, address everything, no element of the life-world can avoid being subjected to the universal aestheticization. Consider Jemson:

"No society has ever been as saturated with signs and messages as this one /i.e. the society of advanced capitalism/. If we accept Debord's thesis of the ever-present and all-powerful imagery of today's consumer capitalism, then the priorities of the real appear totally reversed and everything is mediated by culture." (Jameson 1984: 125).

The once-critical contents of art are deactivated in a social order in which advertising cannibalized the stylistic strategies of modernism and the avant-garde. The ensuing weakening of the institution of autonomous art has a profound impact not only on aesthetic modernism in particular, but also on the totality of the cultural tradition in general. Modernist art and the historical avant-garde, despite its oppositional and negative-critical gestures, still depended on features of 19th century cultural life that have since thoroughly disappeared in the course of social modernization: (1) the public that trusted in the objective status of works of art; (2) the hermeneutically competent recipient; (3) an acceptance of the work as the locus of aesthetic truth.

In advanced capitalism, however, postmodernist art works can no longer count on the stable identity of the bourgeois individual as the target of scandal and shock (recall the avant-garde slogan *épate le bourgeois!*), the structure of the public sphere, which has disintegrated, and the institutional credibility of the art work. Another major consequence of change in the social status of the artist in particular and in the political and social importance of art in general, as demonstrated by the increased corporate and state financial support, was that the artistic role ceased to be that of an avant-garde with its concomitant tenets of *alienation*, *rejection of middle-class values*, *negativity*, and *critique*. Art lost its oppositional attitude. Instead, the reverse was the case. The artists internalized values and goals associated with the middle class. This does not mean that works of art will not be produced any more. However, it does mean that they lost their emphatic character as "works", that the public ceased to treat them as potential sources of moral and symbolic values, and that the inherited reflexive use of genres and disciplined forms is replaced by hybrid and eclectic forms.

Two consequences can be drawn from this configuration. First, works of art, previously under-represented because of their structural incompatibility with a dominant concept of bourgeois privacy, became more prominent. We have in mind here primarily performance, sculpture, site-specific installations, artistic

happenings, architecture, and large-scale public spectacles. In a word, public art forms *par excellence*. Second, as the result of the distance from form, genre, and discipline implied in the autonomous art work, artistic production entered the life-world. Thus, it encourages the transformation of an individual into a constant recipient of aesthetically packaged commodities, not only in privileged sites such as theatres, galleries, operas, and concert halls, but in virtually all spheres of everyday life.

The historical avant-garde has succeeded in undermining the institution of autonomous art and aestheticizing everyday life. It is precisely the legacy of this "success" that defines art in postmodernity. The avant-garde derived its power of radical negation from the conviction that the bourgeois aesthetic predilections, assumptions, and taste were socially privileged. The tradition under attack provided the critics with their power. Today that tradition has thoroughly disappeared. No longer committed to traditional aesthetic forms, the contemporary audience will no longer be scandalized. In a situation in which

"... the elements of shock, provocation, scandal, and (most notably in the case of Dada) sheer outrage... become familiar, predictable, and routinized, they too become the new aesthetic canon and achieved a type of bourgeois respectability that would have been anathema to its originators. It is no longer unusual nor has it been for quite some time to see non-figurative paintings of all varieties adorning the offices of bank presidents." (Wollin 1985: 16)

Unlimited freedom of artistic expression thus undermines the importance of the content being expressed, while the sheer availability of options in terms of form, genre, and style in fact lowers the degree of artistic innovation possible. Historical avant-garde and aesthetic modernist art, when rejecting the norms of 19th century art, made a radical gesture inasmuch as it implied a *personal risk* (economy) and an *aesthetic challenge* (innovative approach). In postmodern pluralism, however, all modes of artistic expression have equal status. Many different claims to authority have now seriously weakened, if not completely undermined art's integrity and plausibility, since what pluralism paradoxically implies is that the *dividing line between acceptable and unacceptable no longer exists*. Everything can now be accommodated.

The general mechanisms of the social and political accommodation of art in postmodernity can be best revealed in the case of Pop art of the 1960s, commonly referred to as the American version of avant-garde. We will attempt to demonstrate, however, that Pop art failed to continue the tradition of critical negativity, rejection, and art as an alternative counter-image to the society precisely because it preferred to accept commodity fetishism as a given.

Insofar as art styles develop within reward system, individual artists retain the right to select their particular cognitive goals and technical means. In regard to a social location, however, they must function within a support structure where they compete for symbolic and material rewards. Changes in the scope, size, and number of the institutions that control the exhibition, distribution, and market sales of works of art affect artists' mutual interactions and their performance.

The artist under the conditions of advanced capitalism cannot function without the aid, support, or guidance of such a *gatekeeping system* (the network of galleries, curators, critics, dealers, and collectors). This is paradoxically incongruous in a society that proclaims the paramount value of individual freedom and the inde-

pendence of the artist. Increasing reliance is placed upon the managerial elite of professional gatekeepers who are powerful precisely because they exclusively control the mechanisms for the promotion of art<sup>3</sup>, with the result that individual artists exist for the benefit of the gatekeeping system, rather than vice versa. Professional gatekeepers could thus easily choose to ignore selected artists' demands simply because they came to realize that artists need them even more than they need artists. The gatekeeping system and their access to mass media was instrumental in helping

"... to increase the visibility of contemporary art and to move it into the mainstream of popular culture. Certain artists rather than others were the object of media attention, particularly those who were expressing values that were congruent with those of the mass media. /Cumulative/ changes in social behavior such as increasing levels of education and changes in the allocation of leisure time that were reflected in the attention given to such activities by the mass media led to an expansion of art institutions, including the number of artists and the number of organizations selling and displaying art." (Crane 1987: 9).

The artist as an individual producer and innovator therefore ceases to be important as himself. He or she becomes an interchangeable unit within the system of galleries, dealers, and museums: a true example of the Weberian cog in the machine of art bureaucracy which organizes and administers the production and consumption of art. This apparatus, however, has another function that is relevant to our present discussion. It also preconditions the ambitions of those whose well-being it ostensibly exists to promote. In other words, it ideologically and economically encourages accommodation and surrender to dominant social values, and in doing so, it has successfully undermined the very basis of artistic negation. The distance from the bourgeois values which was the basis of avant-garde program, is now perceived by artists and the public alike in condescending terms. Negativity, rejection, and opposition toward society have been transformed into harmonizing acceptance of the *status quo*. Jameson observes that

"... in a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum. But this means that contemporary or postmodernist art is going to be about art itself in a new kind of way; even more, it means that one of its essential messages will involve the necessary failure of art and the aesthetic, the failure of the new, the imprisonment in the past." (Jameson 1983: 115-116)

The progressive displacement of radical and innovative impulses by the mechanisms of professionalism, commercialism, and art bureaucracy has caused art's loss of its negative impulse. Art no longer attempts to invent a counter-image to bourgeois social and moral values. What used to be viewed a deficiency in modernity has been in postmodernity elevated to the level of virtue: a submission to the established order seems to be the rallying cry of postmodern artists. The social

<sup>3</sup> Dealers focus more on the commerce of art dealing as business and media promotion or image building, than on the appreciation of symbolic values of art. These activities became their primary and most important occupation. Witness the following testimony of a successful art dealer from New York: "Replying to the accusation that she orchestrates her artists' careers, Mary Boone commented: 'If an artist is introduced and doesn't make the right splash, he may never recover... not enough can be said of the importance of developing an entire image for the artists I represent: placing the painter in certain shows, getting the right attention from the right art magazines, throwing the right parties at the right clubs. It's all very important.'" (Gablík 1984: 64).

roles of the artist and the businessman which were in modernity by definition at odds with one another, have now merged.<sup>4</sup>

Pop art as the major art movement to emerge in the 1960s in America and then in other developed countries, corresponds very well with the business procedures of contemporary art gatekeepers, described above. Pop art may be actually taken as the exemplary paradigm that best reveals the transformation of the social role of artist in postmodernity. While Pop artists wanted to connect their work with the tradition of the historical avant-garde at least on the level of techniques (collage, montage), stronger appeal was presented by the visual imagery of popular culture of everyday life in a consumer society. When they did address their connection with the avant-garde, it was for the most part in parodical or satirical terms, indicating that its historical legacy should not be taken seriously.

Therefore it comes as no surprise that in contrast to historical avant-garde, Pop art has no intention of aesthetically shocking, provoking, and challenging the existing social order. Moreover, *it simply reproduces contemporary power relations by reproducing what is itself a mass reproduced reality*. Everyday reality is used as a source of images and themes that are not subjected to reflection and exploration, but merely juxtaposed incongruously or, more often, simply reproduced features of daily life as, for example, Warhol's silk-screened Coca-Cola bottles, Brillo boxes, Campbell soup cans, two dollar bills, etc.

The failure of the historical avant-garde to make art part of the life praxis again devalues and makes historically obsolete the artistic means by which the avant-garde attempted to achieve its goal<sup>5</sup>. Thus Warhol, Rauschenberg, Lichtenstein, and other Pop artists working with shock-effects, happenings, and ready-mades only helped to integrate these strategies of historical avant-garde into an established art circulation.

The following critical comment excellently captures the essence of Pop art's explicit acceptance of the existing social order, unmasking all the erroneous theoretical efforts to interpret Pop art as critical because of its supposedly satirical or ironical appropriation of the elements of everyday life. Irony exists when there is a meaningful distance between the original and the reproduction, a norm in contrast to which irony can be understood as deviation, a mocking style. Pop art has collapsed the two since it does not have the programmatic ambitions

"... to interpret or represent, but only to present... To the extent that it shuns metaphor, or any deep analysis of complex relations Pop art is an impoverished genre and an imperfect instrument of art. Far from being an art of social protest, it is an art of capitulation." (Dore Ashton quoted in Crane 1987: 77).

<sup>4</sup> Andy Warhol, the leading Pop artist and perhaps the quintessential postmodernist, expresses this juncture quite openly: "Being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art. Making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art." (quoted in Gablik 1984: 56)

<sup>5</sup> Zygmunt Bauman made this historical parallel clear when, explaining Duchamp's gesture, he in fact implicitly defined postmodern art through what it lacks: "Marcel Duchamp's act of entering a urinal for an art salon was seen at the time as the genuine beginning of a radically new era in art: ... Duchamp did supply his urinal with a shocking, yet congruent function of art (something chosen by the artist), theory of art work (an object from its mundane context), method of artistic creation (infusing the object with a new meaning). Most present-day artists bother with none of these. In hindsight we can see that Duchamp's defiant gesture was aimed at art critics and academic theorists. It was an attempt to wrestle the power of definition, distinction and evaluation from the hands of those who drew their autonomy from the experts in discourse rather than the artistic practice. For present-day artists, such people constitute only a minor threat. Forces and factors which discriminate between art (i.e. something fit for display and selling it in art galleries) and non-art, between good (i.e. successful in the above terms) and bad art, are only in a small part affected by their activities. This is why contemporary art displays its striking immunity to theorizing, programming, argument, principle validation." (Bauman 1992: 27-28)

Not unlike Dadaism and Surrealism, Pop art claims to be calling into question the standardized and routinized nature of the bourgeois social order by reproducing and thus ironically mimicking its mode of operation. However, there is a major difference that radically separates the assumptions of Pop art from those of historical avant-garde and points to the failure of the former to be a rebellious heir to the latter. This mimetic reproduction of everyday life is done

"...without letting the political point of the movement come to the forefront and, falling into a total nihilism in the face of the products of the system, excites suspicion. It accepts its forms as the elements of a milieu in which we do not necessarily take delight, but which must be accepted because there is no alternative." (Hauser 1982: 653)

In the bitter polemic against the distinction between the meaning of art and non-art, the historical avant-garde nevertheless sided with artistic and aesthetic values, albeit *per negationem*. Contrary to this ethical commitment, Pop art is no longer interested in polemic at all. It is no accident that several Pop artists, unlike bohemian artists of modernism and the historical avant-garde, used to hold salaried positions in advertising and graphic design before coming to the art world<sup>6</sup>. They turned from commercial advertising to art with intention not to advertise commodities, but to proclaim those same commodities and their graphic reproductions as worthy of the status of art. This social fact helps explain the reasons for the overwhelmingly frequent use of advertising strategies in Pop art production. Such usage renders the difference between art and advertising virtually nonexistent. However, the obliteration of this difference must be by no means mistaken for the elimination of the dichotomy between art and life, the perennial target of the historical avant-garde.

Instead of displaying shocking ready-mades as Dadaists have done, Pop art is characterized by the production of endlessly reproducible cultural goods to which meaning can only be attached in a tentative, provisional, and open-ended manner. This has an affect on the reception of art in that no particular conceptual demands are placed on the postmodern audience. Such an audience radically differs from the audience in previous periods in that its demand has become increasingly focused on the detached, shallow, and meaningless signs of everyday life and not on artistic enigmas as the markers of alternative reality or "the totally other". From this viewpoint it is plausible to argue that Pop art communicated with its audience only through

"...unadulterated immediacy; they possess the immediacy of dadaist aesthetic experience, minus the shock, which has become institutionalized and domesticated. The avant-garde program of the reintegration of art and life praxis is stood on its head... The radical oppositional stance adopted by the historical avant-garde *vis-a-vis* the aura of reconciliation projected by traditional bourgeois aestheticism is wholly relinquished in favor of a new semblance of harmony and affirmation." (Wollin 1985: 18).

Warhol's silk-screens of soup cans, Lichtenstein's comics, Wesselmann's bathroom arrangements with a dehumanized nude, and other Pop art works reveal that the banal imagery of everyday life is taken at face value. The postmodern subjugation

<sup>6</sup> The artists themselves did not see this connection as negative. Witness pop artist James Rosenquist who also used to work in advertising prior to his art career: "I think we have a free society, and the action that goes on in this free society allows encroachments, as a commercial society. So I geared myself, like an advertiser of a large company, to this visual inflation in commercial advertising which is one of the foundations of our society." (quoted in Huyssen 1986: 149)



tion of art by the mechanisms of commodity circulation is thus rendered complete. Far from being a heir to a legacy of the historical avant-garde<sup>7</sup>, Pop art consciously surrendered to the capitalist mode of commodity production in two ways: (1) by its choice of techniques of reproduction and (2) by its choice of subject-matter.

Contemporary Pop art has maintained only external similarities with the historical avant-garde by viewing the artist as producer and operating with the new reproduction techniques. Structurally speaking, however, the role that reproduction techniques play in postmodern art is entirely different from that it exercised after World War I. At that time, reproduction techniques (photography, film) radically challenged the bourgeois cultural tradition: today they simply confirm the bourgeois claim to the necessity of technological progress in a complicitous manner. Small wonder, then, that when Pop art works are coopted by the art bureaucracy as the newest form of high art and displayed in the major museums, the reception remains contemplative. The aura that disappeared from historical avant-garde art works because of the new reproduction techniques and because of innovation and shock, has reemerged in a media-promoted star cult of the artist himself as the mass icon. The aura of the work of art is thus replaced by the "auratization" of the artist, Andy Warhol being a paradigmatic case.

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<sup>7</sup> The same process was detected in other art disciplines, for example, in literature. Well-known literary critic Irwing Howe penned the following critical remarks: "The new sensibility is... impatient with literary structure of complexity and coherence... It has no taste for the ethical nail-biting of those writers of the left who suffered defeat and would never accept the narcotic of certainty. It is sick of those magnifications of irony that Mann gave us, sick of those visions of entrapment to which Kafka led us, sick of those shufflings of daily horror and grace that Joyce left us. It breathes contempt for rationality, impatience with mind... It is bored with the past" (Irwing Howe, quoted in Callinescu 1977: 137-138).