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Learning from computers is not the next but actually the now big thing of "post-modern", "post-human" art.

I took the expression Not-Art from a Terry Atkinson essay on the possibility of a post-pictorialist, informational art practice that would have to be carried on by a new artist specimen, other than the one modeled upon the bleeding ear of Van Gogh. Significant parts of Terry's essay were transcripted into this brief memo on the future of art in a world submitted to an expanding and pervasive cybernetic paradigm. Carrying different views to this very same discussion I have also picked up three other extensive quotes: one from Rainer Usselmann, on the strategic limitations of the crucial show organized by the ICA in 1968, Cybernetic Serendipity; and two others from Blackhawk, on the art conditions under media dominated societies. The following lines should actually be read as an introduction to such transcriptions in the first place.

Two major cultural confrontations seem to dominate any critical discussion about the nature, need and evolution of art entities under hyper-mediated, hi-tech, monitored, global societies. The first one, is the old Greek-Roman-Catholic iconophile vision of reality vs. the old Jewish-Protestant-Calvinist iconoclast vision of that same (or is it another?) reality. The second one opposes the "contemporary art" establishment and its exhausted (and sometimes heavily corrupted) avangarde to newborn tech and generative artists, as well as to the ideologists of dynamic-art. By dynamic-art, or live-art, I mean not art performed by some live artists, but art that has a life form of its own, generative in its origin, organically alive in its endurance.

The Homo sapiens erectus exposes to everyone his sexual apparatus. He does so by the very gesture of rising his head. He does so by putting himself in a vertical axis towards the center of Mother Earth. Like monkeys and birds, for survival strategic motives, the human eyes became much more important sensors than ears, or the nose, in that very particular field

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of keeping up with the species by the way of recollecting all signs co-related to feeding and mating activities. As André Leroi-Gouhran has abundantly explained, this topological move allowed the humans to specialize their brains, modifying the functional design of the head, and most significantly the mechanics of their mouth/oral apparatus, during a large period of time. Following this anthropological evolution one could actually stress the idea that the bio-logical conclusion of this long-term process will take us to a state of necessity not at all dependent on the same bodily needs that drove the hope and greed of humankind in the last couple hundred thousand years. Catholics think the cup is still half full, the Calvinists, on the contrary, are certain that it is half-empty. I think Calvinists may be closer to the point. In fact, if one take into consideration the most advanced tribes of humankind, those closely wired to a progressive but unstoppable techno-morfosis, it is more than accurate to expect from them that they will evolve to some kind of a post-human condition, and that their bodies and minds will migrate to a radically new, much wider, inclusive reality. The Skepticals — helped by recent historical events like September 11th, the new Christian/Muslim tectonic crisis and the huge as well as unprecedented external debt of USA economy (5) — will tell us that fastening social divisions in the all world will enact all sorts of very dangerous virus, and that in the end this implosive drive will blow-up with the Digitals. Those even more skeptical, actually horrified with the inflexible computational scenarios presented by Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows and Jørgen Randers in "Beyond the Limits" (1992), think that, no matter what we do or think, the near future (say it between 2020 and 2100) will bring such unimaginable catastrophes to humans that all our would-be cultural engineering will simply vanish into the air. Since future is by definition unpredictable, and until I'm convinced that some Apocalypse angel will finally tell me the truth, I

confess myself to be more inclined to believe that the Analogons will prefer to catch up with the new "artificial" world in preparation, than to jeopardize this godless paradise for ever. Like any metamorphosis this one will also be a painful one. New social struggle patterns will certainly emerge from it. But a new mental framework will most probably evolve from this shifting paradigm. The esthetical re-evaluation of flesh and mind, as the re-consideration of the inherent existential rights of photogenic and propositional images, is already part of this thrilling alteration.

Let us then suppose that debating dynamic art is worthwhile.

Photons, like words, can start an image process inside one's brain by exciting that marvelous 1300 cc of whitish cream pudding. The result of such an interaction will be some kind of an external or internal perception, substantiated with content, actually seen as the visual properties of that given object of perception. This given object is by the way neither given nor object in a materialistic sense of the expression given object, but a mere moving shadow, to use a platonic analogy. What we see is nothing but a fragment of the all-photogenic hologram generated by the collision between light and that thing we then call the perceived object. The vision of such and such a thing, that by some occasional event or someone's intention appears to us as seeing is nothing but the beginning of an epistemological process, that will or will not evolve as an historical accumulation of knowledge, esthetical sublimation and moral convictions. From the day we start building an internal library of visual entities, to that anxious night that will shut our eyes forever, every image evolves inside of us like a philosophical category, oscillating between the theatrical surprise of its scandalous appearance and the metaphysical contempletion of its possible truth. If something digital images have cleared up, that is

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certainly the obsolete discussion about the original description of an image. Is this description a sensational event or, on the contrary, a purely mental performance? Well, it seems to be something in-between... We build images the same way as we build concepts: trying very hard all the time! Most important, and very Marxist, any picture has been until now a bloody frozen moment of the historical class struggle upon which rest all human identities and narratives.

Any digital image is only a potential image, preserved as code from being an actual image until the day some genetic order arrives: "Be that image!". Any computer geek can shoot this order knowing absolutely nothing about the process he had just triggered. So when one says that the computer can play the role of a new and more productive model for understanding visual arts and its perplexities (aporia), this means that one have to take into consideration both its common use and its nature. As soon as computational arts become common sense, leaving behind its back all the cheap metaphysics of progress that made the commercial and civic aura of Information Technology, we will have the time and opportunity to concentrate on its inner novelty, as something much bigger than just a sophisticated and very productive tool. To work properly with computers, artists will have to co-evolve with them in a kind of a symbiotic process. Learning from computers is not the next but actually the now big thing of "post-modern", "post-human" art. Of course such a move would be unimaginable from any romanticist (modern or avangarde) standard, be it a financial, bureaucratic or professional one. Ivory towers like Tate Modern and Mac Guggenheim's, whose only mission is to keep up with art speculation on behalf of old capital investments, are still enacting very heavy artillery against the emergence of dynamic art. One of the reasons why this is happening lays in the economic implications

of the new art regime, supposedly based in open-source and free networking social strategies.

I usually think about Every Icon (1997) by John F. Simon Jr. as the genetic model of dynamic art. That perpetual digital machine has a life of its own, being at the same time as enigmatic as Leonardo's Mona Lisa and Duchamp's Fountain. Contemplating that marvelous art piece one can actually see it as a prototype of the coming dynamic art: a creative symbiosis between computational machines and artists. I insist that I am not thinking in any new opportunistic way of abusing technology. What really matters now is the possibility of a co-evolution towards a completely new art paradigm, based on a post-human expanded life. Systems theory, artificial life, artificial intelligence, ADN based genetics, electronic life, old but enhanced flesh bodies and radical networking are some of the indispensable ingredients of the coming age. Some comet, and most probably our stupidity, can always interrupt any dream. But this is not a good reason to give up.

Post Script: I hope to improve the content and language of this draft as a result of your critical commentaries and corrections.

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