

PETER WEIBEL

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OUTLINE FOR A WORKSHOP

Media Art and the Changing Conception of "(Art)Work"

On the common fear of media art in a media-inundated environment

The analysis of the role of technical media in art usually proceeds from the mere existence of media. This is done as if the media suddenly existed in some quasi-ahistorical fashion, and there were some artists who used it for their questionable purposes. In other words: a good video-artist is generally worth less than an equally good painter. Now, where does this indefensible prejudice come from?

One of the sources (which is suppressed) is certainly the extent to which the new media arise from a broad trend of art-historical changes; in other words, how much the germ of media art is itself contained in art history. For example, can a trail be drawn from Durer's mechanical drawing tools to today's plotter (computer-graphic methods)? I would go so far as to maintain that the invention of the media themselves, for example photography, was inspired in part by purely artistic goals. The use of the media is, to an even greater extent, determined by the parameters of art. It is, therefore, our aim to interpret the emergence (and the concept) of media from the womb of art history. Accordingly, the media appear to us as an expansion of the conception of "material," and, along with this, of the conception of "art." This expansion has radically changed the traditional character and conception of (art)works. New types of art, new ideas about art have come into being. The media are a new branch on the tree of art. Now the tree even looks different!

Elements of a general media-theory:

Represented through a method which allows us to answer the problem of content and form in the following way: When two people go to the doctor and "A" says "My disease is the compulsion to

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Lucien Crane
Impressionism
Expressionism

rhyme," and "B" says, "My sick urge is the compulsion to rhyme," (Note: In German, "B" is speaking in rhyme.) only one of them is telling the truth.

I. The legitimacy-problems of art:

What about something, or some activity is "art"? "Is that still/already art?" What is beauty? Hegel, Kant, Nietzsche. On the conceptual history of the word "art." How are the types of art distinguished from one another? The identity-crisis of art since the revolt of the abstract. Is there a bridge between classical and contemporary art, or is the seed of modern art already contained in the traditional? The defamation of particular art forms: comedy, humor, kitsch. On the epistemology of art, T.S. Kuhn, J. Agassi. Why does society today more sharply demand that art as such can reveal itself and justify itself? Art and the public.

II. The convergence of the arts/going-beyond the boundaries of the arts. Classicism and early Romanticism. The synthesis of the arts, 1) Transcending the boundaries inside one type of art. Cases in point: Friedrich, and the landscape as a private medium of expression/Impressionism/Symbolism/the liberation of color from the object/the development, according to its own laws, of painting, which is brought about by the "liberation" of color. E. Varese, and music as the organization of sound.

2) Transcending the boundaries of types of art.

- a) Analogies (for example, between sound and color)
- b) Reference, and the displacement of reference (the reference of artistic materials to the external world; in this connection to the inner world)
- c) Identity, and the alteration of identity (Malevitch: "Red is red"; Stein: "a rose is a rose")
- d) Fusion (for example, combination: multi-media works; structures: inter-media works)

3) Transcending the social boundaries of art, that means, of a handed-down conception of "art." Art in the street. The "animal": the body in the system of art: science and art: demonstration-art.

transcending boundaries
transcending
transcending

That which distances itself from the handed-down realm of art, that is, "art" through activities and objects other than those included up to the present, will be kept separate. Does it make sense to make everything capable of being art? Art as a social process. Is art identical with continual (going-beyond/transcendence)? In transcendence an immanent, creative principle of art? Is there also a law-of-necessity of transcending boundaries of art?

transcending

III. The expansion of the arts/An expanded conception of art/Some generative schemes/generative principles" from every-day activities to anthropology, from "Everything is music" (Russclo) to "Everything is sculpture" (Beuys).

see notes

IV. Towards an expanded conception of "material," with regard to the media

1) Material-collages (paper, cloth, wood, towel, radio), Schwitters, ~~from Dada~~ to Pop, assemblies, combine-paintings (Rauschenberg).

2) Technological materials (glass. . .PVC) and media (telephone. . .)

3) Technical reproduction- and communication-media: photography, film, radio, television, video, print media . . . From mechanical drawing tools, via technical reproduction (from lithography to xerox), to picture (in this connection, text) processing and producing machines.

4) The radical transformation of the CONCEPTION OF (ART)WORK through the media.

5) On the nature of technology/On the technology of nature. The formal boundaries of mechanization. Problems of undecidedness. Kurt Godel, some meta-mathematical results, the theory of return. On the epistemology of our epoch. Some cybernetic models. The concept of the "medium" arises, inside art history, from the expanded artistic conception of "material," through which this concept is reduced to reproduction- and communication-media. For decades, art history has encouraged opposition to the changing conception of "(art)work" which has been induced by the media;

see notes

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The art of the mechanisms of perception. Is there a parallelness between the history of art and the history of the theory of visual perception? The "wisdom" of art: "esse est percipi."

4) The retrospection of the artistic conception of "media" on the handed-down types of art

- a) Sculpture as a medium of perception: photography, video
- b) The body as a medium of expression: body art
- c) Dropping out
- d) Open question

We are not only concerned with the adaptation of technological media (as the neo-symbolists, the nostalgic "grey eminences," and those who've "retired" from art think of it), rather our heart tells us that the germ for the development lies at the core of art itself. We hope that we've also found arguments for this view. Artistic meditations have contributed to the creation of media, and further extend the media. Media art is a new branch on the tree of art. Naturally, the new branch changes the appearance of the tree. I ask for your attention.

(from "Zur Definition eines neuen Kunstbegriffes" 11 June-11 Juli, 1979--Galerie Krinzinger, Innsbruck, Austria)