

Although speaking as a visual artist and within the field of fine arts, I would like to talk about an immateriality, that appears to me to be the most astonishing matter in the conception of so-called art.

I consider art, in its entitative qualities to be transcendent and as such, not bonded to a transmission of an idea into an artifact any other implementation.

This translation of the 'Idea' into material - thereby becoming the 'artwork' - is based on an intellectual construction, which cannot rely on any fact apart from the human mind.

Therefore as with other commonly understood social 'truths' or practices, art has to be assumed as a matter of faith, despite the degree to which it has now achieved secularness.

Because the notion of art initially is not an evident matter of fact and emerges through a spiritual birth provided by the artist, art has to be considered first of all as a metaphysical anthropogenic construction. Due to the lack of immanence* art is granted an almost sacred aura, since it presumes an irrationally based faith in a transcended entity, which proceeds from a mental idea, to be materialized in the form of objects.

The translation of the 'notion' of art into artifacts achieves the transition of a spiritual construction into a social reality, which then is to be understood as a self-evident integrant of cultural practice and tradition. In-between the actual lack of immanence and the evidence of art anchored in our cultural self-conception is an aporia that strongly represents the paradox of human thinking. While surrounded by plain items in an immanent and confusing universe, men construct reality-systems in order to fill matter with an assumed order and sense.

An allegory approaching the human paradox can be found in Paul Watzlawick's writings on 'How real is real':

A man claps his hands every ten seconds. Asked about the reason for his strange behavior, he explains: „in order to scare away the elephants.“ When told there are no elephants present, the man responds: „well, there you go. See?“

The transition from the idea to the artifact implies a loss of precision in respect to an entitative understanding of the intellectual origin of the art. It transfers from an understanding of art as a practice; towards an approach of art as a physical phenomenon, which can be perceived by a broad audience and can be handled as a precious commodity.

Simultaneously the artifact as a terminated shape of whatever kind distracts from the incompleteness of rational thinking, which applies also to the artistic process.

Thus appears another paradox situated in the divergence of the ongoing intellectual artistic process and its rudimentary visualization into a defined form.

*The terminus of immanence is used as a description of the total autonomy of existence:

„It is true, that the animal, like the plant, has no autonomy in relation to the rest of the world. An atom of nitrogen, of gold, or a molecule of water exists without needing anything from what surrounds them; they remain in a state of perfect immanence: there is never a necessity, and more generally nothing ever matters in the immanent relation of one atom to another or to others.“ (George Bataille in: The theory of religion)

This implies the absence of immanence in art, since its existence depends on an intellectual birth and simultaneously on a transcription into a perceptible reference.

The artifact generates a socio-cultural codex, which allows the notion of art to infiltrate the consciousness of society, without being generally questioned in terms of the relative character that inhabits its existence.

Respecting the implicitness of this transcendently based construction in our cultural self-conception, a comparison of the arts with religious contents or philosophy is tempting: the unquestioned acceptance of Art as a fact appears as a peculiar sort of mass-phenomena. As religion exists as a social phenomenon in the world so does art, as an indisputable constituent of society. But while God is questioned by many of us, Art as a fact is not: discrediting can be found only in a judgement of good or bad art.

Faithfully allowing an imaginary construction to have such an impact and an unquestioned existence in our so-called reality, is what Camus in the Myth of Sisyphus claims a mental suicide. By inventing any meaning into the world, propping up the human necessity for causality and rational embedment, the absurdity of existence gets denied. In a universe of plain items, the absurdity is based on the indifference in between the purposeless immanence of all existence and the mans attribution of meaning to all things.

In accordance to Sisyphus, Art is an absurdity per se: an invention of an imaginary perception-system that apparently sustains culture and tradition, manifested into objects, that are

loaded with a transcendent, but human-scaled significance.

Similar to a ritual Art thus performs a role in the maintenance of social self-identification, fortifying a sensation of stability and a well-structured meaning of existence.

Here the artist comes into play as a mediator, in-between the invisible preparation of sense and its completion into the word of items. With one foot in the world of fantastic transcendence and the other one firmly anchored in the world of items, the artist guarantees a meaningful identity of material.

Thereby the primary importance in respect to society is rather based on a joint naming of items and actions, which supports the creation of identity and embedment.

Secondary is the question of good or bad art, which can never be decided objectively and partly depends on an aesthetic cultural codex. Questioning an artifact as „is that really art?“ implicitly indicates to the relative character of the arts existence. To avoid this uncertainty, which awakens the absurd and juggles mans construction, the creation of a determining context appears of great importance.

As a church provides us a divine presence to worship, the art-institution frames a reliable predetermination of objects and actions. The contextualization of objects or actions therefore regulates perception and that implies that art alongside faith is constituted by context. Being here within the context of this exhibition for instance provides this video with a presupposed credibility of being an artwork, so that means that the material I, as the artist produce, represents the notion of art. If you imagine me speaking these selfsame words without any specific setting around the corner in the street, you would probably consider my behavior and message as fairly strange.

A less surreal example is Duchamp's Fountain, which as a perceived art-piece strongly relies on the context of an exhibition.

Thinking of the initial controversy caused by the fountain, which in the meantime has transformed into an important reference in the history of art, the notion of art as Art is also determined by a certain consensus. Thus faith - context - consensus are related in a mutual dependence, that eventually declares art as a social reality.

The three pillars cannot individually provide the perception of art as art, but only in a joint interaction, fortifying each other. Context creates consensus, consensus strengthens faith and faith is transcribed into context, etc.

With these thoughts, which are neither new nor surprising, art as a complex social practice - rather than a physical artwork - becomes self-evident.

Generated in a meaningful and necessary process of construction, Art can be considered as a messenger of human nature.

Liberated from a depictive purpose of reflecting historical, social or religious contents, Art has arrived to another level of transcendent impact. This autonomy allows art to function exclusively as art, which implies a stronger belief in its transcendent authority. Art has so become a powerful entity, constructed but immortal through the self-fulfilling dynamic of its makers.