

The Art of Hybridization

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Technological, electronic : two adjectives associated with the word art which it can be of interest to examine more closely :

- technological : more than to the tool or the technology being used, the word refers to an environment which is no longer "natural", but "artificial", shaped by human activities

- electronic : an electron is a particle which is both invisible and rapid. Technological or electronic art thus expresses an "artificial", "invisible" and "rapid" universe. It reveals not only a visibility of the invisible, but also, and to an even greater extent, an invisibility of the visible or its derealization.

As sight loses its role as principal source of knowledge concerning the world, a greater awareness and receptiveness of the other senses -giving rise to complementarity, not to rivalry- is becoming possible. We are rediscovering that our body is an "object" endowed with various "sensors". Contemporary technology is not an extension of any particular sense, but a new skin through which we feel, breathe, touch and live. This new body covers the old like a layer of sediment. At the same moment as this growing abstractedness and immaterialization, there is a renewed involvement of our body in our experience of "reality".

A striking aspect in many electronic works of art is that they have to be experienced and experimented with. In order to "see" the work, the whole body must be involved in the process defined by the artist. It is an art of Erlebnis, of experience, or "real time".

The different technologies tend increasingly to be combined. Each one constitutes a basic material, an alphabet of creation, playing a part in the emergence of a meta-language mingling the human being and his or her various senses with machines and their different "senses". Our "biosphere" is becoming artificial and the "human animal" is dependent upon a technological planetary network which it has built and which no longer has anything to do with a pre-existing Nature.

This hybridization appears in the nature of the work of art and in our relation to it. The artwork becomes a kind of medium for communication between human beings more than an object in itself. The materialization of the imaginary of an artist in rules to be explored - in some cases through an

object- enables a "voyage" through another person's mental structures which are thereby confronted with our own, in an intersubjective dialogue which does not need to be mediated through the objectivation of words and language.

From these "tele-computational" technologies a "collective individual" is born who signifies neither a loss of individualization nor a return to an undifferentiated collectivity. On the plane of the sensible, technological art enables us to learn this meta-language by including us -beyond the social roles that we are called upon to play- in a "communitary individuality".

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