

## The Status of the Artist and its Relationship with the Exhibitions - From the End of the 18th to the 20th Century -

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### Abstract:

*Until the 18th century the artist was dependent on the royal family or on the institution of the Academy, that prescribed the norms and regulations for his practice. From now on, it is the public that solely has the power to confer legitimacy both to the artist and to the works of art. Even if, from now on, the artist enjoys the freedom of creation, he will be eternal dependent of the social recognition, which includes: public appreciation of his artworks and the establishment of a posthumous museum (a kind of mausoleum erected as symbol of the supreme recognition of his value, an institutional guardian of the artist's immortality). Simultaneously with the freedom of creation, during the middle of the 19th century, two important problems are identified:*

*a) the demystification of the artist's personal studio by the public disturbs the artist, sometimes pushing him to extreme acts, like killing himself or destroying his works.*

*b) the necessity of educating the masses, of elevating them to the level of aesthetic sensibility required for apprehending true art.*

*If during the 19th century, the public display of art was only the place where the artist exposed to public criticism his works, in the 20th century the art exhibition becomes a work of art, a system of installations, an event addressed to the public. To be socially relevant, art requires the engagement of the public as an active participant that has to leave its mark upon it.*

**Key words:** the absolute freedom of art creation, the legitimization of modern artist, aesthetic education of the individuals, new art as a system.

## **Introduction**

Until the 18th century, art was produced at the bequest of the royal family, with the purpose of being included in royal collections usually consisting in portraits of the same royalty, the court artist thereby lacking the possibility to paint freely the themes that really moved him with passion. Beginning with the middle of the 18th and the onset of the 19th century, a change developed that rendered the artist free of any political and religious constraints, enabling him to exercise his artistic activity the way he sees proper, autonomously, following only self-imposed rules. Enabling this autonomy of artistic practice is the emergence of the public as receptor of art, a novel phenomenon unknown before, that became an important power in the art world. The public space of the exhibition becomes the *de facto* instance where an artist may receive his consecration. But, the public exhibition of the works of art, accessible to all people regardless of their social class, simultaneously implies exposing the artist to the harsh criticism of the public.<sup>1</sup> Such critique may become a threat to the artistic values being produced insofar as, due to the lack of an aesthetic education, most individuals are not able to appreciate art properly nor to adopt a proper attitude when encountering artworks, preferring to amuse themselves, to criticize without discernment the artist's work, or – in extreme cases – to vandalize it.

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<sup>1</sup> "The artists were forced to engage in aggressive competition on all sides and were exposed to the daily struggle for the favour of the mass and for market shares." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 137.

## **From the constraints imposed by the Academy to the absolute liberty of creation, claimed by the modern artist**

This newly-gained modern freedom of art was synthesized in the decree of Adolphe Thiers, in 1824, as an absolute necessity: "art must be free, and free in the most limitless manner".<sup>2</sup> But herein, in this demand of the artist for absolute freedom of artistic expression (a freedom considered by the modern artists as a defining value for their status as creators of art), lies a paradox: if the artist's duty is to be free, than his duty is to have no duty – unbound by external constraints, he has to create original artworks, governed only by the passion that inspires his art themes. In reality, instead, the artist cannot enjoy such absolute freedom of creation as he claims he should, exchanging merely one form of dependency for another: if before, the artist was dependent on the royal family or on the institution of the Academy, that prescribed the norms and regulations for his practice, from now on it is the public that solely has the power to consecrate, to confer legitimacy both to the artist and to the artwork. At this point arises the question of the criterion for such a process of legitimation that may elevate the artist to the pinnacle of genius: how does the public choose between what has artistic value and what does not, between true art and non-art?

To offer an adequate answer to this we should return to the demand for absolute freedom invoked by the modern artist, to the reasons for demanding this freedom and to the link between freedom of creation and the realization of valuable art. In the 18th century, French artists petitioned the French National Assembly in order to uphold the necessity of the legitimation of an absolute freedom of creation for the artist,<sup>3</sup> -

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<sup>2</sup> Rațiu, Mihali, *Artă, comunitate, spațiu public. Strategii politice și estetice ale modernității*, 16.

<sup>3</sup> Art transcends social constraints and limitations: "This is why I love Art. For there, at least, everything is freedom, in that world of fictions. Everything is satisfied, everything is done, one is at the same time both king and people,

a freedom without any external constraints imposed by the political or religious sphere, by the royal family or by the Academy that had a monopolistic control over everything that was to be exposed. The artists considered that:

- The constraints imposed by the Academy are incompatible with the freedom of creation necessary for producing genuine art, born out of the artist's passion. For this reason they've accused the Academy of producing artisans and not true artists, who have to be dedicated, body and soul, to their art.
- Art has to be practiced out of passion and not for the laurel wreaths bestowed by public applause.
- Recognition of the status of artist and permission to expose his works must not be conditioned by the requirement to paint in certain approved styles, using certain approved themes.

One of the reasons for the artists' demand of unconstrained access to the public may have been the faith in the beneficial influence of art on the public,<sup>4</sup> leading to the desire of some of them, like Van Gogh and Matisse, who want to enact through their art positive changes in the spiritual state of the ones that contemplate their works of art. They desired that their works, made with passion, be also curative works that lessen the daily sufferings of the visitors.<sup>5</sup> In this regard, the role of the artist in society was to become an important one, he no longer being

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active and passive, victim and priest." Bourdieu, *Economia bunurilor simbolice*, 160.

<sup>4</sup> "The artist's duty would be to augment through his productions, as much as he is able, the pleasure of the individuals joined in society or, at least to lessen their sufferings." Rațiu, Mihali, *Artă, comunitate, spațiu public. Strategii politice și estetice ale modernității*, 17. The principle of utility in ethics demands as good to be achieved the highest possible happiness for the largest possible number of people.

<sup>5</sup> "... art of equilibrium, of purity, of clarity, without an unsettling or worrying subject-matter, that has to be an leniency-inducer, a cerebral painkiller, something akin to a cozy armchair, one that relaxes, that eliminates physical weariness." Bourdieu, *Economia bunurilor simbolice*, 17.

simply just an artist, but an artist-physician or even a priest of humankind, one that guards over the well-being of his "patients". But under this vision, and contrary to the demand that was expressed, the artist that creates art with the fuel of passion that governs him cannot be absolutely free, being constrained by his own repressed unconscious content, by his own anguish, that leads him to expression, to give his best through his works of art and to bring joy to the public.

At 21 August 1791, the demand for absolute freedom of creation for the artist was approved by the National Assembly. The artist emerges from under the double tutelage of political and religious power and becomes free to manifest his true talent, his virtues, in front of the judging public, no longer being subjected to the rules for creation and to the rules for the selection of artists and works displayed that were being imposed by the Academy.<sup>6</sup> He no longer creates his works bound by the commands of his noble patrons from the court, having obtained the freedom of being the own master of his art, determining autonomously its limits and having to assume for this the price of facing his own success or failure as dictated by the taste and reaction of the authority embodied in the public.<sup>7</sup> The public takes the function that has previously been fulfilled by the Academy and the role of sole critic and instance of legitimation for what is to be considered as true art. If until the end of the 18th century the artist was subjected to the danger of being banned by the Academy – for if not selected expressly by this authority, the artist was not permitted to display his works

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<sup>6</sup> "The arts have received a great benefit; the realm of freedom has at least been extended to them; it is breaking their chains; genius is no longer condemned to obscurity. To enable the sole and true differences of virtue and talent to be brought to light they need only to be shown to their fellow citizens." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 59.

<sup>7</sup> This new tendency of breaking the boundaries of the rules of accepted art, is considered by Castagnary, as a positive evolution, an emancipation of the artist, a trend that can be synthesized in the formula: be free, enjoy your freedom.

- from this moment on, in order to achieve recognition, he has to subject his works to the judging of the public, having to wait for its reaction, facing the danger of mockery or even vandalism from its part. Such danger may prove to be a threat to the level of quality of the art being produced due to a lack of aesthetic education of the general public. For example, public mockery was the immediate fate of the displayed works of Gustave Courbet or Edouard Manet (instances that will be analyzed on a later point).

### **The legitimation of the modern artist**

The criteria that have guided the Academy in the process of selecting the artworks to be exhibited having been rendered irrelevant. In this context, the problem of the criteria for art arises anew: what constitutes the difference between pure art and artifact and how to legitimate the artist? Art and non-art will be differentiated according to the space where the object is placed on display (museum, gallery, the salon of the rejects) and according to the public that the displayed object is addressed to (which may be formed of critics, collectors, art fans, people that may or may not mock the artist's work). At last, the problem of legitimation will be resolved through the social recognition of the artist as a genius<sup>8</sup> or in the unfulfilled demand from the artist's part for such recognition. The status of genius implies a mutation in the qualitative aspects of the daily life of the artist: his work being now subject to the evaluative authority embodied in a public that often may lack criteria for recognizing true art; the genius renounces to the privileges in order to lead a modest life through art and only for art's sake, creating out of passion and not for profit, retreating from the mediocrity of the

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<sup>8</sup> In Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, the genius is considered to be superior to the rules of art, containing them in itself and being capable of imposing his own new rules; the most fundamental trait of genius is his originality, his capacity to create entirely new things that are no mere imitations of nature.

world in his own ivory tower that is his personal studio.<sup>9</sup> The first example of such an artist was Asmus Jakob Carstens, who renounced to the privileges provided him by the Ministry of Culture in Berlin, establishing himself permanently in Rome and leading a life in scarcity, a life dedicated in its entirety to art, as a form of obeisance to the public and to God.

The legitimation of the artist can be achieved also through public recognition of his value after his death, for example through the establishment of a posthumous museum in the artist's home town. Such a museum is designed as a veritable sanctuary dedicated to the cult of the respective artist, a kind of mausoleum erected as symbol of the recognition of his value, an institutional guardian of the artist's immortality.<sup>10</sup> Two such renowned posthumous museums are those of Antonio Canova and Bertel Thorvaldsen. Canova's posthumous museum, The Tempio<sup>11</sup> in Possagno, erected in 1836, was built after the model of the Pio-Clementino Museum in Vatican and it houses all the artworks of Canova, being a combination of architecture-painting-sculpture. The project for constructing the museum has already begun during the artist's life time, but achieved reality only after his death, when he started being publicly recognized as genius. The Thorvaldsen Museum (1838) in Copenhagen was planned by the artist himself as a form of social recognition after his death. His townsmen were to build the museum, the artist contributing by donating his works to be

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<sup>9</sup> "The artist could suffer lack of recognition or even humiliation by his contemporaries and institutions, driven by inner compulsion and the need for unlimited freedom he would be a martyr to true art. His vocation was of religious intensity and he would, if necessary resist the authorities regardless of his own comfort or financial security." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 67.

<sup>10</sup> "He will dwell there as an immortal master among artists and for art, melting the northern ice with southern warmth." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 91.

<sup>11</sup> "the opus magnus of a single artist." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 83.

displayed within.<sup>12</sup> Thorvaldsen was one of the few artists that achieved national and international recognition, being the most famous Northern European artist. He was acclaimed by his townsmen as a complete artist, one especially favored by God, by Nature and by men.<sup>13</sup>

### **The drama of the modern artist. The self-portrait as the optimal solution against exaggerated curiosity of the individuals**

Simultaneously with the new-found freedom of creation, during the middle of the 19th century a new problem is identified: as the artist retreats from the world in his own studio, where he can find the inspiration and peace necessary to conceive original art,<sup>14</sup> so the public curiosity gets aroused to invade the personal universe of the artist in order to demystify the magic of creation that takes place in the hidden recesses of the studio.<sup>15</sup> Such breach of the private place<sup>16</sup> is perceived by the artists themselves as an affront - sometimes driving them to extreme acts: the destruction of their work or even suicide – because the invasion by the mundane mediocrity profanes all

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<sup>12</sup> "The Thorvaldsen Museum would be a sacred place for art, for the benefit and honour of his native land." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 89-90.

<sup>13</sup> This assertion is based on the story of the artist's arrival in his native town: before his arrival the weather was extremely bad for days, but as he descended from the boat the sun broke through, illuminating the artist and lending a marked shine to his skin.

<sup>14</sup> "The literature on art suggested that the desire of the public to see and experience the soul of the artist was satisfied by the self-portrait's direct revelation." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 116.

<sup>15</sup> "According as artists became public personalities through exhibitions, reviews and the literature on art, the press assumed the public would want to know more about the secret place of creation to which they had no access." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 93

<sup>16</sup> "The artist's studio in France became a secluded place of lonely creativity to which only the privileged had access." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 94.



that it touches, destroying the conditions for the artist's creativity, trespassing against the boundaries of the intimate space necessary for creating original works.<sup>17</sup> For example, we can mention the case of Benjamin Robert Haydon, who in 1846 designed and implemented every detail of his death in his studio in London, or the case of the painter Frenhofer - remembered in the writings of Balzac and whose story was published in 1831 in "L'artiste" - in which the demystification, the invasion of the private space of the artist, who was in the process of finalizing a masterpiece, leads to his suicide.

To quench this ardent curiosity from the part of the public, during the second half of the 19th century the trend of the self-portrait emerges. The artist may appear alone or together with a contemporary fellow artist, as a symbolic representation of the brotherhood between artists, a community considered as a natural occurrence formed through mutual recognition of artistic worth. The self-portrait was defined as the art of the future, as the most authentic form of expression of the meaning of art,<sup>18</sup> as the key for deciphering the psyche and personality of the artist. As examples of self-portraits, under different hypostases, we can mention: Feuerbach "Self-Portrait with a Feathered Cap" (1847), Arnold Bocklin "Self-Portrait with a Dead Playing the Fiddle" (1873), Edvard Munch "Self Portrait with Cigarette" (1895), "Self-Portrait under the Head of Medusa" (1891/1892). In the case of self-portraits depicting the painter together with a fellow artist it's worth mentioning the exchange of self-portraits that took place during 1888 between van Gogh, Paul Gauguin and Emile Bernard. The

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<sup>17</sup> "When people from outside penetrate this unreal inner world, or the barricaded studio, their critical remarks, their uncomprehending faces as they look at the work, give rise to the catastrophe."

Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 99-100.

<sup>18</sup> "A self-portrait, especially when it contained a hint of the ultimate tragedy, was believed to be the most authentic form of expression an artist could give." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 115.

last two sent to Van Gogh "Self Portrait with a Portrait of Emile Bernard" and "Self Portrait with Paul Gauguin", while Gauguin received from Van Gogh "Self Portrait for Paul Gauguin".

### **The necessity of an aesthetic education of the individuals**

If the matter of the curiosity of the public about the creative personality of the artist found its resolution in the practice of self-portraits, at the end of the 19th century a major problem emerges pertaining to the link between the function of the museum as public space and the function that the art displayed in it should fulfill: the function of educating the masses, of elevating them to the level aesthetic sensibility required for apprehending true art. This need was understood by the critic Julius Meier and by Hugo von Tshudi, the director of the National Gallery in Berlin. They observed that most of the visitors were incapable of understanding true art, often mocking great works<sup>19</sup> and comparing the artist with a buffoon. If such is the case, then the purpose of creating and displaying art (to bring joy to the public) turns against the artist, who will be mocked for his efforts. In order to elaborate on this aspect and to further analyze the stance adopted by the modern artists towards the harsh criticism of the public, we will discuss about two great artists of the 19th century: Gustave Courbet and Edouard Manet. Courbet perceived public criticism as being a form of encouragement for continuing to create in his own

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<sup>19</sup> "The new art has the mass against it, and always will have. It is essentially alien to the people; more than that it is hostile to the people. Any product of the new art you care to mention automatically provokes a remarkable reaction from the mass. It splits them into two parties, a small part of a few, who are inclined to favour it, and a large party of countless enemies." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 180.

style.<sup>20</sup> During his time, one of the subjects most prone to attract public indignation was the female nude, which Courbet painted as a modern version of the theme of the nymph as an ideal of beauty, in paintings as "Les baigneuses" (1853), "Les demoiselles des bords de la Senne" (1857), and "Venus et Psyche" (1864). The case of Manet is different to that of Courbet in the artist's attitude to public criticism and in the non-scandalous purpose envisaged. The attitude of Manet towards the mocking criticism of the public was depicted in a caricature by Honore Damier, showing a bourgeois couple amusing themselves terribly while looking at the works of Manet, a reaction that makes the artist suffer, who is rendered looking pained at them from a distance. His most critiqued works, "Dejeuner sur l'herbe" (1865) and "Olympia", also depict female nudes, which he considered as re-enactments of the theme of the true and pure beauty of the classical goddesses, as that depicted in Titian's "Venus of Urbino" - with the difference being that in the paintings of Manet, the place of Aphrodite is taken by the courtesan Victorine Meurent.

In order to resolve this issue that pertains to the aesthetic education of each citizen, it was decided to reintroduce the criterion of originality in the selection of the art to be displayed.<sup>21</sup> This move aimed at re-establishing the educative function of artworks that are to be considered as valuable, thereby furthering the understanding of art and imparting the necessity of an adequate attitude of contemplation required for the reception of art. As another

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<sup>20</sup> "You see I am the greatest painter working today, for I am subject to the most frequent attack." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 123. "He wanted to turn things upside down, cause scandals and arouse opposition, while taking every opportunity to exploit his customers and buyers, and suit public taste." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 130.

<sup>21</sup> "Exhibitions should be more educational, by being restricted to "true art" and excluding all those works that descended to the level of public taste." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 164.

aspect of the aesthetic education of the society, in 1896 Helen Herbert established the first school of painting and sculpture for women artists, envisaged as a publicly useful society in bringing equilibrium between the status of men and women.<sup>22</sup>

**The art of the 20th century: the art as a system. From a conception of the exhibition as a simple place where works of art were displayed to a new perspective about exhibitions as artwork itself.**

If during the 19th century, as we have shown, the public display of art was only the place where the artist exposed to public scrutiny and criticism the works created through his passion, in the 20th century the art exhibition itself becomes a work of art, presenting itself as such to the public. Major trend-setters of this change were Marcel Duchamp (the curator of the International Exhibition of Suprarealism at the Gallery of Beaux-Arts, in Paris, 1938) and Andy Warhol (representative of the American pop-culture, of art as commercial publicity; his works reproducing life-like representations of objects mass-produced for home use: boxes of Campbell Soup or Coca Cola Bottles). Duchamp is famous for putting on display ready-made objects, taken from the context of their everyday use and rendered dysfunctional by imparting them the status of art objects through their exhibition in the museum (suspending them from the ceiling etc.). The most famous such artwork is "Fountain" (1917). His works aim to impart his "Do it yourself"

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<sup>22</sup> "The objective of the Union is to exhibit the most remarkable works of its members every year, to defend their interests unconditionally, to establish solidarity among women artists and consequently to make a contribution to raising their artistic level. Finally it will always be obliged to support recognized and emerging talents with the best possible means. ... One day men and women may be equal in every section of the Palais de l'Industrie. While we wait for the happy time, we believe that the gentlemen can only profit, from a careful study of the way the ladies behave. It is humbling for the bearded sex, but one has to admit that the ladies are acting in an exemplary fashion compared with the men." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 152-153.

creed on art, that anyone can be an artist, anyone can produce artworks using everyday objects.<sup>23</sup> Andy Warhol, using the technique of serigraphy has created multiple versions of portraits of renowned artists or public figures such as Marilyn Monroe (1964), Beethoven (1987), Lenin (1987) or Giuliana Benetton (1986) – portrait that has appeared also on a shopping bag ("Shopping bag with a portrait of Giuliana Benetton" 1989). Warhol was an eccentric figure<sup>24</sup>, even in the world of art, wearing a pink wig at interviews turning the reporter's questions back at them, or in the famous case from 1985, when he appeared to the public besides an invisible sculpture ("Andy Warhol USA, Invisible Sculpture Mixed Media"), representing the theme of the disappearance of the artist and of his work.

Another novelty brought by the art of the 20th century is the transformation of the exhibiting art into a system of installations, into an event addressed to the public. Artworks no longer require only passive contemplation from the part of the spectators in order to be able to fulfill their function. To be socially relevant, art requires the engagement of the public as an active participant that has to leave its mark upon it. The public is offered an experience inaccessible during daily life, that of completing and defining the meaning of the work of art. The exhibition that aims at such transformations is the suprealist exhibition, which is making use of installations and whose purpose is to expose the power of art as color, as sound, as architecture, as mode of organization of the exhibition

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<sup>23</sup> "Anyone who thinks of his future is one of us! All are welcome! Anyone who wants to be an artist should come forward! We are the theater that needs everyone, each one in his place." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 221-222. "Every human being is an artist, not because every human being creates catalysts, but because every human being can take part in the process and this participation is necessary for art to function." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 216.

<sup>24</sup> "The reason I am painting this way is that I want to be a machine, and I feel that whatever I do and do machine-like is what I want to do." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 211.

itself. In this manner, art has to surprise its public (through baiting tactics, shock-value, suggestions of danger and especially through sensitive perceptions) and determine it to get involved actively in shaping an experience unavailable in the daily life of the consumer in today's society.<sup>25</sup> The accent is no longer placed on merely presenting the work of art to the gaze of the spectator, but on the process of defining and completing it, actively involving the previously passive spectator<sup>26</sup>, the art itself no longer being solely the product of the artist alone. The event of the exhibition is intended to establish communication between art and public, no longer as a one-sided channel leading to a passive receiver that contemplates the realized artwork, but drawing him into the process of art creation. Original artworks types (painting and sculpture) are supplanted by installations as machines for producing art (as enabled by the principle that anything may become art), that even have sometimes the capacity to self-destruct – for example, in 1960, Jean Tinguely created an installation called "Homage to New York" in the garden of the Museum for Modern Art of the city mentioned in the title, meant to destroy itself in front of the public; the installation "Etude pour une fin du monde" (1961), placed in front of the Louisiana Museum in Humlebaek, the self-destruction of which, intended as an artistic action, was decreed as being

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<sup>25</sup> "The visitors are invited by arrangements, objects and installations to take the opportunity and go through an experiential process. In doing so they will develop new activities or, at least cease to be merely viewers (of the works) or spectators (of actions)." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 229. "This was the first exhibition to consist of tangible experiences or adventures of sensation in the history of art." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 189-190.

<sup>26</sup> "The extension of concept appears of secondary importance beside the more radical change, the renewed and persistent attempt to move from an art consisting of the work to an art consisting of the process, to summon up elementary experiences of protection and insulation, cold and warmth, communication and giving, and make people aware of them with felt, honey and chocolate." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 215-216.

dangerous to the public; in 1974/1975 Richard Serra exhibited in front of the public his installation "Delineator"<sup>27</sup>; in 1975, Rebecca Horn created "The Chinese Bridge"<sup>28</sup>; in 1983, Bruce Naumann created the "Dream Passage" installation, that operates by creating the illusion of three-dimensional space.

The critiques directed against these art installations accused the nature of the induced experience as being an aggressive one (fear, shock, helplessness, etc.). Those in favor of these new forms of art consider that the major difference between the original classical forms of art and the new installation form resides in the surpassing of the traditional mode of the reception of art as passive contemplation, a passivity that keeps the spectator at a distance from the work of art itself. Now the accent is placed on the process of creating art and on the active involvement of the public, both as observers and controlled participants in the process, having the option of terminating their involvement in the process at any time.<sup>29</sup> The positive or negative reaction of the participants constitutes a defining factor for the success or failure of the art as installation.

The main changes brought by 20th century art, with its transformation of the exhibition in artwork and of the art into a system of installations, are therefore the following:

- The artwork becomes an artifact being presented to a public. The public is formed of persons that are supposed

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<sup>27</sup> Consisting of two plates, one glued to the ceiling, the other on the floor – the visitor was intended to step on it, leaving his mark of his imprint.

<sup>28</sup> A booth with doors that get closed, then the lights are turned off and a reaction from the participant is being expected. He can stop the process anytime.

<sup>29</sup> "The visitors to an exhibition are now expected to give up the status of viewer for interaction with the installation or objects. If they do so they will find themselves directly involved in situations that can be unpleasant, alienating, dangerous or threatening, or appear to be so, or, if they agree to participate in an activity like stepping upon something or entering something, they can be manipulated." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 236.

to understand why the respective object is being exhibited and what is its essence.

- The art world is considered as being a totality of the system of global art, in which artworks are presented to the public.
- The gallery and the museum are defined as cult places of the art system, places where everyday objects are transformed into artworks, action into artistic activity and protagonists into artists. The artist's studio disappears, the installations being created in the same place where they will be exhibited in front of the public.
- Young artists no longer have to isolate themselves from the world, to live alone in a personal studio, in order to become recognized. They must be talented and ambitious to achieve success in the art world<sup>30</sup> and, more importantly, to get discovered by a big gallery. Farther on, they must remain entrenched in the attention of the gallery in order to maintain their status, by constantly creating valuable artworks, in conformity with the trends of the time. To exist socially means, as Bourdieu states, having a certain position in the social structure, adhering to the ideas being current, belonging to social groups that imply professing their values and following their rules. To refuse integration into this world is to be condemned to the role of passive observer, one that will never be valued and will never know success.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Social obsolescence is defined by Bourdieu as the career, the totality of positions successively occupied in the social structure by an individual, determined by his advancement in pace with his peers as per the specific flow of his age, or by his stagnation, his failure to keep the pace and the lagging behind the others, leading to failure.

<sup>31</sup> "I've watched these other people, leading lives different from my own: some believed, some denied or doubted, others again were not interested at all in all these and saw to their businesses, selling in their stores, writing their books or shouting from the pulpit." Bourdieu, *Economia bunurilor simbolice*, 160-161.



In the strategy of this new artistic practice, the installations are intended to ensnare the participant into the process of the completion of the artwork as form of its valuation.<sup>32</sup> The encounter with the installation may prove beneficial to the participant insofar that it may provide the means through which he may face his phobias, transforming them from being subjects (those elements of our knowledge, of our mode of internal organization, with which we identify and by which we are bound, that imprison and control us from within, denying any possibility of acquiring distance from them) into objects (those elements of our knowledge and our mode of internal organization that we can control, over which we can reflect and act).<sup>33</sup> As such, installations may enrich the psychological life, the self-control of the participants.<sup>34</sup> They do not bring into play only the visual aspect of the contemplated image (as was the case with traditional painting and sculpture), aiming to engage the entirety of the affects of our being.

## **Conclusion**

The demand for absolute freedom of creation, raised by the modern artists and obtained at the end of the 18th century and

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<sup>32</sup> "Many installations activate the public and challenge them to active experiences which can range from sensual perception to reflection." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 240.

<sup>33</sup> Distinction operated by Robert Kegan, professor of theory of development and adult learning in: Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey, (2009), *From Subject to Object: A Constructive-Developmental Approach to Reflective Practice*, Chapter 22.

<sup>34</sup> "They insolate them (the participants), subject them to initiation rites, offer them sense perceptions of the most revolting or delightful kind, which normal life denies them, they give rise to claustrophobic fears and joy at liberation, they confuse the elementary sense of orientation by interchanging top and bottom, expose the visitors to seemingly real danger, offer them salvation through trivial psychology, force them to submerge themselves their own memories and suggest transcendental experiences that can only be achieved outside the context of art at the price of a long rejected irrationality." Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: the conflict between market and self-expression*, 239-240.

beginning of the 19th century, was merely an apparent total freedom, for if the artist has successfully deliver from the constraints imposed upon him by his status of court artist and by the Academy, he was to be subjected to a new form of dependency: the dependence on the taste of a public lacking aesthetic education, that criticized, mocked or even vandalized the artist's work without comprehending its true meaning and value. This lack of aesthetic education of the public (even more so that of the working class, lacking the capacity to contemplate works of art) became apparent when the institution of the museum was transformed from a private sphere of royal collections – accessible only to an elite – into a public sphere, being now accessible to any person, irrespective of their social class. The court artist became the studio artist, breaking his ties to the world, out of desire to create original artworks, intended to educate and bring joy to the public. The invasion of his privacy by the uneducated public with its curiosity disturbs the artist, sometimes pushing him to extreme acts, like killing himself or destroying his works. To satisfy the curiosity of the public and its desire to better know the artist, the form of the self-portrait emerges as a trend. The exchange of self-portraits between artists was considered a sign of the true brotherhood existing between them.

If the 19th century art was intended to educate the spectator through providing for his contemplation original artworks, in the 20th century the exhibition itself becomes an artwork through its mode of spatial organization of the objects being exhibited. Art itself is transformed into a system of installations, marking the passing from expositive art – offered for contemplation to a passive participant – to an art that demands the active involvement of the participant, in order to provide him with an unforgettable experience, one that cannot be realized except through the medium of the exhibition. The visitor's reaction to its encounter is paramount in the

legitimation of this new form of the installation as a work of art.

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