

## ART AND ADVERTISING, LANGUAGES IN PROXIMITY

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### ABSTRACT

Consumer society and compulsive consumption, using and disposing, the accumulation of goods generates fascination to pop artists who benefit from the means at their reach to become themselves a product ready for advertising. It's surprising that Warhol –as an example- leaves his atelier as a creative space, the workshop on which a craft is practiced and instead opens a factory of art where taking amphetamines, film a movie, be part of an orgy or make a lithograph are equally possible. Slogans, jingles and catchy phrases integrate comfortably into art.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Is the strident David LaChapelle an artist or a publicist? Was Dalí a performer, a public relations man and a publisher for his work besides a surrealistic genius? Andy Warhol's Brillo Box would be considered a "work of art" in a context outside New York City in the twentieth century? Arthur Danto already foresee in *After the End Of Art* (1997): "Only when it became clear that anything could be a work of art was possible to think art in a philosophical way.

For Danto, art has died. But not from the point of view of their narrative, the element that has died –or has transformed, which may sound less violent- are the occidental canons which reign over art for centuries.

The concept of beauty as mimesis, as proportion, has nothing related to the modern and postmodern tendencies in which art evolve today. And now we witness a convergence of chaotic harmony of irreverent and revolutionary acts from Duchamp, abstract art, pop art, op art, monochrome painting, avant-garde, etc.

A brief looking at a few museums allow us to realize that once called great narratives of art, the alleged canons, are no longer possible. The parameters recognized by Vasari are at the end of a line in development and has to be observed from a different perspective (maybe kaleidoscopic).

Advertising, on the other hand, hasn't stopped its nurturing from art in a permanent way through an ongoing dialogue. Image is still the center of contemplation at both disciplines. "Visual culture" continues approaching to these two languages. Resemblance and difference we find in art and advertising but perhaps their converging features re-signifies them.

The function of advertising is to sell. Art is an end in itself. However, things have changed thru time. Advertising images lose their function along the years, in posters and magazines we see information that expires and becomes images whose function is only iconic, in this manner, the images of advertising reach an artistic level that allows analyzing them within this context.

Starting with these and other principles it is possible to begin an approaching for both languages which had and still have such enormous impact on everyday life even if we don't realize it. Today, at museums or in the streets, internet or movies we recognize hybrid pieces in which art convey its sensitivity and techniques and advertising brings its knowledge of society, communication and persuasion.

The outcome: The bursting of novelty that arises from different streams. Creation and creativity to manifestation, reinterpretation of art, the search for new paths in communication, the examination of new technological tools, without leaving the essence that art extends.

## **2. IN A GUISE OF CONTEXT**

It would be cumbersome to do an historical overview of how art has been mutating, evolving, transforming growing and shocking thru the years. Because of it and in order to express the topic we are interested, we're placing our thinking in a time which Fredric Jameson has entitled "Late capitalism" (1991) and which comes into place because in a stage where is increasingly told about the end of this and that or a major fracture, Jameson's words shed a light regarding how we can approach living in our times.

End of ideologies, of history and the class struggles, said Francis Fukuyama. End of art, said Danto. End of the nation state, said Manuel Castells, even the End of the World is ascribed to Mayans. This maelstrom of changes produce increasingly obsolete definitions of "art", "culture", "society" and even though the concept of "aesthetic".

Jameson wrote in his essay, published originally in New Left Review magazine in 1984, that the term “postmodernity” was –still is- a broad minded term, amorphous, even himself address it as polemical, contradictory and conflictive, alas –in present times- it’s impossible not to use it because it’s related to innovation.

It is worth noting that Jameson already states the fading of the boundaries between mass culture or media culture and high culture, pointing that has been analyzed also by Levi-Strauss, Jacques Lacan and Roland Barthes among others.

Umberto Eco, in his essay *Apocalípticos e integrados* (1965), broaden the subject and invite us to rethink what would be a “serious” novel, a “cultrate” music, “auteur” films or “classic” arts that mixture in everyday life with comics, TV series, rock stars, fashion, advertising or kitsch.

Maybe today the “consumer society” is on their most advanced stage because of the historic evolution of highly sophisticated media. It’s a society that has more access to the pleasures of capitalism, which were exclusively for the upper class.

It’s increasingly usual to take a bus or taxi and notice that drivers have a Smartphone more daring than our humble analog phones. Copies of Fendi, Tous and Prada items are sold daily in every flea market over the country. “Art cinema” is available in clone copies with HD quality in every corner of every avenue for 3 dollars or three movies for 10 dollars.

Of course: museums aren’t safe from mass production! The Mona Lisa, The Scream, The Starry night and the Eiffel tower are the most esteemed objects in the souvenir shops of museums and galleries around the world. Any work of art can be miniaturized, printed, plasticized, became a magnet, umbrella, hand bag, calendar, keychain or bookmark. It’s worth reminding that the Vatican gift shop still sells thorns from the crown of Christ.

The economist Ernest Mandel, in his book *The Late Capitalism* (1972), conceptualized postmodernism not as a style but as a cultural dominating factor: this perspective allows the presence and coexistence of a wide array of very different features even though subordinated to each other.

Picasso and Joyce not had only ceased to look ugly, now they seem to us, as a whole, fairly ‘realistic’, explains Jameson. As matter of fact, today they no longer outrage anybody, ranging from the impenetrability and sexually explicit materialism through the psychological rawness. They are not only received with a huge sympathy but these same features have been institutionalized and harmonize with official culture of western society.

Hence, in a world of fast food, fast sex, copy paste, aesthetic production has merge with wholesale production: novelty items are produce at frantically pace, either in clothing, airplanes, even works of art, as Takashi Murakami's pieces which can be bought easily –with enough euros- on Facebook. In this context it's worth noting Moholy-Nagy, who in 1992 organize the craft of a painting by phone transforming his figure of creator-artist, as a former painter and morphing into an art director.

We are not addressing that present day manufacturing is postmodern as a whole, on the opposite, should be conceived from an open perspective, not generalized. Art is constantly surprising us, hence should be studied from diverse schemes, in emergence, because they are the outcome of a society in contrast, with forces in opposed directions that cannot summon into a single guideline, thus Jameson defines this topic as a “crisis of historicity”.

### **3. BUT FIRST, ¿WHAT WE UNDERSTAND FOR ADVERTISING?**

First of all we must realize that hundreds, maybe thousand definitions of advertising exist. One commonly used describe it as an effort worth of payment with a recognizable sponsor. Also is described as the methods that assist us to gain attention of a future customer or buyer of product, service or good.

Advertising aids clients to obtain economic profit, preferably in short time. Advertising is to convince a customer that “X” product is better than “Y”, represented by other companies.

Using advertising items –slogans, jingles, posters, spots, videos and other types of merchandising, buyers are persuaded by mass media or emerging media, like BTL (Below The Line), a more personal way of contact, as alternatives almost handmade and surprising in which advertising burst in, sometimes in a subtle way and sometimes in a violent thrust over daily life.

However and without a doubt, one of the most solid goals of advertising –massive or market niche- is to sell soap, an idea, even a political candidate.

Strengthen its power by virtue support of various disciplines as psychology, sociology, design, art, anthropology, marketing, public relations, among others, advertising becomes overwhelming.

Mass media has assumed the role of a large spokesman for advertising, and with recent evolution in media, turning into more immediate and “on the spot”, the same quality applies to new ways to approach products to potential users or buyers.

Advertising exist since the beginning of trade commerce as in the apogee of Babylon (3,000 B.C.), later in Tebes and Pompeii. Definitely, Johannes Gutenberg's printing press was the invention that boosted spreading advertising messages. After industrial revolution in the XVIII century emerge the first advertising agents, whose experienced a large development in the XX century.

Newspapers, radio and the surprising arrival of television during the fifties reinforce advertising. Today advertising surround and seize us, ranging from soap operas to adverteinment, brand and product placement on TV series and movies from all genres and ratings, advertising is –like it or not, noticed or not- in everywhere, literally in every place.

Being at Facebook, on a mirror, on a plane, in the toilet bowl, at space, in the water or music, advertising can be found. It would be illogical to think that advertising, with its enormous tentacles, cannot be found in art, but art itself –as we explain next- has been present in advertising, influencing, transforming and - why not accepting it?- turning into an aesthetic issue.

#### **4. ART AND ADVERTISING**

We understand –as mentioned in the beginning of this text- that advertising and art differ in essence because their function. While art fulfill an aesthetic function, advertising has as a main purpose of putting in the market products of any kind.

Taking from the concept “art by art”, meaning “art by itself”, (pure art, selfless, free, single created, without a solid definition or an end in itself), we can appreciate another high contrast in advertising which provide information regarding their product. In order to attract customers, in order to consume and sell offers very specific information that doesn't allow make a mistake of buying other product, even if it has a resemblance.

At the end of the XIX century and beginning of the XX century both paths started to narrow and their common spots have become more recognizable. Relationship between them may have their first stage with Tolouse Lautrec posters.

Thanks to the invention of printing press it is possible to artists like Jules Chéret or Alphonse Mucha to use serial production applied to their work. Art pieces like the Works of Hector Guimard, along with another great artist of their time suddenly fill the streets with colors and messages that advertise a Japanese lounge, a greedy woman, the Moulin Rouge or the actress Sarah Bernhardt.

Art Nouveau expands the possibilities of commercial advertising and here we found another common spot: the aspiration of modernism to breakthrough in day-to-day sphere.

XIX century can be characterized for industrial achievements. The poster finds in technology a renewal strength which serves to place it on privileged spaces on every big city. Images can be produce and locate easily, besides and because of their size and color became easily accepted.

Maybe was Lautrec who unwrap this different universe of expression, raising the poster from a mere advertising device to a piece at the museum.

XX century, the century of avant-garde, offers new forms to symbolize the world. Mimesis, faithful representation, reproduction of reality, proportion and balance ceased to be the constant in art. Forms, colors, textures are more important, the feeling which produces the work of art is as important as the piece itself.

Around this time, advertising develops its heap of logotype, slogan and brand. Products that formerly have no authorship at all now struggle to make a difference amidst the competitors. In accordance with the growth of industrial society, branding images are improved. Electric light awakens the interest of numerous artists, among them the Italian “futurists”. Dynamism, speed, electricity, automobile and steam engines mix up at advertising items.

Figures like Filippo Tommaso Marinetti take from advertising clearly identifiable features like sound rhythms, onomatopoeia, writing in whimsical forms, typography in different sizes and colors which were been used in advertising language. Lithography gives artists a new way to work, a new method with huge possibilities of communication.

Cubist artists included also some fragments of reality in their work, everyday objects and products and brand easily identifiable. On collages we can appreciate labels and advertising of Gillette or Astra.

Fernand Léger or Marcel Duchamp and his “*Roue de bicyclette*” bring a new meaning to art and advertising. In their pieces also is possible to perceive the evolution of the advertising image, happens that way because Dadaists used posters to advertise themselves and their ideas, manifests, exhibitions and works.

Duchamp’s ready-made are precisely that, founded objects that became art by the designation of the artist. Art territories graze with simple products and we look at works/adverts of Nivea or Typho Tea in the collages filled with accumulation from the German artist Kurt Schwitters.

The decades of fifties and sixties are crucial in the relationship between art and advertising. Pop art may have been the artistic movement which has relied on advertising. Andy Warhol the most outrageous and high profile artist, Jasper Johns or Rauschenberg put advertising in their canvas and we see the repetition of brands and products like Shell, Pepsi, Coca-Cola, Campbell's, Brillo, Pall Mall or Target.

Mechanized life, serial production, superficiality in contents, massive consumption and ready-to-wear make an impact in the work of artists that have become producers, ideologists, recyclers, selectors but no longer craftsmen. Fashion, film, television, pop stars, Elvis, Marilyn, Liz, Mick or Studio 54 are the inspiration for new images in vibrant colors, oversized scale, in a copy or on a canvas.

Consumer society and compulsive consumption, using and disposing, the accumulation of goods generates fascination to pop artists who benefit from the means at their reach to become themselves a product ready for advertising. It's surprising that Warhol –as an example- leaves his atelier as a creative space, the workshop on which a craft is practiced and instead opens a factory of art where taking amphetamines, film a movie, be part of an orgy or make a lithograph are equally possible. Slogans, jingles and catchy phrases integrate comfortably into art.

The story continues. Nowadays it's possible to find in a museum a Citroen in halves, a Smart, one or many Coca-Cola sodas, Louis Vuitton logo few inches from an impressionistic canvas or one Rodin sculpture.

## **5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Art and advertising refer to different languages with different purposes. Indeed, we must say that they share some elements. Advertising has market goals. Art is that: art. In his work "Cuerpo en venta, la relación entre arte y publicidad" (2000), Juan Carlos Pérez Gaudi invites us to think that in advertising the aim is not on the plastic image but in the commercial effect that this image generate.

Nevertheless, as time passes things have changed. Advertising images lose their function as the years go passing by. In posters and magazines we could see information that expires and they transcend to a function merely iconic. In this way advertising images rank on the artistic level and can be analyzed jointly.

As we have seen, since the end of XIX century and first decades of the XX century, both languages were connected. A great number of artist works on advertising. Art and advertising are

occupations coming from imagination, creativity and a great idea. In the axis of the school of advertising always take part sciences related to art.

But at the end of the day, advertising benefits from taking art tools. To become a publicist it's necessary to learn painting, design, theory of color, drawing and etcetera. The reason of this is the acquisition of sensibility that only art can awake.

As the world has created geniuses through time, advertising it's no exception because these are key elements to do so. We agree with Perez Gaudi in stating that art and advertising in present time has a tendency to be more personal, intimate, filling to each other, art bringing the beautiful expression, sensibility and methods, in the same manner, advertising brings its knowledge of society, the channels and even geniuses who merge both forms.

“The XX century is the century of generalization in design and hatching of novelty, whose bursting it's going to happen on different ways but none of them so intense as the way of art. We are in a time of searching new paths for communication, exploration of new tools as video, multimedia and animation, without giving the essence that art offers to us”.

To bring a closing at these thoughts we express that art builds and advertising reproduce, pick up and imitate from real life. Art always creates its own amazing and visionary worlds. Art – detached from a constrained definition- keeps on living on the freedom that came with the discovery of its own aesthetic essence.

In the art nothing is taken for granted. XXI century is par excellence the century of transformation, of change, of novelty and re-interpretation. We agree with Clement Greenberg (1960) who said that “art is an act of faith”, because you can't tell the difference between a work of art and a surface painted in red. We, the authors of this writing, are women of faith.

## **SOURCES**

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