

WORKS OF ART AND VISUAL THINKING

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Visual thinking is a type of non-verbal thinking. It has been extensively studied by psychologists in recent years. Many psychologists believe that the main function of visual thinking is its ability to coordinate different meanings of images into a complete, visible picture. The article examines visual thinking in arts via structure of an art work. A painting will be taken as an example for this purpose, though results of this research may be extrapolated on other kinds of arts.

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Visual thinking helps us to ontologize results of abstract-verbal thinking; by means of it an abstract essence becomes intellectually visible. It is necessary to stress, that visual thinking is a contentive product of synthesis of previous sensual experiences and abstract-verbal thinking; by means of it an abstract essence becomes intellectually visible. Visual thinking is a constructive product of synthesis of previous sensual experiences and abstract-verbal activity. So a sensual component of an image of visual thinking is not just the same as some direct sense-data. This component is radically changed within a visual-rational image; it reflects those objective structure, which are not given in a direct perception. An image of visual thinking is able to foresee future events, to draw future worlds in forms of designer's projects.

Images, expressed by works of pictorial art, are not merely perceptual copies of external objects. They are literary *Visual Essences*, lighted through a prism of human relation towards them. Several aspects of this relation are described in E. Bullough's conception of 'Psychical Distance'¹, J. Stotaitz's theory of 'Disinterested Relation', V. Aldrich's notion 'Seeing as'. Much may be said about historical discussion between two alternative sets of theories of art - among a theory of *imitation* and a theory of *expression*, which were developed in modern aesthetics by Clive Bell, Susanna Langer, R.W. Collingwood, Morris Weitz, Monroe Beardsley and others. A good critical analysis of these theories one may find in a very interesting monograph of George Dicke (Aesthetics. An introduction. Pegasus, 1971. - 200 p.). But if Dicke analyze imitationism and expressionism as simply different alter-

native theories, we want to unite them dialectically as descriptions of polar sides of the same pictorial process.

There are two sides of a work of pictorial art, mutually tied. The first side we call *naturalistic tendency*, the second — *symbolistic tendency*. Proportions of these tendencies are very different in various art works. According to his philosophical and artistic program a painter may prefer one tendency more than another, consequently one painter may be called, in general, *naturalist*, another - *symbolist*. Still two aspects of a picture, naturalistic and symbolistic, are its attributes. In order to communicate with a painter, a spectator must recognize, more or less, natural-geometric forms and shapes of a painted artistic object. So the first plan of an art work (its surface) is a naturalistic (imitationistic) key, by means of which one can enter into an author's intention, conception. Some historical and conditional details are helpful for this purpose, especially when a spectator has a good artistic experience and taste. But a real work of art has some other levels, situated within its inner plans. The more profound an artist is, the more number of these levels one can find in his picture. These levels express symbolically author's artistic conception of a human relationship towards the world, towards different aspects of reality. Author's and spectator's visual thinking starts on these levels.

Many inexperienced people do not know about such a complex structure of serious artistic works. Their glances are slipping along a surface of a master-piece, though even in this case primitive feelings of aesthetical pleasure do appear. It is true that there are many professional art critics who,

also, are able to describe the first sur-face plan of an art work only; much is to be done to educate aesthetically those people, especially those critics, who assure public, that an artist usually does not know what he creates, that an artist creates mostly unconsciously or subconsciously. It is true that often an artist is not able to retell painted contents by means of words. But it happens, we believe, not because of his non-rationality or irrationality. A real painter creates by means of visual thinking primarily, but not with the help of verbal thinking. A verbal name of his picture is only a prompting, not necessarily a true one, how to enter to the bottom of his divisionally rational construction.

When an artist starts his work he, may be, does not know his final rational result. But if he finishes his work successfully and does not want to deceive spectators, he mostly consciously knows this result. Of course, it does not mean that an artwork is a closed system. This system is open for a private spectator's imagination, and sometimes one can discover even those deep levels of a talented art work, which its painter did not realize. Thus, art develops in different directions as a result of mutual penetration, balance and unbalance of naturalistic and symbolistic tendencies. Masterpieces are historical landmarks of this dialectical process. We think, that a real pictorial masterpiece is a pure balance and harmony of naturalistic and symbolistic sides of a picture, so some deep essence is expressed geometrically and colourfully in a very naturalistic-realistic manner.

The second condition of a masterpiece is a visual expression of some deep philosophical idea, which is out of age, eternal and international humanistic. Such masterpieces survive via centuries and are open always for new modern interpretations. We think that a good public artistic education is to be based on a written history of such masterpieces, around which other historical one-sided attempts to develop various mode of naturalism and symbolism may be centralized. This is an idea of a new short and condensed

course of history of arts with a causal explanation of arts' process.

Now we want to illustrate and to prove just a little this sketched conception of visual thinking in arts. We have no place now to deepen into a description of a nature of a childish picture. We would say only, that little children have to solve an extremely hard problem, when they try to understand adults' notions. Children see ordinary things (tables, chairs, animals, etc.) approximately as we adults do. But adults use words to designate classes of things, i.e. essences, and little children do not understand, why, for example, a word 'table' may express in one case a fourlegged table, in other case - a table with one leg only and so on? A child has to build rational images of sensually perceived things himself. And this is a real personal creativity.

Accordingly to the psychological theory of interiorization, a child must firstly exteriorize his conjecture about invisible essence and materialize it in a visible geometry. A childish picture is an example of this exteriorization. It is wonderful

that pictures of all children in the world are similar, there is just the same geometrical alphabet in those pictures, it is amazing how little children of different nationalities can read and understand pictures of each other easily, but many adults do not understand them. Adults falsely see in that pictures sensual naturalistic copies of external individual things, but not *Visible Essence*, sketches of notions. Adults are mistaken when they try to correct childish pictures in order to make them similar to ordinary physical things. The symbolical side is the main parameter of such a picture.

When a child has solved his conceptual problem he usually stops his further painting, does not want to improve it. Some of more eldest children continue to draw, and their pictures become more naturalistic. It is very significant that great artists sometimes want to return back to a childish manner of drawing to express essences very geometrically-economically. Picasso was among them. You can see, below, several ex-

amples of a childish drawing of essences, A child draws his *notion* as a logical circle in the middle of a list of paper, and a background is meaningful for him as *all others things around*. Do not insist, that a child simply waste paper. He concretize the logical circle while drawing some details which, he believes, are essential. For instance, 'a cat' is a circle with several short lines within it and with schematic nails. It is because of cat's woolly soft hair and dangerous scratching nails a child has firstly a notion (essence) of each cat.

Look at the second picture. How economically a childish understanding of a notion 'door-keeper' is symbolically expressed in it! You see a one-handed 'head-legger' with a spade. The third picture clearly expresses a personal childish attitude towards such a life-meaningful object for a child as his parents' behaviour. You see the author in the corner, he has no hands to give them to his parents, who have also no hands for the author and who love only author's brother (or sister). Thus, the symbolical side of visual thinking in arts one may trace to begin from childish attempts to draw essences. And this side determinates the other, naturalistic one. In adult's art these sides can change their force, periodically overweighing each other during Art history.

Now let us offer you explanations of several great art masterpieces from the point of view of two correlated tendencies, naturalistic and symbolistic. 'Diskoflignerr of ancient Greek sculpturer Miron is well known. But a few people can see in this sculpture not simply a sportsman, but a visible essence of Apollo - the god of peace and war. Miron expressed geometrically in his work the harmonica! theory of Heraclitus, the philosophy of symmetry of peace and war forces, which are in a mutual struggle eternally. Natural lines of a human figure are subordinated to the main idea of antique dialectics. Lines of hands, shoulders and so on are the mental key to recognize a bow and an arrow in a battle position. Just the same lines with additional of a head and some other body lines

are embodied an ancient Greek lyre, a musical instrument of a silver-bow god Appolo.

Contemporaries of Heraclitus and Miron did understand this visual rational image because they were accustomed to a mythological kind of thinking and highly experienced in arts. But modern people mostly see in this sculpture only a physical body, and art critics notice in it many mistakes from the point of view of anatomy of a human body. Miron's 'Diskoflignerr is an eternal masterpiece, which visually expressed a great idea in a very laconical and perfect geometrical form. Who can prove that Miron did not know what he creates, consciously!

Look at the two pictures of V.T. Surikov — on 'Countess Morozova' and 'Stepan Razin'. Naturalistically they are very different, but symbolically they are identical. Surikov was influenced too much by the widely spread (in Russian society in the very end of the 19th) idea of a lonely strong hero, who knows that he will die and still goes against the modern life stream. To express this idea Surikov invented a special geometrical scheme, which determines a whole set of his brilliant pictures. This is a scheme of a triangle against element. The hero-triangle induces a turbulent movement within a laminar}' normal stream of life. An active diagonal line across Surikov's pictures is drawn in such a way that it expresses the inevitable defeat of the hero. Countess Morozova, one of the leaders of old Russian Orthodox Church, died in exile. Thus, under a surface of Surikov' different pictures you can find a more deep level of a geometrically expressed essence.

A.A. Ivanov's masterpiece "Christ's advent to people' (1837-1857) is well-known in each country. But even eminent art critics can not explain its main idea. They qualify it as a marvelous eclectic picture, they are unable to find its geometrical-meaningful centre, to name the main figure. Some of them think that Christ or John may be that figure. It is wrong. Ivanov as influenced by philosophy of Shelling and his main artistic idea was the idea of an artist who may be the only one human measure of truth and faith. And the

very imperceptible figure on his picture is the central figure in a modern clothes and with a european hat (among others in ancient clothes). And this figure is Ivanov himself!

Usually God's space and man's earth are drawn in religious icons in a form of a numeral 'eight,' '8\ It is a sign of indefinity, which is standing vertically. God's Son. Christ, is the middle of this figure. Christ unites God's and man's worlds, Ivanov puts '8' horizontally. The painter himself now in the role of Christ, he unites and mediates two opposite worlds - the world of faith and the world of truth (knowledge). In the first circle you see pupils of Christ, in the opposite circle-non-believers ('book-people' and pharisaioi). If the first are surrounded by green life's colour, the seconds are situated in a desert. Christ appears on the side of unbelievers because he is more important for them. But you also can see in the left corner of the picture a Jerusalem temple and a *yellow* twig of the green tree upon the temple. It means that Christ's doctrine ('twig') begins weakening, and Christ's apparition is necessarily for his pupils also.

All figures are very naturalistic (realistic), as if you see a photo of a real event. But the naturalistic side of the picture is totally subordinated to the author's conception of a true artist. The artist here is shown as the middle of a weighing machine, on which *faith* and *knowledge* are weighed. Christ is a light unbalanced force on the side of *knowledge*, and yellow twig is a counter force. So the balance is restored again, and the picture seems to be highly harmonical. The more you deepen into Ivanov's picture, into bottom levels of its structure, the more you understand, by means of your visual thinking, the author's conception. You are able to understand that Ivanov found the golden medium among faith and knowledge, and different figures on his picture, young and old, delighted and skeptical, etc., are nothing else but images of ivanov's personal biography. These figures are symbols of his own creative life way; the cen-tral figure is symbo-

lized his found meaning of life. Much is to be said about Ivanov's skill to harmonize oppositions on each part of his work.

The more general artistic idea, the more abstract may be its visual geometric expression. The top of this visual thinking in pictorial art was achieved, we suggest, by Kazimir Malevitch in his suprematism (in his art of pure forms). His 'Black Square' is the more abstract painting out of possible. As Malevitch himself wrote in his explanations, this work artistically expressed the Hegelian dialectics of pure existence and nothingness. At first a spectator's existence is situated on a white background of the canvas. Then a spectator is pulled in the blackness of the square, into its infinity; it is difficult to return back on the white surface of phenomenon. Such is a pulsation of life and death and a pulsation of a spectator's attention. Impressive people are better not to survive aesthetically 'Black Square'. Many artists and ait critics hate this masterpiece. Even if they do not understand its idea, they nevertheless feel that Malevitch revealed in a naked form *absolute*, which is cold and dangerous for normal people. Two sides of each great artistic pictures -naturalistic and symbolistic - are perfectly identical in 'Black Square' accordingly to the top level of artistic material and abstraction. Thus every great master finds his own original form of visual thinking and materializes this form in an art masterpiece, eternally alive.

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