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Interaction of Art and Science as a Fact in Latvia (1970s – 2010s)

Regarding art during the last fifty years the definition of style and movements has become more flexible and nebulous, therefore the evaluation of an art work – precarious. During this period aesthetics of technology play dominant roles in visual arts. It gives artists a new world where to materialize ones ideas; those that have not been possible to realize that before. This aspect has given way for and intensified discussions about the convergence of these two industries. It creates a question where art either starts or ends.

The branch of new media art which is included in a category “art and science” creates a different kind of situation. As a result a new hybrid form of art develops - scientific art.

Scientific Art: 1. Stimulates its creators and viewers to discover new aesthetic values. Striving to be scientific and reasonable, it is not balancing with wit as a game of words;

2. Does not seek restoration of forms and themes of traditional art. Science serves an innovation of themes which inspire new formal and technical solutions; 3. Does not refer to other art works and it does not require comprehension of viewers which is based on memory, but it requires knowledge on different fields;

4. Although scientific art is associated with intertextuality, text is not as important as in conceptual art. It is not connected to reorganization of “conceptual complexity” but with the integration of other industries in the art. Artists who practice this movement of art are able to explain their creations more clearly. Scientific art requires the viewer to rely on reasoning rather emotions and impression. To evaluate scientific art, one needs knowledge from other fields. It could be the reason why, in descriptions of new media artworks we will not find references to artists’ emotions, but rather descriptions of the process of research, by giving question such as: where is the line beyond which science end and art begins; and what characterizes its aesthetics? It sounds like new media art relates to two absolutely different fields, but if we consult encyclopaedias published in Latvia; we will

discover that “science” and “art” are defined as mental and specific cognition forms of society.

Using technologies to create artworks, new media art does not have a “*plastic substance which the artist manipulates and over which he is supposed to maintain a sort of total control.*”¹ Describing new media, Canadian communication theorist Herbert Marshall McLuhan notes that the media is the message. Consequently, new media artists are working with two sets of tools that express a message: technologies as material and artwork as a creative result; meanwhile artists of traditional art media create works that are subordinated to a message of a system of philosophical characters. In the context of art history in Latvia, new media art is considered as part of influences by the movement of New Age or a continuation of kinetic art. Somehow it raises doubts, because both these terms are history. The author is not sure if it is adequate to connect ideas of New Age to Eastern European art from the 1960s/70s and to today, because in that period, even in periodicals there have been discussions about the mission art, its meaning has often been considered in the context of evolution of sciences and technologies.² So called discussion between “lyricists and physicists” in 1960s and a practice of kinetic artists and theoreticians such as Valdis Celms and Artūrs Riņķis is a ground to scientific art in nowadays in Latvia. It includes themes as ecology, biology, physics which is practised by artists such as Voldemārs Johansons, Gints Gabrāns, RIXC Centre for New Media Culture (Raitis Šmits and Rasa Šmite). The aim of paper is to disclose that the scientific art exist in the practice of Latvian artists.

1 Benthall, J., Science and Technologies in Art Today. – London: Thames and Hudson, 1973, p 28.

2 Kalniņa I., Netradicionālās mākslas izpausmes Latvijā 1972 – 1984.// Doma 6./ Ind. by I.Konstante. – Rīga: DOMA, 2000. – p 102.