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Multimedia art in Russia: outbreak and development dynamics (1991-2018).

In the West, specialized studies of artistic practices, which are increasingly making use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), have generally overlooked, in terms of both depth and specificity, the development of such practices in Russia. In order to fill the cognitive gap and integrate this aspect of contemporary Russian art in the international context, the analysis of this development and of the factors which have defined its essential characteristics is a task that cannot be postponed anymore.

To date, what is missing is a systematic study defining the contemporary situation starting from Video Art. Some essential points are also yet to be clarified: the geographical boundaries, both within and outside the country, the organization of media art centres and their finances, as well as the periodization to present day.

The research activity will then provide an exhaustive overview of the development of multimedia art in the context of the contemporary Russian art scene, exploring the cultural and socio-economic factors that have influenced its character.

Digital canons are universal by nature. Can we refer to a Russian identity in multimedia art?

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the disappearance of obligations to adhere to the regime's aesthetic canons (Socialist Realism), artists have had greater opportunities to explore artistic territories hitherto unknown, even beyond the experiences of non-conformist art, which had already started by the sixth decade of the 20th century. The 90s were marked by wide experimentation by a generation who, impressed with the expressive potential of the previously-inaccessible new technologies, was able to perceive their communicative effectiveness. The delay with which new technologies were employed in Russia has led to a different approach to New Media.

According to Anatoly Prokhorov [*Poltsarstva za strannogo konya!*, 2013], the young artists initially were not experimenting with new visual images, nor with new materials. What changed was their relationship with the new tools. That's what would determine a distinctive Russian style.

Lev Manovich's opinion [*Behind the screen. Russian New media*, 1997] is that digital art for young artists doesn't necessarily entail a break with the past, rather it is a way to reconfigure and rethink some of the past's cultural models. Russian artists are then able to mediate between western materialism, and the historicism and conceptualism that is typical, instead, of their national tradition.

The main goal of my research project is to identify the current reality of the use of ICT in Russia, thus starting from their abrupt introduction in a context with different dynamics. I will also verify if the "sudden break-in" can be said to be now settled, or if, vice-versa, it retains connotations of rupture and innovation.

In order to answer these questions, the theory according to which it is possible to locate a real genealogical connection between the Avant-Garde of the beginning of the century and New Media art will be tested. The dissolution of the autocratic regime of the early twentieth century represents for Russia the beginning of a time of liberalisation of costumes. This liberalization entailed such an abrupt opening towards the West that it is possible to think that Russian artists had a real indigestion of Western models. A similar phenomenon occurred with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Therefore, the beginning of Video Art in Russia can be seen as a continuation of what had been built by the first Avant-Garde, specifically by the Constructivists. Indeed, the film *Chelovek s kinoapparatom* (*The man with the camera*) by Dziga Vertov (1929) might be considered the first true example of Video Art in Russia.