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EXPLOSION AND CUTTING EDGE NEED FOR KAIROS

MODERNISM / AVANT-GARDE /
POST-MODERNISM. PROBLEM REVISITED

1. In the early 1990s Dmitry Sarabianov made several important points regarding the *temporal limitations* of the concept of avant-garde. He identified the fundamental difference between avant-garde as something *innovative*, something that *renewed* art in the early 20th century, and a *trend* that had its history and temporal framework. But there is a third aspect, namely the very ability to discover something *new*. Perhaps, it is necessary to single out the very moment of novelty and put it in the foreground in the current of time. The avant-garde artist comes into his own at the cutting edge of time, he is ahead of time, its advance gesture... Of course, this cannot last long: the collecting and saving function of memory creates pivots for shaping ever new traditions. Here is what Sarabianov wrote:

“Masters of the middle and second half of the century drew on the immediate traditions of their predecessors, the avant-garde artists of the 1910s-1920s. That was why their art ceased to be in the vanguard. The quest for ‘other’ traditions that today’s masters are preoccupied with has also become an exercise in recapping. This does not mean that art has nothing more to do, that it has stopped in its tracks and cannot discover anything. It does discover new things and will continue to do so, as did artists of the 17th or 19th centuries. However, creative endeavour has lost its innovative character. Although it seems to comply with many of the conditions formulated above, some of the important criteria are missing. The very combative spirit of many new trends has been borrowed

and moulded into a tradition. Its mechanism is well oiled. It has become a norm, a canon handed down from without, which is inherently at odds with the avant-garde principles.”¹

Of course, we can call “avant-garde” anything that breaks out of tradition (aesthetical custom or earlier canon) in any way. Then all the principal figures of 20th century art are avant-gardists, i.e., innovators “going to the brink of the time”, risk-takers, experimenters, anarchist-provocateurs, rejectionists, iconoclasts, etc. Such definition is very limited because it addresses only one aspect, that of values, and even that chosen arbitrarily. But if we break down avant-garde art into individual trends (with differentiation focussing on differences between *techniques* rather than philosophies or politics), we will altogether lose the intuition to see art periods as a single whole.

2. The differences become obvious as soon as we choose the *will for the total artwork* (Gesamtkunstwerk) as our criterion. Modernism is absolutely infatuated with it and does not see anything in art that would not strive for one thing only, the creation of a perfect work of art. Isn't there any continuity between two types of aesthetic impact: one that **Modernism** of the late 19th – early 20th centuries sought in trying, starting with Nietzsche/Wagner and Baudelaire/Mallarmé, to produce an artwork that would implode the world into itself and “devour” reality? At that time the idea of the *absolute, or total artwork* was the standard of the ultimate creative product. Everything revolved around drawing closer to Nature and a new understanding of the potential of human perception. Of course, achieving the depth of experience promised by Modern Art would have been impossible without altered states of consciousness. Experimentation proceeded across the entire aesthetic spectrum (here are some names that readily come to mind, without specification of trends or styles: Paul Cézanne, Vincent Van Gogh, Georges-Pierre Seurat, Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, Pablo Picasso in painting; James Joyce, Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka, Andrei Bely, Virginia Woolf in literature; Dziga Vertov, Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin in film-making; Alexander Rodchenko in photography; Mikhail Chekhov, Antonin Artaud, Vsevolod Meyerhold in the theatre; Adam Schoenberg, Alban Berg, Anton Webern in music; Henri-Louis Bergson, Martin Heidegger, William James, Theodor Adorno in philosophy and many others.) The practice of contemplation was giving way to the onslaught of new forms of perception.

Deep inside the classical oeuvre is the ideal image of the total artwork which, as it unfolds, engulfs the whole world, Nature and history:

¹ D.V. Sarabianov, “K ogranicheniyu ponyatiya avangard” (Apropos Limitations of the Concept of Avant-garde). In: D.V. Sarabianov, *Russkaia Zhivopis. Probuzhdenie Pamyati* (Russian Painting. The Awakening of Memory), Moscow: Iskusstvoznanie, 1998, pp. 274–5. Regrettably, this paper leaves no room for a more extensive discussion of this subject with the use of other sources.

everything disappears into it (the Book of Nature, Universe, Knowledge, etc.). Everything is collected in that greatest of the greatest books in the world, which Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz introduced in his *Théodicée* as the Book of God. Nietzsche wrote his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and Joyce tried in his *Ulysses* to express this total completeness and perfection of the world within itself, which, however, did not come to light without the Book. The Book completes the world, and the world becomes completed in the Book. There are other examples. And does not the development of the modernist theory of painting pursue the goal of the ideal – **total** – form of the oeuvre?

Strangely, the classical work has always suffered from *objective* incompleteness. No artwork has ever been “finished”, the artist always has the nagging thought that he has not brought his work to the end, has not laid on the “last stroke”. This idea of the perfect, ideal artwork, the oeuvre of all oeuvres, has overshadowed creative endeavour over the ages. Honoré de Balzac’s *Le Chef-d’œuvre inconnu* is just one example.

3. The opposite approach was taken by the Russian revolutionary avant-garde art of the 1910s-20s, which did not view the total artwork as a way of enhancing the aesthetical impact but searched for the ideal mechanical models, technical structures and concepts to support the efforts drastically to “remake” man and restructure the world around him. This implied an anti-artwork strategy: rejection of Nature in favour of Machine, “de-humanisation” of sensual experience and ridding it of models based on organic nature that were characteristic of the period of Modern Art. Perhaps, the de-anthropologization of aesthetical experience was more pronounced and dramatic in the Russian revolutionary avant-garde (Kazimir Malevich, Andrei Platonov, Sergei Eisenstein, El Lissitzky, Vladimir Tatlin, Dziga Vertov, Pavel Filonov, Vladimir Mayakovsky). Perhaps the avant-garde could be considered especially packed with events, as befitting Modern Art. Avant-garde mentality (or leftist art) is *revolutionary* mentality, which means that where it is at work, it reveals an aspect of the world that can only be detected through an explosive rather than evolutionary change. Avant-garde mentality balances between destruction and renewal, between “a new beginning and new end”. But the beginning is a sort of objective of destruction itself. Destruction pre-determines the possibility of a beginning, and the more radical the new, the more devastating it is. “Show me your ability to destroy and I will tell you what sort of avant-gardist you are!” Therefore, our conclusion is that in general the avant-gardist gesture is a gesture of total negation that is complete unto itself (that is, has no trace of assertion). Such negation is only possible thanks to the machine as the only vehicle of transforming the world without reliance on man or nature. What is needed is the original void, its infinite vacant surface to draw plans on, build new machines, and carve and recarve the world and the universe (Le Corbusier’s new language of art Modulor, Malevich’s architectons, Platonov’s

“machine of the invisible ether”, Eisenstein’s *montage* (decoupage) machine, etc.)¹.

4. The third form is referred to as **actual art** (or *post-modernism*, or *modern art*), and here the impact is equivalent to the instantaneousness strike of the cutting edge or a brief flash, and this is what I call *kairos*. It is something that may or may not happen as you view a modern art object. However, the right object always appears and one of the visitors to the exhibition gets lucky and is “moved”, “stung” or even “pierced” by *kairos* (“supreme moment”). Today modern art objects are characterised by localised pinpoint impacts of varying intensity that do not have a totalising (cascade-like) effect. They flare up for an instant and go out eventually to flare up anew elsewhere, in another environment and with a different effect. This is not a synthesis of earlier forms of art and their practices, but rather an experience in conceptualisation of art as a special phenomenon of our times. Conceptual art – and here we must agree with Joseph Kosuth, Boris Groys and Ilya Kabakov – is searching for the limits of the answer to the question as to what art is *today*. Is it not the question that Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia and Man Ray set out to answer when they declared rejection of any form of mimetism and went after the ideal image of anti-oeuvre?

5. The artwork migrates over time; now and then something happens to it: like a ghost ship, it navigates through storms, calls at peaceful harbours or altogether disappears in the art milieu. Modern art or the period of modernity or else modernism can manifest itself not only through image representation techniques, but also as an integral paradigm.

Modernist consciousness is entirely immersed in the past; it is mythogenic and only concerns itself with what is covert and deep-lying; it is aware of its break with the former classical (standard) culture and tries to overcome it by what it thinks to be a simple action, namely, by critically rethinking the status of the oeuvre in the new age. What makes the past valuable is reminiscences, reconstructions and reconstitution of past experiences in new terminological settings, in other words, *rewriting*, if we can say so. All major modernists copy and rewrite classical models, but in a language that no one knows and that will be impossible to rewrite anew. This is a sort of butchery of the classical standard in the process of bold attempts to use it.

¹ For details of my position see: V. Podoroga, *Mimesis. Materialy po analiticheskoi antropologii literatury* (Mimesis. Materials on Analytical Anthropology of Literature), vol. 2/1, Moscow: Kulturnaya Revolyutsiya, 2011, pp. 240–65.

FIREWORKS. THE IDEA OF EXPLOSION

6. In modernist oeuvres we deal with *explosion*, but in the form of *implosion*, i.e. the slow accumulation of author's energy that destroys the original form, and with other "explosive" elements leads to the transgression of experience. To Eisenstein there is no *ecstasy* without *pathos*.

To have a better idea of the subject of our contemplation we need to go back to Bergson, to the problem of an impulse of life, *élan vital*. Today his philosophy is one of the better expounded and more recognised theories of modernism. Here is how his principal train of thought goes. For life to exist it must be excessive with respect to the essential consumption of energy; life is always *too much*, it is indeed a fireworks display, a sparkle, the shooting of streams from that centre... Bergson called it *élan vital*: "Now, if the same kind of action is going on everywhere, whether it is that which is unmaking itself or whether it is that which is striving to remake itself, I simply express this probable similitude when I speak of a centre from which worlds shoot out like rockets in a fireworks display – provided, however, that I do not present this centre as a *thing*, but as a continuity of shooting out. God, thus defined, has nothing of the already made; He is unceasing life, action, freedom."¹ Bergson uses "explosive" terminology now and again in describing the creative evolution of life². Every living creature is a sort of explosive charge that is ready to go off; the evolution of life proceeds in leaps, by "the random play of forces", from one explosion to the next. There are two types of blast: one is *explosion*, quick or instantaneous, and the other *implosion*, slow or "delayed". The former, like any blast, destroys itself and

¹ Bergson A., *Tvorcheskaya evolyutsiya* (Creative Evolution), Moscow: Canon-Press, 1998, p. 138; the English text here and below cited by <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/26163/26163-h/26163-h.htm>

² Elsewhere in the quoted book: "The evolution of life really continues, as we have shown, an initial impulsion: this impulsion, which has determined the development of the chlorophyllian function in the plant and of the sensori-motor system in the animal, brings life to more and more efficient acts by the fabrication and use of more and more powerful explosives. Now, what do these explosives represent if not a storing-up of the solar energy, the degradation of which energy is thus provisionally suspended on some of the points where it was being poured forth? The usable energy which the explosive conceals will be expended, of course, at the moment of the explosion; but it would have been expended sooner if an organism had not happened to be there to arrest its dissipation, in order to retain it and save it up." (Ibid., pp. 243–4). If natural energy is admittedly excessive and if every organism has such a surplus of energy, then what does limit it? Its limitation is precisely what makes it excessive: indeed, "when continued growth is impossible, the way to the expenditure of energy is open". The point is, however, that this *expenditure* of energy cannot be instantaneous or explosive, although this is the best way to get rid of surplus. It can be very economical and prolonged. And here we see the theme of memory tacitly coming to light, or rather showing itself. The higher forms of life, the more developed ones, depend on memory, which allows them to control their own condition.

anything within its range of action; the latter can be easily confused with any growth (“development”), the gradual deployment and struggle of forces. In the former case we have simple, more primitive organisms, which are ready immediately to expend the energy they receive and convert it into life activity; in the latter immediate explosive expenditure is impossible, and increasingly complex organisms emerge and use the energy of the original *Explosion*, or *the First Push*: they retain part of the energy for purposes of their own development. This is “diverted” energy: the organism saves up and uses energy in the mode of “delayed explosion”, or implosion. However, the organism cannot save surplus energy indefinitely. Even if it does, it is only for expending it because life itself means balancing out expenditure and savings, and the life cycle of consumption (growth) as such consists in this process. Hence the necessity of expenditure, and any attempt to avoid, delay or halt it is a breach of the law of Nature, that is, something anti-Nature and anti-life. The themes of essential expenditures of energy, of organisms/oeuvres as “explosives”, of “dispersion” and “redistribution” thus translate into general economics as basic anthropological facts.

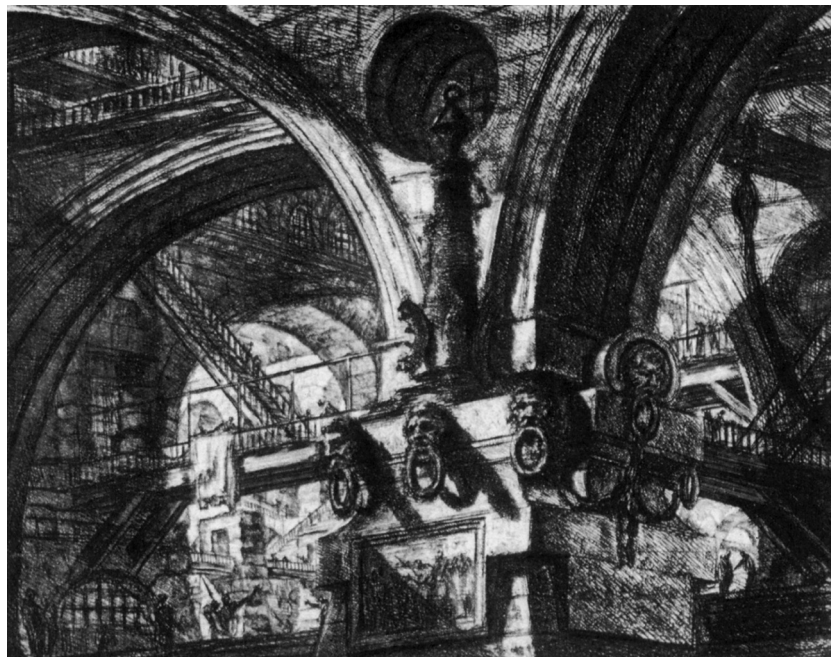
7. Here is Eisenstein’s train of thought as he analysed Piranesi’s series of etchings *Imaginary Prisons*:

“The focus of their effect is not so much *an explosion as the processes of the buildup towards an explosion*.

“An explosion may happen. Sometimes it is as intense as the preceding tension, sometimes not, and sometimes almost non-existent. The bulk of energy is drained into the process of overcoming with virtually no stop at the point achieved because the very process of overcoming in itself is the process of release. Almost invariably it is scenes of buildup that are the most memorable ones in my films.”¹

Eisenstein explicitly formulated the regularities of explosive transition from one architectural composition of the “prison” (graphic image) to another. This “transition” operates as self-description of a system that overcomes the final (*catastrophic*) state to transform into another (*transfigured*). An artwork has a great potential of *indirect* impact, which is dramatically intense and more far-reaching and lasting if it can produce a form capable of redirecting surplus energy flows within itself. The true work of art is a contained, delayed explosion. From the point of view of intrinsic dynamics of compositional imagery Piranesi’s *Prisons* are an implosive structure, an *invisible explosion*, with everything flying out, disintegrating and getting pulverized. We see unbelievably huge forbidding prison walls with gratings and embrasures, but our sensation is that of lightness rather than heaviness. The explosive cloud of flights of stairs receding into distance makes us feel in the focus of an *explosion*. In this way the dynamics of conflicting spaces, “blocks” and the brickwork of walls thus makes its way beyond the visible

¹ Eisenstein S.M., *Izbrannnyie proizvedeniya v shesti tomakh* (Selected Works in Six Volumes), vol. 3, Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1964, pp. 156–92.



composition of the etching so forcibly that there can be no other explanation: of course, this is the implusive wave breaking free and sweeping along everything in its way... The imprint of the perceptive impact will trace the line of our amazement over the power of this blast.

Giovanni Battista
Piranesi
Etching from
the *Prisons* series
Sheet XV. Circa 1760

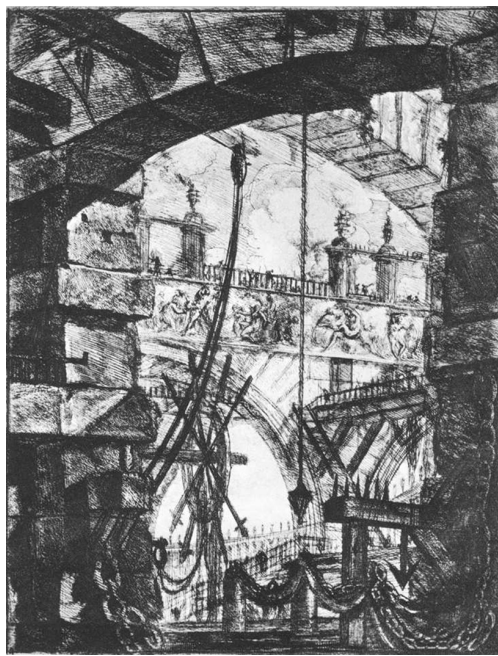
Eisenstein is attracted to the road that the artwork, such as *Imaginary Prisons*, opens to our eyes. As we contemplate the etchings, we become increasingly immersed in this incessant interplay of arches, bridges, crossings and passages, niches and spaces, light waves and glares: all of a sudden everything becomes “suspended”, as if lifted above the supporting basis, heavy shackles and locks, losing any weight and slowly soaring up. Eisenstein’s thought flows precisely in that direction: his aim is to track and analyse the viewer’s leap from eager contemplation to immersion in the visible movement of “transitions/breaks” and, ultimately, to the ecstatic sensation of that weightlessness and vagueness of imagery.

“Like the tubes of a single telescope extending in length and diminishing in diameter, these diminishing arches engendered by the arches of a plane closer up, these flights of stairs ejecting progressively diminishing new flights of stairs upward, penetrate into the depths. Bridges engender new bridges. Columns new columns. And so on ad infinitum. As far as the eye can follow.

“In raising the intensity of the etchings from state to state, Piranesi, in establishing new foregrounds, seems to thrust once again into the depths



Giovanni Battista
Piranesi
Etching from
the *Prisons* series
Sheet VII. 1761



Giovanni Battista
Piranesi
Etching from
the *Prisons* series
Sheet IV. Circa 1760

one measure deeper the entire figure created by him of successively deepening volumes and spaces connected and intersected by staircases.”¹

All the stages of implosive (explosive) poetics are represented on Piranesi’s two or three etchings, which, incidentally, were done at different times; it is only when comparing them that you notice to what extent they try to emulate one another while distorting and disfiguring what they try to convey. A play of explosive elements.

8. Andrey Biely is even more tempestuous and, I would say, more acrobatic as he urges us to hear the monotonous ticking of the bomb/“sardine tin” and feel the threat of world catastrophe in the imagery of his *St. Petersburg*. We indeed seem to hear that continuous, unbelievable sound, first unobtrusive, like muffled rumbling, but then rising to hollow, horrifying howling, the unpronounceable **Y-y-y** as the only sonorous code governing the entire movement of sounds in the novel. All the movements and rhythms of the novel are gradually sinking into this all-destructive rhythm; anyway, Biely tried to convey the effect (*phenomenon*) of the explosion without introducing or describing it, but *immanently*, as some force that is continuously at work in the novel, thus imparting explosive, impulsive energy to the compositional structure of the novel. Everything is throbbing, lashing out, sliding and exploding in Biely’s *St Petersburg*, everything appears to

¹ Eisenstein S.M., *Izbrannyye proizvedeniya v shesti tomakh*. The English translation from http://monoskop.org/images/a/a0/Tafuri_Manfredo_The_Sphere_and_the_Labyrinth.pdf

be displaced. The main characters move about with unusual speed thanks to their gestures and grimaces. Where they are visible and seem to have bodies, thoughts and individualities they still are mere dead masks, empty shells. Only an imperceptibly fast movement brings them back to life, and only those movements that the language announces; it is in language that we find their traces (the author's inarticulateness, rumbling, shouts and howling) whereas they themselves, the ultrafast creatures of this strange world, are virtually invisible¹.

9. Any oeuvre is a clash of forces, *external* and *internal*, *centrifugal* and *centripetal*, a clash of forces that associate themselves with what they are trying to overcome and thus express and those forces the clash with which cannot produce anything except explosion. It is primarily avant-garde artworks that are imbued with this ultimate shocking force, they indeed explode within us without leaving behind any memory of themselves. In defining the artwork Theodor Adorno, another influential Bergsonian, attempts to formulate its aesthetic characteristics, the main one of them being *apparition*: "Fireworks are apparition κατ' ἐξοχήν: They appear empirically yet are liberated from the burden of the empirical, which is the obligation of duration; they are a sign from heaven yet artifactual, an ominous warning, a script that flashes up, vanishes, and indeed cannot be read for its meaning."² However, one thing is perception and another the answer to the question as to whether there are objective preconditions for the artwork to objectivise itself, that is, to present itself as autonomous reality of experience and *outgrow* reality itself. Apparition is a phenomenon that can and must be discussed in phenomenological terms.

True, what makes the artwork objective for Adorno is its having irremovable internal contradictions, forces struggling with one another: it is these forces that "spark it up" and make it "explode" and rip the appearance of the world with "flashes" and "sparkles". The artwork is objective when its guiding force of expression breaks out of the prescribed form and ruins it; this force is always "more than itself" (*mehr*). Of course, we are talking about the latest unaesthetic experience (which no longer owes anything to the philosophy of the beautiful). Here is what Adorno uses as the basis for his definitions of apparition: "The instant in which these forces become image, the instant in which what is interior becomes exterior, the outer husk is *exploded*; their apparition, which makes them an image, always at the same time destroys them as image."³ And below, even more definitively: "Movement at a standstill is eternalized in the instant, and what has been made eternal is annihilated by its reduction to the instant."⁴ The latter point is

¹ A. Biely, *St Petersburg*, Moscow: Nauka, 1981; V. Podoroga, *Op. cit.*, pp. 30–76.

² Th.W. Adorno, *Esteticheskaya teoriya* (Aesthetic Theory), Moscow: Respublika, 2004, p. 120; the English translation from <https://istifhane.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/aesthetictheory.pdf>

³ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

particularly important. Indeed, the force of impact should make sure that the artwork itself is a device producing “direct action” effects. Adorno was well aware of the extent to which modernist consciousness is tensely allegorical, imbalanced and always on the brink of premature peril, given the risk of disappearing before making a presence.

10. Much earlier Marcel Proust wrote his great novel *In Search of Lost Time* with an emphasis on apparition. The first 60 pages of the first volume of the novel *Swann's Way* describe in detail how the original image of an artwork manifests itself. It is casual, random, it just “flares up”: “...I saw no more of it than this sort of luminous panel, sharply defined against a vague and shadowy background, like the panels which a Bengal fire or some electric sign will illuminate and dissect from the front of a building the other parts of which remain plunged in darkness.”¹ Proust often uses such descriptions of a slight arrest of attention followed by an almost instantaneous flare and ecstasy of involuntary memory when he tries to transform a fragment of reality into an artwork (“hawthorn-blossom”, “three churches”, etc.). His imaginary artists and performers of genius, whose art is the keynote of *In Search of Lost Time*, are presented through the same apparition technique: there are the *andante* movement from Vinteuil's sonata, several beautiful passages from Bergotte's works and a spot of light on the artist Elstir's canvas that Marcel the narrator finds in his poorly lit studio. All these are instants of explosion, of auratic arrest of the course of narration and literally the birth of aesthetic experience.

11. Samuel Beckett, a close reader of Proust, sees over a dozen such “epiphany flares” in his *Search of Lost Time* that bespeak the work of involuntary memory: “Involuntary memory is an ‘involuntary, total and delicious conflagration.’”² Here Beckett includes such apparitions, or revelations of memory, as the uneven cobblestones on which Marcel stumbles, *a spoon and plate, their very sound, the rumble of water in hotel pipes, a stiffly starched napkin, shoestrings*, etc. However, Beckett may have overlooked the most important thing: the artwork *fully presents itself only when it comes true*. This is the crucial definition of the artwork in modernism and post-modernism. Beckett records a clash of two particles in the memory experience of the “forgetful” Proust: one is a particle of the present and the other of the past; one is a signal originating from the practical experience of *now-being* and *right-here-being* while the other is a particle belonging to

¹ Proust M., *Swann's Way*. Penguin Books, 1957, p. 54 (Translated by C.K. Scott Moncrieff).

² S. Beckett, *Oskolki. Esse, retsenzii, kriticheskiye statyi* (Shards. Essays, Reviews, Critical Articles), Moscow: Text, 2009, p. 22. The English text quoted from <https://books.google.ru/books?id=xhSk6fg6u2MC&pg=PT195&lpg=PT195&dq=beckett+proust+involuntary+memory+-explosion&source=bl&ots=e7ViLDoyPY&sig=hmvNzmgLia1uEnfqd3tpFSSrC38&hl=ru&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj9x-qP88LLAhWrIJoKHWX1CQwQ6AEIJDAC#v=onepage&q=beckett%20proust%20involuntary%20memory%20explosion&f=false>

the past image and ready to unite with the former one. It is the same particle which is indivisible in our living memory, and it relates our perception to past memory with one explosive moment, illuminating, revealing and erasing it... So it circulates, now losing itself, now finding itself anew, here and there, stopping nowhere. It is from such micro-flashes of memory that the *perfect modernist artwork* is built¹.

Time takes both toil and idleness away into space
And brings back intention
While space seasons the resultant difference
with an element of suspicion.

Time and space live separately.
Time absorbs so as to give back
White space exhausts until the moment of fatality,
Their false brotherhood eventually wrecked.

Dmitry Sarabianov. *Verses of the later period*

THE ACTUAL, OR THE TIME OF FORGETFULNESS

12. The consciousness of contemporary artist is pervaded with the latter-day sense of temporality or impermanence, which we call *a c t u a l*. This consciousness comes to life only in the moment of actualization; here it flares up, and in a moment goes out. The actual should be understood as the action or act of actualization, activism or even actionism. Actual art is on the edge cutting of time, where contemporaneity cannot hold on. Contemporary art (museum classics) has characteristic techniques, styles, genres and mass-reproduced technology for producing “recognizable” images. Standard images of today are consumed over sufficiently long periods of time; they can correspond to the ebb and flow of fashion and the

¹ What Adorno calls apparition James Joyce, especially in his early works, formulates as a basic category of post-Aristotelian Thomistic aesthetics termed *epiphany*, or *Theophany* (frequently occurring in *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*). I think that to Joyce the epiphany phenomenon as some *quality of being as it is* presents a general principle, one that only receives fresh aesthetic support and grows stronger as the years go by. (See Joyce J., *Sobranie rannei prozy* (Collected Early Prose), Moscow: Eksmo, 2011, pp. 8–34. He did not renounce his early ideas as drastically as Umberto Eco suggests in his remarkable study. On the contrary, this category is definitive to the aesthetics of the later Joyce; moreover, it underlies his finely elaborated writing technique. The completeness of every position, statement and viewpoint gives us a chance to see an event, a piece of reality as it is and where it is. Or in other words, there are the epiphany of the artwork and presentation of its components, which are quite autonomous with their specific apparition, although quite in synch with the artwork as a whole (U. Eco, *Poetiki Dzhoisa* (Poetics of Joyce), St Petersburg: Symposium, 2006, pp. 123–31).

movement of goods and follow market strategies. The contemporary has a temporal cutting edge, which can be called *actual*, but the actual does not depend on any calendar time or cycle. The actual bursts out, explodes and rejuvenates the contemporary with its newness as fast as today's world allows.

13. The actual artist “knows everything”, he reflects, reads high-brow art books, can sell himself and is versatile; he is both professional and amateurish (combines different levels of knowledge and skills, from performances and design projects to business initiatives); in short, he navigates the well-explored socio-cultural and political landscape and knows it well. He is not what the artist of the early 1990s used to be and has very different goals and ideals. The new actual artist is not committed to one “favourite” subject or distinctive technique for expressing ideas: he is labile, mobile and ready to take on any, even “dirty” work. He was born at the time the art market was taking shape and for this reason, I think, he is unable to blow up the situation but only can timidly follow it. In fact, his professionalism is focussed on the “correct” understanding of the IMAGE (as it is circulated in the mass media). We also can construe the *ideal* of the actual artist. Today there are few artists capable of perceiving themselves as multicultural personalities, that is, *persons with a thousand faces*, with virtually every aspect of such personality capable of being reflected in a separate art practice without obliterating the others. The subject of actual art possesses a mercurial *Dasein*, he is polymorphous, plasma-like and mimetic to the point of virtuosity, as if he has had all the bones taken out of his body and now his jelly-like body were vibrating in rhythm with the concept, ready for actualization... Perhaps, this type of actual artist has been called for by market demand as it has taken shape *right now* (and not by dint of art evolution).

14. What then does it mean to be contemporary? It means to belong to one's time, which defines one's capability to perceive and be perceived. What can be contemporary is the period, the century, the past ten, twenty or thirty years, but by no means what is taking place here and now. Is actual the equivalent of fashionable? Generally speaking, what we call contemporary is beyond our comprehension; although most of events are taking place before our very eyes, we do not know the reasons behind them. Perhaps, this will come to light at a different time – or never.

15. Let us analyse the *topography* of the actual shown below.

There is no future any longer because it has already come; there is no past because it has been pushed out of individual memory and “settled down” in collective memory, getting “frozen” there forever. What is left is only the *p r e s e n t*, that is, the lasting time of perception, during which the perceiver does not tell himself from the perceived. But how do we comprehend the present? To my mind, it is double-layered: the *contemporary*

and the *actual* are combined in it, and these are certain modes of action of time that require evaluation (when we say “this is *contemporary*, but not necessarily *actual*”, for example, or “this is *actual*, but not necessarily *contemporary*”). What then do we mean by being contemporary? This means belonging to one’s time, which defines one’s ability to perceive and/or be perceived. The period, century, or past ten years can be contemporary, but by no means what is taking place here and now. Of course, the actual is not defined by calendar time, even less so by measurable physical or by psychological time. The actual is the acting time that can be neither postponed nor delayed. Contemporaneity has its *temporal cutting edge*, and it is that cutting edge that can be called *actual*.

16. The movement of time comes up against an obstacle; this obstacle is the direction of two times: the past against the future and the future against the past, which point to the mode of transition of one time to the other. The dialectic of the *break*, at the point of transition from the past to the future through the present. The future cannot be imagined or the past forgotten if the present is bypassed, and this is understandable. In the present time it is twisted up, broken down into ever more minute fragments and seeks to actualize itself at every point/moment with final completeness. Hence the intensity, impulsiveness and explosiveness of the temporal flow. An event in the mass media space cannot but be repetitive: the more repetitive images there are, the more significant the event. One example is millions of copies of the collapse of the World Trade Center towers in New York.

Actual art has no memory. It is not the art of forgetfulness, it does not need mnemonics because it lasts within a certain interval of time that is not governed by the longevity of the stored and preserved institutional memory. The actual artist acts so that every new gesture of his erase the previous one. That is why he always repeats himself, although in a different way on every new occasion. The mechanics of erasure is the artist’s skill of repeating himself, that is, of coming out as new and still newer.

CUTTING EDGE INSTANT. BOREDOM AND DISINTEGRATION OF AURA

17. The *instantaneousness* of the impact is what makes the actual complete. If you want to complete something, you must minimize the point of impact. The viewer must have no time to evaluate or resume a verbal act (protection), he must become a consumer of the communication; if such communication is targeted *precisely*, he will not need interpretation. A well-executed artwork has pinpoint accuracy and causes a shock. It does not move, stir or repel the viewer – no, it smashes his perceptive protection, which depends on *completeness* (or “document”). The instantaneousness of perception does not mean that you must be shocked; what matters is that you

understand it the moment you see it. Roland Barthes, following the spirit of late Modernism, expounds the idea of *punctum*, a sudden prick, the cutting edge of an invisible attack by an image that finally gets at you. However, one thing is missed here: the *punctum* is accidental and its generation is not the author's design but a blind choice of time. Finally, every epoch has *its own* punctums, and that is why they are so fluid, replacing one another as if in a relay race. Occasionally the viewer cannot "capture" and misses them, although they are there to see (when we "cannot tear our eyes off them"). The wholeness of the image is broken down and a search for these "covert" punctums begins¹.

18. In his unfinished early study of the existential interpretation of boredom Heidegger touches upon certain aspects of existence of the actual artwork that are of major importance to us².

Here is how his train of thought goes.

First he poses a series of questions about what should be understood by *boredom* or what is the experience of *being bored*, the experience of profound or dumbing boredom: is not this the absence of habitual reactions to what is taking place (to the needs of Daisen)? Precisely the temporary paralysis that seizes us when being bored or having a bout of "profound boredom" testifies that something has happened to time if boredom itself is some phenomenon of temporality, or even some pathology of individual time, or a deviation from the rhythms of existence itself. Boredom is a product of the infinite extension of the temporal horizon, moreover, to such an extent that time in such extended form is something like a spell, wizardry or aura, and also capture (the *translation* offered to us.). Time empties itself and becomes space (with the negative sign). Heidegger reiterates over and again the conditions of this utmost slowing down of time, that is, the very phenomenon of boredom as a complex and multicomponent phenomenon of temporality. Being predisposed or attuned to boredom manifests itself through emptiness, through being left empty, and this attunement is understood *topologically*. What we see is boredom, the phenomenon of being bored as *an expanding space stretching into infinity that is full of emptiness*. We come across such space in Andrei Platonov's stories, where boredom is just a symbol of tragically lived being that is called a *nguish* (melancholy): this feeling envelops one and threatens to drain away everything human. It is also "simply boring", sunk in the spellbound emptiness of faraway gullies and steppes. But it is not the boredom that the character of Goncharov's novel *Obломov* strives to uphold as the doctrine of "doing nothing" or the fabulous Russian laziness.

¹ Roland Barthes, *Camera lucida*.

² M. Heidegger, "Osnovnye ponyatiya metafiziki. Mir-konechnost-odinochestvo (The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics. World, Finitude, Solitude), St Petersburg, Vladimir Dahl Publishers, 2013, p. 241.

How does one break out of the state of complete capture (enchantment) with boredom and regain oneself in the time of existence? I can only presume, with a reference to Kierkegaard, that boredom can also be interpreted as rejection of existential temporality. This means rejection of the *time* of choice. Meanwhile this time belongs to choice itself, it is the time of the *instant* in which Kairos operates as the *cutting edge*, tearing existential time out of the boredom that threatens to stop life. There is only one purpose, and that is breaking the boredom of repetitiveness in favour of the risk of choice and always siding with the resoluteness of choice.

LETTER AND SPIRIT. APROPOS THE HISTORY OF MOSCOW CONCEPTUALISM

19. I see the conceptual movement as rather closed, private and partially dissident. It was a conspiracy of the artistically advanced elite against the then political regime. Their conceptual reflection was focussed on the world of Soviet *paradigms* (in all their diversity, such as customs, habits, dreams and stereotypes of the period). Conceptualism as a whole is focussed on the LETTER (as the smallest element of political writing and its grammatical unit). I will try to explain the meaning I invest in this postulate. What is the reason for this painstaking analysis of the linguistics of the letter in the practice of conceptualism and why does precisely the letter crown all its plastic images? The answer is obvious. Under the Soviet regime the natural verbal flow was captured (usurped, forcibly taken over) and driven out into the periphery of social life (into semi-legal study and interest groups and kitchens of Moscow and St Petersburg). Every word and letter, in fact, every stylistic, grammatical and even lexical capability of the language was under control. That great political regime feared the stand-alone Letter if it was not part of the administered ideological context. The authorities insisted on the Marxist-Leninist discourse, imposed it as the only admissible linguistic norm and were well aware of the possible source of danger for the regime. In fact, every letter pronounced or, even worse, written “in a wrong way” and placed not where it should have been, could ruin the regime’s discourse. I think that all the more prominent heroes of conceptualism (among them I. Kabakov, B. Grois, D.A. Prigov, V. Sorokin, G. Bruskin, A. Monastyrsky, L. Rubinstein and many others) were men of the LETTER. At that time the Conceptual Letter existed in a very broad range of applications. I remember the many “political mistakes” caused by breaches in set phrases and clichés (for example, the same error occurred in many publications of the *Voprosy Filosofii* (Problems of Philosophy) journal when authors mentioned transition “from socialism to capitalism” rather than “from capitalism to socialism” in their articles). Only veteran editors with their “trained eye” spotted such things whereas others just did not notice them. Even readers always missed such “mistakes”. The automatic relationship between the regime’s discourse and its language was

gradually falling apart. Conceptualism attacked the Letter of the regime, which prohibited any communication with society out of the literal context of the communicated message. I think it was President Gorbachev who finished off conceptualism as an ideology and destroyed the party man's loyalty to THE LETTER OF THE REGIME when he began talking without fearing to make a mistake or deviate from the Stalinist sacrality of the LETTER, its primordially and its omnipotence.

Conceptualism is one of the better developed techniques of stripping the regime's discourse of its sacrality. Replacement or anamorphosis of the Letter in art. In other words, the regime's automatic writing and discourse of paradigms came under attack from *writing without discourse*, a new artistic gesture that targeted the addressee rather accurately, a viral letter, the infestation of the regime's discourse by invading its automatic writing: slow down, stop, interrupt, destroy.

20. Instead the conceptual artists introduced well-designed techniques for actual art practices (such as happenings, performances, installations, etc.). Under such an ideological regime the LETTER does not exist separately from the SPIRIT or the SPIRIT from the LETTER. Then there was progress from the letter to writing, which conceptualism began to develop in order to counter the mechanistic hieroglyphic paradigms of the Soviet regime. Conceptualism started developing the techniques of automatic writing, thus involuntarily parodying the automatic writing of the regime and its entire "discourse", which in the last years of the Soviet Union dismally failed to control daily language usage. "Medical Hermeneutics" members, D.A. Prigov's verse raptures and M. Epstein's essayistic group readily come to mind in this connection. It was indeed in the 1970s that the regime's automatic writing began to be seen as something absolutely alien and even absurd that did not agree with the standard of common human communication. This writing of the regime was everywhere, but without any support from its own ideological discourse. There was no doublethink, but the gulf between Reality and the ways of its Representation in the regime's automatic writing was absolutely obvious. The latter was fast moving away from the former, destroying "Marxist-Leninist" ideology in the process. Gorbachev's naiveté was manifest in his belief (even if fake) in some "true" Leninist socialism. He did not quite understand that any discussion, opinion or contest of ideas would kill any ideological resource (if we can speak about it at all). There emerged some strange "automatic writing": people did not believe anything any longer, but writing was everywhere, everything was written "c o r r e c t l y" everywhere, the right speeches were pronounced, and so on.

21. By the end of the 1970s it became clear that the regime had entered a new phase: the gap between what was associated with the LETTER, LAW and CONTROL and what was said and was allowed to be said had widened

dramatically. Previously the party discourse had been responsible for what people thought *aloud* and what should be presented as the “correct” sacral image of the regime that restricted the public will for free speech. The political writing of the regime became automatic and slipped from under the control of the ideological/party discourse. In conceptualism it was the Letter, manipulation with words said by others, re-interpretation and depreciation of such words and their translation into a plastic gesture, painting or sculpture played a tremendous role. The first important actions were tested mostly on members of the art community and their friends; they were shocking but apolitical. Actionism becomes powerful and influential only when it gets involved in a political happening or accompanies it, or else brings it to attention in the utterly emphatic exposition of a gesture.

22. The current stage of development of contemporary domestic actionism cannot be characterised as new, but it is clearly taking the place vacated by the conceptual philosophy of art. What is the most important thing about these changes? It is the factor of *immediate impact* that only became possible because society has gained a different level of freedom¹. In my view, actionism emerges precisely as a consequence of awareness of a new sense of freedom and, of course, readiness to demonstrate that sense. The sphere of the direct action of the artistic gesture has expanded unprecedentedly and there appeared a new CONSUMER, namely, the mass media community as a whole rather than individual groups of connoisseurs and fans of actual art. Communication with the consumer is based on interaction; here is the cutting edge of the actualisation of the artistic gesture. The actual for the actionist artist is *immediate impact* upon the Other, and that other cannot avoid, dodge or prevent it.

23. In the 1990s, the time of chaos and predatory original accumulation of oligarchic capital, actionism could not find its niche within actual art and remained a sort of bourgeois action within the emergent post-Soviet bourgeoisie. Indeed, actual art took shape as permanent practice against the grim depressive background of devastation, the catastrophic impoverishment of the population, rampant crime, the emergence of oligarchs, glamour and “public opinion”, the makeover of punitive institutions, and the growing influence of TV and the Internet, but all those processes were “off the mark”, with no promise for future change. Being in the focus of this freedom... actionism went on the offensive precisely when it was capable

¹ There was close control over the sacral official space, with a tight hold on all the possible venues where actionist artistic gestures could be demonstrated. Under Brezhnev and Andropov Red Square was supervised especially closely. Under the security regulations the police patrol on duty had the minimum time (something like 15 seconds) to cope with protests and individual sporadic actions on the square. In other words, any actionist manifestation was immediately suppressed, and anyone behind its planning and execution would be sentenced to a prison term under laws prescribing punishment for crimes or dissident activities.

of capturing (at least temporarily) the *sacred places* of post-Soviet urban space and renaming them. The tools of such activities of actionist groups are scandal, guerilla warfare, provocation, mute speech (a ban on speech). All these tools have the only purpose of ridding old things of post-Soviet aura and place. It is not enough to conceptualise an event; a direct impact on the environment is needed for its drastic transformation (at least for the moment of the action itself). It is necessary to put an end to the understanding (contemplation) of the idea of omnipotence of reason and reflection. It is necessary to attack consciousness not by appealing to “free thinking”, not through speech or mind, but through the body, that is, attack everything that involves the co-participant in the action, the new Consumer, in the “harsh” practice of remaking his own body and the bodies of others, their new images. Actionism tries to create a new anthropology, the anthropology of *actual* corporeality. The silence of the actionist artist is not something subjective or arbitrary, but the very essence of actionism: he uses exclusively body language. Action links the desired object to one who observes it and tries to capture, appropriate and destroy it. Following the victory of Perestroika and the onset of the age of Big Crime (throughout the 1990s) there opened up a new social space, a space that was free for crime and flight, anonymity and theft, but not for rebellion. The bulk of the population shut off the unbearable reality as best as they could and especially banished art that directly appealed to that disgusting and deadly Reality. Actionism was especially successful when it used the human body and all the other bodies (museums, mass bodies, etc.)

24. It is important to note that actionist ideology is focussed on *sacrifice*. In some cases the act of sacrifice makes the artist himself the target and centre of representation of an idea while in others the attack targets concrete paradigms, norms and institutions – the regime’s discourse – and those people who represent them in public mentality. Artists representing the latter trend suffer at the hands of the authorities far more often than artists who present themselves as targets for experiments and/or artworks. Admittedly, actionist art is *necessarily* connected with such self-sacrifice. What A. Osmolovsky calls the *sincerity* of the actionist artist I call readiness for self-sacrifice and victimhood and, ultimately, readiness to take the risk of losing everything one has had or achieved and even end up in jail. The stakes are rising: it is not enough to be *simply* an artist or even a *successful* artist – how can you get your message across to many people, even those who have nothing to do with art?¹

¹ I remember Oleg Kulik effectively demonstrating in my sector video scenes from his “dog’s life”. I was particularly impressed by the clip in which he as a dog viciously attacks German shepherds held in leash by policemen to keep the beasts from “retaliating”. The dogs were positioned in a circle at a distance of the length of the chain holding Kulik the dog. A white flag with blue stars flies high over the spot. We see a vulnerable naked human body darting about between dogs’ snouts at the risk of being torn apart as soon as the dogs are unleashed.

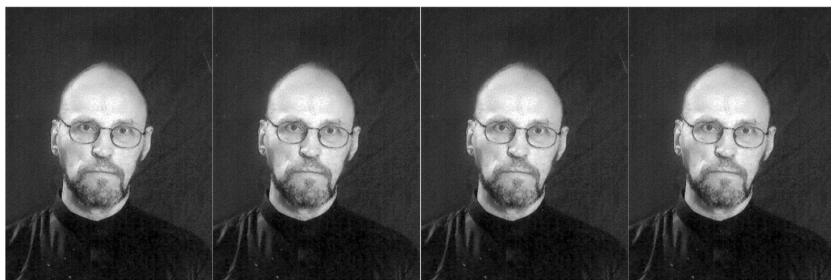
UNRETURNED GAZE. APROPOS D.A. PRIGOV'S MASK

Anemic face, your trick, poet...

N. Zabolotsky

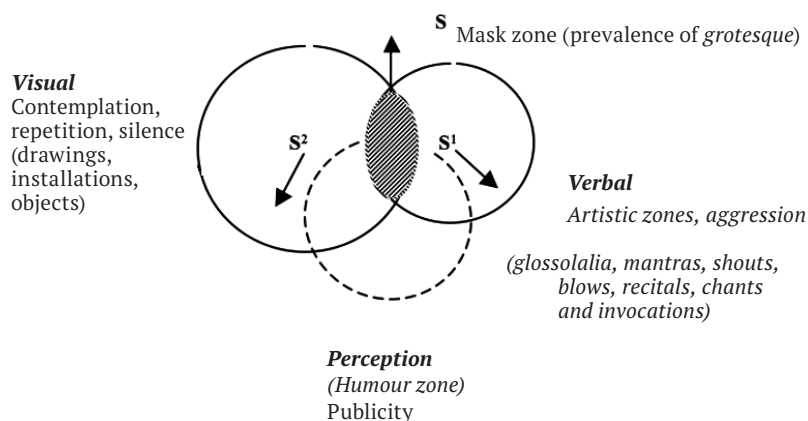
25. One very memorable physiognomic impression of mine is Prigov's face, the *distance* he puts between himself and what he is involved in, what he creates as an actual artist. This feeling is not something close to what is described as "being not in one's element" or an artificial psychological condition; perhaps, it is something like the well-known mask of *Buster Keaton*. He wears an impenetrable expression without any reaction to anything, perhaps gloomy, but not that gloomy, perhaps aloof and self-focussed, but not that aloof; the eyes look at you and don't look at you; and being at that place, he behaves as if he were elsewhere. Perhaps, my observation is wrong and few people will share it, but I see Prigov's image through that mask of his. Prigov's photographs displayed at the exhibition are beautiful precisely because of that utter aloofness. When you come across rare photographs of V. Khlebnikov, regardless of how they were taken his gaze never reaches us; it gets lost somewhere on the approaches to our world without crossing the borders of time. You cannot find a photograph on which he looks into the camera lens. A sideward gaze was the most open gaze of the great poet. To Prigov his own mask was very important because it made him an exterritorial person in an art experiment: he is the author and participant, but neither the author nor participant, nor even the public. We were just discussing the artistic value of the unreturned gaze in destroying the artistic aura of the traditional image of an artist seeking support, fame and justification. This unreturned gaze keeps us away from the image that is being created before our very eyes. We cannot say that the artist here is like a *zombie*, sleepwalker or *psycho-automaton*. However, this behavioural mask precludes any event of gaze exchange and, therefore, denies any understanding of what is taking place right before us. In other words, Prigov's mask does not restrict his potential as an actual artist. Masks are simulacrum of identity; in fact, the mask hides the unbelievable capability for impersonation that Prigov used as a poet, artist, master of performance and installations, virtuoso of glossolalia, etc., a mercurial and fluid identity.

26. In the early 1990s *aggression* underlay the plastically expressive form of actual art. Moreover, that aggression often had a very concrete target. Eventually its intensity diminished because the murderous ruthlessness of that time made it impossible to accept the aesthetics of the aggressive gesture as a social phenomenon. Common aggression suppressed the aesthetic experience. However, it did not disappear but was turned around: its provocative, "tongue-in-cheek" aspect addressed the inner circle of the art community of the period. Artists themselves became victims of and participants in various art experiments. I remember how Prigov read his "*Militiaman*" at a poetry readings in the Zuev community centre on Lesnaya Street,



Video performance
(2001–2002)

if I am not mistaken. The brilliant aggression of the free artist destroyed everything around and it seemed that nothing of the “coppers” of the immediate past was left around except for Prigov’s *militiaman*. At that time the audience was far less receptive to the comic aspect of Prigov’s style than to its aggressive, anarchic aspect.



S is the mask zone, it is invariable and even immobile;¹ its expression does not change in any way, it is semantically *desolate*, like the streets of old Paris on Atget’s photographs (which Benjamin admired so much); that face with its aloof expression is a face without an aura. **S¹** actually marks the beginning of the nearest environment with which aggression (or its semblance), understandable humour and gestures are associated; **S²** is a different environment in which the artistic impact is not *immediate*, and it is an environment of the visible, where the artist’s body does not “sound”:

¹ Prigov’s cameo role in A. German’s film *Khrustalev, the Car*; his “mask” was probably needed to make hospital space look as real as possible. I thought that Prigov was germane to or, rather, compatible not only with that, but with any other space, regardless of whether it was playing, highly artistic or common, compatible because it would be as alien to him as any other space in which he could find himself...

there is no echo, it is “pure space” devoid of any tones. The body represents itself in total silence and without any feedback, then and immediately follows transition to different types of recording (from writing to symbols). The mask enables Prigov to perform acts that are very much like those of a *shaman*, in other words, acts that are not limited to anything like genre, professional techniques, ideology or common art objectives. Like the shaman, Prigov wears an immobile mask, which due to its general neutrality towards ongoing events, its *non-involvement* and aloofness makes it possible to create new opportunities for playing. Every environment has its own shock programme: while in S¹ it is immediate challenge and immediate impact, one that is superfast and dominated by speech, in S² the slowing down, halt and cataleptic lull in an installation are equivalent to a shock. Everything is gathering momentum here and slowing down there. What I mean is that Prigov was an *actor* of actuality rather than an actual *artist*. While the former does everything at his own risk and peril, without paying attention to those who he addresses, the latter always does something for the Other (and thus becomes dependent on the demands of that Other, what we call the art market today). Actuality is not technological and does not follow any rules, and that was how Prigov acted, on every occasion turning up where the actuality of current events was fraught with a shock. I think we should draw a more distinctive divide between the *actor* of actuality and the actual *artist* than we could do before. The latest exhibitions of actual art have forcefully demonstrated that even the best specimens of actual art are severely subordinated to the logic of the art market, the strategy of glamour, and no longer capable of creating an innovative environment. Close-knit teams of bunglers march onto the actual art scene one after another in search of fame and money. Those who way back in the 1990s tried to impart new dimensions, such as “physical aggression”, to actual art, among them Kulik, Brener, Osmolovsky, Guelman and AEC, translate their imagination into new materials and ever more refined art technologies. Only few actual artists, among them Prigov, choose artistry over well-thought-out market strategies. By virtue of his “genetically inherited” (I dare say) shamanism the universal artist or ACTOR is capable of implementing individual projects contrary to the technologically overloaded art of today. When he ceases to be an actor, the actual artist becomes a designer decorating the zone of attraction for “new” bourgeoisness. Prigov interpreted his creative work as a sacrifice and readiness for *self-sacrifice* as the basis or even supreme stage of professionalism.

27. By the mid-1990s Prigov had changed his tactics in view of the past years that changed the times and operated mostly through *delay* or halt of time (video installations, performances and portraits). Today, with everything caught in a fast pace, which is beginning to engulf our life without leaving us a moment of peace, it is *deceleration* that produces a shock: what is needed is the slowest, not the fastest. Nothing happens, there is no reflection-provoking content, and everything just repeats itself monotonously.

The goal is the art of repetition. Prigov's artistry pursues the very pragmatic objective of not succumbing to the rhythm imposed from without but resisting it. The actual artist seeking to keep abreast of developments becomes part of an extraneous process and turns into a craftsman, specialist in tastes, aesthetic servant or business artist. Technology entirely subordinates innovative imagination; moreover, such imagination no longer "works" because now any novelty is just a link in the technological chain. Whatever Prigov took up, risk was the natural framework of his art actions. I heard that shortly before he *left* us he had agreed to take part in some monstrous performance: he was to be lifted in a wardrobe nearly to the 12th-storey level of one of the Moscow University towers. Though well advanced in years, Prigov nevertheless took such risks of falling victim to his art practice.

28. A closer look proves that many of his artworks involve deceleration. Generally speaking, the factor of deceleration has been used since Warhol, and it was used in the exhibition. The video installation is as follows: Prigov is sitting on one side of the picture and his counterpart on the other, and Prigov leads, makes passes and directs the counterpart's movements, which *mirror* his own. It is a very slow Zen Buddhist exercise. Although the movement is very slow and can be watched slowly as well, there is no "traditional" contemplation here. On the contrary, it is destroyed by the slow repetition of the same gestures and pendulum-like movement. The instantaneous capture of the situation has already occurred and given way to trance, that is, to a condition in which we become involved in an extraneous rhythm and try to master it. Repetition as it is, very slow, points to the possibility of trance. So, superfast alternates with superslow, and both upset the conventional ways of perception of an artwork. The traditional, *auratic* artwork ceases to exist because the traditional forms of its perception die away. But this does not mean that the earlier forms of contemplation cannot still be active outside the sphere of (contemporary) actual art. So the artist trying to be in time everywhere becomes a designer of the civilisational process; he takes part in it as an aesthetic process engineer. But the artist who does not want that institutes rules of delay. He uses various halting techniques to draw attention to repetition itself and give man time not for contemplation, but for understanding the character of such repetition. Man should survive amidst these different rhythms and have enough time simply to examine something, instantly grasp something and disregard something else, that is, have unlimited speed of perception as the consumer of images and "irritations". (To what extent this is possible today is no longer a question: suffice it to mention the virtual worlds of the Web.)