

Naturalization and reification of the human global subjective experience in some forms of scientific and technological art

In Uruguay, where I live, some artist practices and discourses that seek to connect in no traditional way art and science in innovative ways have been institutionalized. Some examples of these institutions are the *Medialab* of the Faculty of Engineering, *Gen*, which is a space of production of art and science, and, finally, the *Equinox*, an academic event, where I have participated, which name is *Equinox*. These three institutionalizations of such aim are not the product of a casual or lucky miraculously encounter of scientists and artists. Rather, on the opposite, these institutionalizations they are the crystallization of an international tendency. Maybe you have heard of know the Artsci Salon in Toronto, the ArtScience Museum of Singapore, the Laboratory of Art Alameda in Mexico and the Centre for Art, Science and Technology, Art Catalyst, in London.

To understand these institutions we can take a look at their pragmatism and programmatically theoretical sample which is Tomasula's famous paper in *Leonardo*. The journal itself, for its part, that is an other example of institutionalization of an interest to connect in a some particular way art and science. In "Genetic Art and the Aesthetics of Biology", Tomasula argues that transgenic art has called into question the theoretical and practical boundaries between art and science and, moreover, the ontological limits of art and nature. In accordance with that, According to him / this theory we live in a very particular moment in of the history of art: on the one hand, machines produce art, in such a way that science and art seem to overlap each other and, on the other hand, animal and human bodies are transfigured in artistic production materials, in such a way, for its part, so that art also seems to overlap with to nature. In this special state of affairs, there are two necessary mainly questions: firstly, does exist a historical identity of art exist? And, then, it is is it possible to catch its specificity? Secondly, in the light of the aesthetical manipulation of animal and human bodies, does exist a human or animal specificity exist?

The problem that I bring forward / advance here I advance belongs to that first question. If it was possible to formulate ing a relationship of identity between practices which we usually call *artistic*, concerning their faculties, reception and historical dynamics, maybe we can call into question not only the institutionalized search of these spaces of art and science, but also problematise make problematic what some part of the Artworld has supposed, I mean, the positive aesthetical value of genetic or transgenic artworks. This is what I am looking for today, and my main question is the following: how it is possible to aesthetically evaluate ing a productive instance of art which has been reduced *a priori* into a political programme and also has been reduced into veritative-functional interpretation?

Let us describe, firstly and briefly, two examples of genetic artworks.

In Eduardo Kac's *Signs of Life*, Natalie Jeremijenko briefly describes in what consisted on her *One Tree* project consisted in. In certain similitude line with Walter Benjamin's agenda, Jeremijenko argues that the very ideas of authenticity and individual identity are already obsolete, because nowadays the genetic engineering can produce lived photocopies of lived organisms. Said it. To put it in a borgean way, in the genetic engineering world one tree is all trees and all trees are finally one tree only. Or in more brutal terms, in such world the time has been refuted. Nevertheless, what would happened be the case if we exposed two organic photocopies to different environmental conditions? The problem setted out by Jeremijenko to the biological determinism is the following: if genetics refutes the time, then genetics should to account for the deep transformations that environment produces in of these photocopies produced by their environments. Therefore, is it it is then reasonable to hold the genetic determinism? This question concerning the individual identity and authenticity is, really, subordinate to such the dichotomy between liberty and determinism. Jeremijenko's *One Tree* pretends to

performatively participate in this debate on biology and social praxis. The project was made of ~~had~~ two parts. The first ~~part one~~ consisted in ~~was~~ the production of a thousand cloned trees which ~~being plantlets~~ were exhibited as plantlets in 1999 in the Yerba Buena Centre for the Arts in San Francisco, California, United States. The second ~~part one~~ was developed in 2001, when each little tree was seeded in different public sites of the San Francisco Bay Area. According to Jeremijenko, each of these little trees ~~was were~~ no other thing ~~but the that~~ mimetic lived memory of experiences and contingencies of ~~the such~~ public places where they were seeded.

Finally, let us think of a second example of genetic art, the *Genesis* project by Eduardo Kac. To comprehend it, let us postulate, firstly, that what can be said in any language is translatable into Morse code. Your intuitions are good, if you are associating biology to the general concept of *code*. As it has been proposed by Claus Emmeche ~~since~~ years ago in "Defining Life. Explaining Emergence", ~~the b~~ Biology can be thought as a particular form of semiotics or interpretable symbolic information. In his project, Kac sets out a second order of translation from a sentence of Morse codes into DNA base pairs that he calls "artist's gen". Surely you are ~~asking questioning~~ yourself now: 'why *Genesis*'? Because his project was the progressive translation into a genetic code of a verse of the Bible, 1.26 that says: "Let man have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." Yes, this verse was translated into a Morse code and then into a genetic code integrated by Kac himself into a bacteria exhibited online in the OK Centre of Contemporary Art in Linz, Austria. According to Kac, the interest ~~in for~~ this biblical verse is ~~to problematise making problem~~ the human domain over ~~the~~ nature, while, on the other hand, the interest ~~in for~~ the Morse code is – attending its power to open the globalization process of Western civilization ~~globalization process~~ – its character of epochal symbol. By means of the Internet, the receptors of *Genesis* were able to produce mutations ~~in on~~ the bacteria using ultraviolet light shoots on it ~~her~~. In this way, according to Kac, the transformation of the genetic code, then the Morse code and, finally, the biblical verse constitutes a symbolic gesture. And Kac concludes, [quote]: "... It means that we do not accept its meaning in the form we inherited it, and that new meanings emerge as we seek to change it."

From these two examples, I would like to ~~make do~~ some remarks which will be useful to me in order to evaluate transgenic art by means of some other remarks on traditional arts. From both examples, *Genesis* and *One Tree*, we can isolate some specific properties of this kind of art. Firstly, both productions discuss a philosophical thesis; secondly, the receptive approach to these works entails not a merely erudite disposition, but a necessary knowledge of the paratextual information which is a condition to ~~understand the works'senses~~ meaning; thirdly, because the paratextual information plays ~~has a~~ central role ~~roll~~ in the works's reception, their figurative reflection by receptors is almost dissolved into a theoretical evaluation of such paratexts. In this way, I think that these works have an extraordinary aesthetic difficulty. I mean, their comprehension is mostly guided by the exhibition of discursive or theoretical properties. In Theodor W. Adorno's terms, if two children meet each other ~~in the street on the road~~ and bet ~~at in~~ different times, but using the same money, ~~to eat eating~~ a toad, they will not to do more than to come back into the same initial situation, but living the disagreeable consequence of housing two toads in their stomachs.

Given an artwork, if our aesthetical procedure to interpret it consists in determining philosophical, scientific, and theological thesis only, certainly we will agree with Adorno, who would argue that the work's materiality will be trivialized in the process. The work, in other words, would be the poorest vehicle to communicate something which we can better communicate by means of language or, on the other hand, it would be something like the sweet of a pill and, then, works as the better mean to a rhetorical aim. To some extent, if

we postulate that ~~the~~ aesthetics comprehension is a complex process implying multiple interactive mental levels, genetic artworks seem to contend the same problems of the old conceptual art of the ~~middles~~ of 50's. I hold, then, that the aesthetical evaluation of artworks does not leave behind a certain complex mental model which, in ~~the~~ genetic art case, ~~it~~ is not possible to achieve because of its high emphasis on theoretical or discursive components. Therefore, let us consider some remarks that bring us to evaluate the aesthetical quality of genetic art.

The irreducibility ~~of~~ the artworks to its ideological conditions – and then to its socio-economic conditions – or components was a precious philosophical thesis of ~~Marx's~~ 1857's ~~Marx~~ *Einleitung*. According to Marx, if ~~the~~ reducibility was ~~to~~ be the case, then how can we ~~would~~ account for the modelic and normative value ~~that of~~ Homeric poetry ~~holds for to~~ us today? We can ~~reply answer~~ to Marx that if we consider art and ideology ~~as~~ the same thing, then we should accept that every transformation of ideology implies the dissolution of any modelic and normative power of art absorbed by such ideological change. It is necessary to recognize - as Uruguayan Philosopher Juan Fló pointed out - that artworks and ideologies are heterogeneous. If *ideology* means, in its *stricto sensu*, inverted representations or descriptions of socio-economical reality, artworks and ideologies are actually heterogeneous. And the reason ~~for why to~~ this is very simple, and it was formulated by Gottlob Frege in its famous "Sense and Denotation". The difference between Judge and Sense has its background in ~~the~~ scientific interest to comprehend the world. According to Frege, if we ~~looking~~ for the theoretical truth, we will have an interest for the particular referentiality of a sentence and its referents. Our receptive disposition to artworks does not ~~flows~~ to theoretical truth and, therefore, it does not ~~flows~~ to evaluate the existence of ~~the~~ its referents. Every work of art impels us to agree with ~~it they~~ in forgetting any form of veritative-functional analysis.

This semantic, visual or even acoustical freedom allows us to set out one specific question concerning the constitutive characteristics of traditional artworks and, moreover, concerning the mental activity associated ~~with to~~ these traditional artefacts. When ~~the~~ artworks are ~~freely~~ of practical and communicative claims, they allows us ~~to exploring the linguistic, visual and acoustic materials without any restrictions~~ to rational principles such as coherence, cohesion, unity of sense, validity, truth, clarity, economy, distinction, and so on. By virtue of this ~~freely~~ behaviour of artworks, we can postulate ~~a an artworks~~ power which ~~artworks they~~ have had from their very origin. ~~†We can call~~ this power or faculty of artworks ~~we can call it~~, following Juan Fló, *subjective human global experience*. We believe that sometimes we recognize ourselves into ~~the~~ artworks - as if ~~it happens~~ some kind of identification between ourselves and artworks ~~had happened-~~, but we actually are shaping and organizing our phenomenological experience of ourselves through the properties and relations of properties of an artwork. ~~The †Traditional artworks allow us to~~ unearth, as some type of phenomenological archaeology, our more repressed representations - of ~~each and~~ everyone of us and of the social collective. Such anaesthesia of our theoretical disposition to any artefact makes ~~it~~ possible to bring into ~~play cognitive and phenomenological processes~~ in ourselves that are ~~a~~ spontaneous shaping ~~of by means of figurative images or literary fictions~~ our self-comprehension in the everyday social world ~~by means of figurative images or literary fictions~~.

If we read the *peripeteia* of Dostoevsky's *Underground Man*, it is possible that we experience the vital contradictions in his search ~~of for~~ any meaning of life and the liability of any foundation to any founded existential meaning. This *Underground Man* seems to live in a Cratylus world where ~~it~~ does not exist any kind of ontological identity and, therefore, any intentional and permanent decision in time. His desperation is our own mind confronting ~~in within itself herself~~ the diverse levels of beliefs or conceptions of social reality at ~~once one~~ time. However, coming back to genetic art, the mainly level that we

bring into play when we experience genetic artworks is intellectual. ~~The~~ Genetic artworks compel us to catch one discourse which drives us to some philosophical discussion or debate, that is, they drive us to the activity of our theoretical rationality. In this peculiar art, our subjectivity is reified, because its qualities are dissolved in its central paratext information. The senses of such artworks are actually the paratexts themselves. These objects, for ~~their~~ ~~its~~ part, are a vacuous pretexts to playing with curiosity and surprise, but not to exploring our collective unconscious. Curiosity and surprise are easily and quickly reduced to theoretical information which compels us to confront intellectual ideas by means of theoretical principles.

Our aesthetical mind ~~is~~ ~~are~~ exposed, then, to the petrification of ~~its~~ ~~her~~ movements or figurative possibilities. ~~Such~~ The unearthing / exposure / uncovering of representations through such peculiar genetic art structures is repressed. Therefore, genetic artworks are in advance / from the start untrue because we can hold that aesthetic truth consists in the power to move at once ~~the~~ time the different levels of mind to consciousness ~~the~~ ~~different~~ ~~levels~~ ~~of~~ ~~mind~~ by means of the organization and shaping of our phenomenological experience of ourselves.