A new cultural paradigm

Media Art, new economies, open innovation and DIY

We've got to start living with it, the future is here; those who do not take it in are lost. The twentieth-century sustenance models of artistic and cultural production are disappearing and our generation has not had the time to test them all the way. In Western countries, state subsidies for culture, as well as funds provided by enlightened (and interested) sponsors, are ever more scarce and concentrated in the hands of a few representatives of a social and economic elite that is busy occupying and consolidating its roles and positions.

In the last three decades, the necessary finances to activate production processes in the field of Media Art have come first and foremost from institutions, but also from banks, patrons or sponsorships from markets that seemed apparently untouched, though ready to commercially contaminate and thus guarantee survival. The common feeling is that this great welfare mechanism that - let's admit it - was thought to be everlasting is not sustainable any longer and should allow space to more virtuous art production and dissemination processes.

In fact, in a period of growing economic recession and widespread cuts to cultural funding, the number of examples of cultural and creative subjects and industries involved in the standardization of sustainable development models aimed at activating functional productive processes to realize a "cultural object" is increasing: artists, designers, programmers, authors, hackers, makers, musicians, film-makers, graphic designers; but also companies in the ICT sector of course such as hardware and software producers, or active in such fields as scientific research, mechatronics, artificial intelligence, biomedicine or materials investigation.

The new "creative classes" come from a varied background; they have not been necessarily institutionalized even though they contribute to creating "value" on a socio-economic model scale that is more connected to the *networks* and the production of bottom-up culture. They are able to act as a link between the industries and an ecosystem of research centres, laboratories, and academies, exhibit spaces and institutions of excellence, so as to create interesting sharing, exchanging and production mechanisms. The ultimate goal is to activate dissemination and circulation processes for the "cultural object" - a product a company would not have access to - for the growing interest of a whole productive sector ever more ready to invest in arts and culture, more attentively and massively than in the past.

The ability of what we refer to here as "Art Industries" is that of acting as catalysers and incubators of an increasingly popular form of grassroots artistic, economic and cultural production, linked to the usage of (new) technologies; and it is interesting to note how long the list of similar experiences is, both in recent times and with reference to the past century Avant-gardes. The new "Art Industries" highlight the need to operate by activating networks of acquaintances and contacts, integrating artists in the most appropriate productive circuits; designers and creative people belonging to increasingly liquid local/global networks that mirror a hybrid territory, interpenetrated by (in)experience and know-how. We need be acquainted with the most prominent international case studies and draw from specific literature, which is between topics related to "creative industries" and

the more “Media Art” oriented publications. Lastly, we must understand how the paradigms of artistic and cultural object creation are changing, how they are being affected by the relationship with the companies and the market and how the mechanisms of expression and freedom of research on the *medium* are changing.

The ultimate aim is to highlight how the introduction and dissemination of new open technologies, on the one hand, and the development of networks, peer-to-peer structures and social networking dynamics on the other hand, have produced radical transformations in the relationships amongst arts, science, design and society. In fact, if the progressive de-institutionalization of forms of production, management and usage of material and immaterial goods, brought in by new technologies, is reshaping the way we think about the production of culture, economics and information - blurring the boundaries between fields and disciplines, combining methodologies, languages, know-how and influencing the distinction between "high" academic approach, and "low" self-taught approach - the birth of a series of platforms and online projects facilitates new ways of relating between producer and market.

The *Do It Yourself* philosophy has become the subject of reflection and research into new and interesting balances for a class of producers of creativity and culture: reduction of costs, lean structures, offer of services, capillary dissemination and communication, platform sharing, sharing of expertise, direct professional relationships are forms and practices that provide the market with culture, art, design and communication in an innovative and competitive way for companies in the sector.

With this in mind, I would then talk about Open Innovation, i.e. when the processes described herein really affect not only the economical dynamics, but also the production of art and culture in contemporary society. Here innovation is “open” not only because it implies shared knowledge and techniques, but mainly because it activates cross-cultural processes, thus developing artistic objects whose real “value” is not only what determines their impact as “goods”.

Bio Marco Mancuso

Marco Mancuso is a critic and curator in the field of Digital Technologies applied to Arts, Design and Contemporary Culture. Founder and Editor-In-Chief at Digicult and Digimag Journal (part of The Leonardo Affiliate Program), he teaches “Multimedia Arts Theory” at MAIND Interaction Design Master at SUPSI in Lugano, "Web 2.0 & Media Art Management" at NABA Academy in Milan, “Digital Publishing for the Arts” at Academy of Fine Art in Bergamo and is visiting professor at Transmedia-Postgraduate Program in Arts+Media+Design in Brussels. With the Digicult Agency he curated and co-curated a number of international exhibitions, screenings, lectures, workshops and meetings and partnered with most of the main media art festival and events in Italy and worldwide. He recently developed the “Digicult Editions” online service, while expertizing from years on wider subjects like open communication, social networking and digital publishing. Lecturing internationally and writing critical texts for media art publications and catalogues, articles, interviews and essays for Digicult, Marco Mancuso curated for *MCD-Musiques et Cultures Digitales* the publication “The Open Future” - Issue 63 in 2012 and the carde-blanche “Art Industries” - Issue 74 in 2014. He was included in the publication *Cultural Blogging in Europe* by LabForCulture.org in 2010. Twitter: @digicult – http://www.digicult.it