

PUBLIC ART AND POST-SOVIET IDENTITY: AUTONOMY UNDER SOCIETAL PRESSURE

Art sphere is considered to be the most independent field for personal identity development due to the ambiguousness of its interpretations and the aesthetic component which sometimes misleads the recipient's perception.

Being a community representative, every artist either purposely or subliminally reflects cultural and social identity of a certain group. Moreover, the default expectations of the art market and curatorial establishments made contemporary artists dramatize and exaggerate their identity extravagance.

Thus, the societal pressure is coming out at every stage of producing pieces of art and is based on a complex combination of social, historic and economic factors. The artist acts as an agent under pressure of alien identities.

Nowadays art production and visual culture is often designedly used as a tool for constructing personal and group identity. Both individual artists and art or cultural organizations create artistic products aiming at community impact. For making this impact more significant, art broadens its publicity, and the society enters the epoch of public art.

In current research we consider public art to be a contemporary art direction which is the result of art-strategies transformation based on cultural context and able to resist commercial representation. These processes started being regulated by the Federal Art Project in the United States and the Ministry of Culture in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, – it started off being a tool for propaganda and forming a constrained identity. In the 1960s it began gaining autonomy as a form of site construction and art endeavors in the realm of individual and public interests.

The post-soviet societies had been maintaining their homogeneity for a long time, hiding cleavage into communities due to post-soviet ideology. Diversity demonstration was not encouraged. State-established aesthetics was white, male, heteronormative and socially equal (that is feigned) identity. Only in recent years the voices of self-determination in post-soviet countries became louder. They are the voices of displaced people, minorities (national, gender, religious or political), poor, disabled and other disadvantaged communities – the people, who were not heard, now construct a sense of own identity and and proclaim it through public art.

Key words: post-soviet identity, public art, community-engaged art, dialogical art, visual and performing arts, public message, new identity establishment, identity advocacy, regulated and spontaneous public art initiatives.