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*TRADITION, MODERNITY AND KITSCH
IN ANIMATION THEATRE*

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Argument

Must say, from the outset that this paper is based on studies concluded by important researchers, about art in general and the art of theatre in particular, and, therefore, the purpose is not investigating the sources. I have reinterpreted those research findings from the animation theatre **creator** point of view, through the principles underlying the **theory** of this form of theatre, to observe deeper **animation art possibilities of expression**, following the need to rediscover art animation and put it on the same scale of values with other arts.

Although the theme, as announced – *Tradition, modernity and Kitsch in animation theatre* – sends to a general-descriptive perspective, we specify that this study does not have an initiation character, in the animation art, of the future practitioners of the animation scene. We intend to come with clarifications of **theoretical, aesthetic and structural** nature, for those who have at least basic knowledge, which underlie the creative process of animation scene.

We will pull the proper “learning” in reference to understanding and exploiting specific means of expression of the animation art in contemporary creator vision, the relationship between classical and modern and, as long as we are allowed by the laws governing the art scene, the forms that Kitsch takes on the animation scene. We will not teach animation creator, nor will we draw sharp stakes between “art” and “non-art” in contemporary animation art. We wish only to convince those involved in this branch of theatrical art – creators and commentators alike – to insist more on this phenomenon, knowingly, to burn more energy in the creative process – that is, the “judgment” process – of the animated show.

I. Animation traditional theatre

If the puppet is a **form** of artistic expression able to "assume" different personalities, equipped with an intelligent and sometimes very sophisticated mobility designed to provide puppeteer with a wide range of possibilities of expression, **puppet theatre** (animated or with marionettes) is the phenomenon that shows this form of expression to the audience, in a certain **style** of play and different manipulating **techniques**, in an action organized into a screenplay and presented as a **representation**.

As, in this first stage of research we intend to treat only one segment of this kind of theatre, namely, **traditional animation theatre**, one can detach from the outset questions like: **What is traditional animation theatre?** or **What are the limits within this theatre?** These two questions, but others that will appear over time too, we'll try to find answers in the following pages, focusing on elements of **form**, **technique** and **style**.

1. Traditional. Classic. Sources

Adapting the general definition of the term **tradition** (a set of **habits and beliefs**, which, **settled** inside some social or national groups, **are transmitted** from one generation to another as the **specific features**) on **theatre** concept, we could say that **traditional theatre** is characterized as an artistic phenomenon, through which these habits and beliefs become continuous. But the theatre in general and, especially animation theatre, is not confined to being a means by which these habits and beliefs are expressed and transmitted, but is **represented**, in turn, through a **combination of forms and techniques**, that have perpetuated once with the same habits and beliefs of different social or national communities.

In Western Europe, where traditional puppet and marionette theatre has a long and glorious history, there are three main trends in puppet evolution: There is, first of all, a theatre of folk tales, appeared with the "traveller puppeteer", who played an important role in the spread of national popular literature, through topics developed by this kind of theatre, same topics as those of ballads

and folk tales singers; after this, there is a **theatre of wonders**, appeared with the development of marionette play technique, when “invisible” manipulating methods won in complexity; thirdly, there is a **satirical theatre**, which parody local personalities, Italian lyrical works, and later on, even the political programs became the target of the quiz stitches of the puppet. Same three trends in puppet evolution can be distinguished in Eastern Europe as well, but much later on, as a result of puppet "migration" from the West. Things were not the same in the Orient, where the puppet, in the imaginary fashion for the shadow puppetry, has more than a fun role, is part of the spirit of each community. Here, the puppet is more than a form of artistic expression, is an alter ego of the man in the street or a form of communication with the supernatural and the supernatural explanation.

This **triple relationship** of man with **theatre**, **habits** and **beliefs** have always been an emotional refuge for him. A triple relationship that became a triple reality for man, where the intelligence or imagination met the impossible or inexplicable. In each of his play, with each “act” that his animated object was making, the puppet manipulator was sending, in turn, to a simple and direct message reinterpretation transmitted and received on superficial level, reinterpretation that is deliberately directed by him onto a certain implied thing or opened explanation on the audience. This feature of the animation play, present from the beginnings, is still a characteristic with a perennial value of puppet theatre, which is being constituted into an element of specificity of the art of animation.

Classical term came much later in the animation theatre, only in the last century and began to be used in assessing a style of animation or for cataloging the types of shows or for cataloging the types of animation shows or creators, after animation art has been institutionalized and began to be perceived as independent art, able to find its own destiny between conservatism and modernity, between tradition and absolute novelty.

In animation theatre, like in the other arts, we can understand and put the **classical** label to either a creator or show that respects the laws of aesthetics and traditional animation show

structure, as they have perpetuated into a national cultural community or another, or to a creator or animation show, which fall into the stylistic, aesthetic or structural general note that the creators of animation shows from a community currently uses and that may belong to the tradition of the place, national tradition or it may have belonged to a superannuated modern current.

2. On forms, techniques and styles

Given that, to make the puppet worth requires a certain physical distance between the object and puppeteer, only three types of manipulation are possible, in our opinion: manipulating the puppet object from the **underneath**, manipulating it from **above** and manipulating it from **behind**. Thus, according to the specified techniques, we identify three styles of traditional puppet theatre: **glove puppet** theatre (finger puppet, rod puppet), **string puppet** theatre (marionette on rod, marionettes on strings) and **horizontal-handled puppet** theatre (Bunraku puppet, clavier puppet, Chinese rod puppet, Turkish puppets with sticks).

Beyond this technical problem related to the physical distance between actor and animated object, Cristian Pepino, in *Modalitatea estetică a teatrului de păpuși (Puppet theatre aesthetic manner)*, presents four types of manipulation, called **manipulation systems**, the author associated with the four major categories of puppets (or animated objects), known in classical animation theatre: (1) The first category is represented by the **puppet** itself, that can be played on **hand** or with **Gabita**. Here we find the **puppet with mimic** (Muppets), **Bunraku puppet**, **body puppet** (puppets hiding the manipulator in their own suit), **marionettes** and **puppets made of disparate elements**. (2) Next is **marionettes** category, whose manipulation principle is based on gravity. This category includes: **rods marionette** (fixed or movable rods), **rods and wires marionette**, „à la **planchette**” **marionette** (puppet or couple of puppets are crossed by a horizontal wire, through which they are actioned), **wires marionette**, on water Vietnamese marionette. (3) The third category includes **mask** and **costume-mask**, which also use manipulator's body expression in addition to animating the face

mask or the mask manipulated by the actor. (4) In the last category we have **Chimeras**, as Cristian Pepino called them, i.e. “systems characterized by the combination of human body parts (head, hands, arms, legs) with animation.”¹

A very large gallery of **key comedy types** developed and spread worldwide as a consequence of the huge popularity that puppet theatre gained. Of these, a few characters detach whose contribution to the further development of modern animation theatre has proven to be extremely important (from **Pulcinella**, **Punch** and **Guignol**, to the Turkish-Arabian character **Karagöz**), not so through the strongly caricatured character palette, taken over by the later modern animation art and highlighted as core element in the making of art animation, but rather by strong echo that have played beyond the national community in which they were born.

3. Traditional puppet theatre in Romania

Romanian traditional puppet theatre, even if not very old, such as the Asian or the Central and West European one, still had a pretty wide area of distribution and held different in terms of form, technique and style. As a spectacle, was present north of the Danube through the play of different types of puppets, which occurred on this territory, with the Ottoman influence and with some puppeteers "migration" from the South, through “visit” of other puppeteers from the Western side of the continent, who came in search for new and innocent audiences, or with puppets manipulated by natives who took over and adapted some characters or playing techniques from those foreign wanderers.

Of all the Romanian traditional puppet theatre characters detaches **Vasilache** hand puppet. Born into a socio-economic-cultural background similar to that of its correspondents from the West, Vasilache character came to life as a result of the same impulses and inclinations to caricature, self irony and disguised rebellion, as Pulcinella, Guignol or Punch. What distinguishes

¹ See Cristian Pepino, *Modalitatea estetică a teatrului de păpuși (Puppet theatre aesthetic manner)*, Bucharest, UNATC – IL. Caragiale Library, 1993, page.2.

Vasilache from all other hand puppet characters in Europe is it's eclectic shape and style, as character and puppetry show, being recaptured in the Romanian character profile, maybe in a perfect balance, both Guignol and his West-European "relatives" and the fingerprint of the famous Turkish character, Karagöz.

Trying to define what is meant by **traditional** in puppetry performance art we find that the whole concept of **traditional animation art** relates to two extremely simple and clear reference systems: one is represented by **technique** (given by shape and style) and the other one – represented by **ideology** and **mythology**. The first system is that where the animation tradition is being reduced to **the "theory" of the three manipulation types**. The second reference system, which refers to ideology and mythology, places traditional animation theatre, regardless of manifested form, style or technique, in theatre framework, designed to meet the sensitivity and popular belief of a smaller community or a nation, the artist expressing them with the means that the culture and knowledge possibilities of the community put them in handy.

4. Conservation of traditional animation theatre. Drama and spectacle of animation in terms of institutionalized classical theatre

Late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, in the itinerant puppetry manipulation, obedience to tradition is expressed mainly in the fine art of puppet, of scenery, in technical solutions, in conception of unmasking the message and less in terms of repertoire and representation itself.

Animation theatre was perceived by the art people as a miniature edition of the big stage that is the "live" theatre. The interest that theatre people showed for the puppet theatre, the fact that animation art started to be taken seriously have led to art people opinions about puppet, highlighting traditional puppet and it's manifestation principles with projection to what they felt should be the puppet show in modernity, namely to imitate, to a smaller scale, the "live" theatre.

Against the traditional conception of animation theatre, still supported by conservative aestheticians and many ethnologists,

there were art people vehemently denying the traditional puppet (a “dubious theatrical production”), at least, as it was looking in the early twentieth century. This conflicting state persisted until post-war period when conservatives were still accused that, from lack of critical sense, claimed confusion between so-called **folk puppet shows**, with **folk theatre traditions**, diverting the public from understanding the true puppetry art: an institutionalized art of animation that can be developed following some hardship and pre-established artistic laws, just as drama theatre.

The echo of these reformist trends has rapidly developed, and since the second half of the nineteenth century, in European countries, which have known until then a strong development of traditional animation, puppet theatres of true artistic held were born, with their own interpretation style. Soon, the phenomenon grew, many theatres with repertory that was specific to puppet theatre taking birth across the continent, and from mid-century, with the new political configuration in Eastern Europe, this reform of animation theatre was done in a relatively short time, given the magnitude of which was done, in haste, with not always beneficial effects on the quality of the animation scene.

To mention that, in the same animation art development stage, one can notice a change of direction in terms of target audience for this kind of theatre: **children**. But because the new puppet theatre was not strongly supported by a **drama specific** to animation art, most creators have turned to **myth** and to **mythology** and, therefore, to tales, legends and stories, most readily available and, of course, most loved by children, which was the targeted audience. The call for tales and legends was made so often that many contemporary animation creators claim that the dramatization and the setup of folklore and mythology or stories written for children is already the **tradition** of animation theatre.

II. Animation art modernity

1. Modernity concept

In a democratic world, where the art is more accessible to audience more than ever, the artist that that wishes to be **modern**, through his remarkable talent, through imagination, through theoretical knowledge, intelligence and a good knowledge of psychology of the audience that he addresses to, manages to break the prejudices and conservatism and to impose through the novelty and authenticity. This type of artist, who combines experiment with already imposed novelty – by himself or by others, can be considered **modern-authentic**, without being necessarily a genius.

The artist who wishes to be modern and who, initially, shares the innovative creative enthusiasm of the modern-authentic artist, but who knows the limits in terms of genetic data (talent, imagination, etc...), limits that he accepts, is self-fitting, in time, in the modern artists category who embrace **fashion in art**. This artist, in our opinion, is the one that definitely wants to tell something to the world (or we can say that he aims that), without having something concrete to pass to audience through his art. He is the common sense modern artist, who generally accepts his condition and limitations. Therefore this is the **fashionable** artist.

The artist who wishes to be **modern** and who also has limited native class (that is normal for an ordinary man), but who doesn't accept his condition but wants at any price to tell and to show everything he has proposed, ends up creating, immediately or after a while, an art of bad taste, which most of the times borrows processes and ideas from modern authentic artists, “improving” and “assembling” them into a form more or less aesthetic, namely in his own creation. This type of artist (to call him - **amateur artist**) addresses to a small audience community, a “local” one, mostly poorly informed. This art of bad taste, copied, composed of bad combined clichés or just uninspired is known under the name of **Kitsch**.

In general understanding, **modern** means something that “belongs to closer times [to speaker]; which is abreast of current progress”. Getting closer to performance art and reporting the

modern, representing novelty, to old – so to **classic**, the **modern** is distinguished by releasing dogmas imposed by **classic** and, even more, by its stand, always in contrast with the rules of **classic**, which always considers outdated, worn.

Although the term **modern** is often confused with the term **modernity**, the **modern** must be understood as a framework concept, whose essence is “the present”, “immediacy”, “current”, and **modernity** expresses the quality of being modern. **Modernism** also defines the theory and practice of modern.

2. National traditions and myths in modern animation landscape

Once with the transition to a new development stage, with adaptation and assuming some concepts taken from other arts areas, particularly from philosophy and aesthetics of actor art, animation theatre was facing an imperative need to outline its philosophical profile, its own existence laws and principles in perspective of a modern animation art and as substance, not just as scenic view and functionality. Institutionalization of animation theatre, therefore, the new organization and even form that was being presented to audience, was strongly sending to these searches of redefining its own guidelines and principles.

At this stage of animation development, to the three main trends of puppet development, can be added, once with puppet theatre “revolution” a forth trend, that of **metaphorical animation**, accidentally exploited in traditional animation.

Thus, **folk theatre**, the one about fairs and public markets, has adapted to the professional scene, becoming a theatre for children. In a world where film and television have much more success and are a lot more convincing with the tricks, the “**wonder theatre**”, the one that was presenting its marionettes manipulated using “invisible” wires, adapted to the new times of the second half of last century by bringing the puppeteer to sight, many times in direct relationship with his puppet, successfully proposing the manipulator-character convention to all ages. In the world of fantasy, the puppet remains the actor capable par excellence to deflect the viewer’s imagination from the flat reality and from

naturalism. And if we persist on the idea of functionality, as an ideal tool for characters embodiment, where else would the puppet-actor move more freely, if not in **satirical theatre** (in performances for adult audience)? In a more exaggerated form and perhaps closer to their previous virtues, **burlesque** and **grotesque** can be found in our days satirical theatre, particularly in political satire, yet very popular among adult audience.

3. Classics - modern, an older controversy

As an independent art, able to discover and to carve its own destiny, animation art, through its modern creators, started the long and difficult journey in searching for new expression forms and a new and loyal audience that would cherish it and confirm its status of live art, always willing to overturn any patterns, to smash prejudices and rise to the same level of innovation as the other arts. But, as with other arts, the effort required for this formation enforces not only the “fight” with the animation art rigors and ideals or even failures of the artist which wanted to be modern – whose creation was not immediately accepted by the audience; this effort was backed by modern animator “fight” with the reticence of a certain part of the creators and dogma imposed too easy in post-war animation show. Therefore, modern animation art goes into conflict not only with traditional art, with classic animation art, but also with that institutionalized animation form, with a strong academic nature, simplistic and opinion maker, animation form which, built on an ideological foundation imposed by the socio-political factor, wanted to become, in turn, the **new classical animation**.

However, modern animation creators cannot reinvent animation by ignoring tradition and classical forms of puppetry art, just like the classical theatre artist cannot resist the contemporary viewer by ignoring contemporary art in general, suggest us, through what they do, authentic creators of animation art. This situation often resulted in direct collaboration between the classic and the modern animator.

Therefore, on the animation scene developed an atypical polemic in art landscape, insignificant in terms of casual spectator,

but which had a double consequence: has provided a greater creative liberty to the creator of authentic art animation and a comfortable armchair to animation pseudo-creator, from which he “juggled” with animation cliché-forms, classic or modern.

4. Authentic modernity in animation theatre

Any authentic modern artist and therefore also the creator of modern animation, embraces new ideas and artistic forms, because he thinks that through them they can get to **scenic truth** more directly and more meaningful than through other ways – through classical ways, which are presented in contrast many of the times. But the effort to achieve truth through the message designed and “interpreted” in his work or through plastic forms that he propose also concomitantly with creator need to expose **artistic beauty**. Establishing these ethical and aesthetic co-ordinates of the future animation operas that collect the substance of all the other arts in developing a “essences arts”, are possible only by direct competition of artist intellect, artistic culture that this profession requires and, not least, the talent and flair with which he feels and develop in his imagination the animation art phenomenon. In other words, talent and inspiration are insufficient as a basis for a future scenic creation. Creating a balanced and authentic-modern opera also involves research work in the field of old and new forms aesthetic, of concepts that preceded opera of artist who wish to propose novelty.

The attraction force of the puppet theatre, seen from the animation scene that is where the creator act produces, lies in its awareness of opportunities related to material subordination to the creator’s will, owing to the full opening of all participants to the projection of what will be the final creation, modern and authentic animation performance – **modern animation art**. An art that puts on the same level artistic and social values of the puppet with its power of synthesis, with its ability to represent what is general, an art that unites in the good way the subjective and objective understanding of the world.

Syncretism, this osmosis of arts, promoted and exploited by innovative creators of all arts, came to welcome animation theatre,

a **syncretic art** itself, where the fine arts, music and dance naturally interweave. Surprisingly perhaps, in pursuit of scenic perfection, today's dramatic theatre actor and modern director found dramatic perfection in marionette; its possibilities of expression and scenic transfiguration came to be coveted by perfectionist innovators of dramatic theatre. Has reached the level where, from Alfred Jarry to Peter Schumann, the boundary between the two arts has known a certain teasing, the "live" actor facing the marionette and vice versa. But bringing the puppet on the stage and transmitting with it the exact same feelings, to arouse through it same moods, using purely psychological instruments typical for live actor, in other words, replacing the live actor with puppet actor, with the same scenic functionality, can only represent a transient form of modernity in animation art.

Unlike dramatic theatre, where the actor needs a certain intellectual maturity to be able to find the truth of the played character, the authentic puppeteer, whether working on a performance for children or adult audience, returns to the state of childhood playfulness, to that quality of subconscious that leaves complete freedom to intellect uncut play. This is how authentic animation actor is born, again and again every day, before each rehearsal or performance, through unrepressing his will of play. Then, after the actor "polished" his play with the object, the **animation art** is born, leaving the developed subjects and stories pray to the ephemeral, but showing, with each performance, the art that he is devoted to.

Creations examples of Alfred Jarry, Peter Schumann, Philippe Genty or Roman Paska could suggest the belief that puppet theatre had a real explosion of ideas and authenticity in modern animation scene, since so many innovative artists from various genres of art, turned to animation art, the animated object, the animation tradition, as to an imperative and aware way of defining their own creative horizons. But concrete reality shows us that all this interest was and is nothing but barely taken seriously by most professional puppeteers, creators attempts mentioned above, although they clearly exceeded the status of experiment, failed to lead to a "revolution" in modern animation creation.

In animation art, more than in any other art, profound understanding of modernity can not be possible without a thorough knowledge of tradition, as the main source of aesthetic forms for contemporary performance and as a means through which evergreen animation art is ensured, without separation between true and false, between originality and imposture. With the opening offered by animation theatre institutionalization to direct collaboration with other arts, puppetry art accepted the challenge and the transient play of the experimental forms, convinced that everything is a convention, a time of its passage to the realms of other arts. All artistic experiences that the animation has gone through up today, lasting longer or shorter, troubled the innovative spirit of the animation creator and puppet theatre life without reducing from its perennality and fascination. Authentic puppeteer, through a comprehensive understanding of the world and man, through clear and sharp questioning in the act of communication with the audience, offered to the art that he is dedicated, all his intelligence and intuition, skill and ingenuity.

III. Television and animation theatre

Given the rules of representation and perception, animation performance, presented in the form of animated film and television animation, fits, at least from audience perspective, in modern performance category. Certainly, this new face that animation performance takes is most highly valued form of modernity from in the history of animation, in particular because of the mass nature that this representation form contains. Must not overlook the fact that viewer embraced with great ease the new form of animation art, particularly with regards to comfort that animation film and, in general, television has offered. Audience quickly passed over the preliminary stage of perceiving this type of art, purely as an art of optical illusion, as it was greeted with the first of its manifestations, right after the “miracle” became a habit and, later, a necessity in regular and stereotyped activity of the audience, film and television entering their daily routine.

A further reason, for which we have insisted over this new way of artistic expression, is the powerful impact it had over scenic animation creator, forced to take “attitude” towards a non-favourable perspective, offered by scenic arts future: perspective of losing, gradually, the audience. Science and technology evolve with giant steps, and film and television benefit from the advantages of an increase of technical perfection directly and immediately, unlike scenic arts, which must retain the specificity and principles that imposed for millennia, those that require a live and direct contact with audience. This growing of technical perfection enjoyed by film and television and the ease with which the viewer is being more evident attracted by the new forms of expression that emerged in art, made the theatre look deprecated, and a race with its rich and endowed competitors, from technical point of view, seems completely impossible.

As we have seen, the animation theatre hasn’t disappeared once the animation film art seized public attention through its various possibilities of action and through its new form that is being presented. The force that gave survival strength to theatre was based specifically on that direct and immediate contact it has with viewer, on genuine excitement that comes with a spectator during a performance. These characteristics specific to scenic arts, which are found in spectator’s psychological needs, and the need that he feels many times to discard the animation film specific artificiality, even if, often unconsciously, pushed by ethical spirit of society or just as a repression, it was speculated by scenic art creators not only to save the scenic animation art from death, but also under the development of this art, to its rediscovery depending on contemporary aspirations of spectator.

The contact with the spectator, the interaction between actor, character-object and spectator, carries with it extremely rich and necessary opportunities of aesthetic joy for both sides – animation theatre and spectator. Through this live and direct collaboration scenic animation art differs from **animation film** and **television animation**, its strong competitors. Moreover, television, through its more diversified programs it broadcast, can easily “kill” animation theatre, ravishing its audience, but, in the same time, it can also promote it in audience eyes. It’s all about the skill which

the animator demonstrates on the scene, the magic that can impress the television audience and, moreover, the intelligence through which he manages **not** to imitate television animation or cartoons, but to have like an alternative for it, characterized by originality.

IV. Kitsch and animation theatre

1. Kitsch. Kitsch forms and principles as general phenomenon in art

Just like there is **authentic**, there is also **inauthentic**, in a close relationship with authentic, just as, in the same world of aesthetic values, **beautiful** is in a close relationship with **ugly**. **Kitsch**, because it is what we refer to, is considered in specialized dictionaries as “a term used to describe a decorative object of bad taste”, with direct reference to fine arts or, in a definition that finds its place up to a point in drama, **Kitsch** is an “industrial-scale reproduction or copying of works of art, commercially copied and exploited” (DEX – explanatory dictionary).

In *Psychology of Kitsch*, Abraham Moles presents a possible derivation of the word stating that term **Kitsch** appeared for the first time in München, in 1860, **kitschen** meaning “to do something superficially” and, with a more special sense – “to transform old furniture”, as a verb in a familiar language. Another ancestor of **Kitsch** is **verkitschen**, which means “to degrade, to maim, to stack”, in other words, “sell to someone something else but what he demanded”². In the absence of a fully satisfactory definition of **Kitsch**, we can combine historical-sociological approach, where **Kitsch** is closely linked to cultural industrialization (television is an example), with aesthetic-moral approach, where **Kitsch** is false art, mostly designed for consumption, with the purpose of immediate satisfaction, in the most direct and simplest way possible, of aesthetic needs of a large, mass public. Detached from **modern**, **Kitsch** is a high

² Abraham Moles, *Psychology of Kitsch*, translated by Marina Rădulescu, Bucharest, Meridiane publishing, 1980, page 5

degree aesthetical form of lying, a form through which beautiful, in its various forms, from fine arts to performing arts, is socially distributed, like any other product, depending on demand and supply. It can sometimes be categorized as “missed value”, as “skill impotence or deficiency”, as “technical incapacity” or “artistic weakness”³.

Looking to animation art through the performance represented on scene, we find **Kitsch** on animation scene under four configurations: (a) There is a **Kitsch of composition and forms association**, resulted from a bad linking between aesthetical and structural elements in a performance; (b) There is a **Kitsch of pseudo-tradition** and, here we also have a **Kitsch of pseudo-classic**; (c) We often find a **Kitsch of pseudo-modernity** and (d) there is a **Kitsch of “borrowing”** (acquiring some aesthetical forms promoted by other creators).

2. Puppeteers between professionalism and amateurism

In all four forms it has, in puppetry representation, although manifesting similar as in the other arts, **Kitsch** easily slinks into the animation scene, mainly because of the audience attitude, at first sight less circumspect than other arts audience, a public willing to accept compromise in animation creation, with the animated object / character convention, generally confusing compromise and agreement.

This “tolerant” attitude that audience has towards the puppet performance and, implicitly, towards animation art has made possible the emergence of another phenomenon generating **Kitsch**: it is the migration of some creators from other arts to puppet stage. We refer here to those immigrant creators, who approach temporarily or permanently, to animation theatre, under the principle according to which, on the animation scene is being built **as a joke** art and is perceived **as a game** and would require less effort. Thus, as directors or manipulator-actors, they get to build puppet shows using some false principles, in line with some false creation axioms, detached in general, from dramatic theatre

³ Victor Ernest Mašek, *cited work.*, page 211

framework and with few roots in the specific of animation art. To those pseudo-puppeteers from other arts joins pseudo-puppeteers from animation scene, for whom theatre is nothing else but an institution that pays them and that offers them the status of artist. All these pseudo-creators from animation theatre area (from theatres, independent companies or freelancers), together, open up wide paths to **Kitsch**, to **Kitsch animation performance**, themselves becoming, when not warned, guided or just stopped from carrying on the animation stage, **Kitsch creators**.

3. **Kitsch in puppetry art representation**

It is very difficult to prove **what** exactly **Kitsch** is in theatre and even difficult to determine the boundary between **the modern** and **Kitsch** or between **fashion** and **Kitsch**, by the way it can be found in fine arts for example. It is really difficult to find **Kitsch** in animation art, compared to dramatic art, knowing that the animated object, puppet or marionette, through the metamorphosis it suggests, through symbol value in a particular context of ideas or ongoing events, could “exonerate” the creator from the animation scene before any of us try to accuse him. We consider these creators – stage directors, scene painters or manipulators – having reasonable knowledge about the art of creating animation performance, allow **Kitsch** to penetrate through their creation only by accident and we cherish the belief that themselves will find those elements in their own creation, that do not honour them, and later they will correct it or will insist more carefully over what they propose to imagine and expose on stage, strengthening in the same time the class of authentic creator.

A **Kitsch** object in fine art can acquire unpresumed meanings on theatre stage and, even more, on animation stage. Meanwhile, if the object is misplaced, if its size or colour are not justified by the performance idea or by manipulation, through play, then that is definitely a **Kitsch** object and, depending of its importance on scenic stage, can transform the whole performance into **Kitsch**. Another form that **Kitsch** takes on stage is the **excess** used for certain techniques, using a particular material or (geometric) animated shape to define characters, a specific sort of

light, sound or gags, just because they have an undoubted impact over the audience, but without the director justifying it through performance idea or the actor – through his play. **Kitsch** may also occur as a result of unjustified agglomeration of objects and characters on stage or as a scenographic agglomeration, which limits characters space or when characters are being unreasonably disproportionate compared to animated objects, but also when the performance message is intended to be ambiguous and difficult or even impossible to decrypt.

We must admit that, behind a perpetual and subjective opinion conflict between animation creators, critics or just ordinary viewers, on modernity from animation theatre, on relationship between **modern, authentic** and **Kitsch**, delimitating them on stage is hard to accomplish, as long as the modernity element is not obvious, and **Kitsch** is not conspicuous. Creators' temptation and desire to be appreciated by the public, to have their value confirmed, is often evident. All artists want to be modern and all feel offended if, in one way or another, their work is associated with **Kitsch**. Perhaps, casting a retrospective on art in general and excepting the creative genius which, through means once unthinkable, send the deepest message in the simplest way, the other creators, knead in turn of potential **authentic** generator ideas, call, a little bit (but they will never admit it), **Kitsch**, in order to get them stronger as artists and to understand more deeply the psychology of spectator. Some use **kitsch** as much as they need, then explode into a modern and authentic creation, while others use it... all the time.

Conclusions

People say that there is no good actor on the animation scene that can not manage it with honour on “live” stage. This axiom is also valid in reverse. Animation actor, by nature of his profession, calls the psychology of “live” actor, his own psychology to build the psychology of the object character that can transmit the scenic truth. This is the authentic animation creator,

whether exploiting elements related to **animation art tradition** and presents them as they occurred once or in forms more close to specific of contemporary problems, whether follower of a new form, a new understanding, in large terms of animation art, detached from any dogmatic restriction, i.e. **modern**.

One cannot say the same about theatre **performance creators**. Similarities between dramatic theatre director and animation theatre director are misleading, even if, as we stated before, the psychological routes of characters, at least at structural level, follow the same path. “Live” theatre director is conditioned by physical limitations of the actor and creates the **metaphor** permanently considering these limits; looks for helpful leverages, in scenery, in lights or in the area of play, while, for animation director the object to become character, most of the times represents the **metaphor** itself. But some creators neglect this difference and, unwittingly, approach a different kind of theatre. And when they raise to art level what they have scenically accomplished, driven only by inspiration or “dogmatizing” incomplete knowledge and most of the times misinterpreted on the animation art, dilettante inevitably arises, and sooner or later – **Kitsch**. This type of dilettante is often more dangerous than dilettante actor, because he manipulates the performance and transmits to audience a cropped or badly understood image about animation theatre.

Authentic animation creator still experiments an unjustified fear, when he has to work with aesthetic forms that he masters, to express it on stage freely and without being conditioned by dogmas from classical theatre, freed by the prejudices that have emerged about puppet stage creation in the eyes of audience. In the formation of this art, authentic creator must want more from himself. He must believe in his success, as soon as the forms – old or new, ideas – old or new are no longer foreign to him. Despite the unlimited possibilities of expression available to him, despite the syncretism that characterizes by definition the animation art, this art still “intimidates” many of the professionals from animation stage, who indulge in convenience and stereotypes.

Is the animation creator in search for the aesthetical and artistic form or formula that would stop his unrest **or** is the

animation art, always, in search for pure creator that would complete it? This is a question to which authentic creators, critics and audience have not yet found a convincing response. Probably a Jarry, a Schumann or a Genty were not enough, so that, among practitioners of the animation art, the desire to achieve the absolute through creation would increase.

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