

REVITALIZED ART THEORY

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COULD CONCEPTUAL WORK INFORM EMOTIONAL TRUTH?

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While social platforms have always needed some subtle lens through which to be processed, modern values effectively separate thought and rhetoric. But what if we were to effectively unite these concepts? How might our modern arguments capitalize on building rhythm between fact and whatever plays the part of fiction? Numerous other meaningful practices approach arguably similar relationships despite more complex systems of violent logistical interaction, so it stands to reason that our own daily conversations could approach a similarly efficient engine. Exploring probable means to do so could gain new respect in professional practices first, which often clears the way for similar discussion in the culture at large. But even that would require some scholastic structure to rely on for understanding, and subsequently ignore, which requires time to materialize. So for the time being, we instead follow the methods of previous generations and their media (for better or otherwise) and compensate for irregular rules as we find them.

In the 1890s, photographers, partly motivated by a desire to redress the effects of nostalgia on working people, began intensely retracing the history of their own artistic field. This theoretical response to the conditions of the times fundamentally reconstituted what it meant to, in their words, "make sense of one's obligations to subjecthood." As a result, that which was once considered something quickly became nothing in a fashion modernists would later describe only as "morbid." The educated belief upturned, and in its place arose a particular phenomenon now known to the learned as Bittersweet Austerities. Students of this movement (of which there were, admittedly, notably few) argued later that practitioner triumphed

over concept, and that the future could only be carried by the voracious consumption of feelings previously though uncouth.

The following century found this mode of thinking rendered largely moot, likely due to its overwhelming banality juxtaposed against the social context of the time. Indeed, one might argue (and rightly so) that the core concepts of the Bittersweet Austerities were so steeped in abstract literary analysis that they were destined to elimination by any subsequent movement with any sense of self-awareness. But does this not also mean that one might find the very elements which opened that dialectical transaction of great purpose to contextualization in the contemporary photographic sphere? Considering how much the art world learned of itself in the twentieth century, such a thesis is beyond simply reasonable. Unlike the dying discourses of the university, art remains inlaid in the ever-refurbished wunderkind of decades concurrent.

Indeed, the work of the contemporary viewer is foundationally that of the psyche, what Freud might call "the conceived neuropsychosis" and what contemporary medicine would refer to as "nostalgia." Nostalgia was once considered a psychological disorder, something which afflicted the impecunious or intolerably political. This condition was sometimes manipulated for motivation, but most often it did little more than occasionally agitate neighbors. But by 1936, experimental publishers had found ways to make nostalgia distinguished. One book from that era even goes so far as to make the revolutionary suggestion that nostalgia could contribute to both spirituality and demystification simultaneously, a claim that we now know is utterly unfounded. Evidence presented since speaks to different interpretations, and intelligent people have become more focused on working out the meaningfulness inherent in this context.

But what does this mean in a wider social context? Common

narratives say little, but memories are meaningless without form and so it stands to reason that nostalgia could contribute something to practical knowledge after all. In this way, artwork stands to benefit by nostalgizing aesthetics themselves, furthering scholarly research that might otherwise be regarded as linguistic artifacts. This type of disjunction can produce incontrovertible nonsense, but ultimately we learn best when spared of evidence. Furthermore, meaning may become obsolete as more complex aesthetic practices take precedence, so it is beneficial to forget this altogether. As Susan Sontag suggested: the science of nostalgia seems utterly bleak until you know how to ignore it. It is at this point one reaches the artistic concepts of memory.

This idea reaches home in perfect structure and marks what it touches with an almost jarring slant. The strict feeling of familiarity which ties us to the present is represented here, too, but rather than enlightening the situation, we simply reenforce whatever it was that dug the first hole. This is detrimental to further metrics, and yet it is arguably the whole point.

Even if you could keep these two standards separate, cultural values require one to sand the edges. This creates a dichotomy which has crept into all means of practices, creative and otherwise. The door is open, and it arguably always was. So what? What ending can be perfected by resigning to this system? Lifetime reality argues that our social machinations ultimately do not matter: any system can be discarded or dissolved. What complicates that process, however, is the combination of human chemistry and personal fear on a cultural level.

Pursuing unbiased themes often sorts work into absolute groups. It defines otherwise meaningless elements with undue structure and instead of turning ideals into narrative, renders fundamental truths

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relatively meaningless. The lines around associated discussion become something else entirely ; thus, that which clung to effectively strict theory becomes ultimately senseless. We see this phenomenon often, though we may not always recognize it, and instead of interacting with the purpose to induce change we settle into reading nonexistent meaning in otherwise banal spaces. That is probably acceptable for lower - level thinking, but we are professionals and therefore must hold ourselves above the common viewer, lest we undermine our own pursuits.

When photographing, for example, one is often asked to believe photographic systems as the backdrop of all that they do. This is critical to effectively utilizing one's device ; it is also largely impossible for those interested in creating true art. Since exploring art itself relies on the subversion of basic norms, should not one's own practices also buck basic wisdom? Results be damned; we live in a world dependent on building and process, not readily adopted sacrosanct directions. Presentation should be where one materializes order, not creation. However, the reality is that management has overtaken the true professional and actively seeks to effectively malign true purpose. This strict culture values only actual points and brushes aside that which makes potential a candidate for reality.

When we tie this back into memory, we find that photographs are something which crept into the window of controlled purpose, eventually snapping through the filter which blinds the public to the realities of the practice of art. By introducing a medium which stretched formal stability concerning reality, photography fulfilled that overdressed need to effectively develop one's absolute desires. There are, of course, limits to the interests one can synthesize, but rather than allow critical neglect to such states, memory permits the editing and reconfiguration of temporalities around any and all accompanying narratives.

So what does a society do with this information? Likely nothing, but regardless of whether or not institutions ultimately digest the truths laid bare unto them, the contemporary viewer remains fundamentally responsible to the informing and distribution of revolutionary artistic thought. The white cube - gallery, classroom, or otherwise - can only spur compelling notions of poetry, reality, and other expressions; it falls upon the artist as viewer and viewer as viewer to contextualize that which is seen and remains to be unseen still. Only with the acceptance of that reality may we begin to pull any meaning from art at all.