



THE MODERNS AS A SYNTHESIS OF ARTS

MODERNIȘTII CA SINTEZĂ A ARTELOR

OLIMPIADA ARBUZ-SPATARI,

PhD, Senior Lecturer,

Ion Creanga State Pedagogical University, Chisinau

Art Nouveau (termen provenit din limba franceză însemnând **Artă nouă**) este un stil artistic manifestat plenar în artele vizuale, designul și arhitectura de la începutul secolului al XX-lea, relativ sincron în majoritatea culturilor și țărilor europene, dar și în America de Nord, unde a fost adoptat, cu precădere, în Statele Unite ale Americii și Canada.

Art Nouveau poate fi, de asemenea, văzută ca un fel de mișcare artistică de tranziție, formând un preludiu a ceea ce urma să devină modernismul secolului al XX-lea. În acest bloc de artiști și tendințe a trecerii spre modernism pot fi incluse și mișcările artistice cunoscute sub numele de „Jugendstil” în Germania și Olanda, respectiv „Secessionsstil”, sau „Secesionism”, în Viena, Austria, ambele inspirate, dar și grupate ideatic în jurul periodicului de avangardă vienez *Jugend* (Tinerețe). Atât artiștii germani și olandezi, cât și cei vienezii luptau cu convenționalismul sfârșitului secolului al XIX-lea și, în același timp, încercau să se desprindă de toate „ism”-ele anterioare prin găsirea de noi formule artistice viabile, părăsirea drumului neted al sălilor de expoziție consacrate, găsirea de noi spații ambientale/funcționale/expoziționale și expunerea lucrărilor pe cont propriu [8].

Art Nouveau (fr. L'Art Nouveau – New art) – is the French name of the art of the period of modernist style bridging the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However this term cannot be applied to the whole art of a modernist style which includes various movements and styles, but it refers only to the more decorative and ornamental in intent known as the floral style “stile Floreale”. This style is indicative to an art form, which appeared in Belgium and France. Some Belgian art critics coined the term “Art Nouveau” as it first appeared in 1881 in Brussels’s magazine “Modern art” («L'Art Moderne») owned by O. Maus and E. Piccard. The term «Art Nouveau» was willingly used by the artists who contributed to the magazines Adriaen van de Velde, V. Horta, H. Guimard. In 1895 the art dealer from Hamburg, Siegfried Bing

best known as S. Bing opened his famous gallery in Paris «Maison de L'Art Nouveau» (fr. «the House of New Art») which showed works of traditional art of China, Japan and also works of young Parisian artists A. van de Velde, E. Galle, P. Bonnar, F. Brangwyn, O. Rodin, J.T. K. Tiffany, made in a «new style», partly reminding one of Eastern style art of Japan of which the Eastern Art was considered one of strongest influences of the modernist styles. In 1856 in the Parisian shop “Delatre” the French artist, engraver and ceramist Felix Bracquemond noticed Japanese colour and beauty of the engravings on the Hokusaja's woodcuts, which were used as wrapping or packing around a shipment of Japan and soon these unusual xylographs drew the attention of many French artists. This

discovery helped to change the look of late 19th century art.

Postimpressionist Artists seeking divergence from an era of art form found emancipation of a colour stain, decorative effect of the organization of a new plane, expressiveness of a silhouette and fanciful coiling contours. It is recognized that an important part of the transformation is the fact that Paris was ready to accept these radical new plastic qualities long before they were formed by an evolution of the European fine arts.

At the very beginning of XIX century the English poet-symbolist and artist W. Blake was one of the first who "found" the curved line in his fanciful, fantastic water colours and engravings. The decorative effect of the contours and a plane stain were cultivated by English Pre-Raphaelites, artists of William Morris' circle: W. Crane, E Burne-Jones and later by A. Mc Murdo and participants of "Aesthetic movement", "Aestheticism" headed by O. Wilde. Regardless of them, French artists E. Degas, P. Gauguin, and "Pontavenistes", E. Manet, J. L. Forain, A. Toulouse-Lautrec and even V. W. van Gogh, researched Japanese engraving. Divisionists G. Seurat, and after Denis, and artists of group "Nabis", began to symbolize curved lines "ascending" and "descending" like musical contours. J. Whistler reconsidered methods of using line and colour in a Japanese engraving, porcelain & silk painting. This unusual combination of the West and the East, the symbolism and the decorativism also was accepted by Belgian-French group of architects-designers led by van de Velde, V. Horta and H. Guimard who created their floral "biosimilar" forms. In 1895 H. Obrist shown a tapestry with the image looped curve of cyclamen stems – this

line successfully named by critics as "slash". This line became a "modernist style card" in Europe. In 1898 Guimard created the well-known biosimilar bars of entrance in the Parisian underground, and in Munich the same year A. Endell made a fantastic facade decor of a photo studio "Elvira" (see the wave). However the architects of "new style" gave to floral forms more significant value which is beyond simple stylization of plants.

On the basis of the curving lines they developed the concept of the continuous "flowing" space uniting utilitarian function of architectural constructions, furniture, household subjects with their design, an external decor and technology of processing material. This innovative concept presented the organic integrity of «new style».

Modernist style is one of the most beautiful and popular. It is style of nature, colours and women. Its ornaments are based on the wavy, curving lines resembling lilies, waves, irises, and orchids. English craftsman and artist William Morris (pic. 1) was a progenitor of a classical ornament of a modernist style. For the first time he applied a concept of art unity of all elements of object spatial environment. It makes his projects become coherent and art completeness. The modernist style became the style that synthesizes all art forms and also appreciates a craftsman and an architect as high as an artist and a sculptor.

Nature was the source of ideas for the Art Nouveau artists in which buds (as a symbol of arising life) and exotic plants with long stems became the most widespread theme. Women in Art Nouveau were represented with long, flowing hair. The decorative style allowed applying ornaments practically everywhere: in the handcrafting and mass production, in the facade decora-

tion of buildings and interiors. In the architecture of the modernist epoch is brightly expressed the aspiration to connect functionality and aesthetics. The most deeply aspiration "to merge with the nature" was the work done by the architect Antonio Gaudi.

To each art form, at least symbolically, we can apply the concept of an iconography. Most serially, the iconography in modernist style was the best presented in painting and in graphics, less in sculpture. There is "Iconography" in architecture. However, with reference to painting and graphic, we can absolutely lawfully speak about defined community plots and motives.

Each national school has the specific tint, showing primary gravitation to its circle of plots and motives, but this circle always will be similar to the next one. Therefore it is necessary to define how plots gather in community and to explain their arrival.

At the turn of the century, people's minds were always under the influence of anew schools of thought – especially "life philosophy". It is interesting that we can find these philosophical representations in plots and motives of painting and modernist style of drawing. The idea of the growth, the demonstration of the vital forces, an impulse, the direct subconscious feeling, the direct expression of a state of mind, the awakening, the formation, the development, the youth, the spring – all are the themes, the plots and the motives, conveyed in painting and the schedule of a modernist style which have received wide enough expression. For example, in German painting we can find uncountable sets of "Whirlwinds", "Dances", and "Orgies" where the idea of biologics can be taken adequately enough including the mythological beginning. Similar motives are pre-

sented in other national schools. We will remember F. Malyavin's "Whirlwind" (1906r.), the motives of dance at S. Malyutin, A. Benois etc.

Many artists and sculptors often use the image of the professional dan-

44 Dancers were favourite models of Toulouse-Lautrec and Chéret, which, as well as other French poster artists, often recreated dancing figures on the posters. But the well-known dancer Loie Fuller with her famous "Serpentine Dance" became the most popular model on a boundary of centuries. The effect of this dance consists of a skilful and agile manipulation of a drapery (material), which bends and repeats body movement. Loie Fuller invented the modernist style of dance. This dance gave the possibility of the most various likening and pliable analogies. Loie Fuller in her whirling motion was represented to contemporaries as newly appeared Bacchante.

The orgy became popular concept at the end of XIXth century after Nietzsche noticed the features of the ancient art in struggle of two beginnings – Apollonian and Dionysian. The modernist style likes to reveal human passion, its violence. The artists often searched for a case to transfer love passion. The motive of a kiss became popular and transferred from one master to another.

Well-known "Kiss" of Behrens (1898) (draw 1) gave one of the first decisions of this motive (see illustration). In his colour lithograph the German master represented it abstractly, so he found the original formula of a kiss.



Drawing 1. Peter Behrens "Kiss"

Masters of a modernist style did not neglect also other forms of love dis-

play – we remember “Danaë” Klimt” (1907-1908) [7] where the erotic beginning wins Klimt’s decorativism. Often enough artists and graphics are interested in mythological heroes who satisfy their passion only if love & death, love & blood have mixed up (consider “commingled” or “converged”). That’s why they like to draw Salome (Klimt, Boehmer, Beardsley; Stuck, Corinth, Moreau), Judith, Herodias, and Delilah. “Judith” by Klimt (1909) depicted in an ecstatic condition (fig. 2): her thin bony fingers are convulsively compressed, the eyes are rolled and the eyelids are half-opened.



Drawing 2. G. “Judith” by Klimt (1909)

The woman in ecstasy is a well spread motive in modernist style art. The ecstasy – rascally-erotic as at Klimt, dance ecstasy as in any of "Orgies" by Stuck or Hofman, or “the Woman in ecstasy” Holder (1911) – all of them are similar to each other, all of them are a new sort of heroines who are able to frankly reveal their feelings, their inwardness, the passion of soul, the love and the body movement. The artists of the modernist style often represent other heroes. They are interested in feeling an awakening, in formation of the vital forces. This theme usually uses not so much in spiritual aspect as in physiological. The well-known picture "Spring" Holder (1901) is one of the vivid examples (Drawing 3). Life awakes in young bodies and not in revealed souls.

Young heroes can meet in the works of Hofman, Roussel, Maillol; babies and young men are presented in the art of Kuznetsov, Utkin, in the sculptures of Golubkina.



Drawing 3. Holder, "Spring"

But all these listed motives do not mean that the modernist style of iconography is painted only in the optimistic tone of the revival, an impulse, and awakening. In this impulse and ecstasy the style concealed damage, breakdown, and overstress. There were plenty motives of death, hopelessness, languor, despair. The allegorical image of death was popular in Belkin, Stuck, Greenberg, and Crane. Soul languor lives in many Vrubel's heroes. It is impossible to assert that all plots and motives listed above appeared only in painting and graphic modernist style and that they never were before.

The mythological characters and allegorical images mentioned above are presented at the European art of XV-XVIIth centuries maybe, even more often than in modernist style art. But the principle of mythology became insignificant in XIXth century. On the contrary, for the modernist style is indicative return to mythological characters and allegorical motives. Certainly, the interpretation of traditional plots became absolutely new on a boundary of the XIX-XXth centuries. The iconographic generality was occurred in modern style and became a reason of consolidation of many national schools.

The style as it wins the national tradition though, in each school, the

plots are interpreted differently with a glance on traditions and the national art situation.

Another iconographic generality also arises from representation of the typical concept that time and unity of all is alive. In this representation there are many animal and vegetative forms; tendency to unite a flower and a bird, a wave and a horse, fish and a person into new fantastic creatures. Sometimes in this way artists use mythology, which, as it is known, generated a great number of similar creatures. Sometimes artists recreate them and during this period they feel themselves as "myth creators" who are able to compete with the collective national imagination that generated all these images. Very often, for example, we see it in paintings and in graphics such as Pan with the legs of a goat.

The German painters and the graphic artists Jugendstil more often than the artists of other schools used such metamorphoses. Similar heroes are at Böcklin, Klinger, and Stuck. Böcklin especially loved Tritons and Nereids who have carefree life in the sea and were busy only with love games. Centaurs were very popular because they personify the ideas of man's force.

German, French and Belgian symbolists often depicted a sphinx as the ideal hero for artists of the modernist style, the hero who has united a woman, a bird and a lion.

But idea is not only in the above mentioned metamorphosis. The fauna and the flora became a subject of special attention of the artists, the sculptors, the graphics, and the masters of applied arts. The artist is not interested the whole nature. He separates parts of it as a flower, a leaf or a bird, a dragonfly or a butterfly. The artist uses all these "characters" as independent subjects, which are isolated from

their living conditions or their usual environment where they always exist.

Certainly all these cases are extremely various. They are taken from different kinds of painting and gra-

46 s and serve many different purposes, sometimes being a subject in an easel picture or a sign in a book or as an element of the graphic design.

But the most important is that a flower, a leaf, a tree or a branch already acts as a certain concept by itself. The main task for the artist is not in cognizing the uniqueness of this subject but in using it as a concept, already developed image for special purposes, more often for the symbolism.

In a modernist style there were favourite flowers that have certain meanings taken from mythology. Among the favourites were the tulips, the orchids and the lilies, where the water lilies meant tragedy, destruction, and death; the hand bells meant desire; the sunflowers burning with the light of the sun symbolize zest for life. The roses, the narcissus also were the favourite flowers in a modernist style.

Favourites also were in Fauna especially in the world of birds: the swan, the peacock and the pheasant. The swan was associated with refined beauty, the allegory of hopelessness. The peacock in Ancient Egypt was a symbol of the Sun City and it quite often appeared in a Christian iconography in a paradise tree of life. All listed flowers, leaves and birds were in ornaments, certainly in their conventional and stylized forms.

The essence of human beings was a mythological hero. This is the explanation of myth's great popularity as the source of a plot.

There is a fairy-tale stemming from the myth in the form of his youngest sister that consists of an important set of different plots. The reference to a fairy-

tale is a tradition from romantic times. In Jugendstil the reference to fantastic plots was not a rarity, not only in illustration, but also in independent easel products. In Russian modernist style there are also many fantastic plots. Polenov, Yakunchikova, Malyutin, Bilibin used Russian fairytales' plots for their pictures and illustrations.

The essential iconographic generality was formed in the theatrical plots and tendencies in theatre life. Artists from different countries created their plot groups there. Frenchmen preferred ballet, circus, and cafe. Germans depicted opera singers and the stages of big theatres. Also, Russian artists occasionally used similar plots where they tried to make life look like a theatre, dramatizing life.

Painting, sculpture, applied art with their inherent iconographic features participate in formation of architectural image because modernist style syntheses in art.

Public buildings, shops, railway stations were under massive construction. Apartment houses were originally decorated in a modernist style. The styles were specific in Russian architecture. The modernist style presented fine models of trading houses, offices, and banks.

From all referenced above, it is possible to make a conclusion: the iconography in different arts does not form "within" the style, but the style chooses form by itself. It is not difficult to make a choice for the style because in itself with favourite plots and ideas, architectural genres are generated with the same time and mood of an epoch crossing of the boundary of centuries.

As any style, modernist style claimed the creation of art synthesis. The synthesis of arts is a way of perpetuating ideas, conceptions of people, of human society, perpetuating life by building mankind's activity in unity

with spiritual and material creation. Synthesis realizes certain categories and symbols as written by A. F. Losev, "for limits of purely art figurativeness" [6]. More often it is believed that these categories originally manifested in art are from religion (antiquity, the Middle Ages). During the early epoch that also gave expressive examples of art synthesis there were notions of the influence of magic.

The synthesis provides the conflict of various kinds of arts. V.A. Favorsky eloquently formulated the notion of synthesis as follows: "To enter inside architecture with the idea to prevent it is a miserable task. The Artist's task is only the effective transformation of the architectural surfaces" [4].

More often the synthesis uses a principle of mythologization. It creates a relative world with its own dimension and internal laws.

The direct "conversation" with nature in the synthetic work is impossible. It can happen in details, in parts, but not as a whole, not in the main theme. Before we start revealing the characteristics of the synthesis, it is necessary to make a small trip back in history. German romanticists considered that human beings lost the integrity during the epoch while they were creating; the life and the art are separated from each other. It is necessary to restore the synthesis of art and life, the art and the person as a means to achieve this restoration as seen in the synthesis of arts. A variety of works of R. Wagner [5] shows that synthesis was one of the central problems in the middle of XIXth century. In 1849 he wrote "Art and Revolution" and "Future Art"; in 1850 – "A Future Work of Art"; in 1851 – "The Opera and a Drama". For Wagner the musical drama was the form in which it was possible to collect all art forms and it

will directly convey the idea of synthesis. Friend and colleague of Wagner amidst the Dresden revolution of 1848 Gottfried Semper promoted the ideas of synthesis and focused the attention on creating a man-made environment, so we can notice that it was perspective and in the future it became one of the ideas for the modernist style. It is important that Semper focused his attention especially on applied arts, considering that their development surpasses development in architecture. Morris developed the same idea of creation of an aesthetic environment. He thought that the architecture is the most important and it is necessary to organize all external environments of human life into new conditions.

Drawn from this line of Semper, Morris obtained a practical development in modernist style of the art. It was one of the preconditions posed for the practical decision of the synthesis. Another precondition we can consider, is that synthetism of the art of thinking, which characterizes painters, graphic artists, sculptors who have overcome the previous attitude towards nature. The term "synthetism" was also one of the characteristics of Gauguin's creative method. It can also describe the art of other artists.

The possibility of the implementation of the idea in the art synthesis in a modernist style is caused by its primary qualities. Monumental painting gathered wide development in the moderns; very often plans that unite different art forms are carried out – architecture, painting, sculpture, a stained-glass window, and objects of applied creativity. The quantity of Monumental painting is extremely large. As a rule, the private residences, the public constructions, even the business buildings are decorated inside and sometimes outside by the picturesque pa-

nels, the mosaic, the tempera list, the painting on glass. The final purpose is beauty. The idea of beauty is given from outside as the highest task. But the idea is inside the art. It is a child of the aesthetic idea in general. The beauty appears simultaneously both in purpose and in means, it reproduces itself. This process of self-reproduction proves that mutual relations between the art and the real world become different than before. The idea of beauty acts as a maintenance extract, and then it doubles and triples, being simultaneously and aprioristic condition of creativity, figurative purpose, and means.

The rapprochement of different kinds, the occurrence with each other leads to their transformation into each other. This transformation, the mutual substitution of architecture, the sculpture, the applied objects, the painting becomes distinctive feature of the Moderns. In this aspect the modernist style can be compared only with the Gothic, which has the similar tendency. However in the Moderns, mutual imitation of different art forms reaches the highest point. If principles of the Moderns are stronger and more obvious, then the tendency of interchangeability of the art forms, the mutual imitation and the form creation, are main features in a modernist style. The number of the limited parties of the Moderns and in particular, the absence of the most important task has defined impossibility as the "big" synthesis. On the other hand, the attraction to each other or different art forms becomes the stimulus for the creation of the "small" synthesis.

There were plenty of them. Perhaps, the most popular of the Moderns became the synthesis of the books. It brought good results. The illustration and the book design connected with each other; except that, the book be-

gan to be perceived as an object and a product of arts and crafts.

In the same venue, it is possible to tell more about the "theatrical" synthesis. Theatre has the advantage of blossoming over time at the boundary of centuries and began to play a significant role in the system of arts. In the middle of the century, Wagner instigated some revolution in the mutual relations of theatre with other kinds of art. Wagner's tendency was influenced by the modernist style. In Russia this movement of artists towards the theatre was especially strong: there were no masters of painting from the new directions who would pass by the theatrical art. There are also other variants of the synthesis – "interior" or "street".

The interior began to play a more important role. This role was dictated by the architecture, which has created new ways of the configuration of the internal space and opened the way to full balance between external and internal. It was important that the applied arts have the same rights (it "serves" the interior) as any other kinds of art creativity. Such role then was played by an interior in a modernist style as "a skilled field" for the style experiment, before of which he had never played.

The same we can tell about designing of the "interior" of a city such as a street. We know many examples in the history of art when "small" architecture (for example, lattices) rises to

the level of the "big" art. However there is no epoch of ordinary objects of the street entering into "the big" history of art – for example the lanterns. The Moderns know the highest qualitative launches of the art decoration of street. We remember at least lighting devices (street lamps) of Guimard.

In connection with the synthesis of a boundary of centuries it is necessary to pose one more problem - new growths in art and the occurrence of new forms of art creativity because of inclination to each object to other separate objects. We remember that cinematography appeared in 1895. There were experiences in the area of the colour music, which within the whole XXth century remained an unused area, of which there were no essential aesthetic results.

So, as the result, taking into consideration the problem of synthesis in art of the Moderns we established the following moments: the failures of the "big" synthesis happened because of the absence of the big ideas which could result in the ennobling and improving the human being. On the other hand, the development of the "small" synthesis gave serious success and new steps in historic-art development. There is a big interest of the artists in the designing of environment, and finally, the ability of various art forms to approach each other and to transubstantiate each other.

Bibliography

1. Arthur F. Johnes, *Introducere în artă*, Editura: Orizonturi Lider, București 1997.
2. Dicționar de curente picturale, Larousse, Editura Niculescu, București, 2001.
3. E.H. Gombrich, traducerea de N.Constantinescu, *Istoria artei*, Pro Editura și Tipografie, București 2008.
4. <http://j-volfson.livejournal.com/176905.html?thread=1898505>, В. Фаворский "Теория композиции". Критика модерна, модернизма, абстрактивизма и проч.
5. <http://smallbay.ru/modern.html>
6. <http://www.dissercat.com/content/kulturnye-osnovaniya-stilya-modern>, //Юсев А.Ф. Понимание стиля от Бюффона до Шлегеля // Литературная учеба. 1988. - № 1. - С. 156-164.
7. <http://www.arteveryday.org/gustav-klimt/>
8. <http://mariapopart.wordpress.com/2011/03/>

9. <http://www.artap.ru/cult/moderne.htm>, Культура справочник – словарь. "М", культура основные термины, учения, течения; история культуры; функции культуры; человек и культура
 10. http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enc_pictures/2971/sintez
-