

NEO-POSTMODERNISM

a
cultural-anthropological
analysis

by Tilman Otto Wagner



As cultural-scientific stigmatization of a new moral idea - a new perception of culture itself - we witness a dialectical resumption and new arrangement of pre-Christian-aesthetical, respectively mythological ideals and forms, which can be subsumed as "**neo-postmodern**". We witness both in the field of **beaux-arts** and in the area of more recent poetical-philosophical works a shift towards anthropological discourses of antique origin. The evaluation of the imaginary art production - from a nowadays point of view of a post-

colonial redefinition of our history of civilization -, originates from the spirit of prophetic (wise) knowledge, which was to be praised during early modern art history in a profane way, and ultimately found its authorization through the irrationality and absurdity of modernism in form of deconstructive working methods.

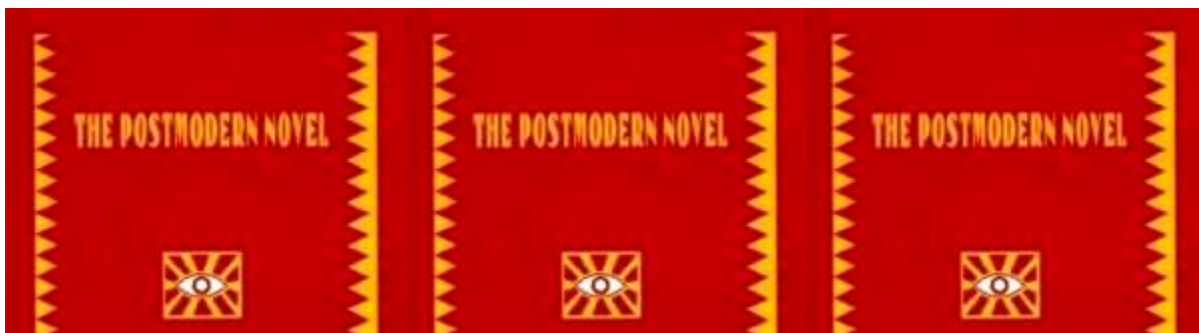
A logocentric, implicitly ethnocentric development is being reflected in the generative principle of the imagination, as well as in the theology of creationist tendencies towards a parallelization of knowledge and art, alias the conception of a postmodern world. By means of existing theoretical approaches and discourses, this essay should precisely define the present art theoretical approach to the aesthetic-ideological measures of the 20th century, with all its sociocultural implications in the age of the digital revolution. Starting with the cinematographic revolution of

the ***fin de siècle***, via mystical-psychoanalytical dimensions of the classic avant-garde in the first third of the 20th century, through to the obliteration of the mimetic-empathic mechanisms in the subconscious mind of the art-recipient¹ after the armed conflicts of the last century, respectively the dissolution and dematerialization of form and matter², the denial of readability (e.g. misinformation: blurred pictures, unreadable texts, scorched paper³) and the admission of metaphysical, media-critical discourses in the working methods and creation process of artistic mechanisms of the third millennium, an eclectic conglomerate is being generated, asking for a more precise redefinition.

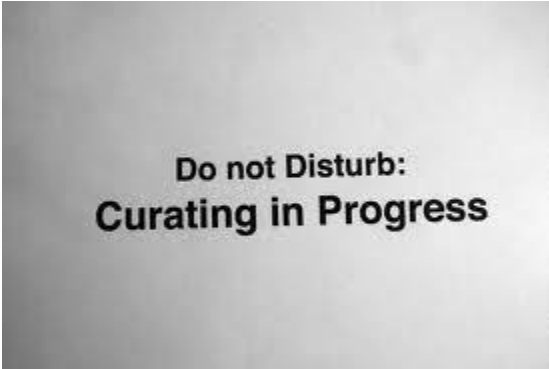


The term "**Neo-postmodernism/neo-postmodern**" occurs for the first time in the history of an institutionalized cultural-political discourse in philosophical and cultural-theoretical essays.⁴ In the past centuries a permanent attempt was being made to veil the nature of humans and to allow a mythological significance to the metaphysical dimensions. In modernism this tendency reverse-engineered. The

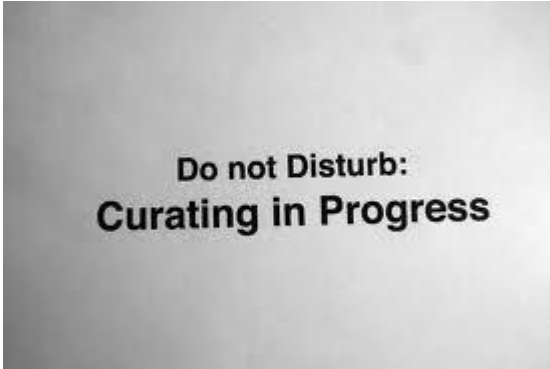
artist reveals his/her secret. He/she airs his/her soul-mysteries, in order to create art. Traditional art was always constituted around the secret, around the encoding of a mystery or enigma. Whereas modern art found its benefit from the pleasure of trespassing both the intimacy and secrets of the human nature - a breach of taboo ***par excellence***. Authors like Bret Easton Ellis, Martin Amis, Philip Roth, Margaret Atwood, Katherine Mansfield or Michelle Houellebecq tried to celebrate the after death of the narrative in the postmodern novel by use of voyeuristic literary strategies, whereby it remains questionable, if they really succeeded in doing so.



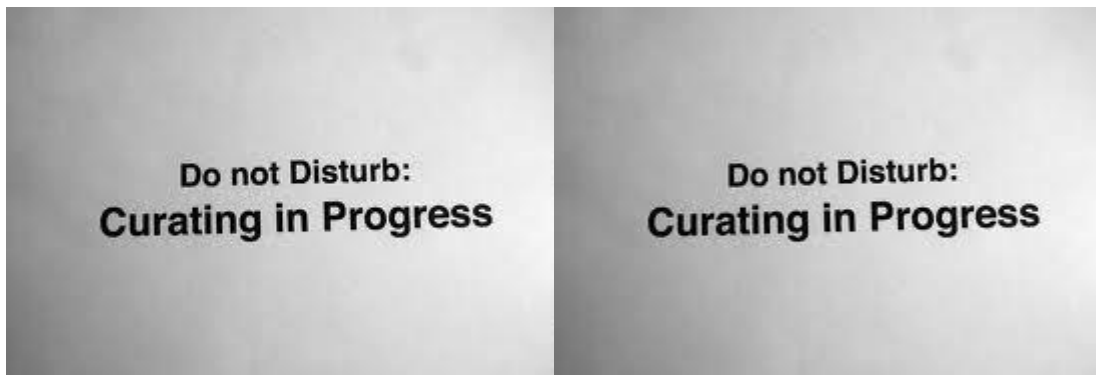
With the end of the industrial age, respectively the manu propria-access to the process of art production, significant changes in the perception and reception of artistic contents and forms have been emphasized. The serial-automatic reproduction of art, which blasted by means of technological possibilities of the new media the one-dimensionality of the art work, opens a whole new perspective and position of the artist in the social process of understanding culture and art. Also, the question arises, whether the artist is legitimate for his art work and desires the critical intervention of a curator or critic.



**Do not Disturb:
Curating in Progress**



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The world of curators and art critics still exposes a phallogocratic background, which can best be described as: "There is no such thing as history, there are only historians. History is only his story!" A statement that can be rendered to both cultural and educational policy. Nevertheless, our simulated world was generated by means of feminine perception, taking in account the scientifically proven fact that both the Internet and computer system architecture are based on a loom weave-concept of zeros and ones.



The ethnocentric approach of the neoliberal subjectivity in the middle-European discourses to art turned out to be wrong during the modern and postmodern age. And this is the opportunity of a new arrangement of

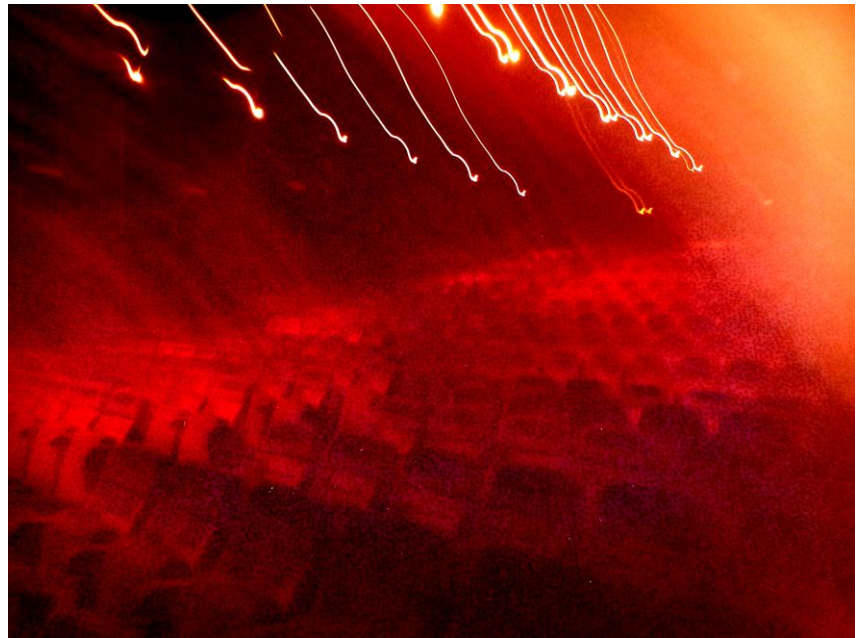
the already existing structures and mechanisms both in their dialectic understanding and in the sense of the anima as "archetype of life". Through the perception of a modern secularisation we face an intelligible form of the further up defined **NEO-POSTMODERNISM**.

During the 1960s a conclusion in the field of natural sciences was elaborated, stating that the common empirical judgement as seen by scientists was not sufficient anymore. The extended art term is the goal of the development from traditional to anthropological art. The conclusion was reached, that art and science are diametrical opposite in the thought-development of the occident, this fact being reason enough to search for a resolution of this polarization. This way, the substantial strategy of **Neo-postmodernism** can define itself only by destroying this dualism, liberating itself from the ideological and

dogmatic mistakes of the past by means of expressive abstractions and spiritual conditions in both the art community and world of science. New methods of working and thinking can be made possible. The scientific cultural-anthropological work shall be empirical, job-oriented and relevant to present times. Culture and civilization are in a mutual, not contrary proportion to each other. The **neo-postmodern** artist and scientist recognizes - as creator of culture - the regularities of an advanced civilization as the possible spiritual (intellectual) fundus, from which he picks out the necessary irrational, subversive and constructive ideas and impulses.

Unfortunately, at the time being we witness aesthetic disaster-hits in both the fine art world and the world of letters, which feed their energy from formalistic experiments and shallow futile theory. How can we -

without suppressing a cynical smile - write about **NEO-POSTMODERNISM**, which had to slave away from the irritations and enactments of postmodernism, in order to leave those parts of our subconscious behind, which psychoanalysts and mystics define as the fountainhead of the human soul.



As long as the simulated, virtual reality demands for access authority in the history books, an utterly problematic cultural atavism tiptoes among thinkers and leaders of our times. Only where the borders of

impossible find their end, and the borders of unconscious fail, only there we can create an autonomous, free zone, where liberated minds can set the course for a new world awareness. Let's change the world together!



ENDNOTES

1. Bertolt Brecht's "epic theatre" was to overcome the understanding of Aristotle's classic theatre by means of dialectics and alienation, in order to induce the audience to socio-critical thinking, rather than a mimetic touchy-feely identification with the actors on stage
2. The reference especially goes to the works of concept artists: Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Joseph Kosuth, Sol Le Witt, Donald Judd, Allan Kaprow, Ian Wilson, Robert Smithson, Robert Morris, Lawrence Weiner, Dan Graham, Douglas Hueber etc., who questioned in the New York of the mid 60's conventional visuality, creating a new artistic approach: The separation of the artistic proposal (in the form of drawings or specific instructions for the use of different materials and how these materials should be assembled) from the aesthetic experiences of the recipients.
3. Like for example in Antonin Artaud's notion of the "subjectil", which he assigned to his figurative, artistic visions.
4. In the Internet we can find references to both architecture (<http://www.raum-szenarien.udk-berlin.de/final/neopostmoderne>) and dramatic arts (<http://www.theaterspielplan.at/index.php?pagePos=52&id=25986&PHPSESSID=543f22c41d2f5323a0226e4d88943085>) using the term "**Neo-postmodernism**" or "**neo-postmodern**".