

Chapter 1

Culture Industry: A Contemporary Revision of the Term of Theodor Adorno

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ABSTRACT

*This chapter examines some of the ideas that Theodor Adorno elucidated around the term culture industry, compiling mainly the ideas published in the text *Aesthetic Theory* of 1970. The term culture industry is also contextualized in the chapter with the reflections that Adorno previously exposed in 1947. A dialog is created with the proposal of the North American theoretician and artist Martha Rosler to understand the chronological development of art before, during, and after Adorno. Regarding the relation between art and autonomy, the ideas of Adorno offer elements to understand contemporary art production. This way, the author also discusses contemporary new media art manifestations, which are analyzed in key terms such as autonomy/ culture industry in relation to the proposals of the Brazilian theoretician Arlindo Machado. Lastly, the chapter offers an approach to the artistic institution analyzing the museum in relation with Adorno's ideas.*

INTRODUCTION

Since its mere emergency art has been asked about its autonomy in relation with its social role and with the industry. At the same time art has always been the deposit of romantic ideals and the dreamed place from where society is criticized. Theodor Adorno was one of the pioneer authors who reflected about the relation of art industry

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with communication media such as the TV, which in 1947, time of Adorno's first reflections, was getting consolidated¹. The time of Adorno appears similar to ours of the consolidation of the internet, making his reflexions pertinent for a critique of the media art of our time.

This way, strongly contemporary Adorno's ideas about the *Hitlerian strategies* (Adorno, 1947, p. 16-17) of the mass media, help us to understand the idealism of Adorno's art conceptions, through the approach to his historical moment and his own personal life.

The present article briefly describes what Theodor Adorno reflected about the relation between art and the culture industry in his posthumous and probably most influential publication *Aesthetic Theory* of 1970. Subsequently the term is contextualized with previous reflections of the author since 1947.

Together with the research of the North American theoretician and artist Martha Rosler, the ideas of Adorno are shown in a parallel to the moments of art before, during and after Adorno's time. At the same time that contemporary new media art manifestations are analyzed in the article in key of the couple autonomy/culture industry, this time in relation to the proposals of the Brazilian theoretician Arlindo Machado.

Lastly, the article offers an approach to the artistic institution analyzing the museum in relation with Adorno's ideas.

CULTURE INDUSTRY INSIDE THE AESTHETIC THEORY OF 1970

In the first section some of the historical conceptions of the culture industry will be brought together in order to create a compilation of the ideas that illustrate the complexity of the term proposed by Theodor Adorno.

This way, the idea of culture industry will be described as a factor that made possible for art to become a consumer good, understanding this process also in key of a commercialization of the catharsis in the reception of an art piece.

Culture Industry and Consumer Goods

Theodor Adorno explains in *A Critic to the Culture industry*, section of the book *Aesthetic Theory* published in 1970, that as far as art corresponds to a social manifested necessity, it transforms itself mostly in a business governed by the profit, which persists as long as it is profitable. By doing so, art makes itself aside, confirming being nothing but something already dead (Adorno, 1970, p. 34).

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Adorno exposes the means used by the culture industry in order to transform art pieces into commodities when he makes clear that the 'naïve' people of the culture industry, avid of commodities, locate themselves closer to art, perceiving how art is inadequate to accompany the process of social life. Adorno argues that the creation of this proximity to art only intensifies the culture industry, as well as, at the same time, here the idea of the immediatism of art to the society is planned to deceive (Adorno, 1970, p. 376). On the other hand, the culture industry defends that art suffered a process in which it ceased being what it is and lost its specificity, becoming consumer goods in the shape of catharsis and art pieces themselves (Adorno, 1970, p. 34).

In the following paragraphs we will then explain how for Adorno the art and its catharsis became consumer goods.

Art Pieces as Commodities

For Adorno indubitable symptoms of the tendency of the culture industry are the passion for what is palpable, as well as for not letting any work be what it is, accommodating them, while diminishing the distance in relation to the spectator (Adorno, 1970, p. 32).

For the author considering art *vested interests* means to classify subjectively art inside the commodities. Adorno specifies the complexity in the relation with art as goods when he hopes that *at least* art was simply consumable, then, this way, the relation with art would be based on the mere relation with commodities but for Adorno in a time of super production the value of use of art is also problematic since it is submitted to the secondary delight of prestige, of fashion and then, finally, submitted to the own character of commodity. This way, of the autonomy of art just remains the fetishistic character of commodity, being this a regression to the archaic fetishism in the origin of art (Adorno, 1970, p. 32).

On the other hand, the culture industry's praxis advocates for a servile respect for empirical details, this is, for the shape, allying this way the praxis of the culture industry with the ideological manipulation (Adorno, 1970, p. 336). A fact that makes believe in the importance of art based on its technique, and on its final shape, which is equal to its fetishistic character. And for Adorno, the sublimation of the form is a vehicle of ideology.

For the author a type of art that prevails in the culture industry establishes its significance on its *value of exposition*, instead of its *auratical, cultuai*, value (Adorno, 1970, p. 73).

At the same time that the culture industry transforms art into commodity, it also feigns the catharsis in the shape of a consumable aesthetical stimulus, as it will be explained as follows.

Catharsis as a Commodity

For Adorno the catharsis experienced through the appreciation of art pieces is taken and administrated by the culture industry and, by doing so, the aesthetical experience is no more sublime but one that makes possible its commercialization.

According to the theoretician, the real catharsis of art consists in the loss of oneself in the perception of the own limits and finitude not in a particular satisfaction of the 'I' or in the pleasure proposed by the culture industry.

For Adorno the idea of a profound catharsis is nonsense, is madness, for the culture industry (Adorno, 1970, pp. 364-365).

In the same line of Hegel's conception about the freedom to the object, Adorno argues that the aesthetical sublimation, guaranteed in the past the dignity of the spectator who, in a spiritual experience, becomes a subject through his/her alienation to the object of art. And this conception opposes the *philistines* aspirations that demand art to give something (Adorno 1970, p. 32).

This *something to give* is understood like the reductionist process in which art becomes a thing and a medium for the use of the psychological processes of the spectator (Adorno, 1970, p. 33).

Secondly, to create a market from art some of the strategies used by the culture industry are the progressive subjective differentiation of the creators of art, as well as the intensification and diffusion of the domain of the aesthetical stimulus (Adorno, 1970, p. 354). Therefore, art becomes inferior art and entertainment, as well as in this context art is a manifestation of the obvious. This process legitimates the ideology of the culture industry, an ideology that made art popular and closer to the public. But here for Adorno, the popular art is just a strategy that the culture industry uses to profit. Conversely to this idea of the art made popular and closer to the public, the notion of noble art has been, since Baudelaire, an accomplice of the privilege (Adorno, 1970, p. 354-355).

Lastly, concerning the transformation of the catharsis into a commodity, for Adorno, art transforms itself into a consumable product when, in an effort for not to be a commodity, it becomes a spiritual matter available at all the levels of life. Being this, as mentioned before, another kind of commodity that is taken and administrated by the culture industry (Adorno, 1970, p. 354).

This way, art pieces are turned into consumer goods and developed certain characteristics within the spirit of the culture industry that Adorno explains as follows.

Spirit of the Commodities

One of the characteristics of art as a commodity is its ridiculous seriousness. Adorno points to the fact that the culture industry is nowadays the only space where the spirit

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of seriousness of art appears, being this a distorted seriousness, clarifying that when art is serious is posing of not being modern art, turning art itself into something ridiculous (Adorno, 1970, p. 65). Simultaneously, for Adorno, if art pieces were absolute responsible, it would make art sterile.

The complexity of this hypothesis appears when Adorno exposes that at the same time art cannot be responsible but if it is exclusively irresponsible, art is nothing but a game. This way, for the author, it is only in front of the culture industry that art keeps its seriousness (Adorno, 1970, p. 65), but a fake new one that makes possible the commercialization of art pieces.

Regarding the irresponsibility of art, Adorno explains that to be delirious is for art a critic to the social praxis, a mimetic residue of art, and the price of art's impermeability. But in this barbarian moment, the irresponsibility of art transforms it in mediocrity and is only used by the culture industry as profit in the shape of *the fun* of art; this is, in the shape of a cultivated puerility of art (Adorno, 1970, p. 181). In a cycle, the puerility, which shares the objectives of the anti-intellectualism of art, degenerates directly in culture industry and is then fed by this, being, in this movement, preserved (Adorno, 1970, p. 309).

The question that therefore would follow is: what do we need art for? and if so, then, how to make it possible outside of the culture industry? this is, autonomous?

The Necessity of Art

According to Adorno, the necessity of art within the context of the culture industry is a creation of the culture industry.

For the author, the first time that the masses were confronted with art was through the mechanical medium of reproducibility offered by the culture industry.

The increase of the necessity of art for the masses becomes thus suspicious, since the culture industry hides behind it. For Adorno, the fact that the culture industry validates art, not only raises doubts, but would also not be sufficient to assure the justification of art, since it emerges from an area external to art (Adorno, 1970, p. 34).

In this context, clarifies Adorno, the one who defends art equalizes it to the ideologies of the culture industry (Adorno, 1970, p. 34).

Regarding the necessity of art, Adorno explains that the aesthetical necessity is a concept slightly vague and unarticulated, while at the same time the practices of the culture industry didn't produce the many changes they want us to believe, and that we are taking for granted.

For Adorno the necessity of art is in great size ideology. For him, it would be possible to live without art, not only objectively, but also in the consumer's psyche, who is suggested –constantly and without cost- to change their taste, since he/she follows the way of the smallest resistant: The shape of culture that matters to the

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culture industry is one without complexions and simple enough to be able to profit from it. The cultural goods are here a naïve and affirmative image of the culture (Adorno, 1970, p. 361).

Autonomy of Art

As a solution for the autonomy of art inside the context where the culture industry reigns, Adorno describes the place of artworks as its own. Not the place of art in relation to any social function.

For Adorno when art crystallizes as a specific thing in itself -instead of opposing the existent social rules or instead of qualifying itself as *socially useful*-, criticizes the society because of its simple existence.

This, according to the author, has been reproved for puritans of all confessions because what exists purely, completely structured according to its immanent law, exercises a critic without words, and denounces the degradation of society. This is, the society of exchange where everything exists only for something else.

This way, the asocial aspect of art is a certain denial of a certain society. But furthermore, for the autonomous art applies the idea that from the distance, art leaves intact the society from which it feels horror (Adorno, 1970, p. 253).

At the same time for Adorno, art keeps itself alive only because of its strength of resistance: Its contribution to society is not the communication with society, but a resistance to it (Adorno, 1970, p. 254).

Thanks to the complexity of this scenario, the autonomy of art is conceived by Adorno as a utopia, considering the fact that art emerges in relation to the manipulation offered by the culture industry (Adorno, 1970, p. 33).

Even though for the author the autonomy of art is an utopia, the author envisions a solution, a space where the culture industry cannot reign, when he claims that all these reflections can begin with the fact that, in reality, something aspires objectively to art, beyond the veil woven by institutions and fake necessities. For the author this would be then an art that evidences what the veil hides (Adorno, 1970, p. 34).

Regarding the value of art, although Adorno recognizes that provocative effects of art are quickly dissipated, he moreover identifies that artworks offer a practical effect in the transformation of consciousness (Adorno, 1970, p.272)

These possible solutions to the autonomy of art were only conceived by the Adorno of the *Aesthetic Theory* in 1970.

Previous to this text, Adorno pronounced overwhelmingly the relation between culture industry and art, with less than few possible solutions.

Following, a brief tracking of the term culture industry will be exposed, as well as some more reflections about the term and its implications that were exposed prior to the significant publication of 1970.

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THE TERM CULTURE INDUSTRY

Brief Trajectory of the Term

The term Culture industry didn't appear the first time in Adorno's posthumous publication

Aesthetic Theory, in 1970. As Adorno himself mentions in *Résumé über Kulturindustrie* -a text that was published in 1968 based on the radio conferences broadcasted in 1962 in Germany-, the first time that the term 'culture industry' was used, was in the book *Dialektik der Aufklärung* published by Adorno and Horkheimer in Amsterdam in 1947(2).

According to Adorno (1968, p. 61), the authors initially used the term *mass culture* that was subsequently substituted by for 'culture industry'. And they did so intending to exclude the defenders of the culture industry who aim it to be a sort of culture emerging spontaneously from the masses.

For Adorno the culture industry differs from this radically: the culture industry is the deliberated integration from above, of its consumers. It forces the union of domains, separated since thousand years, of superior art and inferior art, prejudicing both: superior art experience and the frustration of its seriousness on benefit of the speculation about their effect.

Through civilized domestication inferior art loses the element of resistant and rude nature, inherent to it when the social control is not absolute (Adorno, 1968, p. 61).

The origin of the culture industry can be located, according to Adorno, from the economical point of view when merchants where looking for new possibilities of application of the capital in more developed countries (Adorno, 1968, p. 63).

In addition to this, Adorno recognizes that authors like Brecht und Suhrkamp reflected in the decade of 1930s about the fact that cultural commodities of the industry are oriented towards its commercialization and not according to art's own content or adequate configuration (Adorno, 1968, p. 62).

Subject Means Object

Another aspect reflected for Adorno since the text published in 1968 is the concern about the state of consciousness and unconsciousness of millions of people, which is defined by the culture industry.

In terms of the author, for the culture industry the masses are nothing but a secondary factor, a calculation element, and an accessory to the machine. The consumer is in this system not a king, as the culture industry would like to make believe. He/she is not the subject but the object of that industry. And at the same time

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the culture industry reinforces the mentality of the masses, by taking this mentality as something given a priori and immutable (Adorno, 1968, p. 62).

For Adorno the interest of the culture industry in people only takes place when they are considered clients or employees (Adorno, 1947, p. 15).

At the same time, in the publication of 1968, Adorno exposes a diminishment in the spiritual character of art pieces inside the culture industry, as explained in the next section.

Individualization and the Spirit of Creations

For the theoretician, every practice of the culture industry transfers the motivation of profit to spiritual creations, and from the moment these commodities assure the position of its producers in the market, this motivation contaminates the spiritual creations. (Adorno, 1968, p. 62)

The products of the spirit, according to the author, once inscribed inside the style of the culture industry, are not only commodities as they are integrally commodities (Adorno, 1968, p. 64). For Adorno the culture industry forces the spiritualization of distraction (Adorno, 1968, p. 13)

At the same time that in this process, every product is presented like individual, considering this a kind of individuality that contributes to strengthen the ideology (Adorno, 1968, p.62): An ideology that defends the system of the 'vedettes' taken from the individualist art and its commercial exploitation.

In opposition, when it comes to defend themselves from the critics, the promoters of the culture industry have the pleasure to claim that what they provide is not art but an industrial product (Adorno, 1968, p. 66).

The culture industry transforms the fabrication of a simple good will in public relations, without the relation with the producers or with any particular object of sales. It looks for a client to sell him/her a total and not critic agreement (Adorno, 1968, p. 64)

Autonomy of Art Seen by the Adorno of 1947 and 1968

Regarding the autonomy of art, Adorno claims since his previous publications to the *Aesthetic Theory* in 1970, that pure art pieces that deny society's mercantile character, because of following its own rules, become also a commodity:

Until XVIII c the protection of the maecenas defended artists from the market, but these artists were instead subjected to the maecenas and his wishes. For the author, the freedom of the great modern artwork lives from the anonymity of the market (Adorno, 1947, p. 21).

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The autonomy of art almost never existed in a pure form and was always marked by connections of effect. Nevertheless, with the culture industry, this autonomy sees itself in the limit of being abolished. And this is a process that occurs with or without the conscious will of its promoters (Adorno, 1968, p. 63)(3).

Critique

The main points of criticism distinguished in Adorno's early reflections are, first of all, the exhortation to not to take culture industry seriously. It is something suspicious, since in the name of the social role of the culture industry judgments are repressed or eliminated about its quality, about its authenticity or falsity, as well as questions about the aesthetical level of its message.

For the author, to take seriously the proportion of its unquestioned role means to take it critically serious and not to curve oneself in front of its monopoly (Adorno, 1968, p. 68).

In our current time authors like Laymert Garcia dos Santos propose the same debate in publications like *To Politicize the New Technologies*, 2002, this time in relation with the internet, the digital era, the genetic manipulation and nanotechnology. For the author it is necessary to politicize the debate about technology and its relation with the capital, instead of leaving this debate to the transnational industries, as the establishment prescribes.

For Adorno the justification of the culture industry is contradictory once the *lawyers* of the culture industry defend it with the excuse of the *not intention to be art*.

Once again, the ideology excuses the responsibility in relation to what maintains the business alive. But at the same time this type of no-art is also referred to the fact that even the worst movie is presented objectively as an art piece inside the culture industry.

The criticism of Adorno focuses in media like radio, cinema and the TV, pointing how the products they offer, like the sentimental mail and horoscope, are intended to be inoffensive and democratic because they obey to a demand. But these demands were previously stipulated.

The defenders also claim that these manifestations bring all kinds of benefits like the diffusion of information and advices, while, at the same time, it acts as a reliever of tension.

But this information is poor or meaningless, like proves a sociological study about the level of political information found in these media (Adorno, 1968, p. 67). At the same time that in case these media disseminate informations, these are simply futilities, or even worse, they are shameless conformist standards of behavior. This all, only concludes for Adorno in the idea that *it is now more real than it never intended to be, that the world wants to be deceived* (Adorno, 1968, p. 68).

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As a consequence of these processes, what is firstly affected is the formation of individuals as explained in the next paragraphs.

A Critique to the Lack of Formation of Individuals

In the previous reflections to the text *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno presents a more strengthened connection within the political implications of the culture industry.

For him, the critique to the culture industry in relation to the impossibility of creation of individuality is based on the imperative of the culture industry according to the idea of *you must subjugate*, without indicating to what.

This way the culture industry impels to subjugate to whatever is already given and to what -as a reflection of its power and omnipresence-, everybody, -this is, the other-, thinks.

As a conclusion of this process, through the ideology of the culture industry, conformism substitutes consciousness, and this conformism is created in key of the culture industry's ruminations. This means that these are not rules for a happy life, neither a new kind of moral responsibility, but the exhortations to conform to what is behind the interests of the power (Adorno, 1968, p. 69).

As a critic to the conformism that the culture industry creates, Adorno asseverates that without confessing it, the spectators of these media sense that their lives become intolerable if they don't hold to satisfactions which, truly, are not any satisfaction (Adorno, 1968, p. 68).

In this context, the one who doubts of the potency of monotony is a maniac. While at the same time, as the author provocatively argues, *nobody will be cold or have hunger: whoever feels hunger or cold, will end in a concentration camp*. This sentence, emerged from the hitlerian Germany, could *shine as a slogan* of the culture industry, where to be the outsider is the most serious guilt (Adorno, 1947, pp. 16-17).

The compensatory satisfaction that the culture industry offers to people when it awakes in them the sensation of comfort, of a world in order, frustrates them in their own happiness, which it deceptively supplies (Adorno, 1968, p. 70).

Adorno concludes about the lack of individualization that it impedes the formation of autonomous and independent individuals, able to judge and decide consciously (Adorno, 1968, p. 70). As they constitute the previous condition to democracy, is here easy to imagine what for this is convenient.

In general terms, it is noticeable how the tone and ideas of Adorno in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 1947, is softened in the text of 1968 *Résumé über Kulturindustrie*, and become more abstract in the late *Aesthetic Theory* of 1970. At the same time that the harsh critiques, even more the ones that made a connection between the ideals of the culture industry and the ones of the Hitlerian Germany, tend to disappear in Adorno's discourse of the last times.

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Also, Adorno is important to us because, as it was already mentioned, he is one of the pioneers in interpreting the art industry nowadays as we will as follows explain.

AN APPROACH TO ADORNO

Adorno contributed with tools of analysis to understand the relation between art and industry in the current time. Diverse contemporary authors like Martha Rosler and Arlindo Machado have also reflected about this topic, and this way it is possible to bring them together and complete the trace of history allowing them to dialog and describe the context since 1947 until the present days.

The Autonomy of Art: Adorno and Martha Rosler

As a way to complete Adorno's ideas about the autonomy of art, here is exposed the reflexion of the artist and theoretician Martha Rosler, building a past-present-and-future chart in relation to Adorno's time.

Before Adorno's Time

(...) social negativity was a central element of the Frankfurt School, as exemplified by Adorno's insistence, against Brecht and Walter Benjamin, pointing to the fact that art in order to be appropriately negative must remain autonomous, above partisan political struggles (Rosler, 2010).

But different to Adorno, for Martha Rosler the alliance between artists and social phenomenon during the Industrial Revolution pointed to the liberation of the media of the time benefiting artistic freedom.

Artists working in a variety of media and cultural registers, from high to low, expressed positions on the political ferment of the early Industrial Revolution. One might find European artists exhibiting robust support for revolutionary ideals or displaying identification with provincial localism, with the peasantry or with the urban working classes, especially using fairly ephemeral forms (such as the low-cost prints available in great numbers) (...) New forms of subjectivity and sensibility were defined and addressed in different modalities (the nineteenth century saw the development of popular novels, mass-market newspapers, popular prints, theater, and art), even as censorship, sometimes with severe penalties for transgression, was sporadically imposed from above (Rosler, 2010).

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Even though it is a complex labor to define clear limits between tendencies, to this respect, Rosler argues that precisely only a couple of hundred years ago, *-as the old political order crumbled under the changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution, and direct patronage and commissions from the Church and aristocrats declined-* became possible for painters and sculptors to be independent enough to be critic.

But this criticism would not exclude the fact that a type of *art that exhibits an imperfect allegiance to the ideological structures of social elites has often been poorly received*. And this would mean that to step outside the ambit of patronage or received opinion, meant *losing one's livelihood or, in extreme situations, one's life* (Rosler, 2010).

For Adorno the autonomy of art was seen as almost inexistence as far as pure art pieces that deny society's mercantile character, because of following its own rules, become also commodities (Adorno, 1947, p. 21).

Contrary to what Martha Rosler points, the patronage for Adorno signified a solution for the autonomy of art from the market, which at the same time meant an opposite way of losing its autonomy in order to satisfy the patrons' wills.

For Adorno, until XVIII c the protection of the maecenas defended artists from the market, but these instead were subjected to the maecenas and their wishes. The freedom of the great modern artwork lives of the anonymity of the market (Adorno, 1947, p. 21).

During Adorno's Time

For Rosler the time of Adorno, first half of the twentieth century,

Consisted on a prodigious industrialization and capital formation, witnessed population flows from the impoverished European countryside to sites of production and inspired millenarian conceits that impelled artists and social critics of every stripe to imagine the future. We may as well call this modernism. And we might observe, briefly, that modernism (inextricably linked, needless to say, to modernity) incorporates technological optimism and its belief in progress, while anti-modernism sees the narrative of technological change as a tale of broad civilizational decline, and thus tends toward a romantic view of nature (Rosler, 2010).

Adorno interprets in this context a new death of art, as he perceived how through the process in which art persists as long as it is profitable, art makes itself aside, confirming being nothing but something that is already dead (Adorno, 1970, p. 34).

To complete the trace of this aspect for the current time, and in words of Rosler, in 2008 the real estate market brought down much of the world economy, taking the

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art market with it (Rosler, 2010). What in relation to the capitalized idea of art for Adorno this would mean that what was as well brought down during the economical fall, was not just a market created around art pieces, but the very same art which grew until the current time in relation to its market. It is peculiar to perceive how since Hegel's death of art in the beginning of the XIX century, authors like Adorno and Rosler keep reflecting about new deaths of art.

Martha Rosler's perspective adds clarity to the last years of life of Adorno and the ones that followed his death in 1968. For the theoretician the decade of 1960s consisted in

A robust moment, if not of outspoken criticality in art, then of artists unrest, while the culture at large, especially the civil rights/youth culture/counterculture/antiwar movement, was more than restive, attempting to re-envision and remake the cultural and political landscape. Whether they abjured or expressed the critical attitudes that were still powerfully dominant in intellectual culture, artists were chafing against what they perceived as a lack of autonomy, made plain by the grip of the market, the tightening noose of success (though still nothing in comparison to the powerful market forces and institutional professionalization at work in the current art world). In the face of institutional and market ebullience, the 1960s saw several forms of revolt by artists against commodification, including deflationary tactics against glorification. One may argue about each of these efforts, but they nevertheless asserted artistic autonomy from dealers, museums, and markets, rather than, say, producing fungible items in a signature brand of object production (Rosler, 2010).

As Rosler manifests, the market forces, as well as the institutional professionalization of the art world, were stronger than the fight against the lack of autonomy. But it was only possible in this context that media art manifestations appeared to question the lack of autonomy. Like in the cycle of *work's production, absorption and neutralization*, the search for autonomy is followed by the scope of the culture industry. Like this, it declares art what was supposed to be anti-art, looking for new means of commerce.

This way, Adorno and Rosler agree with the fact that what was left of the robust political, cultural and artistic manifestations of 1960 was nothing but the development of new strategies of the culture industry in order to maintain the commercialization of art.

The fact that the culture industry changes its strategies with time in order to maintain art as a consumer good, which was observed by Adorno, didn't alter after his lifetime. On the contrary it became more complex as explained as follows.

After Adorno's Life

To illustrate the complexity of the autonomy of art after the time of Adorno, it is pertinent to consider what Rosler specifies about the late 1960s when in the United States

President Johnson's Great Society included an expansive vision of public support for the arts. In addition to direct grants to institutions, to critics, and to artists, nonprofit, artist-initiated galleries and related venues received Federal money. This led to a great expansion of the seemingly uncapitalizable arts like performance, and video, whose main audience was other artists. Throughout the 1970s, the ideological apparatuses of media, museum, and commercial gallery were deployed in attempts to limit artist's autonomy, bring them back inside the institutions, and recapitalize art. (...) Art educators began slowly adopting the idea that they could sell their departments and schools as effective in helping their students find gallery representation by producing a fresh new line of work (Rosler, 2010)

With the apparition of new patronages like the own government art becomes more restricted of its autonomy, being this the new faces of the culture industry. This way its autonomy becomes every time a more intricate dance of interests, at the point that nowadays it is pertinent to ask -without this being a rhetorical question-, like the seminar of Univ.-Prof. Dr. Violetta Waibel at the University of Vienna: *Do artworks exist? How are they possible?*

For Rosler the only possible solution is to consider that *these, then, are not abandonments of art world participation but acceptance that these institutions are the proper – perhaps the only - platform for artists* (Rosler, 2010).

The theoretician finds then a positive general solution on the interpretation of the changes between art and industry that affects not just art, but also the way of actively live in society, based on the fact that the new movements occupy *a middle region between 'individual and collective'* and so have the possibility of engineering a different relationship to society, state, and capital. For the author the new forms of communication can produce *a radically new form of democracy* (Rosler, 2010).

This conclusion of the present time would be a solution that contradicts what Adorno reflected about the lack of autonomy in the creation of individuals at the end of the 1960s, also in terms of individuals who keep alive the apparatus called democracy without any critical formation, being this maintained by the information spread through the culture industry (Adorno, 1968, p. 70).

On the other hand Rosler provokes with the idea about *whether choosing to be an artist means aspiring to serve the rich*. With the new global economy relations

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the idea here exposed by Rosler as typical of the United States can be generalized. But also Adorno explores this axis, noticing that this relation is not new when he claims that the notion of noble art has been, since Baudelaire, an accomplice of the privilege (Adorno, 1970, pp. 354-355). And at the same time, in Adorno's words no infamy is softened when it is declared as such (Adorno, 1968, p. 68).

Regarding the autonomy of art, Rosler points to a context where as she explains, *how long can the academy of art success without the galleries?* At the same time, for the theoretician, artists are stubborn and there are always artworks, or art *actions*, that are situated outside the art world or that *cross-list* themselves in and outside the golden ghettos. For the author, the art market doesn't mean it all: *It is not the market alone, after all, with its hordes of hucksters and advisers, and bitter critics, that determines meaning and resonance: there is also the community of artists and the potential counterpublics they implicate* (Rosler, 2010).

It is important to follow the trace in the search of both authors regarding the autonomy of art, as something superior to a commercial intention; this is, headed towards an intention inside its own manifestation. And it is important because it could give us the clues to understand the complexity of the time we live, ultimate objective of art's expression.

Finally, since the decade of 1960s and with the apparition of a strong tool like the mass media to control and distribute art, new ways to make art also emerged as a consequence and as a contrary position to this tendency. As Martha Rosler mentions even inside the strengthened culture industry through the use of the media, also appeared a

So-called 'dematerialization': the production of low-priced, often self-distributed multiples; (...); the development of multimedia or intermedia and other ephemeral forms such as smoke art or performances that defied documentation; dance based on ordinary movements; the intrusion or foregrounding of language, violating a foundational modernist taboo, and even the displacement of the image by words in Wittgensteinian language games and conceptual art; the use of mass-market photography; sculpture made of industrial elements; earth art; architectural deconstructions and fascinations; the adoption of cheap video formats; ecological explorations; and, quite prominently, feminists overarching critique... (Rosler, 2010).

This strengthen of control of the culture industry would shape the time that followed Adorno, this is, our current time.

It is then interesting to analyze the relations of the subsequent new media art and culture industry, as the final stage where this relation is manifested.

Culture Industry and New Media Art

Continuing with the exposition of manifestations after the time of Adorno, the Brazilian theoretician Arlindo Machado reflected about the new media art and its relation with the culture industry.

Here the analysis is brought to the new media art, considering it a contemporary type of art that deals more accurately with the technological evolution stage of our time, helping us to describe the relation between last manifestations within the art field with the autonomy of art, as well as with the culture industry.

What was already distinguished by Adorno in relation to the art of his time and the culture industry does not relieve at the present time. In words of Arlindo Machado, in the case of the art made with new media technology, what promised to be a period of experimentation and discoveries was soon revealed as the trivialization of routines already crystallized in the art history: the return to conformism and integration to dominating values (Machado, 2007, p. 55).

For the new art manifestations the rule seems to be today marked by a strong standardization, by a general uniformity, as if what is at stake is a sort of aesthetic of merchandising, in which every piece must show a merely demonstration of the qualities of the hardware or the potential of the software (Machado, 2007, p. 55).

Adorno already intuited this perspective in the fetishist character of art, which the practice of culture industry, in a servile way, respects. To be more precise, the process suffered of what was seen by Adorno as the culture industry admiring the empirical details -or technique-, which allies in a big success with the ideological manipulation through the utilization of those elements (Adorno, 1970, p. 336).

For Machado, in the art of the new media what seems to happen is, in most of the cases, the subtle but undeniable lose of the more radical perspective of art nowadays. And he adds: today, when one visits any event of electronic art, digital music or interactive writing, as well as when one browses any magazine dedicated to those specialties, it is not necessary a big effort to confirm that the aesthetical discussion was entirely substituted for a technical discussion, and that matters like algorithms, hardware and software, took majorly the place of creative ideas, of subversion of rules and re-invention of life (Machado, 2007, p. 56).

To conclude about the idea of great value given to the empirical details in the new media art, Machado manifests that with the boom of electronic technologies, art seems reduced -except from, naturally, some few powerful and disturbing experiences- to certain professional skills, while at the same time the technical ability took the place of the most radical attitudes. And he completes that in the environment of the relation between art and technology; only few events could overtake the inevitable industrial framing, looking to confront the most profound inquiries of our time (Machado, 2007, p. 56).

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For Machado, the description of an artist who, in Adorno's terms, was taken as a *vedette* (Adorno, 1968, p. 66), would nowadays correspond to a generation of uninformed yuppies that today produces multimedia pieces, uses devices of non-linear edition, diagrams its homepages in internet but never saw a movie of Vertov, never read Artaud, never heard about Beckett, or touched a *bicho* of Lygia Clark (Machado, 2007, p. 56).

As well as Adorno saw a conflict when he perceived that the technique made possible that even the worst movie were presented objectively as an art piece (Adorno, 1968, p. 68), for the present time the same consideration is applicable:

According to Machado we must define with more severe and rigorous criteria to separate the weed from the wheat in the slippery territory of the technological aesthetics, in order to differentiate and privilege works that mark our time, works that bring an effective contribution and gilder, works that, finally, point to perspectives of invention, freedom and knowledge. (Machado, 2007, p. 56)

And, as well as Adorno pointed to the danger of declaring art every manifestation done inside the culture industry, for Machado, the challenge of the new media art doesn't lay in a mere naïve apology of the current possibilities of creation. New media art, on the contrary, must trace a clear difference between what is an industrial production of pleasant stimulus for the mass media, and on the other side, the search for an ethic and an aesthetic for the electronic age. (Machado, 2007, p. 17)

More precisely, regarding the difficult production of autonomous art inside the new media, it is important to point to the fact that nowadays manifestations like the net.art or web art are cheaply produced and freely exposed to the public of the wide spectrum of the virtuality. Art is being produced like never before, and without the intervention not only of interests of the culture industry and also of the artistic institution.

This way, the ultimate solution for the most radical shapes of art can exist only inside its non-commercial character, as it was exposed in Martha Rosler's, as well as in Adorno's ideas.

And by doing so it questions more effectively not just the culture industry but in a broader extension, the whole society, being this the role that art is called to play.

On the other hand, the question *How can there be poetry after Auschwitz, or, indeed, pace Adorno, after television?* (Rosler, 2010) is explained by the similarity that Adorno found between the hitlerian ideals and the television (Adorno, 1947, pp. 16-17), as well as with the art emerged within the culture industry.

It will not be enough to keep mentioning the importance of the context in which Adorno produced his critiques to the art within the culture industry: His context is the one of a person who lived and thought Auschwitz and who even lost his friend and intellectual partner Walter Benjamin in 1940, who committed suicide in the border between Spain and France, trying to escape from the Nazis. (Gagnebin, p. 1982).

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In this personal context of Adorno, it is intuitively understandable how his search for a place for art turned to be a capital search for answers to oppose the horror of human cruelty.

By doing so, Adorno insisted in the autonomy of art, maintaining it as a manifestation that emerges pure from any human dimension, apart in its own character and justified by its mere existence.

Perhaps trying to find a place where to rest from the horror, Adorno fought for a utopian untouched place called art.

CULTURE INDUSTRY AND THE MUSEUM

Adorno's ideas on culture industry comprised the mass media of the time –radio, film, magazines and television-, as well as the artistic institution as such, like the museum, as explained in relation to the catharsis phenomenon, experienced in the reception of an art work and the lack of autonomy of art works. For Adorno art suffered a process in which it ceased being what it is and lost its specificity, becoming consumer goods in the shape of catharsis and art pieces themselves (Adorno, 1970, p. 34).

It is curious however to notice how carefully Adorno did not comprise his criticism within particular artistic structures and did not connect openly culture industry with the museum. Nevertheless his approach referred to this artistic institution, as well as galleries, art fairs, biennals, the explosion of cultural and artistic tourism, and other artistic venues as they too, in the search for continuity face the necessity of dealing with art pieces as commodity, as we will explain in the following chapter.

But how has the culture industry developed within its highest aspect, this is, the museum? In this order of ideas, does the artistic institution turn the spectator into a client? And until what extent is the museum still the ultimate secure place where to preserve the legacy of mankind and support its production insofar as it is defined as the place that brings together art and the public?

The history of the museums is in itself not the most transparent one, and sciences like museography and museology aim to deal with such historical and irresolvable questions.

In the following section we will point to certain characteristics of the museum in order to deepen in the continuation of Adorno's ideas regarding the culture industry and how it evolved until our current time.

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A Brief History of the Museum

The wide span from the middle of the 16th century to the beginning of the 18th century is regarded as the *century of the collection* and at the same time the birth of the modern museum (Flügel apud Herzig, 2010, p.52). Public circulation as in today's museum took place in early private collections and art chambers, but the admission was only allowed to a limited number of visitors and selected persons. The entrance fee was usually paid in the form of a gift and thus represented a contribution to the completion of the collection.

In a first wave in the 15th and 16th century, art and wonder chambers were founded as very early forms of the museum in the centers of early-modern Europe. These centers were Florence, Paris, Madrid, Prague and London. Objects of different origin and purpose - works of art, antiques, books, natural materials, curiosities, exotica or technical devices were presented here (Baur apud Breuer, 2012 p.60).

This way, a general opening of aristocratic art collections, libraries and gardens did not begin until the second half of the fifteenth century. The universities also began with their collections of research and science: In Pisa, in 1543, a botanical garden with free admission for visitors was built next to the university collection. The university collection was also known as *hortus medicus*, *hortus simplicum*, and *theatrum anatomicum*. (Roth apud Herzig, 2010, p.52). A century later, around 1661, the University of Basel opened the first public museum at the north of the Alps. By acquiring the Amerbach Collection with a large number of paintings, drawings, engravings, coins and antique rarities, the viewer in Basel could for the first time have a comprehensive insight into art. (Grote apud Herzig, 2010, p.53).

A second museum boom begins in Europe in the middle of the eighteenth century, which has its origins in the gradual opening of private, mostly princely collections.

The roots of the collection activity of the modern museum date back to the 17th and 18th century. The methods and insights of the natural sciences and the philosophy of the Early Enlightenment paved the way for a new quality of museum collecting. (Breuer, 2012 p.69)

The opening up of the private art collections, which had been held up to this time, aroused an immense interest in art and newly created values among the population. The demand for art and education on part of the bourgeoisie inspired Napoleon's government to use art as a political instrument. For example, the histories of Jacques Louis David and others were propaganda instruments for glorifying the emperor as well as a medium to represent the nation, and as learning material and source of knowledge for the formation of the population. (Wolff apud Herzig, 2010, p.54).

On the other hand the cultural policy after the example of Louis XIV became a guide for many sovereign personalities, such as Napoleon's collectivist activity or Hitler's dream of a *Reichsmuseum*. (Wolff apud Herzig, 2010, p.95).

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The creation of a separate area for public art appreciation strengthened the belief in the autonomy of art. (Grote apud Herzig, 2010, p.56) But this autonomy had nothing to do with the one that Adorno thought as for Adorno the place of art works as its own and not the place of art in relation to any social function, that is, not inside a Museum as a commodity. It is in light of this that Adorno conceived the autonomy of art as a utopia. Considering the fact that the appreciation of artworks inside a museum is the result of the dynamics of the culture industry (Adorno, 1970, p. 33).

The history of the museum is marked by the gradual opening of the museum walls being this the transformation of princely collections to the modern and public museum. (Raffler and Fluegel apud Breuer, 2012 p.59).

This way, to deal with museology means to deal with an almost elitist form of history of the ideas, regardless of the ever-renewed discussion about the term museum. This is so as the principles of order, genres and species, as well as names and concepts change with time. They have been defined and have changed under specific historical conditions.

In this respect it is pertinent to ask for the difficulties of the museums trying to approach the spectators in every historical period since the 15th century to art, when art pieces do not play any role in their life. Even more, when the social development of the present moves away at an ever-faster pace from the historical cultures, their cultures of origin, and the distance between them become then ever greater and ever alien. (Fluegel Apud Breuer, 2012 p.60)

Adorno addressed the fact that through this process the culture industry transforms art into commodity, not letting any art work be what it is, accommodating it, while diminishing the distance in relation to the spectator (Adorno, 1970, p. 32). Or even more, for Adorno in a time of super production, the value of use of art is also problematic since it is submitted to the secondary delight of prestige, of fashion and then, finally, submitted to the own character of commodity. This way, of the autonomy of art just remains the fetishistic character of commodity, being this a regression to the archaic fetishism in the origin of art (Adorno, 1970, p. 32).

In key of Adorno's ideas on culture industry, which constitute an early approach to the institutional critique of our time, Kenneth Hudson in the article *The Museum Refuses to Stand Still* (2004) suggests that *A very important feature of the majority of the museums today, in contrast to what characterized them in the mid-1940s, is the extent to which they have become visitor-centered. This amounts to saying that, as good shopkeepers, museum directors are slowly coming to think of the customers first and the goods on sale second* (Apud Gorlenko, 2010 p.24)

In the same direction Brian O'Doherty in *Museums in Crisis* (1972) described the fact that

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The more the objects of private collecting reverted to public hands, the more inevitable it became that the economic interests behind that collecting would move to control the public houses of art. Museums are, or will soon be treated like entities in a conglomerate. Moreover, with a different sponsor for each ambitious exhibition, the museum becomes subject to a carousel of sponsors, each feeling entitled to have its interests acknowledged. (Apud Gorlenko, 2010 p.28)

On the other hand according to Isabella Herzig, one must not forget that all the collections contribute to secure the cultural heritage. The museums are no longer able to cope with this task by themselves, and they are certainly going to be dependent on private collectors. Only through the financial aid and through the loan of financially potent collectors, as well as exhibiting contemporary works of non-established artists, can the growing demand for new exhibitions be satisfied. (Herzig 2010, p.140).

For our current time also Lisa Dennison from Sotheby's in New York agrees that the future of art museums is endangered. Her main argument lays in the shift of power and influence from the art museums towards the auction houses and private galleries:

[...] museums are in difficult position today because they don't seem to have the power to speak with the same authority that they had in the past. More and more people are learning about art from galleries and auction houses. Museums need to build their permanent collections, but what we are seeing is a phenomenon where collectors don't want to gift their art in perpetuity to a museum that may put it in the basement storerooms. Collectors want their collections to be living, breathing entities – and this makes museums less relevant to them at this time. (Apud Gorlenko, 2010 p.27)

This situation is explained by Gludowacz, van Bennisen and van Hagen (2010) in their text *Global Art* as:

The public museums are under increasing financial pressure and becoming more and more dependent on collectors and gallery owners, all of whom are pursuing their own – primarily economic – interests. For this reason many museums are putting on shows aimed at drawing in large numbers of people. Success, so the reasoning goes, consists in having as many visitors to your exhibition as spectators at an international football game, and letting them set the cash registers ringing. This is a pretty dangerous trend. According to the authors, it must be possible for public

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museums to show important artists who don't have great popular appeal, and who are perhaps reserved and difficult to understand. That really would be exciting. And it's really the only way for public museums to fulfill their mission of educating the public. (Apud Gorlenko, 2010 p.27)

What is therefore the future of the museum and what is the museum to convey to future generations? Peter Weibel sees the future art museum as an organic place, which is subject to a constant transformation and becomes a place of pilgrimage more than an eventual site of the general display of art. Using the media, the virtual way to store information, a *universe of the visual* is to be created. The dream of a *Cyberspacemuseum*, a kind of *universal metamuseum*, is intended to open up unprecedented access and possibilities, to allow virtual visits to museums everywhere and at any time, thus the circle of history of collection closes: the wonder chambers with their all-encompassing view of the world were abandoned, only to return to a technical and practical possibility of connection (Apud Herzig, 2010, p.72) with their public, that the museum is invited to experience.

In light of this, the mere idea of the digital artwork could seem to turn in the direction of Adorno's ideas criticizing the fetishism of the art piece used by the culture industry in order to profit. Finally would art pieces lose their materiality and become available to everyone. Nevertheless, such process of bringing art pieces closer to the spectator would be criticized from Adorno's perspective, as again, this would negate a utopian impulse, turning it everyday life and thus low art. As well as it would indicate the same old use of art for personal pleasure, a particular satisfaction of the *I* directing the reception of artworks more to its consume than to the loss of oneself in the perception of the own limits and finitude, expected by Adorno. (Adorno, 1970, pp. 364-365)

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Autonomy of Art: Is defined by Adorno as the own place of artworks. Not the place of art in relation to any social function. For Adorno when art crystallizes as a specific thing in itself—instead of opposing the existent social rules nor qualifying itself as *socially useful*—it criticizes the society because of its simple existence. This is the autonomy of art, an art that leaves intact the society from which it feels horror.

Catharsis: Loss of oneself in the perception of one's own limits and finitude. It is not a particular satisfaction of the 'I', neither pleasure nor consumerism.

Commodities: Commodities are merchandise. The term refers to commercialization, being in this context the will to make art profitable.

Culture Industry: Adorno's term culture industry comprises the mass media of the time—radio, film, magazines, and television—as well as the artistic institution as such, like the museum, as well as galleries, art fairs, biennals, the explosion of cultural and artistic tourism, and other artistic venues.

Museum: The history of the museums is in itself not the most transparent one; it is a non-profit institution that needs the public to remain working, is permanent but in risk of closure and in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates, and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study, and enjoyment.

New Media Art: Type of art that deals more accurately with the technological evolution stage of our time.

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Utopian Art: Artworks whose place consists in their own, and not in relation to any social function, that is, not inside a museum. In light of this, the autonomy of art is conceived by Adorno, as a utopia.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Electromechanical broadcasts began in Germany in 1929, but were without sound until 1934, according to Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_television
- ² The text will deepen in the last ideas reflected by Adorno since 1962 that were published in the text *Résumé über Kulturindustrie*, 1968, and the first manuscript will be disregarded as, assumedly, it was enough revisited until the last ideas of the author.
- ³ As an isolated aspect, Adorno mentions in 1947 the political implication of an art being produced inside a system that supports the investments in technical effects, but which, at the same, doesn't find the resources for the abolishment of hunger (Adorno, 1947, p. 11).