



## ART 2.0 IN THE MEDITERRANEAN DIGITAL SPACE

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The latest evolutions in the field of Internet technologies have given shape to what is considered the new Web era, a second epoch already known as Web 2.0.

Basically, this evolution of the Web is characterised by the progression from a more static language, such as that of the first Web pages, in HTML code, where the users were mere consumers, to a more dynamic, interactive and dialogued phase. The most relevant aspect of this change can be personified in the fusion of the receptor with the emitter.

Among the more immediate examples, we can highlight universally known sites such as *YouTube* or *Flickr*, in which the users can "upload", view and share different contents. The Web is therefore transforming into a platform for plural exchanges. This represents a real revolution in the fields of technology, communication, information technology, etc. One of the most biting criticisms against this new phase of the Internet is that the economic system that gravitates around new technologies has appropriated this new formula for itself. So much so, that the term "Web 2.0" has become a benchmark logo and a business opportunity for a vast array of companies [1]

This is an attractive market, which as Juan Martín Prada explains, focuses its interest and economic development in the construction of social networks: *"The fact that the central axis of Web 2.0 today is the production and management of social networks proves that it brings together social and economic production. Companies on the new Web try to produce social life, human relations, in an*

*extremely profitable strategy that does not distinguish among the economic, emotional, political and cultural. The design of forms of human relations comprises the instrumental base of production. The new businesses of today are the new economy of the immaterial"*[2]

Despite all of the economic interests that are at play in the development of Web 2.0, its open, participative, dialogical, and "platform" structure are obviously an interesting starting point for the examination of the transformations that are at work in different fields of study and action, such as Art, social criticism, as well as politics and their numerous points of contact.

Over the last few decades, the strategies, forms, and above all the techniques of artistic practice have multiplied endlessly. The evolution has been such that for various contemporary art theorists identifying continuity in the social-historical development of art is a complex and highly debated task.

We can extract one of the most interesting theories regarding the current social and historical process of Art from the work of the American philosopher Arthur C. Danto, who in the 1960s already hailed the *"end of Art"*; one of his better known texts, published in 1997, is actually entitled *"After the End of Art"*. In this book, Danto ponders over the contemporary evolution of Art, after the demise of the period characterised by legitimating narratives on Art. As Danto claims, *"...now that Belting has come forward with the idea of art before the beginning of art, we may think about art after the end of art, as if we were emerging from the era of art into something else the exact shape and structure of which remains to be understood"*[3]

The transition *into something else* that Danto already started to recognise a few years ago helps us to analyse the current transformations that are occurring around art, technology, science and communication.

### WHAT DO WE UNDERSTAND BY ART 2.0?

We might be able to relate this new concept, with that which Danto referred to, art after the end of art, although we are clearly in a phase in which there are innumerable issues to be resolved in order to best define Art 2.0.

The fact of asking these questions, will in any case, help us to understand the contexts in which we are operating. Furthermore, in order to go deeper into our analysis, we shall consider as our first example the experience of the EMYAN (EuroMed Young Artists Network) Network, the network of young artists from the Euro-Mediterranean space. Among the EMYAN initiatives, there is a project devoted to researching the concept of Art 2.0 with the aim of "*defining the art of the future and outline it in order to create a new era of art*" [4]. The questions raised to reach this goal are very helpful in understanding, from different perspectives, some of the properties of this new concept.

### WHAT IS ART 2.0?

Is it a new way of saying digital arts?

Is it some sort of a tool, a method in order to strengthen the relation between art and ITC?

Is it an abbreviation of something?

Is it a new version of art with particular aims and objectives such as dialogue, development, freedom, peace, etc?

Is it describing the current facility in making art that ensures interactivity with the public through today's technology?

Is it related to the term Web 2.0?

Is it the name of a coming era of art?

Is it describing the tools and methods that make it easy to create a work of art? [5]

As we know, all closed definition limits and restricts, therefore it would not be fair to apply any to Art 2.0 as it is still in the initial development and discovery phase. Nonetheless, in many cases the response to the questions laid out by the EMYAN network may be positive. In any case, this barrage of questions helps us to outline a still hazy

concept such as Art 2.0.

One of the most frequent traits of the contemporary circuit around artistic theories and practices, from the different forms of expression and current artistic practices, to the construction of theoretical debates for the curation of exhibitions and/ or the organisation of multiple events linked to the analysis and socio-political criticism of art, is the need to establish a dialogue. To build ideal bridges that can unite different and/or distant realities. One of the most recurring terms in Web 2.0 terminology is "*platform*", which takes on a fundamental value and meaning in the new debates regarding the current development of art. A good example of this can be found in the projects carried out within the framework of *Contemporary Arab Representations*, led by the French art critic and exhibition curator Catherine David, recognising the imperative need to articulate and consolidate *platforms* that develop a critical culture [6].

Spaces for debate and exchange, multi-shaped and plural projects that generate interrelations and attempt to reveal the complexities of the contemporary period, are gradually, yet increasingly, present and develop in a fluid manner in the Web's territory and in the more institutional geopolitical terrain.

In his analysis, Arthur C. Danto actually contemplates the era of pluralism in the art world, an era that we could recognise as ours due to the enormous technological advances and Internet's contribution. He goes as far as to conceive the possibility, or maybe the utopia, that this pluralism could influence future political events: "*This is what I mean by the end of a certain narrative which has unfolded in art history over the centuries, and which has reached its end in a certain freedom from conflicts of the kind inescapable in the Age of Manifestos. Of course, there are two ways for there to be freedom from conflict. One way is really to eliminate whatever does not fit one's manifesto. Politically, this has its form in ethnic*

*cleansing. When there are no more Tutsis, there will be no conflict between Tutsis and Hutus. When there are no Bosnians left, there will be no conflicts between them and Serbs. The other way is to live together without the need for cleansing, to say what difference does it make what you are, whether Tutsi or Hutu, Bosnian or Serb. The question is what kind of a person you are. Moral criticism survives into the age of multiculturalism, as art criticism survives into the age of pluralism. To what degree is my prediction borne out in the actual practice of art? Well, look around you. How wonderful it would be to believe that the pluralistic art world of the historical present is a harbinger of political things to come!" [7].*

Juan Martín Prada recognises this same kind of pluralism in the connected multitude: *"What we could call 'art' in the context of Web 2.0 is certainly what most reinforces our belief in the potentials of the connected multitude, in its possibilities for the free production of critical thought and new life. That all means that art, the optimal form of resistance in the context of the new networks, would be an extreme herald of the constituting power of the multitude. That is, the world that the multitude can build is foreshadowed in the best artistic proposals, always manifested from the demands of interpretative thought, of critical and meaningful communication. Through the most interesting artistic proposals an attempt, at least, would be made at a poetic reconfiguration of the social interactions of the connected collectives" [8].*

Pluralism, connected multitude, interculturality, dialogue, platforms for encounter are therefore some of the main aspects that we can recognise in the new language of Art 2.0. A new language that does not have to be linked compulsorily to the context of the Web 2.0, but which can develop beyond the Web's own characteristics. A language that tackles and proposes different perceptions from different perspectives; using in some cases, the tools

that the new technologies offer.

As Donald Kuspit states in an interview: *"All great art gives us a new perception of what we think we already know. Coleridge said it beautifully when he said that the goal of art is "to give the charm of novelty to things of every day." Proust also stated that, "there is nothing new, only new ways of seeing things," that is to say, new forms of awareness. I believe that the electronic potential for combination and manipulation heightens our perception. There are neither strictly positive nor negative aspects; one of modernity's greatest discoveries is that all perspectives are relative. Of course, one can allow oneself to be dominated by one perspective, but there are clearly others. The new technologies offer new possibilities to intervene in the public sphere from a different perspective"[9].*

Understanding Art 2.0 as a space for encounters, a space for communicative interaction, a tool for intercultural dialogue, as a *new way of seeing things*, allows us to construct and relate territories and people beyond the conventional geographic formulae.

Art 2.0 proposes itself as a shared space where the multitude can express its potentials in a heterogeneous fashion, thus demonstrating, as Juan Martín Prada has indicated, the power of difference: *"in no case can we conceive of the idea of art on the networks as an element transcending life. To the contrary, it must be seen as an element able to penetrate life, affirm existence and the power of difference, of the exceptional in each of the infinite elements forming the infinity of connected lives. At the same time, we must view it as what proves the common underlying that whole world of singularities: a need to live more fully, with shared expressions of solidarity, of a life accommodated to others not through homogenization but rather through an enjoyment of differences" [10].*

For a territory to be known, it must contain multiple perceptions and perspectives, the tools of knowledge that the Web provides

allow for the development of a deeper and more plural vision.

An example of a territory that is in permanent construction, in a continuous process of redefinition, where artistic experiences together with social and political criticism, etc., seek open dialogue, in which the differences and similarities between diverse realities can be found, is within the vast space of the Mediterranean.

A complex, ambiguous, hybrid space, that is in permanent movement, fluid and liquid like the waters that comprise it.

Around the Mediterranean, around the physical and geographic space that it occupies, around this enormous metaphysical scenario in which multiple identities coexist, around this mobile and fluid area that embraces the Euro-Afro-Asian continent, in this inland sea *"offering communication and not division between the various interrelated peoples, and the setting for norms of mutual and long lasting benefit, of weddings and hospitality. Polyphonic in the number and complexity of sounds and situations"* [11], as the art critic Claudia Zanfi has said. A growing number of artistic projects, as well as social criticism, are developing around this sum of realities, in which we can recognise certain parallels with the characteristics of Art 2.0.

Projects that travel through Mediterranean territories headed in multiple directions. Projects such as the *Going Public '06 - Atlante Mediterraneo*, which outlines a critical map of transformations and contemporary life, through artistic theories and practices, in six Mediterranean cities (Istanbul, Beirut, Nicosia, Tel Aviv, Alexandria, Barcelona.) [12] Digital projects, like the *fadaiat* [13], that use the Web and new technologies. As does the Spanish collective *hackitectura.net*, a project that includes the goal of establishing itself as an open platform for debate on the concept of border(s) –Spain-Morocco, Europe-Africa, South-North- as well as researching on the relations between technology and communications and the construction of new

geographies, specifically in the area around the Straits of Gibraltar.

Another interesting project that has developed in the Web is "The Olive Project: Two minutes for peace and justice" [14], a series of on-line videos that invite us to think about the dire situation that Palestinian farmers are living in due to the destruction of over 200,000 olive trees from Palestinian lands by Israeli occupation forces since 1967 [15]

The transformations of societies and knowledge, thanks to the advances of new technologies, are the object of interdisciplinary research. These studies have to be approached in a truly plural manner, such as, for example the experience of the *"Caravanes Civiques"* described by Moroccan author, and Principe de Asturias Award winner in 2003, Fatima Mernissi [16] *"Dal deserto al Web"* [17] is a journey to the interior of a *cosmocivic* Morocco, deeply transformed by satellite transmissions and the Internet.

Finally, we must mention *Love Difference, Artistic Movement for an InterMediterranean Politic* [18], founded by the Italian artist Michelangelo Pistoletto. This project constitutes an important intercultural network where different initiatives develop with the common goal of questioning, through art, the societies and multiple aspects that comprise the totality of human life. As Rosa Pera points out, *"it is surely no coincidence that precisely at the moment in which studies on the phenomenon of globalisation and its consequences are proliferating in various areas such as sociology, urban planning, architecture, economics, history and philosophy, the need also seems to arise in contemporary art to consider the situation, not only in a purely analytical manner, but also in its practical capacity"* [19]

The project that Pistoletto promotes represents this new era of art, from different perspectives. A new era in which artistic creativity is understood as an expression of freedom, and which becomes necessary to

debate and analyse all sectors of human activity, such as for example, communications, ecology, economics, education, philosophy, work, food, politics, religion, science, spirituality.

*Love Difference*, to love differences, is conceived as a free platform that tries to develop interconnections and interrelations among peoples and projects in the Mediterranean area. Among its aims, we can highlight that of giving, "meaning to the word 'humanity', openly, sensitively and warmly accepting differences between individuals and social groups"[20]

If we go back to the questions taken from the EMYAN project, the Network of young Euro-Mediterranean artists, we can find various similarities between Pistoletto's project and the possible characteristics of Art 2.0. Especially, when referring to a new version of art with specific aims and goals such as dialogue, development, freedom, peace, etc., or the relation between art and ITC (Information Technology and Communication) networks.

Overall, the Mediterranean presents itself as an important area for debate and exchange in which it is crucial to heighten research in order to reach true dialogue between its multiple diversities, be they social, cultural, artistic, political, economic or spiritual. "A Sea," as defined by exhibition curator Rossana Pittelli, "that unites this great diversity with one single wave"[21], a liquid movement, we might add, that constantly pushes the multiple and heterogeneous elements of this *Mare Nostrum* towards dialogue.

#### NOTES

[1] See, for example the following Web pages: <http://www.web2submit.com/>; <http://www.web2expo.com/>; <http://www.web2con.com/web2con/>.

[2] Prada, Juan Martín. *La "Web 2.0" como nuevo contexto para las prácticas artísticas*. Documentation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Inclusiva-net Session, 2007.

En: <http://medialab-prado.es/mmedia/578>.

[3] Danto, C. Arthur. *Después del fin del arte. El arte contemporáneo y el linde de la historia*. Paidós. Barcelona, 1999. p. 26.

[4] See, the following Web page: <http://www.emyan.org/art2.html>.

[5] In English on the following Web page: <http://www.emyan.org/art2.html>.

[6] Tamáss 2 – *Representaciones Árabes Contemporáneas. El Cairo/Egipto*. Witte de With, centre for contemporary art, Rotterdam and Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona, 2004. Exhibition catalogue.

[7] Danto, C. Arthur. *Después del fin del arte. El arte contemporáneo y el linde de la historia*. Paidós. Barcelona, 1999, p. 59.

[8] Prada, Juan Martín. *La "Web 2.0" como nuevo contexto para las prácticas artísticas*. Documentation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Inclusiva-net Session, 2007.

In: <http://medialab-prado.es/mmedia/578>.

[9] Kuspit, Donald (ed). *Arte digital y videoarte. Transgrediendo los límites de la representación*. Ediciones Pensamiento. Madrid, 2006. p. 44-45.

[10] Prada, Juan Martín. *La "Web 2.0" como nuevo contexto para las prácticas artísticas*. Documentation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Inclusiva-net Session, 2007.

En: <http://medialab-prado.es/mmedia/578>.

[11] Zanfi, Claudia. *Atlante Mediterraneo*. In: *Going Public '06. Atlante Mediterraneo*. Silvana Editoriale. Milan, 2006. p. 11.

[12] See the following Web page: <http://www.amaze.it/en/inside.html> and the publication: *Going Public '06. Atlante Mediterraneo*. Silvana Editoriale. Milan, 2006.

[13] <http://www.fadaiat.net/>.

[14] <http://www.charlesstreetvideo.com/project.php?id=1>.

[15] *Mediterráneo(s)*. Exhibition catalogue. Centre d'art La Panera. Lleida, 2007.

[16] Mernissi, Fatima. *Karawan. Dal deserto al Web*. Ed. Giunti. Florence, 2004. See the following Web page as well: <http://www.mernissi.net/>.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] <http://www.lovedifference.org/>.

[19] Pera, Rosa. *El Mediterrani com a pretext. Love Difference. Per una transformació social responsable*. Article in: Transversal 31. *MEDITERRÀNIA(ES)*. Revista de cultura contemporània. Lleida, 2007.

[20] [http://www.lovedifference.org/it/aboutus/finalita\\_mac.htm](http://www.lovedifference.org/it/aboutus/finalita_mac.htm).

[21] Pittelli, Rossana. *Mediterraneo. A sea that unites*. Exhibition catalogue. Istituto Italiano di Cultura. Londra, 2008.

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## CYBERSPACE AND REAL TIME: THE VIRTUAL BEYOND THE SCREEN

[M. LUISA GÓMEZ]

When talking about new technologies, it is inevitable to refer to the changes that they have generated –and continue to generate, at increasingly greater speeds- in our culture, leading us towards the so-called Network Society [1] or Information Society. This new form of society is characterised by new forms of production, social relations and interactions, of data management, etc. All of which linked to the possibilities of interconnectivity that digital and information technology processes allow for.

At the origins of these transformations we can observe a process of "acceleration" promoted by technologies that we can verify, as Virilio, Gleick or Kern have done, by analysing the evolution of the means of transportation and communication since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In practice, this acceleration consists of reducing the time that is necessary to develop any process, be it travelling a distance (from the application of steam engines to means of transportation, to high speed trains or airplanes), performing complex calculations (increasingly rapid computation processes) or transmitting specific information (from the telegraph to broadband systems).

It is therefore obvious, as expressed by many researchers of the relation between culture and new technologies that this process of acceleration has had, and will continue to have, practical consequences on our relationship and understanding of the complex notions of space and time, or rather of the notion of space-time.

One of the consequences of the acceleration of processes regarding time and space could be defined as "contraction" [2]. When we