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**Bazon Brock**  
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**SERGEY DOZHD.**  
**“COMMITMENT TO A NEW SPIRITUALITY.”**  
**ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REAL**  
**AND MENTAL SPACES**

As the founder and director of the “Institute of Theoretical Art” in Berlin, I strongly welcome Sergey Dozhd’s attempts to systematically reflect on the spiritual dimension in art and science. Why is this research necessary? It is undeniable that mathematics in world practice is of paramount importance, that is, it has a decisive influence on the material and physical reality, although mathematical activities are performed in a purely spiritual inner world. The system of operational rules of mathematics is independent of the empiricism of the life world of mathematicians. The fixation of these activities as logical systems on axioms is a pure spiritual postulation. Especially in the last 600 years, as part of the development of autonomous science and art in Europe, the minds of theologians, philosophers, aesthetics, psychologists and technicians have been captured by the question of how the impact of a spiritual event on the physical outside world can be revealed. Sergey Dozhd attempts to give a new answer to this question through his theory of Sciarsism (the unity of scientia and ars).

The following forms of the spiritual are considered generally accepted today:

- “symbols” according to Goethe, that is, the transformation of the perceived image into thoughts;
- “gestalts” according to Ehrenfels, which are understood as psychodynamic comprehension of physically given things, even if only their fragments are before our eyes;
- “spirit of the law”, which goes far beyond the character of the legislative text;
- the effect of color in the rooms design on the mood of the people there;

- unified algorithms that allow a computer to carry out the execution of one principle in various forms;
- recognition of ghostly long-range action in quantum physics;
- or, in general, forms of understanding as opposed to the tradition of doing.

Masters closer to us in time, who worked in this field in the German-speaking world (a clear example of geographical and mental space), from Helmholtz to Koffka and Kohler, from Mauthner to de Saussure from Nietzsche to Carnap, from Wagner to Georghé were all motivated by a medieval dispute about universals. Universals were understood as abstract concepts that are valid always, everywhere and for all people. These concepts were obtained by abstraction according to the scheme of constructing the concept of “redness” from a multitude of red objects, or deriving the concept of “love” from examples of people’s loving treatment of each other, or the emergence of the concept of “society” from the fact of social life of people with their certain patterns of behavior, laws forms and power relations. The question was whether redness, love, society can be regarded as elements of reality in the same way as red things, loving people and human communities organized according to the rules.

Does the grammatical procedure of adjectives substantivating lead us into the temptation of empty conceptual formalism and tautologies, or, on the contrary, does it open up the spiritual space as another dimension of the three-dimensional space where we act? Mathematics proves that the power of the spirit determines reality.

Since the 14th century the new types of creative artists and scientists have emerged in direct connection with each other. Apparently, the subsequent evolution of working techniques of art and science has significantly moved away from this relationship. Individual attempts to achieve uniformity in art and science, undertaken, among others, by Giambattista Vico or Goethe or Heckel or Benze, by their failures fueled the desire to create ever new structures of synthesis. These include, for example, the decision of the triple A (AAA, American Association for the Advancement of Sciences and Arts), that towards all visual practices, whether new electronic or old artistic, since 1994, the generic designation Imaging Sciences should be used (*Engl.* “Science of visualization”).

In this way, the artist’s centuries-old experience of learning through the creation of images for the natural sciences has gained traction. Since every scientist

or medical practitioner is forced to use visualization techniques in their research work, they are also required to have aesthetic skills similar to those developed by artists. This should lead to a higher differentiation of the consciousness of the characters. Although, for example, neurosurgeons can only perform surgical interventions using a visualized diagnostic method, they do not operate on images, but on the human brain, which the images only indicate.

It is this distinction that immerses Sergei Dozhd. His quest is so desperately fearless that it leads him all the way to "automatic engines" and "mental constructors" to establish a connection between work in mental and real spaces. Through this he seeks to discover forms of influence, such as catharsis, that is, the liberation of a "beautiful soul" or creativity, as an endless approach to genius, to the very power of the spirit. For Dozhd this state describes the beauty of unlimited construction of analogies and metaphors in our perception of the world. One of the wonderful examples of the lyrical self "Peter Handke" convinces me of Dozhd's goal-oriented presentation: "Winter cold — the shadow of a house freezes on the back of a horse."

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4. Koffka Kurt (1886–1941) — German and American psychologist.
5. Kehler Wolfgang (1887–1967) — German and American psychologist.
6. Mautner Fritz (1849–1923) — Austrian and German journalist, writer, philosopher.
7. Saussure Ferdinand de (1857–1913) — Swiss linguist, founder of semiology and structural linguistics.
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12. Vico Giambattista (1668–1744) — Italian philosopher, founder of the philosophy of history and ethnic psychology.
13. Heckel Erich (1883–1970) — German expressionist painter
14. Benze Iaks (1910–1990) — German scientist, philosopher, representative of existentialist rationalism and logical empiricism
15. Handke Peter (born 1942) — Austrian writer and playwright

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## **ART AND FAITH: THE ARTIST AS A SUBJECT OF RESISTANCE TO EVERYTHING**

*“The world we have created today as a result of our thinking  
thus far has problems which cannot be solved by thinking  
the way we thought when we created them.”*

Albert Einstein

### **1. TWO VECTORS OF CONTEMPORARY ART**

Any critical artist with the pretense of actualizing a strong critical statement but fated to cultural production in the framework of legitimate art institutions finds him-herself in a tricky situation. He is caught in the pincers of a “two-fold impossibility”. On the one hand, his intentions are neutralized by the unspoken consensus of global corporate art scenes; this consensus “customizes” his statements and ultimately turns him into a creative functionary in prestigious artistic forums that are really no more than appendages of political events. On the other hand, the artist must face the fact that any revolutionary intervention into social space with the goal of changing the situation of the status quo meets with a hapless outcome. If, in the first case, he opts for mass culture and participates in politically correct projects of contemporary art, he can still easily blend into the glamorous atmosphere of cultural life, becoming a media star for the glory of capital. But in the second case, the artist faces the unavoidable fact of existential defeat, inevitably robbed by a society he loathes.

The history of “radical” art shows how a neo-liberal order undergoing globalization uses a well-oiled mechanism of its own devices to reproduce itself. While this mechanism allows the artist to construct a critical discourse, he actually stands no chance of ever actualizing it. The system injects itself with a critical barb, but its tissue immediately assimilates any destructive potential this insertion might

have. After the system has completed this filigree work of recovery, counterpower loses the grandeur of its rage – its radical, destructive impulse – and turns into a plaything, performing the decorative role of a domesticated antithesis in a profane “systemic” game.

Such unfavorable conditions lead to an even greater radicalization of art, effecting its reduction to an unambiguous political gesture. But at the same time, art threatens to turn into an application-oriented instrument of ideology, losing all of its essential immanent traits. Here, the most impassioned producers of actual/contemporary art<sup>1</sup> engage with radical leftist revolutionary rhetoric and orient themselves toward *a breakthrough* to the actualization of the condition of an *other*, better, *freer* world. By doing so, they express their doubts in the immanent efficacy of art as such. After all, they argue, art is not adapted socially and ineffective in its immanence, and must become a mouthpiece for work in the ideological field, transforming the artist himself into a rank-and-file political activist who, in the worst case, inexorably takes on the role of a politically correct designer of globalization. As a counterbalance to this tendency, there is the intention of analyzing the autonomous dimension of art whose suggestive purity is capable of “giving birth to” more effective strategies of resisting the system. This discussion is complicated by permanent institutional activity that does not tolerate even the slightest “contemplative pause”, when, in fact, it is this pause that provides the only chance for self-reflection, an unhurried, fundamental reconsideration of strategies chosen by both the individual contemporary artist and art as a whole.

In the framework of the current text, we will try to model this particular meditative pause, probing the body of art and feeling for the finest nerves of the *other* possibilities for self-actualization that have been eliminated by the discourse of actuality. The essence of our “message” is as follows: it has long since been time to embark upon a radical intellectual revision of both contemporary art and the mode of the artist's presence in the world. We can only undertake this effort if

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<sup>1</sup> Trans. note: The Russian *aktual'noe* means both current (i.e. contemporary) and actual (i.e. realized). Throughout the article, the author plays on this ambivalence by using the term *aktual'noe iskusstvo* to mean both. The term itself, widespread in the time of perestroika and beyond, has no direct English equivalent, so I have opted to translate it as contemporary/actual art.

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we extract ourselves from the “objective” causality that society imposes, or, more plainly put, from the growing pressures of this world's hustle and bustle.

## 2. ACTUAL – NON-ACTUAL

One should say that any artist who positions himself as a subject resisting a new world order is necessarily rooted in the format of actual/contemporary art. Traumatized by the virus of total sociality, he has turned “inside out” completely. Thus, the focus of his attention lies in exterior space. Such meta-strategies can be arbitrarily called *exclusive*, since they are oriented toward the outside. The contemporary artist is an integral part of the dynamic in which global art projects are realized. This dynamic is conditioned by the pragmatic aspect of a worldwide curatorial practice that stimulates not the active, but the re-active side of the artist's creative nature. This, in turn, demands quick responses and adequate reactions to social mandates. In this case, the artist is hostage to his outer surroundings, becoming the passive object of a total sociality that places him into a humiliating dependency on the fluctuations of the social barometer and the system of financial investments these fluctuations articulate. His entire strategy, no matter how radical or revolutionary, responds to the System's popular demands and organically weaves itself into the fabric of pre-programmed social mutations, ultimately stimulating the hard and fast “circulation of capital”. In other words, whether the artist wants it or not, he will have to play by the rules that the system imposes. In the short term, this automatically brings tactical losses. In a broader perspective, it leads to the collapse of his entire worldview.

Does this mean that any vector of protest through contemporary art is untenable? Or does the body of contemporary culture contain an explosive potential hitherto untouched by artists who see themselves as the subjects of resistance? A sense of the answers we might provide impels us to take a distance from the entire complex of problems that constitute the notion of contemporary art (as actual art). As strange as it sounds, the answers become increasingly optimistic as art loses its status of “actuality”. Jumping ahead, we might say that a positive resolution of this crisis lies in a rather “simple” meta-perceptive gesture: in displacing the focus of attention (the center of gravity of existential tension) from the ontologically illegitimate *outside* (linear/total sociality/the realm of necessity) to the *inside* (living space/the realm of freedom), a leap into the space

of unconditional faith. But since contemporary art is a functional product of the *outside*, the context of our consideration here prompts an incidental disassembly of its basic paradigmatic constructions.

Contemporary art is so vain and absorbed in the hustle and bustle of the everyday that it could be defined as *visual journalism*. Yet first of all, it will never reach the mobility or popularity of journalism proper (as in the mass media) or other mixed media fields (such as fashion and mass culture). Second, it inevitably sets itself at a growing distance from the ontological functions of art, which boil down to unhurried and fundamental *existential analysis*. Global art institutions channel the current flows of power in contemporary art, eliminating anyone who doesn't conform to its accelerated interchange of intellectual fashions. However, one should note that there was always also a *non-actual* tendency. It decelerated such ultra-rapid processes and uncovered the zero-regime of creativity that lies at the base of any creative act. Artists of this (including Duchamp and Beuys, and in a broader historical context, Rimbaud and Artaud) are characterized by indifference to “the sphere of coercive social illusions set up by the specific bounds of various social groups”<sup>2</sup>, finding their roots in an inner space of unconditional freedom and *personal belief* as a modality of the will to overcome the *inauthentic* form of being at hand<sup>3</sup>. These artists preferred the quality of in-action (on the edge of utter failure) to quantitative productivity. Their works present singular “points of bifurcation” at which the development of art could have taken a different trajectory. (The fact that this never happened and that art always treacherously slid back into the “sin of reification” does not mean that another approach is not possible in principle).

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<sup>2</sup> Mamardashvili M., Solov'ev E., Shvyrev V. *Klassika i sovremennost: dve epokhi v razviti burzhuaiznoi filosofii // Filosofiya v sovremennom mire*. [Classical Culture and Modernity: Two Epochs in the Development of Bourgeois Philosophy // Philosophy in the Modern World] (Moscow: Nauka 1972), p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> In a historical view, one could find the first collective subjects of the tendency discussed here in the first communities of almost all of the great world religions. Until their ideas were universalized and established as institutional religions (as the result of an inversive re-adaptation of a spiritual message to society), their activities were not aimed at reactive intervention into social structures, but at the accretion of a paradoxical and counter-pragmatic belief in an absolute Other. It is precisely this «zero»-strategy, which would appear to be politically naive, led to a passionate energetic explosion within social space, followed by «civilizational-cultural» expansion, a phenomenon associated with the theory of the universe's origin in nothingness...