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VISUAL TRANSLATION FOR ART INTERPRETATION. A NEW METHODOLOGY INFORMED BY CRITICAL THEORY

Understanding critical theory –in the extended meaning of the term, informed by cultural criticism– this thesis proposes a new methodology for art interpretation that operates with visual translations by appropriating concepts from different theories –such as critical semiotics, psychoanalytical critical theory, ideological critical theory, Marxist criticism, postcolonial theory, or feminist critical theory–, with the intention of deciphering the understanding of an work of art in its political, social, historical and cultural context.

In this context, visual translations are understood as practices of mediation between visual languages and different other types of languages –operated in the extended field of critical theory– as postcolonial language: referring to the construction of the other in contemporary visual culture, or psychoanalytical language: focusing on the constitution of subjectivity in visual culture. As Foucault argued,

there is an infinite relation between seeing and saying –since what we see never resides in what we say–, while not seeing could be translated as well into a parallel body of discursivity that refers to a panoptically structured manner of controlling. This new proposed methodology of interpretation relies on visual translation in order to critically understand both intentions of making visible, and restraining from visibility.

Any *ekphrasis* –any verbal description of a visual work, either real or imagined– is not intrinsic and not entirely reflected on the visible, but it is the “shadow of an absence”¹, a trace of something that cannot be seen. In Derridean terms, the invisibility is not simply the opposite of visibility, the artist is always experiencing a blindness, and therefore, visual arts –as arts of the blindness– are always leaving a trace of an absence that cannot be seen, although it is intrinsic to the meaning of the artwork. Furthermore, the interpreter is also experiencing a blindness –in consonance with his aesthetic experience–, and this is why the new proposed methodology of visual translation does not endorse an authoritative interpretative position, since any interpreter, whether art historian or art critic, should recognize his own moment of blindness when operating translations of visual into text. Moreover, when it comes to the interpretation of an artwork, a different presence –a “refractory self-portrait”² of the interpreter can always be identified– thus creating a plurality of perspectives.

The practice of translation has a consistent history rooted in the field of literary studies, philosophy or theology and it implies crossing

¹Derrida, Jacques (1993). *Memories of the Blind. The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*. Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 34.

²Emerling, Jae (2005). *Theory for Art History*. New York, London: Routledge, 141.

boundaries, adapting, emulating or sometimes even rewriting by relying on the polysemy of language. In contemporary interpretative studies, translation was appropriated as a methodology –mostly associated to the field of visual studies– given its interdisciplinary constitution and its “etymological relation to metaphor: both translation and metaphor share the notion visible in the root *transfer*”³, while maintaining the same approach towards the flexibility of language. If in linguistic studies, translation may provide the examination of differences between linguistic signs, in psychoanalytic studies it may reveal an understanding of subjectivity, in postcolonial studies it may deconstruct the liminal processes of identity hybridization; –in visual studies translation could provide a context for subjectively creating metaphors for art interpretations, it could constitute a manner of critically interrogating the possibilities of understanding an work of art in its political, social and cultural context, and it could generate the means for propagating a discursive framework around globalization and interculturality.

A new methodology for art interpretation, informed by critical theory, which operates with visual translations would be focusing on the intermedial, intersemiotic and intertextual relation between different genres or mediums of art, different subjects, different disciplines or knowledges constituted interdisciplinary. Translating across mediums, subjects or disciplines, implies a particular attention oriented towards the interstice between all these different boundaries, an interstice constituted as the only possible space for generating the *ekphrasis* –a

³ Bal, Mieke and Morra, Joanne (2007). “Editorial: Acts of Translation”. In *Journal of Visual Culture*, 6, 1, 5-11. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi and Singapore: SAGE Publications, 5.

rhetorical exercise produced by describing an art work– which could be perceived as both, a necessary condition for the visual translation method and its simultaneous negation as a practice that has infinite variables.

In this respect, Jacques Derrida talks about an impossible, although necessary, condition of the translation practice –its impossibility residing on the matter that it fails to constitute itself universally, and its necessary condition relying on the fact that each translation constitutes a chance of survival for the original meaning. Even if the absolute translation is impossible –a final or universal version of the meaning translated being unreachable–, the practice of translation should maintain its interest in decoding an interstitial meaning which is both, at once, translatable and untranslatable –since if “totally translatable, it disappears as a text, as writing, as a body of language (*langue*) [and if] totally untranslatable, even within what is believed to be one language, it dies immediately.”⁴

When referring to visual translations, the translative practice is equally plurivocal –no single visual translation could be providing a finite description of an artwork– but between each intention of translation and the actual work of art, there is a space of incertitude –where a sense of incompleteness could be instituted. Thus, translation always remains incomplete, maintaining a promise that could never be fulfilled, and this may be why the act of translation remains interesting and appealing. Michael Ann Holly talks about a pleasure of writing about art as being equally captivating as the pleasure of looking at art, although “the act of trying to put into words, spoken or written, something that never

⁴ Derrida cited in Modesta Di Paola, “Translation in Visual Art”, In: <https://interartive.org/2013/08/translation-in-visual-art>.

promised the possibility of a translation, can sometimes blur the boundaries between author and work.”⁵ Following this idea, Mieke Bal considers that the work of art could never promise translatability, but the translation –through its approximate and incomplete nature– promises translatability. The original text, or the work of art, is defined by untranslatability –its meaning appears unreachable, its approaches may vary, but this is precisely what activates the captivating nature of translation.

The encounter with a work of art activates the necessity of translation at the level of the aesthetic experience. For Michael Ann Holly, “the enchantment that transpires between beholder and work of art has no name because it resists linguistic appropriation.”⁶ However, this enchantment is translated through means of aesthetics or, as Mieke Bal puts it, “the aesthetics poses translation as a key.”⁷ Contemporary approaches to art interpretation extended the attributes of translation to other disciplines. The new proposed methodology of translation ceased to be informed by traditional disciplines, such as aesthetics or history of art, and commence relating to other theories from others domains, informed by critical theory. As, for example, approaches on feminist art projects informed by critical theories on the performativity of gender –which states that any performance of a particular gender type is not a voluntary choice, disciplinary regimes being the ones deciding the subject's gender options; their regulating discourse including disciplinary techniques, which through the coercion of performing a certain gender manage to create only “an appearance of

⁵ Holly, Michael Ann (2013). *The Melancholy Art*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1.

⁶ Holly, Michael Ann [*op. cit.*], 1.

⁷ Bal, Mieke (2007). “Translating Translation”. In *Journal of Visual Culture*, 6, 1, 109-124. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi and Singapore: SAGE Publications, 115.

sexuality”⁸; or approaches on social art projects informed by theories on the *linguisticization* of society, which determines the subject's existence in, and through, language –and assembles a community in which “language is working as a commodity and the critical discourse is successful as long as it sells well.”⁹

The practice of creating interdisciplinary conceptual relations could generate “an over-structured field of hybrid theories applied in the interpretation of the contemporary artistic phenomenon,”¹⁰ both in the field of art production, as well as in the field of visual translation for art interpretation. Thus, by appropriating different concepts which belongs to other disciplines, connected to the study of contemporary artistic practices, productions and representations, a new direction of study could emerge, articulating new theories, as Arthur Asa Berger mentioned in his book *Cultural Criticism: A Primer of Key Concepts*: “concepts are those who can create new disciplines,”¹¹

Thus, critical theory could inform a new methodology of visual translation since it offers a diverse interpretative apparatus which challenges traditional approaches over the work of art –although, according to Jae Emerling, many art historians and theorists would desire the obliteration of this new conceptual apparatus, instituted by critical theory, given that the parameters of analysis instrumented, in addition to “formalizing and criticizing modern and contemporary art, rethink the premises of history and art theory [reconsidering] the role of art historians and theorists within the pre-existing institutional

⁸ Butler, Judith (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge, 103.

⁹ Groys, Boris (2010). *The Communist Postscript*. London: Verso, 6.

¹⁰ Gheorghe, Cătălin (2010). *Condiția critică*. Iași: Institutul European, 25.

¹¹ Berger, Arthur Asa (1995). *Cultural Criticism: A Primer of Key Concepts*. London: Sage Publications Inc., 5.

structures; [...] seeking to address, and even redress, power imbalances inherent in these fields of study.”¹² But, of course –outside of this *conservative hysteria*– critical theory is supported by all those who believe in its *radical liberating* constitution.

Influencing art history, critical theory advocates the exclusion of elitist perspectives – ultra-conventionalized and *masculinized*– which neglect marginal histories, constituting themselves vertically and hierarchically. If we consider the possibilities of a horizontal history of art that challenges power and the hegemonic discursive manifestations, we can discuss the possibility of establishing non-hierarchical and non-vertical practices of historicization, which could be marginal and multidimensional, pluralistic and polyphonic, transcending the traditionalist hierarchic-geographical paradigm and engaging in a narrative practice –alternative to temporal linearity– and non-concentric in respect to the localization of artistic geographies. However, critical theory does not restructure art history from the outside and does not impose itself upon the historicization and the interpretation of art, given that “the relationship between critical theory and art history is not transcendental, but immanent [attested by the common origin of the two, in the practice of aesthetic theory], and what critical theory is ensuring art history, is a suspension of ethics, a self-critical reflexivity which returns unexpectedly and discontinues the status-quo type of practice of the art history.”¹³

Influencing art theory, critical theory infiltrates itself in the problematization of art in relation to theories of language and subjectivity, theories of gender and sexuality, and political and

¹² Emerling Jae, [*op. cit.*], xii.

¹³ Emerling, Jae, [*op. cit.*], xii – xviii.

sociocultural theories. Informed by cultural critique –a (multi-) (inter-) (pan) and (meta-) disciplinary concern, embodied in a rhizomathical intersection of interpretative theories as: semiotic, psychoanalytic, postcolonial, neo-Marxist or post-Marxist theories, configured through a series of combinations and permutations of ideas, theories and approaches belonging to various disciplines such as literature, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, studies of communication, media studies, aesthetics, semiotics, psychoanalysis – critical theory is heterogeneously constituted by appropriating concepts, theories, argumentative strategies and discursive methods which belong to other disciplines, with the purpose of configuring its own contributions within the contemporary cultural context.

However, as Jae Emerling notifies, critical theory does not exist separately, outside of all these disciplines, but it is constituted from inside, in accordance to its own time –which opposes the time of capitalist cultural industry– “the inner nature of theory being constituted in *contretemps*: instead of positioning itself outside the accelerated temporal logic of capitalism, critical theory tries to build another time, a slowed time, in a temporal logic that can be reversed”.¹⁴ Critical theory can be established within these disciplines only if it is informed over the fundamental notions –operationalized in cultural criticism, which investigates cultural history in relation to the actuality– in its whole, without abjuring certain principles or denying certain groups according to class differentiations, in an attempt of deconstructing the conceptual barriers imposed by traditional disciplines of the humanities, since the nineteenth century. In fact, the problematics

¹⁴ Emerling, Jae, [*op. cit.*], 238.

of cultural critique deconstructs the conceptual barriers between all disciplines, in an attempt to stabilize a cultural polymathy.

In the art field, critical theory –instituting itself from the inside– appropriates the existing discourses, operating at their level – sometimes in consonance with aesthetic theories and visual studies– but reproblematising constantly the constituent theoretical positions, formulating “innovative questions and revealing other possibilities of studying and interpreting art and its history.”¹⁵ In this respect, Donald Preziosi propose in his book, *Rethinking Art History*, a series of questions –about the object (and) the subject of art, the autonomy of art in relation to economical exchange of the capitalist market, the public (real) or spectator (fictional)– that constitutes itself outside the expectancy over clarifying answers, but in line with the specific problematisation of instrumenting critical theory in the field of visual translation.

The new proposed methodology of visual translations for art interpretation could problematize around these questions, identifying also other concerns, or possible repositioning in the field of visual arts. However, critical theory –used as an instrument for visual translations– does not intend finalizing answers, affirming the need for articulating constant queries, rather than formulating a finite and limited researches which anticipate specific answers and presuppositions. In fact, critical theory does not formulate answers, but even “challenges art historians and theorists of art not respond –instead critical theory and art theory encourage one another to rethink the work of art– both about its reception and about its role in the establishment of *the socius*, as

¹⁵ Emerling Jae, [*op. cit.*], xii.

something that indexes and ensures *the politics of becoming*, instead of identifying a specific meaning or essence.”¹⁶

Accordingly, the present research –which investigates the possibilities of instrumenting critical theory for operating visual translation with the intention of interpreting contemporary art works– does not intend to identify and implement certain strategies for interpreting visual images –which could become universal and could be reused regardless of any context–, neither to establish a specific methodology of analysis over the work of art that can be articulated, structurally, in any interpretative approach to the visual image, but tries to implement a pluralization of perspectives –informed by the political theory, cultural studies, social theory, anthropological studies– with the endeavor of theorizing artistic practices and productions. Thus, the new proposed methodology for visual translation does not prefer to undertake an „authoritarian discourse –denied by theory (*theōria*) itself, in western cultural problematisation, from Plato to Hannah Arendt– but rather a practice, an intermission, an exception to the rule, a caesura that may allow rethinking, [...] an activity that builds a gap in any practice reified.”¹⁷

This paper explores precisely this gap where art meets continental philosophy –an interstice associated with critical theory– trying a critical incursion over the technical terms with which four critical theories are operating, namely: post-Marxist critical theory, post-structuralist critical theory, post-political and post-colonial critical theory. Restricting the area of research to these four theories does not imply a strict limitation since all of these theories are not differentiated accurately, but represented combinatively as part of a varied and

¹⁶Emerling Jae, [*op. cit.*], 240.

¹⁷Emerling Jae, [*op. cit.*], 241-242.

intersected complex of critical postmodernist paradigms, involving a multiplicity of theoretical approaches which concern the intersection of certain cultural issues, in the vast framework of different conceptual postmodern configurations.

Consequently, some topics discussed are constituted at the limit between post-Marxist critical theory and post-political critical theory – as the revaluation of communism condition as a system of ideas, and not as a political regime– or, between the poststructuralist critical theory and post-politics critical theory –as the diagrammation of power relations– or, between the post-political theory and the postcolonial theory –as the thematization of the edge-center system. Extending this paradigm of thinking, certain problematics approached by authors such as: Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou, are listed both in post-Marxist critical theory, as well as in post-politics critical theory; or as in the case of Jacques Derrida, whom is mentioned both in poststructuralist critical theory and in post-Marxist critical theory; or as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe which are mentioned both in post-politics critical theory and in post-Marxist critical theory; or as Michel Foucault and Judith Butler which are treated both in post-structuralist theory and in post-Marxist theory. Rhizomatic intersection of all these theoretical perspectives attests the flexible constitution and the interdisciplinary orientation of critical theories which is could serve for fulfilling the necessity in visual translation for infinite variables of interpretation.

In following, I will particularize the discussion on each of the four critical theories listed above –the post-Marxist critical theory, the post-structuralist critical theory, the post-political and the post-colonial critical theory– with the intention of understanding how certain concepts belonging to each theory could be instrumented in

contemporary visual translation. If we consider post-Marxist critical theory as an instrumentary for operating visual translation for art interpretation, we should follow the demonstration path of the Marxist-poststructuralist theory –a complex of heterogeneous theories which are instrumenting diverse methods, with different intentionalities, but nevertheless critically informing the current theoretical approach on artistic practices and productions. In this sense, in contemporary art, visual translations are operating relying on common issues for Marxism and post-Marxism theories such as: the division of social classes, the standardization of work, the evaluation of the worker as a work machine, the autonomisation of work processes, the desynchronization of the individual, and the alienation of the worker –both from the products of his work and from the society, or from their own individuality–, the workers exploitation, the marketing of workforce, the subordination of the individual to the capital, the transformation of value in resource of exploitation and the commercialization of freedom.

All of these issues are translated into the contemporary discourse of art when referring to the dematerialization tendencies of art practices in the production of digital images (Hito Steyerl), which despite their “seemingly immaterial nature, they remain firmly anchored in material reality.”¹⁸ Hito Steyerl questions the artistic practices that embraced digital image production associated with immaterial work as a critical response to the exploitation of the workforce, considering that these new forms of artistic production are predominantly material. The same case could be noticed in the production of delegated performances (Claire Bishop) in which the performer –as an entity non-identifiable

¹⁸ Steyerl Hito (2011). Digital Debris: Spam and Scam. *October*, 138. In: https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/OCTO_a_00067

with the artist– “relocates authenticity outside the singularity of the artist [...] and towards the collective identity of the other, representing a genuine social problem (lack of jobs, difficulties of living outside the country, the difficulties of the homeless and the disabled),”¹⁹ but also concerning the problematic of the artist as an employer and possibly an exploiter of labor force.

Marxist outtakes on labor problematics are translated into the contemporary art discourse about the post-industrialization of artistic productions (Boris Groys) where the artist's decision to present an industrial object as a work of art seems to be equivalent to investing physical work into the art object, while “the expansion of this seemingly immaterial practice to the whole economy, by the means of the Internet, has produced the illusion that a possible post-Duchampian liberation from work through immaterial creativity –and not a possible Marxist liberation through labor– will open the way to a new utopia of a creative multitude.”²⁰ However, this post-Duchampian paradigm shift did not succeed in releasing the artist from his work, but instead it established a turn in the approaches of artistic practices and productions, feeding the expectations of art audiences concerning the proliferation of conceptual arguments, or as Boris Groys affirms, the artist is not releasing himself from work but, on the contrary, is being proletarianized by appropriating the product of a proletarian, alienated work.

Moreover, in order to support this interpretation of the proletariat of the artist's work, Groys brings into discussion the role of the art

¹⁹ Bishop Claire (2012). Outsourcing Authenticity? Delegated Performance in Contemporary Art. In: https://monoskop.org/images/f/f3/Bishop_Claire_2012_Delegated_Performance_Out_sourcing_Authenticity.pdf

²⁰ Groys, Boris (2010). Marx after Duchamp, or The Artist's Two Bodies. *E flux Journal*, 19, 10.

institutions, as instances that confer the status of art work to an object realized by alienated work, redefining the position of the artist, from creative worker to carrier of objects from a non-artistic space to an artistic space. This undermining of the contemporary artist's position makes the artistic production to be consider a result of an abstract and alienated work, both in regard to its outcomes –which in fact belong to other proletarian workers–, as well as to the artist condition, which is not represented only trough creative practices, but also to the acknowledgment and implementation of certain object transfer policies. From this point of view, the work of the artist, who wanted to be immaterial and creative, is constituted antithetically, as proletarian, alienated work.

Furthermore, I will discuss the use of post-structuralist critical theories for operating visual translation, approaching fundamental issues of the poststructuralist methodology, applicable in the interpretation of visual arts, such as the discourse –in relation to power and knowledge (Foucault)–, the art history –as a disciplinary model of knowledge production (Piotr Piotrowski)–, the institutions of art producing discourse (museums, galleries) –as an apparatus of power, or a places of confinement (Donald Preziosi)–, the individual subjected to discursivization, or the disciplinary technologies of constituting the self (Lynda Nead, Judith Butler). Other concepts could be theoretized at the confluence of poststructuralist critical theory and other critical approach, from the perspective of psychoanalysis, postcoloniality and feminism, such as *the war machine*, *transversality* or *micropolitics* (Deleuze and Guattari), *relational geographies* (Irit Rogoff) or the politics of *becoming minority*, *becoming women* (Deleuze and Guattari, Judith Butler), which could be instrumented in the analysis of current artistic practices and productions.

Foucault problematizes discourse as something that “regulates what is considered knowledge, [...] what can be said, and what can be done, which is the good and evil [...], in other words, the discourse establishes and controls knowledge”.²¹ In relation to thinking processes, discourse structures both the way in which one thing is thought –the inherent discourse of subjective thinking– and the way in which a thought configures a particular action. In this sense, “discourse is a particular form of knowledge about the world, which structure the way of understanding the world and the way in which things are done”.²² In other words, discourse is both a form of knowledge and a form of power.

When applied in the field of visual arts, discourse can influence the aesthetic reception and interpretation of an art work, our aesthetic behavior conforming to this code of interpretation is influenced, encoded and managed by representation mechanisms and technologies, which are themselves part of a wider set of social practices: “from a Foucauldian perspective, aesthetic theory is itself a discourse”.²³ These mechanisms and representation technologies which influence our aesthetic receptiveness are at work in specific power structures, inherent to the world of art, including art institutions, art critics, publics, historians, and theorists. As Lynda Nead affirms, as early as the 19th century, “art discourse consists of a concatenation of visual images, language and structures of criticism, cultural institutions, art publications, values, and knowledges made possible [...] so, art is not just a certain kind of visual image, it [presupposes] knowledge, institutions,

²¹ Emerling Jae, [op. cit.], 147.

²² Rose Gillian (2011). *Visual Methodologies. An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*. London: Sage Publication, 136.

²³ Nae Cristian (2013). *Ways of seeing. An Introduction to Modern and Contemporary Art Theory*. Iași: Artes, 207.

subjects and practices,”²⁴ both artistic and institutional ones. For Foucault, the way in which aesthetic reception depends on the instrumentation of certain mechanisms of social power demands the need for an ethical questioning of aesthetic experience.

Investigating how power structures determine the individual's constitution as a subject, Foucault studies the technologies of the self in relation to the world and art, the ethical problematic of the aesthetic experience being “intersected with the discipline of art history as a discursive practice that pervades our modern relationship with objects of art, at the level of an auctorial system of historical narratives of art and life”.²⁵ In this sense, Donald Preziosi's analysis concerning a possible rethinking of art history –*Art Is Not What You Think It Is*–, and many other works of art influenced by Foucauldian theory, regards the “demystification of modernist cadres of artistic practice. According to Foucault's archeological method, the modern discourse of aesthetics and art theory must be provincialized, [...] must be recognized as historically limited discourse, with its own genesis and its own functions, and not as a universal paradigm of art appreciation.”²⁶

A series of poststructuralist concepts, as: *context*, *differance*, *parergon* (Jacques Derrida) could be addressed when operating visual translations in relation to the institutional art. In his work, *Afterword: Towards an Ethics of Discussion*, Derrida states that “there is only context”²⁷: which functions not as a cultural predetermination that

²⁴ Nead Lynda (1990). *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*. London: Blackwell Pub, 4.

²⁵ Emerling, Jae, *Theory for Art History*, 151.

²⁶ Preziosi, Donald and Farago, Claire (2012). *Art Is Not What You Think It Is*, Sussex: Blackwell, 11.

²⁷ Derrida, Jacques (1988). *Afterword: Towards an Ethics of Discussion*, Evanston, Illinois: Limited Inc., Northwestern University Press, 136.

structures the text, but is in itself a flexible social construct which results from the interpretive operations that select relevant data and establish the place of writing in relation to these data. In this respect, the status of an art work could be established following the same principles, since the discussion of the context can extend to the issue of the reception of the artwork.

As a substitute for context –which is considered the fundament of meaning, since is constituted in consonance with the present, revoking the distance and ambiguity that a possible return to the historical moment may generate, and thus positions itself closer to the process of thinking–, Derrida proposes the concept of *parergon*: the framework outside of things, outside writing and discourse, or outside the artwork: “a surface which separates [...] the body of the ergon itself [the artwork, the written or spoken creation] from the outside, from the wall on which a painting is hung, the space on which a statue or a column stands, as well as from the entire historical, economic or political field.”²⁸

This view of the *parergon*, as an space that frames the art works and that constitutes an integral part of the economic, political and historical sphere, made possible the translation of this concept into the institutional critique discourse of the 1960s and 1970s, where artists such as Michael Asher, Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke, or Marcel Broodthaers investigated the conditions of museum practices and other artistic practices in order to destitute rigid institutional frameworks and undermine the very logic of the framework, although, as Andrea Fraser affirms: “with each attempt to evade the limits of institutional determination, to embrace an outside, to redefine art or reintegrate it

²⁸ Derrida, Jacques and Owens, Craig (1979). The Parergon. *October*, 9, 24.

into everyday life, to reach everyday people and work in the real world, we expand our frame and bring more of the world into it. But we never escape it”.²⁹

Another critical theory that could be used for operating visual translation, in the field of contemporary art, is the post-political critical theory which investigates the current political context – specifically the withdrawal of *proper politics* (Jacques Rancière, Slavoj Žižek, Alain Badiou) from the social space, and its substitution with the regulatory social and administrative regimes: such as the police and public administration. In this context, Rancière proposes *the aesthetic revolution*, which could be considered in the development of post-political theory as an instrumentation of power used by the politics of the sensible, capable of substituting the political order of polic(y)ing (Erik Swyngedouw).

Art, as a revolutionary politics of the sensible, establish new regimes of thought that change the core of power domination, from politics to the aesthetics. The aesthetic revolution implies a way of transforming the thinking regimes into art, generating, in Jacques Rancière's view, a specific form of freedom, inaccessible to governmental policies, but manifested at the level of sensible policies. Art, as a revolutionary policy of the sensible, redefines the relations between thinking and the sensible world, the work of art being a work of thought and contouring a particular experience of freedom, at the level of ideal exchange between rational and sensible, thinking and non-thinking.

²⁹ Fraser, Andrea (2005). From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique. *Artforum*, 44, 1. In: http://www.marginalutility.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/Andrea-Fraser_From-the-Critique-of-Institutions-to-an-Institution-of-Critique.pdf

These new thinking regimes revolutionize the field of art, changing its dominance from poetics to aesthetics, and constituting what Rancière names *the aesthetics revolution*: “the end of an imposed set of relationships between what is seen and what is said, action and thinking, activity and passivity”.³⁰ Thus, the aesthetics revolution presupposes the abolition of the representative regimes of thinking about art –regimes involving thinking as an action on the passive subject, which is why art within the aesthetic regime must be constituted as an identity between activity and passivity, between knowing and not knowing. Such an identity of contradictions is found in what the aesthetic revolution considers necessary for the production and understanding of art.

Finally, the last critical theory I address in this article is the postcolonial critical theory, which investigates the global cultural processes and practices, instrumenting concepts and thesis of the post-colonial discourse –such as: marginality, otherness, liminality, glocality, exoticism, multiculturalism, identity hybridization, ambivalence, colonial resistance, anti-colonial national identity, or cultural translation– in order to operate visual translation that engage with artistic practices and productions reflecting upon inter-ethnic conflicts, identitary dislocations, colonizing delegitimizations, ultra-nationalist discourses of identity, feeling the need to reset certain politics of difference and to reconstruct collective memory. In this regard, Yinka Shonibare –a British-Nigerian artist interested in analyzing its personal hybrid, postcolonial, condition– investigates identity formation under the complicated relations between Africa and Europe; while in Eastern Europe, Milica Tomić –an artist of Serbian origin– signals problems due

³⁰ Rancière, Jacques (2010). *The Aesthetic Unconscious*. Cambridge: Polity, 21.

to the identity divisions as a consequence of the conflicts related to the disintegration of former Yugoslavia.

All these problematics, which are concerns of critical theories: post-marxists, post-structuralists, post-politics, post-colonials, cannot be thought disparately, but interrelatedly, configuring a hybrid discourse, multi-structured and multi-faceted, which can be handled in the analysis of contemporary artistic productions. In other words, the selection of theories is not random, but is evidencing an interest in socio-political or cultural issues; the authors discussed being selected from the same paradigm of thought and engaged in analyzing a critical relationship between art, politics and society.

In conclusion, this thesis proposes a new methodology for visual translations informed by critical theory –which could provide a various instrumentary for art interpretation based on different theories, concepts, or methods, borrowed from cultural criticism and intersected with notions from other disciplines such as: philosophy anthropology, aesthetics, semiotics, etc. The practice of visual translation needs to rely on critical theory, since critical theory could sustain an interdisciplinary research and could offer limitless possibilities of interpretation. The methodology of visual translations is conditioned to configure infinite variables of art interpretation and a (multi-) (inter-) and (meta-) disciplinary approaches. Therefore, this new methodology of visual translation will transgress the limits of traditional disciplines, provoking aesthetical approaches and art historical methods by extending its field of research and establishing itself at the border of different body of knowledge while endeavoring rhizomatic intersections between all of them.

As opposed to more traditional approaches, this new methodology of visual translation won't limit its engagement to what it is seen in a work of art. By using a psychoanalytical instrumentary –filtered through critical theory–, it will interpret what is hidden from visibility, approaching each shadow of invisibility from different angles, either referring to what the artist cannot see, what the viewer cannot perceive in certain situations, or what the interpret cannot recognize in operating visual translation into text. Thus, this new methodology of visual translation will admit the plurality of perspectives, and recognize the existing refractory self-portrait of each interpreter, leaving each art interpretation open to the possibility of a new visual translation.

The internal consistency of this thesis –given by the multiplicity and creativity of these interpretative critical theories of contemporaneity– is configured by cohesively relating post-Marxist political theories and post-structuralist theories of the subject –located between plurality and singularity–, post-political theories concerning the subject's desire for emancipation and transformation of life into art, and postcolonial theories concerning the subject's struggle for affirmation and liberation. The specific problematic of articulating these theories are often addressed by artist in contemporary works of art, which inevitably generates a visual translation practice engaged with the main problematics of these critical theories. Therefore, a new methodology of visual translation informed by critical theory would be prepared for shifting the paradigm of thinking over the artistic practices, generating new contemporary approaches that reveal a global understanding of cultural theory.

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