

**STANISLAV SHURIPA'S  
RADICAL REFLEXIVITY**

Viktor Misiano, 2008

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Stanislav Shuripa's work contains certain vivid features that give it a distinct place in the contemporary history of modern art. At first glance it is clear that it belongs to a tradition of formal study that is a part of a general technical innovation but which has produced results of a universal standing. However, despite the richness of this tradition and its museum status, the similarly referential nature of Shuripa's work today seems far removed from academicism. The thing is that in the context of contemporary Russian art formalism, analyticity and universalism is a position that is bereft of any direct continuity and topical ideological basis.

This position is expressly out of step with the Moscow school of conceptualism, which until now has enjoyed the virtual monopoly of representing Russian art in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ilya Kabakov and Erik Bulatov, the founding fathers of Moscow conceptualism planted their flag foursquare against that formalism, analyticity and universalism inherent in the Russian avant-garde and firmly in favour of the realia of "the living world", of metaphysics and narrative. This artistic position contains a critique of the project of contemporaneity, which in the perception of the thinking classes of those times was associated not only with the avant-garde but also with the GULAG.

However, there is no phenomenon in culture that is devoid of historical baggage. Although having emerged in complete contrast to average expectations but having become a topical fact, any phenomenon creates its own history. And this is also the case with Shuripa's art, which brings back into currency a whole series of facts that were topical in the 50's and 60's - the abstract geometry and kinetic movement of Yury Zlotnikov, Vladimir Slepyan, Francisco Infante, Vyacheslav Koleichuk and others. All these artists, understood production as a construct in its own right and thought in terms of a system of universal categories, by means of their link with formal academic analysis, the latest technologies and scientific optimism and thus indeed presented a re-examination of the historical avant-garde.

However, this branch of Russian art is more of a dotted line than an uninterrupted continuity, and Shuripa's work is a yet another case of the sporadic manifestation of this branch of Russian art. On the whole this branch has received considerably less understanding and support from the Russian thinking classes. It repelled people with its uncritical trust of contemporaneity. It seemed that the intellectual optimism and universal view of things that was inherent in it contradicted genuine social experience.

The topical situation in which Shuripa's position is created differs not so much as the result of the hegemony of one of these two branches as the diversity of their hybrid amalgamation. Thus, on the one hand, universalism manifests itself today in globalisation, which has become the condition in which contemporary artistic production exists. On the other hand, globalisation has by no means lead to the triumph of the language of universal form, on the contrary it expresses itself in the language of local narratives. This is because the promotion of national brands is the optimal strategy on the global market. At the same time the global media is beginning to be understood as one of the bearers of universality, moreover by appropriating the global media, production rids itself of a universal resource by becoming a discreet communication.

In this historical and topical context Shuripa's work evidently has the following idea. By so programmatically insisting on abstract formal language, he is true to the notion that the experience of contemporaneity has a universal nature and that the locality in this experience has a subordinate and secondary character. And even if today at the basis of contemporaneity there lies the "science of marketing difference", then the task of art can not be reduced to just becoming a part of this marketing, having positioned itself as the representative of one of these localities. On the contrary, art should internalise itself and analytically elucidate this initial principle of contemporaneity. It is thus that the avant-garde tradition of understanding production as a formal construct of reality is continued and preserved in Shuripa's work.

Moreover, in as much as Shuripa's art internalises and elucidates the "science of marketing difference" as the basic principle of contemporaneity, it removes the contradiction between the two branches of development, that have defined Russian art in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The artist's works demonstrate the face off between the universalism of the neo-avant-garde and the anti-modernist metaphysics of the "Living World" of the conceptualists – a confrontation that is already no longer topical. In as far as the world really has become global, the realia of the "living world" has become universalised everywhere. Contemporary standards such as – Uni A1 for example, are as ubiquitous today as the pumping structures of GAZPROM's pipelines.

At this point one would be justified in asking the question: If Shuripa's work is a meeting place of the conceptual and neo-avant-garde traditions, then how does it reconcile

itself to the critique of contemporaneity inherent in the former and the apologia for contemporaneity inherent in the latter? However, this situation although not free of paradoxes is nevertheless not guilty of contradiction if only because a similar contradiction can be found in its reconciliation with contemporaneity itself. By imposing its proselytising project on the world contemporaneity has basically undertaken its transformation and distortion. This process, in implementing the project, has unavoidably lead to trauma and loss, which is where the consequences of the critique of contemporaneity have originated. Today it is this contemporaneity, (and it could be called the third contemporaneity), is first and foremost defined by communication that has reached previously unthinkable levels of speed and efficiency. It is for this very reason that many define today's contemporaneity as being radical (A. Giddens) and Shuripa himself defines it as being digital and cognitive. However, the idiosyncrasy of this radical contemporaneity lies in the fact that its projects are being implemented with such incredible speed that it is virtually devoid of any perspective of time, existing in a permanent present tense. Consequently in the present, not anticipating the implementation of the project in the future, a critique of contemporaneity is also implemented. One only has to recall that today's third contemporaneity is not only labelled as a radical contemporaneity but also a reflexive contemporaneity (U. Beck).

This is because Shuripa's work manifests itself as project constructs that recognise themselves in the structure of contemporary forms of life, while simultaneously revealing those losses, that accompany the supremacy of cerebral constructs over life's subject matter. Shuripa's work is charged with the operational euphoria of the third contemporaneity while at the same time auguring its inevitable destruction.

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