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## ART AS A FORM OF REFLECTION OF MODERN SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

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### *Abstract*

Today's situation of a rapid growth of the volume of information requires that close attention be drawn to a topical problem of the accelerated development of culture. An analysis of *la vitesse* as an indicator of the so-called “time-space compression” has been applied to art. The research obtains its theoretical ground in analyzing the transformation of aesthetic processes in music, cinematography and fine arts through Zygmunt Bauman's and Paul Virilio's conceptual approaches. Our position is that art shows some revolutionary changes in the social worldview. Describing today's culture as rapidly and irresistibly volatile, we would like to trace its basic artistic trends that could also tacitly illustrate a deterioration of the attitudes formerly targeted to the forming of an integral perception of the world, as well as the development of its multifaceted, “polyphonic” comprehension. In that regard, a phenomenological approach embedded in Edmund Husserl's philosophy and reconsidered by Paul Virilio, together with an analysis of *la vitesse*, may be considered an efficient tool of the research. We believe that an intensified cultivating of narcissism and the taking-on of the status of an “aesthetic action” to social or political provocations, as well as prevalence of the “aesthetics of disappearance” over the “aesthetics of appearance,” tend to become the consequences of “time-space compression” as revolution in today's art. Paradoxically, it is such a revolution that is to be resulted in the general “de-aestheticization” of art in the face of a growth of the individual aestheticization of nostalgia (“retrotopia,” according to Z. Bauman).

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**Keywords:** La vitesse, “time-space compression,” art, “liquid modernity”.



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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. The role of speed on the course of processes in culture

The interest in the problem of increasing speed of movement and action on changes in the sphere of art has a relatively recent history. Meanwhile, these changes are global in their nature. From the steady order and firmness of tradition we move to a constantly changing world of increasing speed, in which the fluidity of phenomena and the interpenetration of various spheres of social life and cultural activities become the rule.

The study of the influence of increasing speed of movement and action on politics, social relations, war and art becomes a central theme in the research of two prominent representatives of European culture of the second half of XX-early XXI centuries - French philosopher P. Virilio (1932-2018) and British sociologist Z. Bauman (1925-2017). The result of Virilio's long-term researches was the emergence of a phenomenological theory of sight and speed, as well as the development of the concept of the interaction of war and art in the context of the above theory. In turn, Bauman developed a theory of changes in the five basic social components in the conditions of "Liquid modernity". These components included labor, time, individuality, community and freedom (Clegg, 2018; Czarniawska, 2018). Bauman's interpretations of time and freedom are of particular relevance for this article.

The views of the founder of phenomenology E. Husserl (husserlian ideas of perception, representation and imagination) had a decisive influence on the formation of the P. Virilio's phenomenological theory of speed. In turn, Bauman relies on the theoretical attitudes of the Frankfurt school, from which he borrows a critical attitude to consumer society. An important place in Bauman's work is occupied by the ideas of French structuralists about the total social influence on the formation of any discursive practices and the methodology of American left-wing sociology, that focused on the combination of micro and macro levels of sociological analysis.

## 2. Problem Statement

The basis of Virilio's creativity is a question of how the speed of perception of phenomena changes their semantic content and constructs reality. The French philosopher begins from the understanding the sight as a way of spatial-temporal organization of reality preceding speech, gesture and writing. The speed of movement of the gaze forms not only space and time, but also social institutions. Therefore, social processes should be analyzed within the interdisciplinary field of dromology, phenomenologically exploring the influence of speed on the ways of constructing reality: "in fact, if speed is not a phenomenon, but the relationship between phenomena (actually relativity), then the notorious question of the distance of observation of phenomena is reduced to the question of the power of perception (mental or instrumental)" (Virilio, 2004, p. 136). Today, under the influence of increasing acceleration, reality virtualization is taking place. The way of virtual organization of reality becomes "teletopology" separating the visual object from our ability to enter into physical interaction with it. Examples here are computer game characters or cinematic images. The main idea of Virilio is that virtual reality does not simulate, but replaces the actual reality.

Bauman (2008) considers the problem of speed sociologically. For him, the most important aspect is the impact of speed on the discovery of new and changing old ways of social communication. According to Bauman (2008), the desire of people for freedom has shaped the modern world that exists in the conditions of constantly increasing speeds: "To Be Free" literally means to get rid of certain bonds that prevent movement; to begin to feel free to move or act. "To feel free" means not to experience any hindrance, resistance or any other obstacles to the desired or considered as desired steps" (p. 24). According to Bauman (2008), today space ceases to be a deterrent to life, while time becomes more important than before: "the problem has shifted from means to ends. In relation to the relationship between space and time, this means that since all parts of space can be reached in the same time (i.e. "without time"), no part of space has privileges, none has "special value"" (p. 129). Time, along with money, energy and knowledge, should be considered as a vital resource (the more work is done for a conventional unit of time, the higher the economic efficiency of time). This view requires a reassessment of previous cultural values that have been of great importance for thousands of years, which include stability, excess of time, slowness and unhurriedness, binding to a specific point of physical space. At the same time, Bauman believes that for culture, unlike nature, protraction is the basis of progress. Calmness and thoroughness allowed people to improve themselves and improve their artifacts. Moreover, the human mind itself was characterized by a mechanism of delayed action. Infinitely increasing speed is not conducive to long-term thinking. Thought requires pause and rest to "give yourself enough time" to summarize. Modern practice demonstrates the struggle against delay even in the case of such an important choice as the choice between security and freedom. According to Bauman (2017), a response to the constantly increasing pressure of acceleration becomes nostalgia for the past (metrotopia).

### **3. Research Questions**

#### **3.1. "Aesthetics of disappearance" and the "aesthetics of appearance" in P. Virilio theory**

Paul Virilio believes that art is able to take a critical position in relation to virtual reality, saving the remnants of actual reality. However, modernist and postmodern art, unfortunately, are focused on blurring the boundaries of the imaginary and the real. According to the French philosopher, the basis of modern art is not the aesthetics of appearance, preserving the material image in time (as an architectural creation for example), and the aesthetics of disappearance, in which the existence of the image does not depend on the material existence of the object (cinematic images exist, instantly disappearing). In this sense, Virilio's analysis of the relationship between war and media is indicative. The French philosopher tries to establish the connection of photography, cinema and painting with the peculiarities of armed conflicts of the XX century. War, according to Virilio (1989), is not just a theme among other themes of art. It creates a tendency leading to the dismemberment of form within the framework of artistic activity. Without understanding the influence of military technology as a means of violence against the physical and geographical form, it is impossible to understand modernist art (p. 137-144). In «War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception» projector using during the battle of Port Arthur during the Russo-Japanese war comments by Virilio's very vividly: "Tested on the heights of Port Arthur, the first military projector seemed to focus all the torches and all the lights from all the wars before it" (Sidorov, 2012, p. 68). The

French philosopher argues that war and cinema, as ways of producing the aesthetics of war, mutually complement each other. While modern war destroys not only the body, but also geography, cinema displacing reality and replacing it with the presentation of images, becomes a disappearing aesthetic gesture, offering ways of disappearing.

In General, criticism of Virilio's theory consists of two central questions: 1. Are the concepts of "eye " and "vision" synonymous (similar in meaning)? 2. How acceptable is the materialization of time, directly related to the optical interpretation of actual reality in Virilio's philosophy?. Recognizing the importance of these issues, however, let's refer to the art of the s XX-XXI centuries through the prism of the theory of Virilio. First of all, let us start from the idea of J. Deleuze about art as the work of percepts and affects. Today art, initiated by the fluid present and referred to the present, is often ahead of philosophy in responding to the challenges of time. The increased speed of masterpiece creation reduces the degree of conceptualization of art, and, as a consequence, first blurs and then destroys the boundaries of genres, levels, types of art. The aleatoric experiences in music can serve as an illustration here (Bonds, 2014). This form was the result of the evolution of the musical text, which became a relative reality (during the twentieth century) after a long way of unification. Its boundaries "are chaotic, leading to individualization of notation systems. In 1940-s John Cage focused on the principle of uncertainty of musical material or form and used the "method of random actions"; Christian Wolff developed an individual "method of prompting"; Earl Brown embodied in his work the idea of "open form", due to the mobility of the text; Karlheinz Stockhausen wrote music in "variable" and "multivalued forms»; Iannis Xenakis followed the laws and formulas of probability theory and applied in the composition of game theory in the process of creating stochastic composition; finally, Pierre Louis Joseph Boulez created the theoretical basis of the technique of aléa, writing the same article and a number of aleatoric research. Nowadays the format of the actual statement was mastered by artists working in the traditional technique of painting and graphics. At the same time in new territories of their creativity there was often a surprising oscillation of hit – miss, relevant-irrelevant, visual-conceptual. New formats: installation, experiments with materials, and the demonstrated awareness and the development of artists and new artistic techniques. Paradoxically, everything new and relevant was realized under the guise of revolutionism and the overthrow of the power of tradition which for modern art sounds like a hermeneutic triviality. But the next trend eloquently describes and inscribes art in the "fluid " state of culture and is manifested in the fact that the "relevant" conceals its opposite – a regime that perceives only the "new" and the accelerating change to the next "new". This leads to the fact that the pace of change has increased so much that the event does not have time not only to live, but also to imprint itself, infuse and cast into a recognizable form. The present shrinks to a momentary message, each claiming exclusivity. The value of information is determined by the speed factor: news, advertising, fashion attract only for a short moment, which generates to notorious clipped look. It reflects and strengths a mass tendency of loss of ability to concentrate the contemporary art-viewer's consciousness on one thing, demands fast change of plots, shots, scenes and themes. But the deceit of simplicity is based on the fact that in general a person, rapidly moving his eyes through various sites, television programs, images, collectively spends much more time on them than on the perception of the complex language of classical art or conceptual works. It does not take much time to consider the Malevich "Black square", or see AI Weiwei's "Dropping the vase of the

Han dynasty" action, but much more goes into reflection the art in the context of art history, culture, politics, etc. The disadvantage of modern culture, perhaps, is the production of unfocused pleasure, which is like a black hole: it draws in, absorbs, but reflects nothing, does not return, leaving one thing: "the ease of sliding without effort". So, today we are experiencing a "time of fluid modernity", which has found its expression as a perception embodied in the practices of art (Demers, 2010; Obrist, 2013; Kostelyanets, 2015).

In this regard, Virilio's idea of the possibility to resist the increasing speed only through the cultivation of forms of aesthetic appearance, primarily sculpture and architecture, is questionable. Today, the wildest imaginations of architects and sculptors are becoming less spatial, because the rooms for forums, and objects for the Olympic games, and pedestals for self-presentation and pavilions of world exhibitions are constructed for a one-time event, and then easily disassembled. Likely sources of resistance should be sought in working on the content of works that blur the borders of genre within the art form, but at the same time supporting the delimitation of art from other cultural activities and suspending speed to achieve a conceptual depth perception (long scenes in the film; variations on a theme of musical works reaching connections of novelty and recognition; monumentality in architecture and sculpture).

### **3.2. "Time-space compression" by Z. Bauman and his influence on art**

From Bauman's point of view, the influence of increasing speed on the ways in which contemporary art exists is directly related to the social conditions in which a postmodernist-oriented individual functions. Bauman argues that all human actions in the symbolic world are an attempt to deny and overcome his grotesque and often absurd fate. An individual is driven to oblivion by social games, psychological tricks, and personal hobbies which are so far detached from reality of his position that they can be viewed as forms of insanity.

Much of modern art is clearly focused on the second form. Since borders are much more easily erased in the sphere of art than they are in other areas of life (in particular, in the field of socio-political relations), art, along with war, continues to act as a dromological avant-garde (Guryanova, Khafiyatullina, Petinova, Astafeva, & Guryanov, 2019). The paradox of the situation is that with the increasing degree of individual aestheticization in contemporary art, the importance of aesthetic function falls. Actual art becomes a form of social provocation. Here, along with painting and architecture, the leading role is played by cinema. So the film "Exit Through the Gift Shop" simultaneously erases the boundaries of authorship (unknown director of this film), imaginary and real (it is a documentary or an art film?), meaning (it is not clear whether there is a sense in artistic creativity), etc. In order to be noticed (and then perceived) today art seeks to hurt and, if possible, - shock, thereby transforming social reality. However, a series of shocking events can change the perception and turn it into background noise. Thus, impetuosity (which is a prerequisite for functioning) does not correlate with the classical way of ideal reflection and aesthetic and ethical evaluation. (Bychkov, 2016; Bychkov, 2018; Iglton, 2012; Lyubbe, 2019).

## 4. Purpose of the Study

The ultimate aims of research are to see the changes in the process of development of art on the example of music and make a conclusion about the social contours and processes of development of modern society.

To show that the increase in the speed of movement and action of social processes is displayed in the field of art and has its own forms of artistic manifestation.

## 5. Research Methods

### 5.1. Methodological settings for this study

The methodological basis for the consideration of speed is the phenomenological approach of E. Husserl and the theory of social fields of N. Luman. According to Husserl, the perception of phenomena is understood as actual bodily-sensual contemplation, which does not lead to anything other than itself. Representation is treated in the context of perception as a memory of presence. Imagination sets the possible horizon of the presence of meanings. This approach explains why imaginative art acts as the vanguard of the dromological revolution. However, the ever-increasing speed with which art expands horizons prevents the "stop look" on the phenomena, and therefore makes the process of their conceptualization superficial.

The fundamental concept for Luman is "autopoiesis", as a way for a system to reproduce its elementary parts through a network of similar elements. Autopoiesis makes possible the delimitation of the system from the external environment. Delineation is the main condition for its functioning. Thus, the differentiation between the system and the environment is made by the system itself. The form of differentiation/functioning of social subsystems is communication. Communication is a unity of three components – information, message and understanding, which obey the principle of binary encoding and decoding and can be incorporated into further communication. Parts of any binary code are delimited, but they serve to transform one element into another. In fact, they double reality, dividing it into what is inherent in the system itself and what is inherent in the environment external to the system. However, it is this property that makes it possible to use differences, i.e. observation. Luhmann (1997) distinguishes two basic forms of system operations – in-system (self-reference) and intersystem (allo-reference). Allo-reference is a system copying differences between itself and the world around it, dealing not with the world but with its vision of what can be called the external environment. It is the formation of a system of differences that makes possible the internal and external limitation of the spheres of social life, including art. In this sense, contemporary art moves in the opposite direction, leveling self-reference (mixing of types and genres within art) and allo-reference (blurring the boundaries between expressive and social functions, which leads to the blurring of the framework of art as one of the types of social systems).

## 6. Findings

### 6.1. Correlation of the phenomenological and sociological interpretations of the problem of speed

In the research process of phenomenological and sociological interpretations of the problem of speed, we found out that the speed of movement should be understood as a condition that forms the relationship between phenomena, on the one hand, and the manifestation of individual freedom of movement and action, on the other.

Art, as a kind of cultural activity, becomes a favorable field for the dromological revolution, demonstrating the accelerated blurring of boundaries between species and genres, as well as between art and non-art.

The consequence of the dromological revolution in art is the growing cultivation of aesthetic narcissism, the transformation of aesthetic action into an act of social and political provocation, the predominance of the aesthetics of disappearance over the aesthetics of appearance.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, through the studies of Paul Virilio's and Zygmunt Bauman's concepts, the properties characterizing both the similarity and difference of their analyses in relation to the issue of *la vitesse* have been revealed. Virilio does not consider it a phenomenon among others but rather as relativity which determines the degree of their actual reality. Both researchers believe that any change in *la vitesse* of an action causes tectonic shifts in the social life and cultural activity, expressed in the prevalence of "the aesthetics of disappearance" over "the aesthetics of appearance" and *retrotopia* (irresistible nostalgia for the past). To implement the study, we have addressed to the process of reception of European music. Such composers as Karlheinz Stockhausen, Yannis Xenakis and Pierre Boulez demonstrated a revolutionary transition of musical thinking, which resulted in a provocative rejection of previous music idioms, in the destruction of usual perceptive standards of the very artworks and in the reconstruction of both the participants' topology and the musical events' temporal nature. We also find some noteworthy examples in cinematography, news and advertising media, as well as clips, performances and installations, etc. These non-verbal processes serve as a witness to cognitive changes in the field of art, stating the transformation of its former values.

To summarize all that has been said, today's art is becoming a favorable field for "time-space compression" as revolution, demonstrating an accelerated blurring of the boundaries between different genres on the one hand and between art and non-art on the other. The paradox of the situation is that an increasing degree of individual aestheticization in contemporary art leads to a decrease of the significance of the aesthetic function; thus, actual art tends to become some form of social provocation. However, a sequence of successive shocking events makes the perception so much dull that it is getting transformed into a background noise.

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