

# Psychological Approaches to the Art History

Autor: Peter Tzanev

Despite of the great number of texts, containing psychological interpretation of art, there are few researches having the objective to make a comprehensive historical review and systematization of the existing psychological approaches in the field of history and theory of art. Particular texts such as the study by Ernst Gombrich *Art History and Psychology in Vienna Fifty Years Ago* (1983)[1] are more likely isolated and throw light on some particular moments of the diverse and complex interrelation between art history and scientific psychology. In a similar context we can mention the book of the art critic Bradley Collins *Leonardo, Psychoanalysis and Art History: a Critical Study on Psychobiographical Approaches to Leonardo da Vinci* (1997)[2], dedicated to the psychoanalytical interpretations of art and their validity regarding art history as a scientific discipline, which has a rich historiographical analysis of the literature related to the famous study of Freud on Leonardo from 1910.

The different psychological approaches to art in the sphere of art history are most often examined in connection with the historical development of a certain theoretical issue[3] or as a part of a study on a specific cultural and historical context. Indicative examples in this direction are the book of Catherine Soussloff *The Absolute Artist. The Historiography of a Concept* (1997)[4], which analyses the myth of the artist in western culture and the book of Louise Rose *The Survival of Images. Art Historians, Psychoanalysts and the Ancients* (2001)[5], dedicated to the transforming potential of the interactions between art history and psychological researches in the first half of 20th century.

Most often the different psychological approaches to art are in the aspect of a historical development of a specific theory question or as a part of a given historical context. The book *From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki* (2007)[6] of the British Professor of Art History John Onians can be regarded in a similar aspect, namely as an original attempt to avoid conventional culture history. Onians offers alternative history of the existing views on art, based on the idea of radical psychological return – through the possibilities of contemporary neuroscience – to human nature as a model to study art.

It is indicative that positions such as those of Gombrich or Onians, although strongly predetermined by their relation to a certain psychological tradition or scientific psychological school, in the end of the day they are always focusing on the possibilities which psychology science gives for the expansion of knowledge within the framework of art history as a science of art. At the same time the existing historical reviews of psychological approaches to art in the sphere of psychological aesthetics and psychology of art, which are significantly more comprehensive regarding psychology as a science[7], almost always stay completely outside the context of art history and the way in which it constructs its object of research as a discipline.

---

[1] *The article is an English language version of a report entitled 'Science of Art and Psychology Fifty Years Ago' (Kunstwissenschaft und Psychologie vor fünfzig Jahren), read by professor Ernst Gombrich at the 25th International Congress of the History of Art in Vienna in September 1983 in a topical section, dedicated to 'Vienna and the development of methodology in science of art'. Gombrich follows different psychological topics and concepts, which can be found in the works of some of the representatives of the Viennese school in art history such as Julius von Schlosser, Heinrich Gompertz, Hans Sedlmayr and Ernst Kris (Gombrich, E. Art History and Psychology in Vienna Fifty Years Ago, Art Journal, Summer, 1984).*

[2] Collins, B. Leonardo, *Psychoanalysis and Art History: a Critical Study of Psychobiographical Approaches to Leonardo da Vinci*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997.

[3] An example for this is the study of the American researcher Juliet Koss, dedicated to the role of the concept of 'empathy' (Einfühlung), developed in the intersection of philosophical aesthetics, psychology and art history in the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century in Germany. (Koss, J. *On the limits of Empathy*. *Art Bulletin*, March, 2006).

[4] The book by the American researcher Catherine Soussloff – an art history and visual culture professor - deals with the way in which the image of the artist is constructed through the genre of the art biography, from Florence in the Renaissance and Germany in the 19th century where art history emerges as an academic discipline, to present days. In the penultimate part of the book, entitled 'The Artist in Myth: Early Psychoanalysis and Art History' Soussloff discusses the specific discourse to the figure of the artist, which emerges in Vienna in the 1930's as a result of the interaction between art history and psychoanalysis. (Soussloff, C. *The Absolute Artist. The Historiography of a Concept*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1997).

[5] In her book Louise Rose comments the psychological approaches to art by art historians from the first half of the 20th century such as Aby Warburg, Emanuel Loewy, Ernst Kris and Fritz Saxl. (Rose, L. *The Survival of Images. Art Historians, Psychoanalysts, and the Ancients*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001).

[6] John Onians's book historically follows the grounds of one contemporary neuroscience art history and interprets the ideas of twenty-five philosophers, artists, art historians and scientists from ancient times until today. (Onians, J. *Neuroarthistory. From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007).

[7] Muller-Freienfels, R. *Psychologie der Kunst*, Leipzig: Teubner, 1923; Визомский, Л. *Психология искусства*. Москва, 1925\1965; Burt, C. *The Psychology of Art*. In. Ed. by Cyril Burt, *How the Mind Works*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1945; Morgan, D. *Psychology and Art Today: A Summary and Critique*. *Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism*, 9, 1950; Munro, T. *The Psychology of Art: Past, Present, Future*. *Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism*, 21, 1963; Frances, R. *Psychologie de L'esthetique*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968; Hogg, J. *Some Psychological Theories and the Visual Arts*. In: *Psychology and the Visual Arts*, Ed. by James Hogg, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969; Kreidler, H., Kreidler, S. *Psychology of the Arts*. Dunham: Duke University Press, 1972; Pickford, R. *Psychology and Visual Aesthetic*. London: Hutchinson Educational, 1972; Berlyne, D. *Psychological Aesthetics*. In: *Handbook of Cross-cultural Psychology*. Ed. By C. Triandis & W. Lonner, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1980; Rump, G. *Kunstpsychologie, Kunst und Psychoanalyse, Kunstwissenschaft*. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1981; Winner, E. *Invented Worlds: the Psychology of the Arts*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982; Allesch, C. *Geschichte der psychologischen Aesthetic*. Gottingen: Hogrefe, 1987; Allesch, C. *Einführung in die psychologische Ästhetik*. Wien: Facultas, 2006; Funch, B. *The Psychology of Art Appreciation*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1997; Martindale, C. *Recent Trends in the Psychological Study of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, In: *Empirical Studies of the Arts*, Vol. 25, N. 2, 2007.

## **Methodological aspects of the interrelation between psychology and art history**

It is a known fact that art history was formed as a discipline in the second half of the 19th century. The official institutionalization begins with the inclusion of art history in the university education in Germany.[1] The academic institutionalization is accompanied by a constant striving towards turning art history into a

systematic scientific discipline. The first historical surveys of the history of art by Frantz Kugler[2], Karl Schnaase[3] and Anton Springer[4] appeared during the 1840's and 1850's.

The first researches on history of art history as a discipline appeared as late as the beginning of the 20th century. In 1913 was published *The Method in Art History (Die Methode der Kunstgeschichte)*[5] by Hans Tietze, which suggests a common methodological scheme for the historical development of art history with several different evolutionary stages, and in 1924 Julius von Schlosser published *Literature on Art (Die Kunstliteratur)*[6], which is the first attempt to create a history of the art history from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance and Baroque to the 18th century.[7]

According to Tietze initially art history emerges as a pragmatic and telling discipline, which is restricted to naming the artists and giving short descriptions for them and their works. Then begins the so called 'pragmatic-genetic' stage, which looks for relation between the different phenomena, but the principle to focus on the importance of the different artist remains the leading one. The genetic stage begins with Johann Winckelmann when the term art history emerges and the beginnings were laid for the creation of a unified and interconnected art history with linear-style periodization.

During the 19th century art history passes through "aesthetically-dogmatic", "historically-dogmatic" and "culturally-historical" stages, which synthesize knowledge from the field of aesthetics, history and archeology and improve the culturally-historical, biographical and attribution methods. [8]

In the context of art-historical methods such as iconographic analysis and especially stylistic analysis the academic art history gradually starts to emancipate its own scientific object of research, which forebodes inevitable contradiction for both historical science and philosophical aesthetics.

It is interesting that as early as this first stage of the formation of the new academic science the main intentions for emancipation of the art history from the aesthetics and the history, are connected no so much with the distinguishing between research methods, but with the differentiation of the very object of the research.[9]

According to some researchers the modern science of art begins in 1893 when the treatise of the German sculptor and theorist Adolf von Hildebrand *The Problem of Form in the Visual Arts (Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst)*[10] and the book of the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl *Problems of Style (Stilfragen)*[11] are published and mark a new era in the history of art.[12]

The very title 'Science of Art' (*Kunstwissenschaft*) appears in the beginning of the 20th century in Germany[13] and after that is adopted in other countries.[14]

In the beginning of the 20th century there was a great interest in methodological problems of aesthetics which resonate on its scientific status. Thinkers as the German philosopher and art theorist Max Dessoir suggest making a distinction between aesthetics and the general science of art 'Kunstwissenschaft'. [15] According to Dessoir these two disciplines intersect each other, but do not overlap because the functions of art cannot be reduced to aesthetical functions only. Dessoir claims that the general science of art is methodologically different from aesthetics and has to develop as a separate direction outside philosophy.

In 1910 the German art historian Wilhelm Worringer states that history of art and aesthetics are and will remain in future irreconcilable disciplines.[16] Worringer thinks that the superstition before the concept of "art" is in the core of this disagreement. According to Worringer, captured by this superstition, we constantly entangle ourselves in almost criminal efforts to reduce the phenomena of polysemy to synonymy concepts

Almost a century later in the preface to his *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (1998)[17] the American professor Donald Preziosi points that there is no institutional integrity between the number of disciplinary fields in which contemporary art history is positioned. Meanwhile, he notes that this circumstance does not hinder the very idea of art as a universal human phenomenon. According to Preziosi art history is the ideal horizon, which turns art into an object and instrument simultaneously. This is the reason why Preziosi concludes that the principle product of art history is the modernity itself.

In his study on historical and methodological issues concerning the development of science of art as a discipline, the Bulgarian art historian Chavdar Popov also finds that the genesis of art as a separate object of scientific search is connected with its separation from the context, because the crystallization of art as a specific object of research is done parallel to producing art namely as 'art', i.e. 'intentionally'. [18] The attention of researchers is focused on the issues of art form and of 'sight', understood as quintessence of the precise 'scientific' spirit of art science, as a *differencia specifica* of the object. So, on one hand the essence of the scientific paradigm is specification, the separation of the object of research 'art', and on the other hand, the confidence in the evolutionary idea related to the concepts of historicism, established in social sciences. Chavdar Popov reminds us that in German science of art between 19th and 20th century the term 'Kunstwissenschaft' is connected with the climate of neo-Kantianism and formalistic direction in aesthetics, establishing the autonomization of art.

Not only on the border between 19th and 20th century, but also after that in the entire 20th century, the psychological science does not manage to suggest a unified object of research which to be connected adequately with the crystallized in the modern theory and art history concept of art. It can be said that psychological approaches enter in art history mainly peripherally as an explanatory context and inevitable part of numerous alternative psychological models and experiments, which accompany the development of modern psychology and modern art during the 20th century.

---

[1] *The first art history professor in a German University is the German artist and theorist Johann Fiorillo (1748-1821), who begins lecturing at art history as a separate academic discipline in 1813, when the Georg-August University at Göttingen creates the position of professor of art history for him. Ernst August Hagen (1797-1880) becomes in 1825 professor of the history of art at Königsberg University, and in 1844 Gustav Waagen (1797-1868) becomes the first holder of a university chair in art history at Berlin University. In 1873 in Vienna is held the first International Congress of the History of Art of the Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art (CIHA) and is decided to include art history as a discipline in all universities. In the next few years art history departments are open in Leipzig, Bonn and Strasburg. At the 10th International Congress of the History of Art, held in Rome in 1912 the German professor Wilhelm Waetzoldt states that in 15 of 21 universities in Germany there are art history departments. As early as 1853 in Vienna is founded the university art history department at the Museum of Applied Art, and in 1873 is established a second department at the History Researches Institute in Austria. The first art history department in Italy is founded at the Rome University in 1896 and two years later, in 1898 is created an art history department at the Lion University in France. See Schwarzer, M. *Origins of the Art History Survey Text*, *Art Journal*, Fall, 1995; Kulterman, U. *The History of Art History*, New York: Abaris Books, 1994; Bazin, G. *Histoire de L'Histoire de L'Arte*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1986.*

[2] Kugler, F. *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*. Stuttgart: Ebner und Seubert, 1842.

[3] Schnaase, K. *Geschichte dre bildenden Kunste*, 7 vols. Dusseldorf: Buddeus, 1843-64.

[4] Springer, A. *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*. 5 vols. Stuttgart: Ebner und Seubert, 1855.

[5] Tietze, H. *Die Methode der Kunstgeschichte*. Leipzig: E.A. Seeman, 1913

[6] Schlosser, J. *Die Kunstliteratur*. Wien: Anton: Schroll, 1924.

[7] Apart from the two above-mentioned studies, which deal with the development of art science in historical aspect, in the period between 1963 and 1969 in Moscow there is a detailed research in four volumes, entitled 'History of European Science of Art', written by a team of Russian art historians, led by professor Boris Vipper (*История европейского искусствознания. От античности до конца 19 века, Москва, 1963. История европейского искусствознания. Первая половина 19 века. Москва, 1965. История европейского искусствознания. Вторая половина 19 века. Москва, 1966. История европейского искусствознания. Вторая половина 19 века – начало 20 века. Москва, 1969*). In 1966 is published "History of Art History" by the German art historian Udo Kulterman (*Kulterman, U. Geschichte der Kunstgeschichte, Vienna, Dusseldorf: Econ Verlag, 1966*), which received wide popularity and underwent numerous editions in different languages (*Kulterman, U. History of Art History, New York: Abaris Books, 1994*). In 1979 the German researcher Heinrich Dilly publishes the book 'Art history as an institution. Study on the history of a discipline' (*Dilly, H. Kunstgeschichte als Institution: Studien zur Geschichte einer Disziplin, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1979*). Other studies dedicated to art history and methodology are: *Bazin, G. Histoire de L'Histoire de L'Arte. Paris: Albin Michel, 1986; Fernie, E. (Ed.) Art History and its Methods: a Critical Anthology. London: Phaidon, 1995; Adams, L. The Methodologies of Art: an Introduction. New York: Icon, 1996; Preziosi, D. The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998; Арсланов, В. Западное искусствознание XX века. Москва: Академический проект, 2005. In Bulgaria, to date, the most comprehensive systematic analysis of historical and methodological issues related to the development of art history as a discipline can be found in Professor Chavdar Popov's study "Art and Postmodernism. Thesis of "The End of Art History": comments and controversy. (Попов, Ч. Изкуствознание и постмодернизъм. Тезата за "Краят на историята на изкуството: мнения и полемики." Сп. Проблеми на изкуството. Бр. 1, 2005.)*

[8] To date, with all the relativity of the quoted stages and methods it is interesting to note that for example, Karl Schnaaze (1798-1875), who determines the method used by him as philosophical and historical, as opposed to a documentary-historical method, also calls his method and physiognomic and poetic, because he believes that the main task of art history in analyzing works of art is to capture the spiritual principles underlying these works as a sort of style physiognomic.

[9] As early as the middle of the 19th century Anton Springer sees the fundamental difference between art history and the other disciplines mostly in the specific object of research and not in the research methods that can be used. See *Schwarzer, M. Origins of the Art History Survey Text, Art Journal, Fall, 1995.*

[10] Hildebrand, A. *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst*. Strassburg, 1893.

[11] Riegl, A. *Stilfragen. Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik*. Berlin: George Siemens, 1893.

[12] Hildebrand's treatise asks for specific, present only in the art content of artistic vision, and Riegl's book shows that the subject of art history is not given by itself, but is associated with the separation of art from all other spiritual and material human activities and regarding it as an immanent nature with its own internal laws. See *Арсланов, В. Западное искусствознание XX века. Москва: Академический проект, 2005.*

[13] In 1905 the German art history professor August Schmarsow, who at the time is head of the art history department at the University of Leipzig (a position which he inherited from Anton Springer in 1893, beating competition such as Heinrich Wölfflin and Robert Vischer), publishes a book called 'Basic concepts of science of art for the transition between ancient and medieval times', in which he comment in detail the ideas of Alois Riegl. (*Schmarsow, A. Grundbegriffe der Kunstwissenschaft am Übergang vom Altertum zum Mittelalter. Leipzig/Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1905.*)

[14] See Бакалова, Е. *Съветската изкуствоведска школа и българското изкуствознание, Проблеми на изкуството, Кн. 4, 1987.*

[15] Dessoir, M. *Aesthetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft. Stuttgart: Enke, 1906.*

[16] Wilhelm Worringer's text 'Transcendence and Immanence in Art' is first published in the 'Journal of Aesthetics and General Science of Art' (*Zeitschrift für Asthetic und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*) under the editorship of Max Dessoir, and then is included as an appendix in the third edition of 'Abstraction and Empathy' (Worringer, W. *Abstraktion und Einfühlung. Ein Beitrag zur Stilpsychologie, München: Piper & Co. Verlag, 1910*).

[17] Preziosi, D. *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.*

[18] Попов, Ч. *Изкуствознание и постмодернизъм. Тезата за "Краят на историята на изкуството: мнения и полемики."* Сп. *Проблеми на изкуството. Бр. 1, 2005.*

## Psychological aesthetics

In 1871 Gustav Fechner published a study entitled *On an Experimental Aesthetics (Zur experimentalen Aesthetik)*[1]. This is a historical moment because for the first time psychology crosses the path of aesthetics and suggests laying the beginnings of a new experimental methodology in the research of art. Five years later Fechner writes his famous book *Introduction to Aesthetics (Vorschule der Aesthetik, 1876)*[2], in which he criticizes the rules and regulation system of the German idealistic aesthetics. He defines traditional philosophical aesthetics as a 'colossus with feet of clay' and proclaims his idea of 'aesthetics from bottom to top', which should be laid on an empiric and inductive base.

Meanwhile in 1874, namely in the period between the publishing of the two Fechner's texts on aesthetics, the book of Wilhelm Wundt *Principles of Physiological Psychology (Grundrüge der physiologischen Psychologie)*[3], which is the first textbook on experimental psychology, is published. In 1879 is founded Wundt's psychological laboratory in Leipzig – a fact which historians of science take as the official separation of psychology as a self-dependent science and the institutional beginning of the modern scientific psychology.

Ten years after the institutional separation of philosophy and psychology in 1889 the leader of the department of systematic philosophy in Munich University for the first time is a scientist who recognizes psychology as an empiric science, namely Karl Stumpf.[4]

Five years later, in 1894, the position of Stumpf is taken by the philosophy professor Teodor Lipps, who regards psychology as a fundamental part of the philosophy of knowledge and defends the idea that philosophy will be gradually replaced by psychology as a science for the consciousness. In his *Aesthetics: Psychology of the Beautiful and Art (Aesthetik: Psychologie des Schönen und der Kunst)*, published in 1903, Lipps states that aesthetics should develop as a 'psychological discipline'. [5]

Thus in the very beginning of the 20th century the psychological paradigm claims to be the dominating approach in the field of aesthetics. According to the Austrian psychologist Christian Allessch for several years during the first decade of the 20th century this dominating position becomes a fact and after that aesthetics turns to philosophy and to the disciplines related to art.[6]

Allessch points out two main reasons which in his opinion predetermine the fate of psychological aesthetics. The first reason is connected with the institutionalization of aesthetics itself. This institutionalization begins in 1906 with the publishing of 'Journal for Aesthetics and General Science of Art' and the creation of a

scientific organization which carries out the first 'Congress on Aesthetics and General Science of Art' in Berlin in 1913.[7] The main figure that initiates the publishing of the magazine and the creation of the scientific organization is the German philosopher Max Dessoir, who is a psychological aesthetics critic and supports the historical and formal approaches to art and to aesthetic issues.

According to Allesch the second reason which predetermines the fate of the psychological aesthetics is connected with the development of the experimental psychology which gradually loses interest in researching sophisticated and complex aesthetic stimuli. The idea of developing the psychological aesthetics as a unified general discipline is replaced by the development of separate disciplines such as psychology of art and musical psychology.

Among the first global and metaphysical theories, typical for the end of the 19th century, the psychological aesthetics gradually turns into empiric discipline in the context of the experimental psychology, which in the first half of the 20th century is dominated by the ideas of behaviorism. According to the American psychologist Colin Martindale the encounter of the experimental aesthetics with behaviorism is a catastrophic era for psychological researches of art.[8] During the second half of the 20th century the development of psychological aesthetics is connected mainly with psychoanalytic theories of art and the yearly cognitive researches. Gradually the cognitive approaches in the field of experimental aesthetics at the end of the 20th century come to full domination. Martindale claims that the beginning of the 21st century shows quite clear and categorical trends that the experimental aesthetics orients towards researches based on the evolutionary psychology and cognitive neuroscience.

On initiative by the Canadian psychologist Daniel Berlyne in 1965 is founded the International Association of Empirical Aesthetics (IAEA)[9], which includes mainly psychologists, anthropologists and philosophers inclined to more global theses for culture and art. Typical for this organization as well as for its scientists is that their researches develop simultaneously and entirely outside the scientific sphere of art history.

There is no doubt that in the second half of the 20th century it becomes very difficult and even absurd with the categories of the universal to also observe and interpret the dynamic processes which occur in such a diverse and strongly specialized professional area as contemporary art. Namely the development of art and the necessity of its adequate interpretation predetermine the low status of psychological aesthetics in the sphere of art history during the entire 20th century.[10]

---

[1] *Fechner, G. Zur experimentalen Aesthetik. Leipzig: Hirzel, 1871.*

[2] *Fechner, G. Vorschule der Aesthetik. Leipzig: Breitkopf und Hartel, 1876.*

[3] *Wundt, W. Grundruege der physiogischen Psychologie. Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1874.*

[4] *Karl Stumpf becomes famous for his research on the phenomena of musical perception. His work called 'Tone psychology', which was published in two volumes in 1883 and 1890 respectively (Stumpf, C. Tonpsychologie, Leipzig, 1883/1890), examines perception of acoustic stimuli as phenomenological entity, not as a sum of separate sensations. Stumpf becomes one of the first researchers in the field of music psychology and his views make him a predecessor of the Gestalt psychology which is developed later namely by his students at Berlin University Wolfgang Kohler, Kurt Koffka and Max Wertheimer.*

[5] *Lipps, T. Aesthetic: Psychologie des Schonen und der Kunst. Hamburg: Leopold Voss, 1903.*

[6] *Detailed information related to the historical emergence and later transformations of the psychological aesthetics can be found in the books of Christian Allesch 'History of Psychological Aesthetics' (Allesch, C.*

*Geschichte der psychologischen Aesthetic. Göttingen: Hogrefe, 1987) and 'Introduction to Psychological Aesthetics' (Allesch, C. Einführung in die psychologische Ästhetik. Wien: Facultas, 2006).*

[7] *Renowned German sociologists and art historians such as Georg Simmel, Wilhelm Worringer, Aby Warburg and 21-year-old art historian Erwin Panofsky attended the Congress in Berlin in 1913.*

[8] *Martindale, C. Recent Trends in the Psychological Study of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts, Empirical Studies of the Arts, Vol. 25, N. 2, 2007.*

[9] *The first congress of the IAEA (International Association of Empirical Aesthetics) is held in Paris in 1965 and the 21th congress of the IAEA to be held in Dresden in 2010.*

[10] *This situation seems to be on track to be overcome at the beginning of the 21st century. Evidences of this are some specific strategies for interacting with the psychological aesthetics in recent years by the world renowned art historians such as John Onians and David Freedberg. See Onians, J. Inside the Brain: Looking for the Foundations of Art History. In: Subjectivity and the Methodology of Art History, Ed. by M. Rossholm Lagerlof, Stockholm, 2003. In 2007 the American art history professor from Columbia University David Freedberg together with the Italian neurophysiologist Vittorio Gallese publishes scientific studies resulting from their common experimental and research work in the field of the neuropsychological aspects of art. See Freedberg, D., Gallese, V. Motion, Emotion and Empathy in Artistic Experience. In: Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 2007.*

## **The fate of 'psychologized' art history**

The differentiation and development of the scientific psychology in Germany in the late 19th century coincides with the simultaneous rise and development of physiology and neo-Kantian aesthetics. In its pre-scientific stage of differentiation from philosophy the psychology is regarded mainly as an essential approach and method, not as an independent science. This is why, quite naturally, interest in psychological topics and issues influences the researches of many authors and becomes a base for entering different psychological interpretations in the sphere of aesthetics and art history.

For example Karl Scherner's book *The Life of Dream (Das Leben des Traums, 1861)*[1], devoted to the symbolic and physiological aspects of dreams, has very strong influence on such significant figures of the classical German aesthetics as Friedrich Vischer[2] and Johannes Volkelt[3], who also write their own researches on psychology of dreams. In 1875 the book of Friedrich Vischer *On Dream (Der Traum, 1875)*[4] and the book of Johannes Volkelt *The Dream Phantasy (Die Traum-Phantasie, 1875)*[5] were published.

It is interesting that as early as 1866 Friedrich Vischer in *Critique of My Aesthetics (Kritik meiner Aesthetik, 1866)*[6] makes an attempt to implement the psychological views of Scherner, related to interpretation of dreams, in the aesthetics theory and understanding of art. According to Scherner the main symbol in the dream is an image of a house, which represents the human body and the different parts of the house correspond to different body parts. This idea is further developed by Vischer, who thinks that the architecture symbolism is not relevant to particular cultural stages, as the theory of Hegel suggests, but rises spontaneously from instinctive human behaviour. He regards the animation of the architectural and art forms as a unifying feeling, which represents a pantheistic impulse for fusing part of the individual with the sensory world.[7]

Several years later, in 1872, these ideas found their synthesis in a dissertation called *On the Optical Sense of Form: a Contribution to Aesthetics (Über das optische Formgefühl. Beitrag zur Aesthetik)*, written by the son

of Friedrich Vischer Robert Vischer, which was published in the following year under the same name as a book.[8] To give a physiological and psychological explanation of the way in which people manage to understand and probe into the essence of inanimate objects such as architectural shapes and works of art, unconsciously putting themselves “inside them”, Robert Vischer invents the term “empathy” (Einfühlung).[9]

The theoretical concept of Vischer is an attempt to analyze art by using an approach, which is based on both psychology and aesthetics. Vischer thinks that via the mechanisms of empathy the art imagination allows objects to be perceived in their most intensive form. The statement that art is a form of “intensification of sensitivity” foresees hundred years ahead the discoveries of contemporary neuroscience, which prove the psychological and physiological mechanism involved in the processes of empathy.[10] As art historian Vischer tries to apply his psychological method in some of his later books.[11]

Vischer’s theoretical concept of aesthetic empathy influences the Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin, who in 1886 wrote a dissertation entitled Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture (Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur, 1886)[12], in which he tries to answer the question how it is possible for architectural forms to express emotion and mood. The physiological and psychological explanation of this issue Wölfflin seeks in the way in which we experience the sensations, perceptions or the impulses of our body.

According to Wölfflin the way in which we percept the main elements of architecture as a matter, shape, weight and power, is determined by our body experience. In his dissertation he claims that the laws of formal aesthetics are nothing else but the conditions in which it seems to us that the organic sensation of good health is possible.

In 1888, two years after his dissertation, Wölfflin publishes a book with the title Renaissance and Baroque (Renaissance und Barock)[13], which becomes much more popular than the ambitious, but unpublished Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture.[14] It is interesting that namely in the second theoretical part of Renaissance and Baroque Wölfflin once again turns back to some of the psychological arguments, expressed by him in his previous work as he tries to answer these questions: Why did Renaissance exhaust and reach its end? And why did Baroque replace it?

Meanwhile Wölfflin had to discuss the theoretical concept, suggested a year earlier by another scientist, who gives a psychological explanation of the stylistic transformations in architecture. This was the German architect and theorist Adolf Göller, who influenced by the psychological models of Hermann Helmholtz and Wilhelm Wundt tries to apply their views, which are related to the mechanisms of human perception, to the architectural theory. In 1887 Göller publishes a study entitled What is the Cause of Perpetual Style Change in Architecture? (Was ist die Ursache der immerwährenden Stilveränderung in der Architektur?)[15], in which he explains the stylistic changes in architecture with the psychological law for lessening the strength of the stimulant.

Göller’s theory is based on two basic notions: the existence of a cultural ‘memory image’ (Gedächtnisbild), which he defines as a psychological memory of previously viewed forms and the pernicious effect of the psychological process of ‘jading’ (Ermüdung) that we feel in regarding a form. Each generation, according to Göller, creates a unified collective image of architectural forms, which is known to them and with time these shapes and proportions begin to lose their attractiveness. Architects get tired of using the same shapes and begin pursuing different proportional deviations (for example the high Renaissance gradually passes into mannerism) and thus with time a new ‘memory image’ is created.[16]

Wölfflin does not dispute the rational nature of the suggested psychological theory, but thinks that a stylistic form is ‘worn out’ and loses its effect only when the person’s conception of the word has changed. According

to Wölfflin the Baroque architecture resorts to the use of extravagant strong effects not because it was tired of the Renaissance shapes, but because the era has lost its delicate sensibility and because the strong emotions have made humans less sensitive to the more discrete influences. Wölfflin reckons that the Göller's theory of psychological 'jading' cannot explain the nature of the newly appeared style and this is the reason why he resorts to the 'empathy theory', already outlined in his own dissertation *Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture*.

In Wölfflin's opinion an artistic style can be explained by including it in the general history of the era according to the ways of expression, typical for the other manifestations of the era. This is the reason why when he applies his psychological method to the origin of Baroque, he does not come from the general historical and cultural idea of a Renaissance which is on the decline, but focuses on something in particular, what in his mind the body configuration in visual arts are, not as a separate motifs, but on the whole.

For Wölfflin the way in which people experience their bodies during a certain era is a key to the analysis of the stylistic forms of the same era, because it is based on the direct expression of their psychological states. Very rarely in his later works Wölfflin goes back to psychology, but in the introduction to his last book *Thoughts on Art History (Gedanken zur Kunstgeschichte, 1941)*[17] he states that it would be a pity if the historian of art and the psychologist of art are always two different persons, because this would break the spine of art history.

Another Wölfflin's contemporary, the German art historian August Schmarsow in 1893 defines architecture as a spatial but not structural and formal art, which, according to him, is unique regarding the other arts in its ability to cause empathy (*Einführung*).[18] Schmarsow thinks that the intuitive form of the three-dimensional space is perceived by our sense of sight, which is connected with the muscle sensations, the sensitivity of our skin and the structure of our entire body. So he once again is looking for a psychological parallel between the observer's body and the architectural shape, by the means of vision.

Like Robert Vischer and Heinrich Wölfflin, August Schmarsow is an art historian, who puts architecture in the center of his researches. The art critic Juliet Koss thinks that Schmarsow manages to suggest 'empathy' as a reasonable concept to review spatial sensation, keeping its role in the discourse of modern architecture theory, which is in contrast with the loss of interest in this concept amongst art historians during the 20th century. According to her the fate of the concept shows the occurred disciplinary distinction between architecture theory and art history.[19]

When in 1893 the German sculptor and theorist Adolf von Hildebrand publishes his treatise *The Problem of Form in the Visual Arts*[20], the psychological approach to art for him is of primary importance and this is why he considers and with great thoroughness grounds his thinking on different notions, which he takes from the experimental theory of sight by the German psychologist Hermann von Helmholtz.[21]

Hildebrand's treatise causes such a great interest and attention that in the words of Heinrich Wölfflin a work of comparable importance has not been seen since the times of Albrecht Dürer and the theorists of the Renaissance.[22] In his research Hildebrand tries to apply the psychological views on perception to the universal laws of representation in art.

---

[1] Scherner, K. *Das Leben des Traums*. Berlin: Heinrich Schinder, 1861.

[2] The German philosopher Friedrich Vischer is the author of the monumental work 'Aesthetics, or the Science of the Beautiful', which was published in six volumes between 1846 and 1857 (*Vischer. F, Aesthetik, oder Wissenschaft des Schönen, Munich: Meyer & Lessen, 1846-57*).

- [3] Johannes Volkelt (1848-1930) is a German Neo-Kantian philosopher. In 1876 Volkelt published his book 'The Symbol Concept in the Newest Aesthetics' (Volkelt, J. *Der Symbol-Begriff in der neuesten Aesthetik*. Jena: Verlag von Hermann Dufft, 1876).
- [4] Vischer, F. *Der Traum*, 1875.
- [5] Volkelt, J. *Die Traum-Phantasie*. Stuttgart; Meyer & Zeller, 1875.
- [6] Friedrich Vischer, *Kritik meiner Aesthetik*, Munich: Meyer & Jessen, 1866.
- [7] See Mallgrave, H. *Gucci or Göller? Architectural Theory Past and Present. Fabrications, Vol. 10*, 1999
- [8] Vischer, R. *Über das optische Formgefühl. Beitrag zur Aesthetik*. Leipzig: Gredner, 1873.
- [9] Robert Visser invented the aesthetic term 'empathy' (Einfühlung) to explain the dynamic way in which a work of art can affect the observer muscularly and emotionally and make them experience similar emotions. The term was introduced to psychology thanks to the German philosopher Theodor Lipps, who extends the meaning of the concept from art to the psychological explanation of the optical illusions and interpersonal relationships in his books 'Aesthetics of Space and Geometrically-Optical Illusions' (Lipps, T. *Raumaesthetik und geometrisch-optische Tauschungen*. Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1897) and 'Basics of Aesthetics' (Lipps, T. *Grundlegung der Aesthetik*. Bamberg: Engelmann, 1903). The further fate of the psychological term is associated with the English word 'empathy', which is introduced in 1909 by psychologist Edward Titchner as 'translation' of the term 'Einfühlung'. (Titchener, E. *Lectures on the Experimental Psychology of Thought Processes*. New York: Macmillan, 1909).
- [10] See Freedberg, D. Gallese, V. *Motion, Emotion and Empathy in Artistic Experience*. In: *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 2007.
- [11] Vischer, R. *Peter Paul Rubens*. Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1904.
- [12] Wölfflin, H. *Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur*, 1886.
- [13] Wölfflin, H. *Renaissance und Barock: Eine Untersuchung über Wesen und Entstehung des Barockstils in Italien*. Munich: T. Ackermann, 1888.
- [14] The dissertation of Heinrich Wölfflin is published posthumously for the first time as late as 1946. (Wölfflin, H. *Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur*, Basel, 1946).
- [15] Göller, A. *Was ist die Ursache der immerwährenden Stilveränderung in der Architektur?* Stuttgart: Technische Hochschule, 1887.
- [16] See Mallgrave, H. (Ed.), *Architectural Theory: An Anthology from 1871 to 2005, Volume II*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008.
- [17] Wölfflin, H. *Gedanken zur Kunstgeschichte*. Basle: Schwabe & Co, 1941.
- [18] Schmarsow, A. *Das Wesen der architektonischen Schöpfung*. Leipzig: Karl W. Hiersemann, 1893.
- [19] See Juliet Koss, *On the Limits of Empathy*. *Art Bulletin*, March, 2006.
- [20] Adolf Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form in der Bildenden Kunst*, Strasbourg: Heitz & Mündel, 1893.
- [21] Hildebrand supports the views of Hermann von Helmholtz, stated in his three-volume essay 'A Handbook for Physiological Optics', published in the period between 1856 and 1866 (Herman von Helmholtz, *Handbuch der physiologischen Optik*. Leipzig: Voss, 1867). Convinced in the scientific correctness of his research, Hildebrand

writes to his friend Konrad Fiedler that he believes he will find a good reader in the face of Helmholtz. Also, when in 1891 Hildebrand makes a sculptural bust of Helmholtz, he describes this order as 'a good opportunity to get closer to that person.' (Hildebrand, 1891 quote by Koss, J., 2006).

[22] Wölfflin, H. *Kleine Schriften*, Basel, 1946.

Central stage in the Hildebrand's concept of art form takes the Helmholtz's theory about the role of sensations and the memory traces of previous experience in building the visual images, as well as the ideas of the philosopher Konrad Fiedler about the role of the 'pure seeing' in the sphere of art.[1]

Hildebrand suggests a line of separate pairs contradicting conceptual terms as optic and tactile; near and distant; whole and fragmented; unified and consecutive; two-dimensional and three-dimensional and on the basis of the psychological contradiction between them, he tries to analyze the difference between the 'objective form of the subject' (Daseinform), which is perceived through practical experience and the 'influencing form', which is specific for creative art.

Three years later, in 1899, Heinrich Wölfflin in the preface to his book *Classic Art (Die klassische Kunst)*[2] recognizes the categories introduced by Hildebrand not only as a useful means for better understanding of the different works, but also as a tool for analyzing different ways of representation. The introduced by Hildebrand use of pairs of conceptually contradicting notions finds its peak in the fundamental work of Wölfflin *Principles of Art (Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe, 1915)*[3]. In this famous book of his, Wölfflin suggests a universal typology of style on the basis of five notion pairs (linear and painterly, flatness and depth, closed form and open form, multiplicity and unity, absolute clarity and relative clarity), through which according to him the 'history of sight' in art can be presented.

Like Hildebrand, the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl tries to reach to the essence of art through the psychological laws of human perception as he stands on the Helmholtz's theory about the physiological functioning of sight. In his books on *Problems of Style (Stilfragen, 1893)*[4], *Late Roman Art Industry (Die spätromische Kunstindustrie, 1901)*[5], *The Group Portrait in Dutch Art (Das holländische Gruppenporträt, 1902)*[6] and the posthumously published *The Emergence of Baroque Art in Rome (Die Entstehung der Barockkunst in Rom, 1908)*[7], he reviews the development of world art as a movement from tactile and tangible perception to optical perception.

Riegl thinks that ancient art is striving more towards representation of separate object rather than to representation of the infinite space. According to him Egyptian art shows this approach in its utmost form, because sight is given a subordinate role. Things are depicted as they are represented to the senses as a long-lasting form regardless of the changing point of view. This is the reason why Egyptians avoid depth and foreshortening, which would introduce a subjective element in the image. Then in Ancient Greece art passes to three-dimensional space and recognizes that the eye has its share in perceiving plastic shaping, but it is in the era of late antiquity when an entirely visual way for representing the objects as they look from a distance develops.

According to Ernst Gombrich there is something truly genial in the striving of Riegl to explain all style changes in architecture, sculpture, painting and ornaments with the help of a single principle.[8]

At the same time Gombrich sees in the theoretical strivings of Riegl an expression of a romantic and mythological vision, which he compares with the views of the German physician and artist Karl Gustav Carus[9], who half a century before that makes an attempt to interpret art history as development from sense to sight. In his pursuit to gain recognition for the landscape painting as the big art of the future, Carus claims

that as the development of the senses in organic beings with sensation and the finer senses of hearing and sight appear only after the organism reaches perfection, at first man becomes sculptor and painting, as well as the higher development of music always belong to later times.

The first mature theoretical work of Riegl *Problems of Style* (1893) is devoted to ornaments, the book *Late Roman Art Industry* (1901) deals mainly with sculptors, architecture and crafts, whereas the later books such as *The Emergence of Baroque Art in Rome* (1908) and especially the detailed research *The Group Portrait in Dutch Art* (1902) are focused on painting. When Riegl analyzes the internal particularities of painting, unlike the other types of pictorial arts, he focuses his attention on the issues related to the way of representation of the internal life of the person, namely to the specifics of the psyche and its effect on given types of art forms.

The fine psychological observations of Riegl are based on suspiciously global theoretical generalizations. The attack against him comes from authors such as the German art historian Paul Frankl, who thinks that Riegl's theory is built on an inappropriate mixture of psychological and physiological arguments. According to Frankl the theory of art should not be brought down to psychology or physiology of the visual perceptions.[10]

The development of the psychological science during the first half of the 20th century forces the second generation of representatives of the Viennese school in science of art to distance themselves from such a model of 'psychologized' art history.

The situation typical for the end of the 19th century gradually changes when theorist and art historians create texts on the 'psychology of art styles' and the issues of 'empathy' and keep a certain degree of autonomy for the psychological researches, which after 1870 are dependent predominantly on physiological analyzes and laboratory experiments. When in the beginning of the 20th century the issue of 'empathy' finally enters for a short time the sphere of psychological science, it does not get wide response.[11]

It is interesting that exactly at this moment emerges an author who causes a stormy discussion and manages to add a new dimension to Riegl's ideas, using the empathy theory.

According to the art critic Juliet Koss[12] on the background of the occurred in the beginning of the 20th century withdrawal of philosophers and psychologists from the issue of empathy in 1908 sounds seemingly the last 'funeral toll' on the topic with the book *Abstraction and Empathy. Contribution to Psychology of Style* by the German art historian Wilhelm Worringer[13], in which the term 'empathy' is used as a main instrument.[14]

From the beginning of *Abstraction and Empathy* Worringer claims that modern aesthetics has made a deciding step from aesthetic objectivism to aesthetic subjectivism and in researches it no more comes from the form of the aesthetic object, but from the behavior of the observing subject. The peak of this development Worringer sees in the 'theory of empathy'. He is categorical that the clearest and most comprehensive formulation of this theory is given by the aesthetic system of Theodor Lipps, according to whom 'aesthetic enjoyment is objectified self-enjoyment'.

Juliet Koss thinks that in his work Worringer uses the formulation of Lipps in a rather rhetorical way, without engaging with the actual aesthetic theory. Worringer quotes the formulation of aesthetic empathy by Lipps five consecutive times; every time with a different nuance. In the final, fifth time, empathy is overthrown from its pedestal and is replaced by the theory of abstraction. Thus, according to Koss, Worringer sets the psychological discomfort in the core of the aesthetic experience.

Worringer views the leaning to empathy as an aesthetic experience which is fulfilled in the beauty of the organic, whereas the leaning to abstraction finds beauty in the life-denying inorganic. Worringer also says

that these two needs are mere stages of one general need, which is revealed as the innermost and final nature of every aesthetic experience, namely the need for self-alienation.

In leaning to abstraction, Worringer claims, the intensity of the striving to self-alienation is incomparably greater, because it is not connected only with an impulse to alienation from the individual existence, as it is for the need of empathy, but with an impulse to liberation from the incidental in human existence and from the arbitrariness of the general organic existence.

According to Koss Worringer's analyzing of art perception in the terms of 'self-alienation' reveals influence by Nietzsche, who describes the activity of the observer as a form of aesthetic schizophrenia, related to states which contain simultaneously experience and liberate oppressive feelings with actively combined connection to the art object and the paralyzing sensation of loss of the self.

At the same time, similarly to Hildebrand, who regards the two-dimensionality in art as a result of the distance of the remote sight, Worringer interprets the two-dimensionality with connection with the emotional distance, which is experienced in the body of the observer. Worringer quotes Hildebrand, who writes about the 'undetermined and oppressive state of the observer facing three-dimensionality' and in this state he sees remains from the uneasiness that humans feel about the things from the outer world.

To Worringer the leaning to abstraction is in the beginning of every art and the 'psychological preconditions' of this leaning are a result from the great inner uneasiness of humans about the phenomena from the outer world and 'an immense spiritual dread of space'.

In his book Worringer follows Riegl's idea that 'art will' (Kunstwollen) and not the individual skills lead art work and similarly to his Austrian predecessor welcomes two-dimensionality, ornaments and cultural artifacts of non-European art, searching arguments for this in the context of an entirely psychological discourse to art, based on instinctive impulses to abstraction and empathy.

In his next research *Form Problems of the Gothic* (Formprobleme der Gotik, 1911)[15], Worringer includes a chapter named *Art History as a Psychology of Humankind*. In this chapter he states that for the art history it is not possible for human to exist in general the same way it is not possible for art to exist in general. According to him the variability of the psychological categories, which find formal expression in the development of style, are expressed in changes, whose regularity is controlled by the fateful interaction between the human and the outside world.

When in 1960 in his book *Art and Illusion* Gombrich comments on the works of Riegl and these of his followers and interpreters such as Worringer and Sedlmayr, without any hesitation he states that the approaches used by them have made it impossible to reach their main objective, namely - psychological explanation of the changes in style.[16]

---

[1] In 1887 in his book *'On the Origin of Artistic Activity'* (Konrad Fiedler, *Der Ursprung der künstlerischen Thätigkeit*, 1887), Konrad Fiedler states that *'the main purpose of artistic activity should be found in the expression of pure vision of an object'* See . Koss, J., 2006.

[2] Wölfflin, H. *Die klassische Kunst*, Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1889.

[3] Wölfflin, H. *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Munich: F. Bruckmann 1915.

[4] Riegl, A. *Stilfragen*. Berlin: G. Siemens, 1893.

[5] Riegl, A. *Die spätrömische Kunstindustrie*. Vienna: K. K. Hof- und Staats-druckerei, 1901.

[6] Riegl, A. *Das holländische Gruppenporträt. Jahrbuch der allerhöchsten Kaiser hauses XXII. Vienna, 1902.*

[7] Riegl, A. *Die Entstehung der Barockkunst in Rom. Vienna: Anton Schroll, 1908.*

[8] Gombrich, E. *Art and Illusion. London: Phaidon Press, 1960*

[9] Karl Gustav Carus (1789-1869) becomes famous for his research on physiognomic and zoopsychology and his book 'Psyche' (Karl Gustav Carus, *Psyche. Pforzheim: Flammer und Hoffmann, 1846*), which is one of the first attempts to create a theory for the unconscious psychic life. Carus' book influences Eduard von Hartmann's philosophy of the unconscious and Karl Scherner's psychological theory of dreams. Carus' idea of an autonomous, creative function of the unconscious is also reflected in the analytical psychology of Karl Gustav Jung.

[10] Frankl, P. *Das System der Kunstwissenschaft. Leipzig: Brunn, 1938.*

[11] The psychological development of the 'aesthetic empathy' idea falls on the doorstep of the 20th century in the context of a dynamically developing experimental psychology. After 1900 the experimental psychology in Germany, Austria and Russia is divided into two main directions which have their grounds in the psychophysics of Fechner. The first direction, which is defined as 'outer psychophysics', explores the relationship between the physical stimuli and their objectively traceable reaction. Russia becomes the center of this 'outer psychophysics', which in the face of the physiologist Ivan Pavlov paves the way for the future world school of the psychology of behavior. The second direction, defined as 'inner psychophysics', explores the relationship between the physical stimuli and the subjective psychological reaction. Germany is the center of the 'inner psychophysics' in the likes of Theodor Lipps and his increasingly criticized by philosophers and psychologists 'theory of the aesthetic empathy'.

[12] Koss, J., 2006.

[13] Worringer, W. *Abstraktion und Einfühlung. Ein Beitrag zur Stilpsychologie. Munchen: Piper, 1908.*

[14] The main source of knowledge for Worringer on the issue of empathy is the dissertation 'Empathy and Association in Modern Aesthetics. Contribution to the Psychological Analysis of Aesthetic Ideas' by Paul Stern (Worringer's friend and student of Theodore Lipps), which is completed in 1897 in Munich and published a year later in Hamburg. (Paul Stern, *Einfühlung und Association in der neueren Asthetik: Ein Beitrag zur Psychologischen Analyse der asthetischen Anschauung. Hamburg, 1898*).

[15] Worringer, W. *Formprobleme der Gotik. Munchen: Piper, 1911.*

[16] Gombrich, E. *Art and Illusion. London: Phaidon Press, 1960*

Gombrich is very cautious regarding the means with which the modern scientific psychology can cooperate for the development of art history. In the introduction to *Art and Illusion*, entitled *Psychology and the Riddle of Style* Gombrich says that when we want to use the means of psychology to research which factors are involved in the process of image creation and image interpretation, we have to realize that the psychology which the previous researchers trustfully relied on, does not exist anymore. 'Contemporary psychology – says Gombrich – has a clear account of how complex and intricate the processes of perception are and does not claim to fully understand them'[1]. Gombrich himself as an art historian and theorist tries to acceptably combine cultural, biological, sociological and aesthetic explanations of art and in different periods he is influenced by the psychoanalytical, cognitive and information theories, respectively.

In the first half of the 20th century art history is dominated by the formal theory and the cultural-historical interpretation models. The withdrawal from the “psychologized” art history is related mainly to the changes in the field of scientific psychology, but also to the advent of a radically new psychological approach, which suggests its own explanation of art and human creativity. This approach is connected with the name of the Viennese psychiatrist Sigmund Freud.

Freud’s psychoanalysis influences the research interests of Ernst Kris, who becomes the first art historian, tried to systematize a comprehensive psychoanalytical theory of art. Kris graduates from the Vienna University with major art history, and then commits to psychoanalysis. Between 1932 and 1951 Kris writes different studies on topics of psychology and psychopathology of art, collected in the book *Psychoanalytic Exploration in Art*[2], published in 1952. Kris’s book becomes a classic of the neo-Freudian theory of art and still today is one of the most cited works in the field of psychology of art.

When in 1958 Arnold Hauser publishes his book *The Philosophy of Art History*[3] with the intention to offer a methodology to protect the main objectives of his previous monumental book *The Social History of Art (1951)*[4], he feels obliged to present not only the philosophical, sociological and educational approaches to art but also the psychological approach. The third part of the book *The Philosophy of Art History* has the title *The Psychological Approach: Psychoanalysis and Art* and in it Hauser discusses in detail the advantages and disadvantages of psychoanalysis as a psychological model for interpreting art.

Hauser states that all psychological theories before the psychoanalysis are trying to adapt methods from the natural sciences by reducing the psychic phenomena to separate sensations, perceptions and reactions. According to Hauser the historical importance of Freud is that he first offers a systematic way to explore personal motivations, obsessions and passions – something which before the psychoanalysis was an objective pursued only by novelists and dramatists. Hauser thinks that the existence of an unconscious material in the creation of a work of art is something which is beyond any doubt. At the same time according to him each benefit from the application of the categories of the unconsciousness to the interpretation of art depends on our success in finding a method which helps us to discover those principles of the art technique which are different from the consciously and premeditated development of a formal scheme.[5]

It is indicative that Hauser comments the potential of psychology of art only through the prism of the psychoanalytical theory of art. This tendency remains in most scope researches and anthologies on history and theory of art during the entire second half of the 20th century.[6]

The other name mentioned beside those of Freud and Kris in these anthologies is this of Ernst Gombrich. This is not by accident, because during the second half of the 20th century namely Gombrich and his researches symbolize to the highest degree the possibilities for interaction between the achievements of modern psychological science and the academic art history. It is not an overstatement that Gombrich, by using his great knowledge on the development of cognitive psychology and information theory manages to create a sophisticated hybrid scientific theory which he guards with exceptional caution and erudition, succeeding in preventing the art history from all possible forms of “psychologization”.

Gombrich is cautious towards the global psychological conclusions, but another art historian is much more radically inclined to use the achievements of cognitive psychology as means to resurrect the “psychologized” art history and the theoretic models of Riegl and Wölfflin. In 1976 appears the book *Progress in Art*[7] by the young American art historian Suzi Gablik, which is one of the last attempts in the 20th century to create a general psychological art history.

Gablik offers a theory of development of art, based on the psychological ideas and experiments of the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget[8], who explores the cognitive development in children and demonstrates how

logical and rational thinking is developed from one stage of adaptation to another and how children's concepts of world change in accordance with the stages of this development.

Gablik goes back to the main contradiction between the so called "inner" and "outer" histories of art, which is related to the question whether inner or outer factors influence the development of art more greatly. It is a known fact that Ernst Gombrich and Arnold Hauser accentuate on the social context, which influences the way in which styles change, while Heinrich Wölfflin and Alois Riegl regard art through its subordination to an inner logic, which is revealed spontaneously and automatically, accordingly to its inner laws of development. Gablik tries to rehabilitate the intuitions of Wölfflin and Riegl with the help of the psychological science. According to her art history illustrates fundamental principle models of psychic growth, which cause the basic mechanism of culturally-historical change. Gablik states that at the time Riegl and Wölfflin present their ideas there is still no such biological concept of epistemological development, as later suggested by the psychologist Jean Piaget.

Gablik thinks that the processes in contemporary art require discussing the issue of art development in the terms of cognitive transformations and not in the terms of perceptual gestalts. According to Gablik conceptual art cannot be explained in the language of the perceptual theory, and it has to be related to the development of intelligence. For Gablik the transformational elements in thinking are the real base for art development.

In art before the Renaissance the organization of space is dominated by topological relations and not by geometrical (i.e. pre-logical and pre-operational), for instance, the Greeks never reach geometry of central projection because geometrical projection cannot have the ordinary perception as its base and is a result of an intellectual construction. This is why no forms of spontaneous arrangement of the objects in space following the principle of the geometric perspective can be found neither in children's nor in primitive art. Until the Renaissance space is perceived as an aggregate or composition, consisting of fullness and emptiness, but not as a homogeneous system. Infinity is not visually included in painting before the Renaissance discovery of one single static point of view. Despite their advanced knowledge of mathematics the Greeks do not reach the geometric statement that parallel lines meet in infinity. Infinity is a concept outside the concrete and the visible. For this reason in ancient art a systematic theory of perspective is not developed.

According to Gablik Piaget's theory helps us explain how artists go from simple intuitive space sequence to conceptual or operational sequence of geometric perspective. Gablik also thinks that art history is developed not as a substitutive evolution, in which one style or approach replaces another, but as a derivative model of development in which the earlier stages are integrated in the later ones. The representations become more and more objective when the psychic development goes from a stage of a relative globality and lack of differentiation to a stage of increasing differentiation, articulation and integration. Art develops through a line of cognitive stages and can be viewed as a series of transformations in ways of thinking. According to Gablik there is a clear line of development in art, which begins from the geometric schemes and ideas in the art of ancient Greece and Rome and the Middle Age scholastic traditions through the greatly materialized art of the Renaissance and Classicism, to the propositional and deductive logic, which characterizes the conceptual forms of the modern and contemporary art. Gablik divides art history in three mega-periods, which roughly correspond to the outlined by Piaget stages of cognitive development as a key factor, which marks these stages is the transformation in the ways of presenting space.

Gablik's book receives a lot of criticism and stays as a contradictive and isolated attempt to integrate topical theoretic postulated from the sphere of scientific psychology in the context of art history.

In the second half of the 20th century the dominating models in the researches of art history are in accordance with the established standards in social sciences. In the words of the American art historian David Freedberg all other approaches in art science until the end of the 20th century continue to be anathematized.[9]

In 1989 Freedberg publishes the book *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*[10], in which he rejects the traditional aesthetics and dominating social models of interpretation of art, related to avoiding psychological topics and issues. According to Freedberg theory of art has to take as a base the research of emotions and different forms of psychological reaction. In his book Freedberg rather describes than explains the psychological reaction to images in art without using direct alludes to the cognitive and neuroscience psychology which in this period are still quite distant in the framework of the psychological science. Only in later years Freedberg directs his efforts towards a systematic psychological research of the emotional reactions in art, based on a convergence of art history and the neuroscience psychology.

Freedberg explains the rejection of the “psychologism” and the abandoning of the psychological topic of emotions in the sphere of history and theory of art with the established trends of separating the “pure” aesthetic knowledge from the emotions in the formalistic aesthetics, defended by authors such as Collingwood (1938) and Greenberg (1961), and also in the informational aesthetic model of Goodman (1976) according to whom during “the aesthetic experience emotions function cognitively”. [11]

There is also criticism towards the limitations in the traditional art history in the works of the English theorist of art Richard Wollheim, who is an opponent of the approaches which reduce art to a net of social and historic functions and relations. According to Wollheim these approaches, as well as the informational and semiotic approaches deprive art from deeper interpretation, based on human psychology. In 1987 in his book *Painting as an Art*[12] Richard Wollheim criticizes deeply the dominating theoretical models and principles in the science of art in the second half of the 20th century and suggests an alternative psychological approach.

Despite the effort of numerous authors in the 20th century to integrate the achievements of the psychological science in the art history, it is an indisputable fact that in its history so far the academic science of art gives an entirely auxiliary and marginal role to the psychological approaches to art and considers much more significant the cultural and social discourses.

Meanwhile the methodological isolation of the psychology from the art history gives grounds for the radical art critique and theory of art to use the explanatory potential of particular psychological terms and ideas. For instance, art critics and theorists such as Rosalind Krauss[13], Hal Foster[14] and Donald Kuspit[15] in the last three decades of the 20th century successfully combine particular psychoanalytical ideas in the context of a critical theory of art and oppose the traditional historic views on the development of modern and contemporary art.

It can be said that in the 20th century the “psychologized” art history is a subject of criticism in two main directions. First, that it is based on “outworn” psychological theories and second, that it cannot cover the complex multilayer essence of art. One of the accusations is a direct accusation in scientific inadequacy, and the other is related to the very object of research, which turns out to be outside the focus of the modern art history. So in the 20th century the psychological approaches to art in general are forced to develop outside the academic parameters of the art history in the form of alternative psychological theories in the sphere of art psychology.

---

[1] Gombrich, 1960.

[2] Ernst Kris majored art history at the Vienna University and then devoted himself to psychoanalysis. Between 1932 and 1951 Kris writes papers on various issues of psychology and psychopathology of art, which are published in the book 'Psychoanalytic Researches of Art', published in 1952 (Kris, E., *Psychoanalytic Exploration in Art*. New York: International University Press, 1952).

[3] Hauser, A. *Philosophie der Kunstgeschichte*. Munich: Oscar Beck, 1958.

[4] In 1951 Arnold Hauser publishes the book 'The Social History of Art' (Hauser, A. *The Social History of Art*. London: Routledge, 1951), in which he offers an unprecedented format of a sociological analysis of the entire world history of art from the Stone Age to the film era. Hauser receives a lot of criticism because his ambitious work begins literally from the first page with comments on prehistoric art without any introduction or description of the methodology used by him.

[5] This insightful note by Hauser will retain its force later, because it contains one of the main problems associated with the use of psychoanalysis in the context of art history. In 1994 the American art history professor James Elkins repeats it (without quoting Hauser), asking the question how can we decide what is conscious and what is unconscious in a work of art and by what criteria can we determine the presence of the unconsciously and consciously controlled elements in the works of art. (Elkins, J. *The Failed and the Inadvertent: Art History and the Concept of the Unconscious*. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 1994).

[6] See Kleinbauer, E. *Modern Perspectives in Western Art History*. New York: Holt & Winston, 1971; Scheider, A. *The Methodologies of Art*. Westview Press, 1996; Halt, M. and Klonk, C. *Art History: A Critical Introduction to its Methods*. Manchester University Press, 2006.

[7] Gablik, S. *Progress in Art*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1976.

[8] Jean Piaget (1896-1980) is a Swiss psychologist who becomes internationally famous for his research on the development of children's intellect. Piaget identifies four main stages in children's psychic development: 1) touch-motor stage - from birth until the age of two, focuses on motor control and skills; 2) preoperational stage - from two to seven years of age, associated with verbal skills; 3) stage of specific operations - from age seven to twelve, when abstract operations appear; 4) stage of formal operations - after the age of twelve at which logical and systematic thinking starts to develop.

[9] Freedberg, D. *Empathy, Motion and Emotion in the History of Art*. Lecture, Stanford University, December 10, 2004.

[10] Freedberg, D. *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1989.

[11] See Freedberg, D. Gallese, V. *Motion, Emotion and Empathy in Artistic Experience*. In: *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 2007.

[12] Wollheim, R. *Painting as an Art*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1987.

[13] Rosalind Krauss is a co-founder of one of the most influential magazines for contemporary art, theory and criticism – 'October', which starts in 1976. Her articles 'Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism' (Krauss, R. *Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism*. *October*, 1., 1976) and 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' (Krauss, R. *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*, *October*, 8., 1979,) and the books 'The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myth' (Krauss, R. *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myth*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985) and 'The Optical Unconscious' (Krauss, R. *The Optical Unconscious*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), interpret various phenomena in the 20th century art through the prism of certain psychoanalytic categories and ideas.

[14] Hal Foster is an American art theorist who becomes famous for the books 'The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture' (Foster, H. *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1983) and 'Return of the Real' (Foster, H. *Return of the Real*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996). In 1993, Foster publishes a book entitled 'Compulsive Beauty', which explores the surreal art from the perspective of the psychoanalytical theory (Foster, H., *Compulsive Beauty*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993).

[15] The American professor of art history and philosophy Donald Kuspit has a unique position in the field of contemporary art criticism and theory. What is remarkable about him is that he defends doctorate degrees in art history and philosophy in the University of Michigan in the U.S. and in Frankfurt University in Germany, respectively. Kuspit also graduates from the Psychoanalytic Institute of the New York Medical University. Kuspit's exceptional knowledge in the field of history and theory of art and culture, as well as in this of clinical psychology and psychiatry allow him to create original theses on the border between psychology and art. Amongst his famous books in this field are 'Signs of Psyche in Modern and Postmodern Art' (Kuspit, D., *Signs of Psyche in Modern and Postmodern Art*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) and 'Psychostrategies of Avant Garde Art' (Kuspit, D., *Psychostrategies of Avant Garde Art*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

## **Disciplinary parameters of art psychology**

A lot of researchers put a sign of equality between psychological aesthetics and art psychology. For example, in the introduction to his book *The Psychology of Art Appreciation* (1997) the Danish psychologist Bjarne Funch says that: 'psychological aesthetics, also called the psychology of art, is one of the academic disciplines that has been actively involved in the investigation of art and its influence on human existence.' [1] Such a substitution has its logic coming from the common origin and common subject of research of these two disciplines. Historically the experimental aesthetics envisioned by Fechner as an empiric science develops at the end of the 19th century simultaneously in the context of experimental psychology and of neo-Kantian aesthetics [2], tempted by different psychological approaches and methods. At the same time other authors such as the Austrian psychologist Christian Allesch [3] think that the research field of psychological aesthetics is wider than the one of the art psychology.

In historical aspect the psychological aesthetics stays connected with the development of the experimental psychology and with a more global understanding of human creative activity. In this way the psychological aesthetics stays in the context, given by the classical philosophic tradition, which analyses human aesthetic experience with the help of aesthetic categories.

Another typical feature of the psychological aesthetics is that it prefers to regard art as a universal and not historic phenomenon. Under the influence of the processes in the general sciences of art and the emancipation of separate psychological schools, part of the contradictive and inhomogeneous field of the psychological aesthetics gradually begins to specialize and differentiate. So the psychology of art as a discipline begins to relate more closely to the experience of the theories which are outside the experimental psychology.

One of the main characteristics of the psychology of art as a discipline is that it develops as a collection of alternative psychological approaches to art, which are part of different, rivaling psychological schools. Art history as a general science of art does not play the role of arbiter, because methodologically it differentiates from all possible forms of "psychologism".

So the psychology of art stays outside the art history. A position that allows different psychological schools to offer their own theories of art, great part of which remain “invisible” to the science of art, and others manage to permeate in its essence in the form of certain topics, terms, ideas.

During the entire 20th century the fate of the psychology of art turns out to be much more related to the history of modern psychology and the processes in modern and contemporary art, than to the theoretic development of the very science of art. At the same time it is not an overstatement that the academic psychology from the first half of the 20th century does not have any effect on the theoretic development of the art history.

A situation, which does not change during the entire 20th century, regardless of the work of scientists such as Rudolf Arnheim[4], who in 1954 wrote the book *Art and Visual Perception*[5], which undoubtedly is the biggest contribution to the differentiation of the psychology of art as an independent discipline within the framework of the art theory. However, this does not stop Ernst Gombrich from stating in his book *Art and Illusion* (1960) that despite its qualities and usefulness the book of Arnheim gives little to the art historian.[6]

Psychology of art does not manage to receive a statute of a fundamental discipline as for instance the historic science is, within the framework of the academic science of art. Another indisputable fact is that psychology of art never becomes equal in rights within the framework of the scientific psychology.[7]

In 1994 in the preface to his book *Cognition and the Visual Arts* the American cognitive psychologist Robert Solso states that regardless of the stormy development of the cognitive psychology in the second half of the 20th century almost nothing from the findings in this field is applied to the sphere of art.[8] With great regret Solso notes that until the beginning of the 1990’s the literature on psychology of art contains only psychoanalytical texts and some psychophysical researches.

Without a doubt the systematization of a comprehensive and integral art psychology remains a project for the future and the main reason for this is in the development of psychology itself.

The development of psychology as a scientific discipline is connected with influence by different philosophical schools amongst which the most important is the philosophical positivism of Auguste Comte. It is interesting that Comte himself excludes psychology from his hierarchical system of sciences. According to him the base of science is physics, on which chemistry is based, which in turn is a fundament for biology, which is in the core of the new science – sociology. Comte thinks that the biological science for the brain gives the knowledge for human nature which is necessary for sociology.

German idealists also doubt the possibility to quantitatively assess conscious experience and predict that psychology would never become a science, because it is impossible to experimentally measure the psychic processes. In Germany philosopher Immanuel Kant suggests creating a science about human behavior and names it anthropology and in England John Mill has a suggestion for a similar science – ethology, devoted to the factors which influence the development of human personality.

The idea of psychology as a humanitarian science is connected with the name of philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey who confronts the idea of positivists that physics should serve as a base for every science and suggests the model of history. According to him psychology does not belong to natural sciences, but to humanities.

According to the American psychologist Michael Cole the reason for the exclusion of art and culture from psychology is that when psychology is institutionalized as a science, the processes constituting the mind are divided between several sciences – culture goes to anthropology, social life to sociology, language to linguistics, past to history and so on and each of these disciplines develops methods and theories suitable for their field.[9]

The major methods in psychology depend on the use of standardized procedures which allow the application of linear statistical models to determine the significance of results, whereas in anthropology the major methods depend on participation along with people in their everyday activities and interviewing them in a flexible and acceptable way. According to Cole, who tries to combine psychology and anthropology, the methods used in the two scientific fields are diametrically opposite.

Such a division of the sciences about human shows why art as a subject of research turns out to be a marginal sphere in the field of scientific psychology which tries to use artificial experiments on the model of natural sciences.

Another interesting trend in the history of psychology is that psychological models which turn out to be closer to humanities than to natural sciences have better development as a self-dependent separate sphere of the psychological research and influence on the general development of art itself.

Psychology as a science according to experts enters the 21st century in a state of theoretic crisis.[10] According to historians of science the field of contemporary psychology is advanced on the way to fragmentation and disintegration from number of independent psychologies, which are unable to communicate with each other. In the beginning of the 21st century psychology is more fragmented than ever before and as every fraction holds to its theoretic and methodological orientations, approaching the research of human nature with different techniques and imposing its own specialized terminology.[11]

As far as every discipline has its own subject of study it is logical to ask the question what does the psychology of art study. One possible answer is that psychology of art studies the psychological processes related to art, for example, perception of art. At the same time such an answer raises the question what is the difference, for example between psychology of art and psychology of perception. Many books on psychology of art deal with the general phenomena of attention, sensations, visual perception, memory and thinking and related them to different aspects of art. So psychology of art finds its purpose as a psychology of art perception, regardless of how general and undefined is every psychological definition of the term "art" seems regarding art history as a science.

Moreover when under the category art perception are viewed different perceptive, emotional, cognitive, evaluation, spiritual and other kinds of relations between the human and the works of art. In fact there is no psychological system or theory which was specially created to be used in the field of art. Most often psychological systems and theories apply their own theoretical postulates and hypotheses as explanation of different aspects of art.

In historical aspect the development of psychology of art is defined by the existing differentiation and confrontation of separate psychological schools and directions. The development of psychology in the first half of the 20th century is dominated by the psychoanalysis and behaviorism, which in its turn in the 1950's and 1960's as a reaction causes development of new psychological systems, namely the schools of humanistic and cognitive psychology. This circumstance can explain why when in 1972 the psychologists Hans Kreidler and Sulamit Kreidler in their book *Psychology of the Arts* review the main psychological approaches to art, they believe that future development of psychology of art is connected with expansion of cognitive orientation.[12]

A similar view can be found in the book *Invented Worlds. Psychology of Arts* (1982)[13] by the American psychologist Ellen Winner, as well as in the book of Howard Gardner *Art, Mind and Brain. Cognitive Approach to Creativity*[14], published also in 1982. In Winner's book are reviewed some of the most significant psychological approaches to art, developed on the basis of psychoanalysis, psychobiology, Gestalt psychology

and cognitive psychology, respectively connected to the names of Ernst Kris, Daniel Berlyne, Rudolf Arnheim and Ernst Gombrich.

It is interesting that authors such as Michael Parsons[15] and David Perkins[16], who in the next decade suggest original ideas related to art psychology in cognitive direction do not show any interest in the achievements of the other psychological schools. The same conclusion can be made about Robert Solso, who in 2003 publishes his book *Psychology of Art and the Evolution of the Conscious Brain* in which he tries to apply the achievements of the cognitive neuroscience to art psychology.[17]

It is a known fact that traditionally the psychoanalytical approach to art excludes any possible interaction with the rest of the psychological approaches. This is why it is a curious trend that some psychologists from other schools such as Pavel Machotka use classical psychoanalysis of art combined with psychometric models close to experimental psychology.[18]

There are enough grounds to say that in the beginning of the 21st century psychology of art is not less fragmented than the scientific psychology. Every psychological approach to art holds to its own theoretic and methodological orientation, applies different techniques and its own specialized terminology, which excludes the possibility for active dialogue with the rest of the psychological approaches to art.

In this regard an interesting exception is the book by the Danish psychologist Bjarne Funch *The Psychology of Art Appreciation*[19], published at the very end of the 20th century, which is the most comprehensive synopsis of art psychology to that moment. Funch's book gives a specific vision for the major theoretical approaches and statements in the field of art psychology from the positions of the existential-phenomenological psychology of art to which Funch himself belongs. According to Funch five main psychological directions in the study of art perception can be differentiated: psychophysical approach; psychoanalytical approach, approach based on Gestalt psychology; cognitive approach; existential-phenomenological psychology of art.

In his research Funch reaches the conclusion that from the five major psychological approaches reviewed by him not only have different subjects of psychological research, which is concentrated on different aspects of art, but also that they are different types of art perception.

For example, according to the psychophysical approach art perception is based on a special personality disposition, called aesthetic pleasure, which helps the individual to make the difference between beautiful and ugly and which according to this approach is a major psychological characteristic of art. According to the cognitive approach the perception of works of art is based on the common cognitive abilities and the pleasure from perception of art is not connected with aesthetic pleasure, but is caused by the very cognitive activity and understanding of art. The psychological approach based on the Gestalt psychology and the theories of expression, deals with emotional perception as a specific type of aesthetic disposition. The psychoanalytical approach is focused on the psychobiography of the artist and the dynamic nature and role of the unconscious in the creative process. A basic psychological characteristic of art in this approach is the so called by Funch 'aesthetic fascination' which shows the relation of certain characteristics of the piece of art to the psychic structure of the individual. The existential and phenomenological approach to art perception takes as a base of the psychological characteristic of art the aesthetic experience which is a form of existential actualization, connected with a new and different type of state of the individual.

One of the most valuable qualities in the Funch's research is that it reveals the original contributions and potential of each of the reviewed psychological approaches to art. At the same time Funch suggests quite a narrowed version of the most influential approach in the historical development of art psychology during the 20th century, namely the psychoanalytical one. In his book in the framework of the psychoanalytical approach

in addition to Freud Funch reviews only the ideas of Ronald Fairbairn and Ernst Kris and partially mentioned and cited are Hanna Segal and Peter Fuller. Funch does not take into account two of the most significant authors of the British psychoanalytical aesthetics, namely Anton Ehrenzweig and Richard Wollheim. There is no representation of the analytical and archetypal art psychology connected with the names of Carl Gustav Jung, Joseph Henderson and James Hillman. From the Jung art psychology Funch deals in detail only with the works of Erich Neumann.

Moreover, despite accentuating on the work of the American psychologist Rolo May, Funch does not present the humanistic and transpersonal art psychology. The biggest gap in his research is that Funch never mentions and doesn't deal with any social-psychological approaches to art. The absence of the evolutionary art psychology and neuroscience art psychology can be objectively explained with the fact that these two newest psychological approaches to art are formed at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. Their influence in the past years connected with the stormy development of the modern evolutionary theory and contemporary neuroscience which uncover totally new and unexplored to that moment aspects, related to art psychology.

The main problem of each psychology of art is connected with the possibilities to relate its own psychological model of art to the models of art which function in the disciplinary field of art history. Rejection of the topical theoretic models of interpretation of art in fact means rejection of the scientific subject of the art history. Such a rejection usually threatens to leave the psychology of art outside the specialized discourse of the modern theory of art. Thus psychology of art faces a choice either to go back to the universal undefined field of psychological aesthetics or to look for opportunities to offer a subject of study which is related to the disciplinary field of art history.

---

[1] Funch, B. *The Psychology of Art Appreciation*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1997.

[2] In this context, it is no coincidence that as early as 1793 the Swiss writer Johann Heinrich Zschokke, Influenced by Kant's Ideas publishes a book titled "Ideas for Psychological Aesthetics. (Johann Heinrich Zschokke, *Ideen zur einer psychologischen aesthetik*. 1793.)

[3] See Allesch, C. *Aesthetics as a Human Science*. 20th Annual Conference of the European Society for the History of Human Sciences, Amsterdam, 2001.

[4] Rudolf Arnheim (1904-2007) receives education in both psychology and art history at Berlin University, where his teacher is one of the founders of the Gestalt psychology Max Vertheimer. After his immigrating to the United States in 1940, Arnheim heads first course on psychology of art in the world, founded in 1943 at Sarah Lawrence College in New York.

[5] Arnheim, R. *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954.

[6] Gombrich, 1960.

[7] Interesting confirmation of this statement is the fact that many authors who write in the field of art psychology, have no academic psychological education. For example, the great Russian scholar Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), who in 1925 wrote a doctoral dissertation named 'Psychology of Art' (Lev Vygotsky writes his work in 1925, but it is first published as late 1965. (Визотский, Л. Психология искусства. Москва, 1965) and the English explorer Anton Ehrenzweig (1908-1966), author of the world famous book *The Hidden Order of Art* (Ehrenzweig, A. *The Hidden Order of Art. A Study in the Psychology of Artistic Imagination*. Berkeley:

*University of California Press, 1967), graduate in law and acquire their knowledge of psychology without academic training.*

[8] Solso, R. *Cognition and the Visual Arts*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994.

[9] Cole, M. *Cultural Psychology: A Once and Future Discipline*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap-Harvard, 1996.

[10] Schultz D., Schultz, S. *A History of Modern Psychology*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2007.

[11] Smit, N. *Current Systems in Psychology*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 2001.

[12] Kreidler, H., Kreidler, S. *Psychology of the Arts*. Dunham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1972.

[13] Winner, E. *Invented Worlds: The Psychology of the Arts*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.

[14] Gardner, H. *Art, Mind and Brain: A Cognitive Approach to Creativity*. New York: Basic Books, 1982.

[15] Parsons, M. *How We Understand Art: A Cognitive Developmental Account of Aesthetic Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

[16] Perkins, D. *The Intelligent Eye: Learning to Think by Looking at Art*. Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for Education in the Arts, 1994.

[17] Solso, R. *The Psychology of Art and the Evolution of the Conscious Brain*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003.

[18] The books in question here are by Pavel Machotka 'The Nude: Perception and Personality.' (Machotka, P. *The Nude: Perception and Personality*. New York: Irvington Publishers, 1979.) and 'Painting and Our Inner World: The Psychology of Image Making'(Machotka, P. *Painting and Our Inner World: The Psychology of Image Making*. New York: Plenum Publishers, 2003).

[19] Funch, B. *The Psychology of Art Appreciation*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1997.

## **Contemporary prospects for the psychological approaches in art history**

The theoretical possibility to use psychology as an additional means which allows a different scientific view on certain art facts begins with Ernst Kris and Ernst Gombrich who in their early research from 1938 on caricature history reach the conclusion that the traditional art history cannot offer an adequate explanation of the late 'invention' of portrait caricature because caricature is not only a historical phenomenon but also a specific process which should be interpreted in the field of psychology.[1] What distinguishes the research of Kris and Gombrich from all other similar researches until that moment is not only their extraordinary qualification as art historians but most of all, their attitude to the psychological science.

When in the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, precisely in the period between 1870-1910, art historians and theorists such as Robert Visser, Heinrich Wölfflin, August Schmarsow, Alois Riegl and Wilhelm Worringer write about art grounding in different psychological or physiological views they regard psychology as an approach which is yet part of philosophy.

It is a known fact that after 1866 psychology begins to enter the German universities as a division of philosophy but even the creator of the scientific psychology Wilhelm Wundt still regards psychology as part of philosophy and not as a natural science.[2]

For a long time psychology remains a subsection of philosophy. So in 1910 in Germany there are already several journals and research laboratories for psychology but only four scientists are registered in the official guides as psychologists and not as philosophers.[3]

In 1892 the future architect and designer August Endell enrolls in the Munich University to study philosophy and not psychology, but only two years later, in 1894 when his new philosophy professor Theodor Lipps creates his psychological laboratory, Endell becomes one of his most devoted followers. In his laboratory experiments Lipps and his students like Fechner try to research the aesthetic qualities of the objects and in Munich in the 1894-1914 period Lipps, who regards aesthetics mostly as a psychological discipline, reads a lot of public lectures on art.

In 1898 Endell, influenced by Lipps' theory on 'aesthetic empathy', publishes a study on psychology of perception in which he tries to describe the power of forms to evoke direct feelings in the observer.[4] In his study Endell claims that we have to learn to see in the terms of pure colors and forms and not to think about what they represent and also states that we have to learn to experience emotions which are connected with the colors and forms, leaving these emotions to freely reach out consciousness. While theorizing on the issues of psychological aesthetics, in the period between 1896 and 1897 Endell creates the famous decoration of the Elvira Studio in Munich.

At the same time the universal creative pathos and panpsychism contained in the 'inner psychophysics' of Lipps finds its defender in the Russian physician neuropsychologist Nikolai Kulbin, who in 1905 experiments with paintings in which he recreates forms of organic matter, seen through microscope and landscapes with intuition for the invisible.

In 1907 in Saint Petersburg Kulbin organizes a group named Triangle: Art and Psychology, which includes artists and poets ready to research the relations between art and psychology. Kulbin chooses the name 'Triangle' because he thinks that painting is a spontaneous projection of conditional signs from the artist's brain onto the picture.[5]

When Vassily Kandinsky arrives in Munich from Russia in 1896 he develops his views on art, influenced by the psychological aesthetics of Lipps, Endell's theory of a psychological art, based on the pure influence of the abstract decoration and by the ideas of his friend Kulbin and his Triangle group. In 1911 Kandinsky begins his manifest essay *Whither the New Painting* with words directed against the 'outer psychophysics' and he cites the German pathologist Rudolf Virchow who says that he has opened thousand of corpses but he never managed to see a soul. In his text Kandinsky claims that the future of art and science belongs not to those who observe the visible reality, but to those who like his friends Kulbin use their intuition and indirect scientific methods to research the invisible.[6]

In the same year, 1911, in Munich the German art historian Wilhelm Worringer publishes his book *Form Problems of the Gothic* in which he includes a chapter entitled *Science of Art as a Psychology of Humankind*. [7] In this chapter Worringer claims that the constant changes in human attitude towards the outside world are the starting point of every broader psychology and no historical, cultural or art phenomenon can be understood if it is not in correspondence with this deciding point of view.

Unfortunately the psychological ideas about art of Lipps, Endell, Kulbin and Worringer fall in the beginning of the 20th century in the context of a more and more dynamically developing experimental psychology which is inclined to choose 'outer psychophysics' devoted to the relation between the physical stimuli and their objectively traceable reaction and not the 'inner psychophysics' which explores the relation between the physical stimuli and the subjective psychological reaction.

In its striving to achieve emancipation from philosophy psychology chooses to define itself not as a science for the consciousness, but as a science for the behavior. So in the next decades the scientific psychology develops mostly on the road of the natural and applied sciences.

Also, the so called 'romantic' situation typical for the end of the 19th century when art historians such as Robert Vicher, Heinrich Wölfflin and Alois Riegl create texts on the 'psychology of art styles', keeping certain autonomy from the psychological researches, is completely passed. The development of the psychological science during the first half of the 20th century forces the second generation of representatives of the Vienna school in science of art to distance themselves from such a model of a 'psychologized' art history.

---

[1] Kris, E., Gombrich, E., *The Principles of Caricature. British Journal of Medical Psychology. XVII, 1938.*

[2] Leahey, T. *A History of Modern Psychology. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2001.*

[3] Schultz D., Schultz, S. *A History of Modern Psychology. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2007.*

[4] Endell, A. *Formenschonheit und Dekorative Kunst, Dekorative Kunst, 6, 1898.*

[5] In 1907 Nicholay Kulbin writes a theoretical study named 'Sensitivity: studies on the psychometry and clinical application of its data' (Кульбин, Н. *Чувствительность: очерки по психометрии и клиническому приложению ее данных, Санкт Петербург, 1907*), and in 1908 he reads a lecture in St. Petersburg called 'The Free Art as a Foundation of Life: Harmony and Dissonance', which later, in 1912 is published in Munich by Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee in 'The Blue Rider' almanac (*Der Blaue Reiter, 1912*).

[6] Gamwell, L. *Exploring the Invisible. Art, Science and the Spiritual, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002.*

[7] Worringer, W. *Formprobleme der Gotik. Munchen: Piper, 1911.*

Kris and Gombrich form their views greatly influenced by Freud who shows that psychology has a unique place among the other sciences because it can affect the very subject of study.

At the same time Kris and Gombrich attend the lectures of the German psychologist Karl Buhler who at the time is a professor in Vienna University. Gombrich university years are between 1928 and 1933 and only one year before that, in 1927, Buhler publishes a book with the remarkable title *The Crisis in Psychology (Die Krise der Psychologie)*[1], which is dedicated to the disintegrated unity of views on the subject of psychology and psychology researches which is accompanied by a methodological crisis and emergence of different psychological schools confronting each other.

It was already suggested that the theoretical possibility psychology to be used as an additional means which allows a different scientific view on certain art facts begins with Ernst and Gombrich. What distinguishes Kris and Gombrich[2] is not only their exceptional qualification as art historians but most of all, their attitude towards the psychological science.

It is a paradox that Kris gradually leaves art history because of psychoanalysis and the exceptional Gombrich's knowledge on the development of the psychological science during the second half of the 20th century makes him the most zealous 'guard' of art history against all possible inclusions of different naive psychological interpretations and conclusions.

Art history does not have its own psychology of art and is dependent on the development of the psychological science. Art history as systematic discipline has not only to interact with different psychological schools, but also to get orientated in their basic postulates by adapting their potential usefulness to the interpreting of art as far as there is no psychological system or theory which is specially created to be used in the field of art.

The question is which psychology is of interest to the art and which psychology of art is needed by the art history? One of the defended thesis of this study is that's the psychological approaches to art in the 20th century are forced to develop outside the academic parameters of the science of art in the form of alternative psychological theories in the sphere of psychology of art. At the same time one of the most important statements of this work is connected with the circumstance that psychology of art regardless of its methodological contradictions and unclear parameters, remains a constant part of the disciplinary center of modern science of art. What are the grounds for such a statement? The first argument is in the historical circumstance that as early as the second half of the 19th century when art history is institutionalized as an academic discipline, it starts to form its principle difference from the other disciplines mainly via its specific object of study and not so much via the methods of research, which can be used. In this way independently from the ruling models of theoretical interpretation of art, and in the 20th century in general dominate the formalistic, sociological and culturological models of interpretation, art history remains highly dependent on its object of study and on the so called 'inner theories of art', which are in the art practice itself.[3] In other words all forms of art, which in some degree contain psychological ideas and methods, cannot be objectively interpreted even in a purely sociological or culturological aspect, if they leave the ideas and methods used by the artists outside the research context.[4] So every study of the various forms of the "psychological art" inevitably goes through construction of a certain psychological discourse within the framework of art history.

To some degree every art is psychological, but from the point of view of art psychology the category "psychological art" suggests presence of a certain discourse, which has its own story and specific theoretical horizon.

For example a discourse, formed in the traditions of the psychoanalytical aesthetics, defines as psychological only the art that has mainly psychological functions such as the authentic "psychotic art" or the art "without psychological distance". This highly narrowed defining of the "psychological art" category cannot be understood without a review of the history of psychoanalytical aesthetics and its 'inner' interrelations, on one hand, with artists such as Jean Dubuffet and Arnulf Rainer and on other hand psychiatrist such as Alfred Bader and Leo Navratil and art historians such as Roger Cardinal, Harald Szeemann and Peter Gorzen, as far as research and curator projects, direct psychological experiments and art actions are integral component of this discourse.

The rise and differentiation of the psychological aesthetics as a specific phenomenon on the border between psychoanalysis, psychiatry, clinical psychology and philosophy of art in the context of the contra-culture and neo-avant-garde in the 1960's together with the interest in the figure of the schizophrenic as a symbol of an absolute psychic otherness manages not only to create a unique psychological discourse in the field of art history, but also to legitimate the psychotic art, turning it into an integral part of the canon of modern and contemporary art.[5]

On the other hand in the context of psychology of art it can be perceived as psychological art, the art that is inspired by certain psychological systems and theories, as is the case of the art experiments of Expressionism, Surrealism and Op art influenced respectively by the psychological theory of the "aesthetic empathy" and the psychological systems of psychoanalysis and Gestalt psychology.

This symbiosis between the development of modern art and the modern psychology is the second argument for the statement made that psychology of art remains a constant part of the disciplinary center of modern

science of art, because this ground automatically turns history of psychology into an inevitable part of the very object of research of history and theory of modern art.

It is indicative that two of the keenest researchers of Surrealistic art in the second half of the 20th century, the American art historians Rosalind Krauss and Hal Foster, led namely by the specificity of their object of study, realize the role of psychological issues and the potential of psychological discourses in the science of art.

The name of Rosalind Krauss becomes a synonym of some of the most influential postmodern trends in art history in the 1980's and 1990's.[6] Her critical pathos to a great extent is due to the contradictive pressure related to the introduction of the psychological terminology, coming from the French structuralist psychoanalysis and the British psychoanalytical school.

Initially Hal Foster forms as one of the most interesting art critics of the New York scene in the 1980's. At the end of the 1980's without giving up his positions of an independent art critic he directs his efforts towards academic career as art historian and defends a dissertation on history of Surrealistic art from psychoanalytical point of view, which is later published as a book entitled *Compulsive Beauty* (1993).[7] Foster's book turns into one of the most admired studies on history of Surrealism and together with the success of his next book on historical dialectics of the neo-avant-garde *The Return of the Real. The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (1996)[8] naturally strengthens the potential of psychoanalytical ideas and concepts to radicalize art history internally through the very object of research.

As theorists of the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde Krauss and Foster use psychological terms and formulations from different psychological schools in a rather rhetorical way. This theoretic rhetoric, based on psychological discourses is the third argument for the statement made in this study that psychology of art remains a constant part of the disciplinary center of art history because it forms a direct interrelation between art theory and practice. This is about theoretical rhetoric which finds a particular expansion in the form of research and curator projects which influence directly the development of art.

Such an example is Krauss' research project from the middle of the 1980's *Photography & Surrealism*[9] which includes a lot of texts and exhibitions redirected the attention of artists and researchers from painting and sculpture to the psychoanalytical meaning of images in the art of photography.

Artists from the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde realize that they need a theory to justify and institutionalize their art. As paradoxical as it sounds, it can be said that in the beginning of the 21th century the "new genres of conceptual art", based on different cognitive discourses and disciplinary fields, seem to have the objective of justifying and institutionalizing the theory of art.

Every psychological research in the context of art can constitute its own specific discourse and its own disciplinary subject of study. In this sense the art practice with its rhetorical potential is able to impose a specific theoretical discourse in the field of art history.

The different disciplines are organized around abstract knowledge and each professional community gives prestige to the ones that practice the knowledge of a certain profession in its purest form. In this situation the advantage of major intellectual structure is not on the side of applied practices, but this of research and rhetorical strategies. Namely this strategies and issues have the greatest potential to engage with the real disciplinary knowledge – hence they enjoy the greatest disciplinary prestige. In historical aspect the advantage in art is not for the best practiced activities as a reply to certain prescriptions and rules but for the best rhetoric strategies and problems.

It can be finally concluded that two major ways by which psychological approaches enter the art history are outlined. The first one is connected with the role of the psychological approaches as a necessary explanatory context to art history and the second takes the psychological approaches as a means which is a significant part of the radical art and theory.

In the 20th century in order to keep its methodology pure, the academic art history is inclined, as for example Gombrich does in his studies, to give up big part of the modern and contemporary art as an object of study. At the same time history shows that art critique and theory is not inclined to do such a sacrifice which explains why art psychology is applied as part of rhetoric namely in this sphere.

The text discusses three grounds, demonstrating how psychology of art remains internally dependent from the subject of study in the field of history and theory of art, which can be synthesized like this:

- 1) presence of art which is defined as psychological and causes a need for disciplinary defining of the “psychological” category in the context of art history;
- 2) art, which develops in historical synchronicity and symbiosis with a particular psychological school or system and needs historiography of psychology as explanatory context;
- 3) art, which creates new psychological discourse and includes as a compulsory condition a particular kind of psychological rhetoric.

In the end of the day the above-mentioned three grounds are directly related to the potential of art to contain brightly expressed psychological reflection, to interpret certain psychological problems and topics and to conduct its own psychological experiments. These three grounds oblige the art history to develop its own methodology in addition to the existing psychological models of art and the psychological discourses and categories in them and to confess that they are oriented towards meanings which the other approaches to art cannot find and understand.

---

[1] Buhler, K. *Die Krise der Psychologie*. Jena: Verlag Gustav von Fischer, 1927.

[2] In addition to all authors regarded as art historians, who until 1938 resort to various forms of psychological interpretation of art, we should mention Heinrich Gomperz, who in 1905 publishes a study on ‘Some Psychological Conditions for the Emergence of Naturalistic Art’ (Gomperz, H. *Über einige psychologische Voraussetzungen der naturalistischen Kunst*, Beilage zur *Munchener Allgemeinen Zeitung*, 160, 1905), Julius von Schlosser with his book ‘History of the Wax Portrait’ (Schlosser, J. *Geschichte der Portratbildnerie in Wachs*, 1910) and Hans Sedlmayr, who in 1930 tries to apply some concepts from the Gestalt psychology, as well as some terms from the character theory terms of the German psychiatrist Ernst Kretschmer to the art and personality of the Italian architect Borromini (Sedlmayr, H. *Die Architektur Borrominis*. Berlin, 1930.)

[3] In this sense, any art history should define in some form the question about the boundaries between theory and practice (See Harrison, C. and Wood, P. *Introduction*. In: Harrison, C. and Wood, P. *Art in Theory 1900-1990. An Anthology of Changing Ideas*. Oxford & Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997).

[4] There is no doubt that theorizing on the nature of art is an intrinsic characteristic of art and very often it is part of the process of creating art. (See Costello, D. and Vickery, J. *Art: Key Contemporary Thinkers*. New York: Berg, 2007.)

[5] See Peter Tzanev, *Art, Psychopathology and Modernism In: Art, Psychopathological Imagery and Children's Drawings* (Цанев, П. Изкуство психопатологична образност и детски рисунки, София: Фондация "Съвременно изкуство", 2002).

[6] Buskirk, M. Rosalind Krauss. In: Costello, D. and Vickery, J. (Ed.) *Art: Key Contemporary Thinkers*. New York: Berg, 2007.

[7] Foster, H. *Compulsive Beauty*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993.

[8] Foster, H. *The Return of the Real*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996.

[9] Krauss, R. and Livingston, J. *L'Amour Fou: Photography & Surrealism*. Exhibition catalogue. New York: Abbeville, 1985.