

MOHOLY-NAGY

KRISZTINA PASSUTH



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Production – Reproduction³

If we want to understand correctly the mode of human expression and shaping in art and in other related domains, and if we want to achieve progress therein, we have to examine the contributing factors: namely, man himself as well as the means he applies in his creative activity.

Man as construct is the synthesis of all his functional apparatuses, i. e. man will be most perfect in his own time if the functional apparatuses of which he is composed – his cells as well as the most sophisticated organs – are conscious and trained to the limit of their capacity.

Art actually performs such a training – and this is one of its most important tasks, since the whole complex of effects depends on the degree of perfection of the receptive organs – by trying to bring about the most far-reaching *new* contacts between the familiar and the as yet unknown optical, acoustical and other functional phenomena and by forcing the functional apparatuses to receive them. It is a specifically human characteristic that man's functional apparatuses can never be saturated; they crave ever new impressions following each new reception. This accounts for the permanent necessity for new experiments. *From this perspective, creative activities are useful only if they produce new, so far unknown relations.* In other words, in specific regard to creation, reproduction (reiteration of already existing relations) can be regarded for the most part as mere virtuosity.

Since it is primarily production (productive creation) that serves human construction, we must strive to turn the apparatuses (instruments) used so far only for reproductive purposes into ones that can be used for productive purposes as well. This calls for profound examination of the following questions:

What is this apparatus (instrument) good for?

What is the essence of its function?

Are we able, and if so to what end, to extend the apparatus's use so that it can serve production as well?

Let us apply these questions to some examples: the phonograph and photography – single pictures (stills) and film.

Phonograph. So far it has been the job of the phonograph to reproduce already existing acoustic phenomena. The tonal oscillations to be reproduced were incised on a wax plate by means of a needle and then retranslated into sound by means of a microphone (correctly: diaphragm, moving cone).

An extension of this apparatus for productive purposes could be achieved as follows: the grooves are incised by human agency into the wax plate, without any external mechanical means, which then produce sound effects which would signify – without new instruments and without an orchestra – a fundamental innovation in sound production (of new, hitherto unknown sounds and tonal relations) both in composition and in musical performance.

The primary condition for such work is laboratory experiments: precise examination of the kinds of grooves (as regards length, width, depth etc.) brought about by the different sounds; examination of the man-made grooves; and finally mechanical-technical experiments for perfecting the groove-manuscript score. (Or perhaps the mechanical reduction of large groove-script records.)

Photography. The photographic camera fixes light phenomena by means of a silver bromide plate positioned at the rear of the camera. So far we have utilized this function of the apparatus

* We take note of this joining. We do not agree with the over-evaluation of Constructivism, and shall return to this in the course of an essay in our next number. – Ed.

only at a secondary level: in order to fix (reproduce) single objects as they reflect or absorb light. In the event of reevaluation taking place in this field, too, we will have to utilize the bromide plate's sensitivity to light to receive and record various light phenomena (parts of light displays) which *we ourselves* will have *formed* by means of mirror or lens devices.

Many experiments are needed here, too. Telescopic recordings of stars as well as radiography represent interesting preliminary stages.

Film. Kinetic relationships of projected light. This can be achieved by sequences of fixed partial movements. Cinematography as practised so far is limited mainly to the reproduction of dramatic action. There are certainly many important activities to be carried out in the domain of film. Some are scientific in nature (dynamism of various motions: of man, animal, city etc.; different observations: functional, chemical etc.; wireless projection of film news etc.); some involve the completion of reproduction itself from a constructive standpoint. But the main task is the formation of *motion as such*; naturally, this cannot be realized without a man-made play of forms as motion carrier.

Naive experiments relative to such development were the trick-films (advertisements). Much more highly developed are the works of Ruttmann and the *Clavilux** of Th. Wilfred; these, however, presented motion as an objectless dramatic action (abstraction or styling of erotic or natural events), albeit by trying to introduce the colour picture.

So far the most perfect works are those of Eggeling and Richter, in which instead of dramatic action there is already a play of forms, although to the detriment of kinetic formation. In fact, movement is not given formal purity, for over-emphasis upon the forms' development absorbs almost all the kinetic forces. The way ahead here will be the formation of motion without the support of any direct formal development.

'Produktion-Reproduktion'
De Stijl, 1922. No. 7, pp. 97-101.

Dynamic-Constructive System of Forces

Vital constructivity is the embodiment of life and the principle of all human and cosmic development.

Translated into art, *today* this means the activation of space by means of dynamic-constructive systems of forces, that is, construction of forces within one another that are actually at tension in physical space and their construction within space, also active as force (tensions).

Constructivity as an organizing principle of human efforts has led the arts in recent times from technology to the sort of static form-invested procedure which has been reduced either to technical naturalism or to an over-simplification of form limited to the horizontal, the vertical and the diagonal. The best instance was an open, eccentric (centrifugal) construction which indicated the tensions of forms and of space, without, however, resolving them.

We must therefore replace the *static* principle of *classical art* with the *dynamic principle of universal life*. Stated practically: instead of static *material* construction (material and form relations), dynamic construction (vital construction and *force relations*) must be evolved in which the material is employed only as *the carrier of forces*.

Carrying further the unit of construction, a DYNAMIC-CONSTRUCTIVE SYSTEM OF FORCES is attained whereby man, hitherto merely receptive in his observation of works of art, experiences a heightening of his own faculties, and becomes himself an active partner with the forces unfolding themselves.

There is a close correlation between the problems of this system of forces and the problem of freely floating sculpture as well as of film as projected spatial motion. The first projects looking towards the dynamic-constructive system of forces can be only experimental demonstration devices for testing the connections between man, material forces and space. Next comes the use of the experimental results for the creation of freely moving (free from mechanical and technical movement) works of art.

L. Moholy-Nagy, Alfréd Kemény
'Dynamisch-konstruktives Kraftsystem'
Der Sturm, Berlin, 1922. No. 12.

* The name indicates a kind of colour organ, although we are concerned with light projection on the plane and not in space.