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SOME REVIEWS ON CONCEPTS OF MODERN, MODERNISM AND CONTEMPORARY ART

Keywords and expressions: modern, modernism, modern art, contemporary art, art, literature, “Ardi” literature, “Noragoyrn” literature.

Բանալի բառեր և արտահայտություններ. մոդերն, մոդերնիզմ, ժամանակակից արվեստ, արվեստ, գրականություն, արդի գրականություն, նորագույն գրականություն:

Ключевые слова и выражения: модерн, модернизм, современное искусство, искусство, литература, современная литература, новейшая литература.

Introduction

“Modern art” and “contemporary art” are terms that are not clearly differentiated and demarcated in the scientific-theoretical thought, but are quite common these days, having a really significant role in describing art and literary processes and distinguishing the art and literature for the past and present centuries. When we use the words “contemporary” and “modern” do we consider these concepts as synonyms or do they have different meanings and content? Although Armenian scientific thought is also reflected in the question, it was mainly at the level of open lectures and public speeches and the problem did not receive a text formulation as such. To present, theoretical thought is guided by the chronological, formal-conventional principles of separation and classification of the terms “modern” and “contemporary”.

The fact that terms “Modern art” and “contemporary art” are clearly separated from each other is obvious in the field of art criticism, book titles, names of museums and institutions. Particular examples can be “Oxford Dictionary of Modern and Contemporary Art”, New Museum of Contemporary Art of New York, and Museum of Modern Art of New York, Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, Galleries International d'Art Contemporain in Paris as well as the Museum of Modern Art in Frankfurt. Moreover, in professional sources usually the term contemporary is being used to distinguish the processes in the art and literature that follows modernism and in this case the term modern is usually used

in the context of the term modernism, as an organized path, movement with its several kinds of streams that were viable between the period of the end of 19th century up to the 20-30s of 20th (sometimes up to 50-60s of 1900s)¹. “Today a distinction is sometimes made between “modern” and “contemporary” art on the basis that “modernism” has come to an end, although there is no clear agreement as to when that happened. For instance the Pompidou Center describes its collection as being “modern and contemporary art”, as though they are separate entities”². This kind of no clear agreement rises in other source “History of Modern Art”, where along with widely accepted modernist directions such as Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism, Abstractionism and such directions as Pop art, Neorealism, Postmodernism are introduced which are strongly considered as contemporary art³. We see the problem in identifying the terms “modern” and “modernism”. As we mentioned above, modernism is an artistic movement, literary and artistic method with temporal inclusion. In addition, terms avant-garde and modernist art are also sometimes used to distinguish art which has specifically “modern” features from more traditional forms. At this point, it is much more important to differentiate between «modern» and «modernism». As truly noted by Ed. Grbashyan, in case of the concepts of romance and romanticism: “It is necessary to clearly distinguish between concepts that are closely related to each other, such as “romantica” and “romanticism”. If romanticism is a specific historical trend, then romantica should be understood as

¹ The starting point of modernism usually connects with the poetry of Baudelaire. “... the modern poet per “excellence”, the first modern poet and the first modern artist, indeed the first modern man, in the sense of uprooted intellectual, alienated city-dweller, and disillusioned romantic; the first to whom romanticism and materialism, rapture and reason, emotion and reflection, became inseparable, as they are to us” (Hauser A., Mannerism, The Crisis of the Renaissance and the Origin of Modern Art, Vol. 1, London 1965). Sometimes the starting point of modernism is considered 1863 the year of the Salon des Refuse's in Paris or 1855, the year of the Paris Exposition Universelle. For some theorists, the genesis of “new art” or “Modern Art” is associated with Debussy's music in the 1870s (José Ortega y Gasset). There are theorists who connect the genesis of modernism with the new era, bringing it with calendar precision to the 1900s (A. Genis), and there are even theorists who see the origin of modernism much earlier, in the art of Renaissance (About Modernism see also our research in “Contemporary Problems of Theory of Literature”, Educational-Methodological manual, J. Qalantaryan, A. Grbashyan, A. Bekmezyan, M. Janpoladyan, A. Semirjyan-Bekmezyan, Yerevan, 2 016, pp.187-195).

² Oxford Dictionary of Modern and Contemporary Art, sec. Ed., New York, 2 009, p.153.

³ Arnason H.H., Peather M.F., History of Modern Art, 4-th ed., 1998.

such creative features that could appear long before romanticism, as well as after it"⁴.

Grbashyan's approach is exactly applicable in case of “modern” and “modernism”. “Modern” is a point of view that is usually applied more specifically to art that is consciously in tune with the progressive attitudes and beliefs of those times: “the spirit of the age”. Hence, Diego Velasques, a 17th century Spanish painter, is considered one of the first modern painters in the world. More than that, modernists of the 20th century are considerably influenced by Velazquez's paintings, such as Dali, Picasso as well as Parajyanov

Coming to the term of “Contemporary Art”, as we have mentioned above, some consider that modernism is a basement for it, some even go further formulating modernism as the “parent” of contemporary art. It means that everything that follows modernism is considered to be contemporary art. Some theorists base their views on the periodicity of style within the time inclusion. However, in this case the question arises: “When would the starting point for contemporary art be?”. As we saw above, there is no clear agreement when modernism ends. For this issue there are several approaches one of them is Robert Atkins' approach, in his book “Art Speak”, the writer considers that contemporary should be used to cover the period since the Second World War. In particular, in his book he started the presentation of contemporary art from 1945 until 1996. Almost the same approach is considered by another theorist Jonathan Law. In his book “European Culture: A Contemporary Companion”, he refers only to authors who started creating after the Second World War. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, covers a similar time range, 1940 as the beginning of contemporary art. Christie's work “Auction House”, however, defines “contemporary art” as starting in 1970. The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, is restricted to the art made within the past ten years⁵. “This last notion of “contemporary” means that such a museum can never have a permanent collection in the normal sense, as works will so quickly lose their contemporary status”⁶.

Robert Atkins' approach seems particularly noteworthy. The most interesting point is that he tries to introduce contemporary art with its connection to the historical, social and political parallels. That means that from this view,

⁴ Ջրբաշյան Էդ., Գրականագիտության ներածություն, Եր., 1996, էջ 331.

⁵ See in detail Oxford Dictionary of Modern and Contemporary Art, sec. Ed., New York, 2009, p.153.

⁶ Same source, p. 153.

realities in contemporary art are directly connected with the situation in the external world. As an example, since 1945, describing the situation in the world, the author emphasizes the end of the Second World War, the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt, US atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the birth of new movement in the art-Jean Dubuffet's Art Brut⁷. In another illustration regarding 1949, the author secludes establishment of North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Mao Ze-dong proclaims People's Republic of China, USSR tests its first atomic bomb, Apartheid enacted on South Africa, Simone de Beauvoir publishes "The Second Sex", George Orwell publishes "1984", First COBRA exhibition in Amsterdam⁸.

Such classification implies that the concept of contemporary art stems from the realities of contemporary life. It also means that definition principles on the whole could be common, but one has to consider also the national aspects of the development of contemporary art and literature. In addition to chronological differentiation, theorists often refer to substantive differences in terms "modern" and "contemporary".

In Armenian terminology we use three different words for introducing contemporary art and literary process: "Noragoyn"(latest, up-to-date), "Ardi"(modern, present-day), "Contemporary". We have the same image in Russian: "Модерное, современное и новейшее искусство"⁹.

From the first sight it is obvious that these words are synonyms and the difference in meanings is negligible. These words are used to describe art and literary processes which chronologically cover the 20-30s of the 20th century up to present days.

In Yerevan State University, one of the chairs of literature in the Department of Armenian Philology is named as: "The Department of History of Modern (Noragoyn - Latest) Armenian Literature and Literary Criticism". It covers Armenian literature of the years 1920-2022s, part of it is the Contemporary Armenian Literature, the temporal inclusion is the period of independence (1990s until present days), as well as the history of Armenian literary criticism from the beginning (from the 5th century accepted by the program) to the beginning of the

⁷ "Raw art" refers to the art of children, naïve artists and mentally ill. Dubuffet is very much influenced by "The art of the Insane", (in details see Atkins R., Art Speak, sec. ad., N.Y., 1997).

⁸ Atkins R., Art Speak, p.10

⁹ See <https://artukraine.com.ua/a/modernoe-sovremennoe-i-noveyshee-iskusstvo--popytka-osmysleniya-ponyatiy/#.YuFjIHZBxpl/>

20th century. Some academic courses taught in the department have the following names: “Contemporary Armenian Literature (1950-1980)”.

In Armenia Yerevan Modern Art Museum is located, which was established in 1972, and was the only modern art museum in the post-Soviet Union for more than 20 years. Also, the Institute of Contemporary Art is sited in Yerevan, which was established in 2012. ICA-Yerevan is an open hub for the design, development and production of cultural and contemporary art projects. ICA promotes the operation of the art economy in Armenia, develops and implements art collection, exhibition, archiving and disseminating projects, conducts research and organizes teaching programs in the field of curatorial practices, theory and art education.

Nevertheless, an actual question is still hanging in the air for the specialist who is interested in the problems of “modern” and “contemporary art” in Armenian thought. As in one of his interviews, Armen Yesayants, art critic, exhibition director of the Tufenkian Centre (one of the centers of modern art and thought in Yerevan), truly admits: "When it comes to contemporary art, there is a terminological question: modern and contemporary art should be clearly distinguished. In Armenian, the words "modern" and "contemporary" are translated as "contemporary", but recently the term "Ardi" has entered Armenian language with the meaning of "artistic circulation" for modern art. Those terms are not only chronological divisions, but also conceptual ones. “Ardi” refers to the period from the late 19th century to the 50s and 60s of the 20th century and the beginning of contemporary art can be considered conceptual art, although its precursors already existed much earlier. In other words, contemporary art is the art that is born parallel to us today, but not all of our "contemporary" artists create contemporary art”¹⁰.

Indeed, terms need to be clarified in our reality. First, not always “Ardi” refers to the period from the late 19th century to the 50s and 60s of the 20th century. In literary criticism we often use the word “Ardi” in literary studies to describe contemporary literary phenomena. Second, we absolutely share the opinion that not all artists that live and create in these times have contemporary style, but rather are representatives of classical art. There are writers, artists that make art and literature in the classical manners and style. In this case, it is necessary to use such concepts for the classification of the modern stage of literature and art, which will include the entire literary-artistic process.

¹⁰ <https://www.vnews.am/culture/post/armen-esayanc-zhamanakacic-arvest-institvoucivonal-mvotecman-bacakayvouthyvoun-ev-dranic-arajacvogh-khndirner/>.

In Armenian reality, some art critics have addressed the subject in their public lectures and speeches¹¹. Unfortunately, we have not found a clear interpretation and explanation of the issue. Perhaps Vardan Azatyan's approach stands out the most among them. Azatyan clearly presents the difference between the concepts of art (in this case he means classical art), modern art and contemporary art within a single issue, although Azatyan sometimes uses the words contemporary and modern as synonyms. Moreover, Azatyan points out that when we are looking at a classic painting, we usually ask the question. "How is it done? We know what is painted, but we do not know how it is painted" (content is important). Looking at the modern painting, the question that comes to our minds is: "What is painted in the painting? We know how it is painted, but we do not know what is painted" (form is essential), while we look at contemporary "painting", the question is: "Is it an art work?" (Contemporary art is an art that comes from questioning the art)¹². In his article, Norayr Adalyan discusses contemporary art and literature, making such a rhetorical question; "Is contemporary art indeed contemporary?" The writer considers the starting point of "contemporary art" the kind of art that is "real art". But what is real art? What do we call real art? The author does not give the exact definition of real art. He only contradicts real art to the one that is "fake, fashionable and with the bells of passing-dying days, from the phenomenon that flatters the taste, or rather the bad taste of the crowd"¹³.

In his definition of "passing-dying", it is assumed that the kind of art is real which is eternal and constant: this is the formulation which essentially contradicts modern art, not even talking about the principles of contemporary art. Of course, no one denies the fact that modern and contemporary art can inherit the values of eternity and constant within the time frame, but they do not inherently have that

¹¹ http://boon.am/arman-grigoryan-artist/?fbclid=IwAR3tpOgpOvYDvkiy2_H5tcPS96PYy3mSVLLBsEGW0hxFOcx_qAayqdgloAY,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynxK3JYMHX4&list=PL5q-h5cUzGOxGdayzxnLzxYdC-oeJHFka&index=4>,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pScIkUEtQBw>,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G4yqA_VrHC4, / etc.

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pScIkUEtQBw>

¹³ <https://azg.am/am/%D5%AA%D5%A1%D5%B4%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%A1%D5%AF%D5%A1%D5%AF%D5%AB%D5%9E%D6%81-%D5%A7-%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%A4%D5%B5%D5%B8%D6%84-%D5%AA%D5%A1%D5%B4%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%A1%D5%AF%D5%A1%D5%AF%D5%AB%D6%81-%D5%A1%D6%80/>

tendency. We can go back to the Bodlers' thoughts of “eternal beauty” (in this context beauty and art are synonyms), dada movement “Art as now and here”, art-performances for conceptualists. Of course, we have already touched on the point of view that contemporary art questions art itself. The standards of beauty and art are changing and we cannot judge new phenomena by old standards.

Conclusions

By drawing conclusions, we can make some remarks:

Modern art, Modernism and Contemporary art –in this triangle we have to try to distinguish not the terms “Modern” and “Contemporary”, but “Modernism” and “Contemporary”. Accordingly, by “Modernism” we mean a unified method of 20th century literary trends, currents, in contrast, “Modern” is something that can be distinctive to the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, or modernism or contemporary art, something that is opposed to the approaches dominant in those times.

In Armenian reality we should try to find exact differentiation between the terms “Ardi”, “Noragoyñ” and “Contemporary” for presenting art and literary processes. Also, the separation of the modernist and contemporary arts should be based on the factors of chronological, formal-contextual, as well as the influence of external circumstances.

Ալվարդ Մեմիրջյան-Բեքմեզյան

***Որոշ դիտարկումներ «մոդեռն» «մոդեռնիզմ», «Ժամանակակից արվեստ»
հասկացությունների վերաբերյալ***

Ամփոփում

Հոդվածում արծարծված են արվեստաբանական և գրականագիտական մտքում արդիական «մոդեռն» և «Ժամանակակից» հասկացությունների տարբերակման, տարանջատման և սահմանման խնդիրները, որոնք չնայած գտնվում են մասնագետների հետաքրքրությունների շրջանակում, բայց մինչ օրս հստակ ձևակերպումների չեն արժանացել: Հոդվածն արդիական է նաև այն առումով, որ հայաստանյան գիտական միտքը չնայած անդրադարձել է խնդրո առարկա հարցին, բայց հիմնականում բաց դասախոսությունների, հրապարակային ելույթների մակարդակում, և խնդիրը տեքստային ձևակերպում, որպես այդպիսին, չի ստացել:

Խնդրո առարկա հարցը ներկայացնելու համար համաշխարհային տեսական միտքը առաջնորդվում է «մոդեռն» և «Ժամանակակից» տերմինների տարանջատման և դասակարգման ժամանակագրական, ձևաբովանդակային սկզբունքներով: Սակայն հիմնական խնդիրը, որ ծագում է

հարցի քննության ընթացքում, կարծում ենք «մոդեռն» և «ժամանակակից» եզրույթները իրար հակադրելու մեջ է: Խնդիրն ավելի հիմնավոր լուծումներ կարող էր ստանալ, եթե ի սկզբանե հակադրության ծայրերում դրված լինեին «մոդեռնիզմ» և «ժամանակակի արվեստ» հասկացությունները: Այն պարզ պատճառով, որ արվեստում մոդեռն երևույթները կարող են դրսևորվել բոլոր ժամանակներում, այդ թվում նաև հենց ժամանակակից արվեստի շրջանակներում: Խնդիրը առավել խրթին է դառնում հատկապես այն դեպքերում, երբ շատ հաճախ տեսական մտքում «ժամանակակից» և «մոդեռն» հասկացությունները կիրառվում են որպես հոմանիշներ: «Մոդեռնիստական արվեստ» և «ժամանակակից արվեստ» եզրույթների տարանջատման սկզբունքներից մեկը ժամանակագրական սկզբունքն է, ըստ որի, այն ամենն ինչ հաջորդում է մոդեռնիզմին և ժամանակակից շունչ ունի, կոչվում է ժամանակակից: Սակայն արդի գրական պրոցեսներին մասնակցող ոչ բոլոր արվեստագետները և գրողներն են հետևում նորարարական միտումներին և շարունակում են ստեղծագործել դասական ձևի և բովանդակության դաշտում: Հարկ է նաև հստակ ձևակերպել և տարանջատել «ժամանակակից», «արդի» և «մոդեռն» հասկացությունները հայ տեսական մտքում՝ հիմնվելով ժամանակագրական, ձևաբովանդակային և արտաքին հանգամանքերի ներազդեցության գործոնների վրա:

Алвард Семирджян-Бекмезян

**Некоторые наблюдения над терминами «модерн», «модернизм»,
«современное искусство».**

Резюме

В статье рассматриваются проблемы разграничения, разделения и определения «модерн» и «современное искусство» понятий в художественно-литературном сознании, которые хотя и входят в сферу интересов специалистов, но до сих пор не получили четких формулировок. Статья актуальна и в том смысле, что хотя армянская научная мысль размышляла над рассматриваемым вопросом, но в основном на уровне открытых лекций и публичных выступлений, и проблема почти не получила текстовой формулировки как таковой. Для постановки рассматриваемого вопроса мировая теоретическая мысль руководствуется хронологическими, формосодержательными принципами разделения и классификации терминов «модерн» и «современный». Однако мы считаем, что основная проблема, возникающая при рассмотрении вопроса, заключается в противопоставлении терминов «модерн» и «современный». Проблема могла бы получить более солидные решения, если бы понятия «модернизм» и «современное искусство»

были с самого начала поставлены в противоположные концы. По той простой причине, что «модерн» явления в искусстве могут проявляться во все времена, в том числе и в рамках самого современного искусства. Проблема усложняется особенно в тех случаях, когда очень часто в теоретическом мышлении понятия «модерн» и «современный» употребляются как синонимы. Одним из принципов разделения терминов «модернистское искусство» и «современное искусство» является хронологический принцип, согласно которому современным называется все, что следует за модернизмом и имеет современный дух. Однако не все художники и писатели, участвующие в современных литературных процессах, следуют новаторским тенденциям и продолжают творить в области классической формы и содержания. Также необходимо четко сформулировать и разделить в армянском теоретическом сознании понятия «Арди», «Современное» и «Новейшее» исходя из факторов влияния хронологических, формо-содержательных и внешних обстоятельств.

Խմբագրություն է ուղարկվել 26.06. 2022թ.

Հանձնարարվել է գրախոսության 12. 07. 2022թ.

Տպագրության է հանձնարարվել 16. 09. 2022թ.