

**Mikhail Rashkovetsky**

Unnatural Selection

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The purpose of the project was to select, collect and disseminate texts on contemporary art practices in the Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, around Soros Centers for Contemporary Art, written in and about art of the 1990s. The coordination of the project was carried out by Janka Vukmir, SCCA – Zagreb, today the Institute for Contemporary Art, Zagreb.

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All of the texts we have collected at the time have been later published on the website of the I\_CAN, International Contemporary Art Network, the short-lived successor of the SCCAN.

On the occasion of the exhibition **90s: Scars**, revisiting the art practices and social and political context of the 1990s in the postcommunist countries, the Institute for Contemporary Art is now reoffering a collection of **89 texts and a comprehensive list of then proposed further readings**, on the website of the Institute for Contemporary Art, [www.institute.hr](http://www.institute.hr).

The exhibition 90s: Scars is curated by Janka Vukmir and organized by the Institute for Contemporary Art and the MMSU – Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rijeka, on the occasion of the **European Cultural Capital Rijeka 2020**. Originally planned to open May 14, 2020, at the MMSU in Rijeka, due to COVID-19 crisis, is postponed until further notice.

## Mikhail Rashkovetsky

### Unnatural Selection

#### **Unnatural.**

In the first catalogue of SCCA-Odessa it seems appropriate to describe (at least in general) the peculiarity of the local context in which Odessa contemporary visual art appeared and exists.

People say, “Odessa is a city for living”. This city is not at all a capital city but at the same time it isn’t absolutely provincial, it can be characterized as a risible, careless and irresponsible, but very cozy place, even in abject poverty. May be because of that in its pontevksinian atmosphere some ferment of freedom and non – standardness is always being kept and reproduced here. Here the opposition between the notions of “life” and “work”, “life” and “duty”, “life” and “thinking” is always felt. So due to different geopolitical and historical reasons Odessa cultural life was characterized by prevailing of the organic perceptible consciousness forms over the rational speculative ones.

The Generation of Odessa underground art movement in 60-70s (a unique phenomenon for Ukraine of that period) professed principles of sincerity and artistic organic unity opposing to false artificiality of the official art including formal criteria of painting. Even in rare occasions when the artists used object elements in their paintings (V. Khrutsch, L. Dulfan), these elements were perceived as variants of the pictorial method – of a stroke, of a spot, of texture.

At the beginning of the 80-s a group of young artists conceptualists (S. Anufriev, U. Leiderman, L. Voitsekhov, “Pertsy”) was rejected not only by the semi-officials, but by the “fathers” of Odessa underground. It seemed that Odessa itself didn’t admit their intellectual ambitions that were realized with success in Moscow.

A splash of interest to Odessa art (first of all to A. Roitburd and V. Ryabchenko paintings) coincided with the boom Ukrainian transavangard during perestroika (1987-1990). Numerous critics considered this movement

as a fruitful alternative to the chilly Moscow post-conceptualism and soc-art that was losing their actuality very quickly. Even terms in which this trend was described (vitality, neo-baroque painting, eclecticism, sensuality, etc.) pointed to the relative ties of this trend with traditions of Odessa artistic mentality. Though pompous quasi-narrativeness of mythological motifs became unwanted (because the traditional underground self-expression is usually characterized by chamber, intimate intonations, a simple motif or a hot abstraction and narrativeness belonged to the official ideological fire camp.). Absolutely unnatural seemed the size signified the authors monumental intentions, these intentions realized in a wide spectrum meaningful architecture or advertisements and design if in Kiev and Moscow the enormous size connotated with huge easel paintings of socialist realism and these canvases became the signs of post-Soviet ideology with its futility and emptiness, then in Odessa almost absolute disproportion of these canvases added to them features of an object, it was a genre alien to the local tradition, because this object was perceived not through its "picturesque" features, but through a complex of intelligible, contextual and inter-textual relations which had been provoked by it.

At the beginning of the 90s for the first time in Odessa (and in Ukraine) the process of institutionalization of underground movements began. This means not only presentations of some exhibitions in official and museum premises, not only some artists joining the official Union, it happened before as well, but some independent alternative institutions were founded. The first attempt of the kind was made in 1986 (Society of Creative Artists, SCA) but obviously due to heterogeneousness of its members this society didn't accomplish consistent activities based on a concrete program. The institutions which appeared in the 90s turned to be more durable, they are functioning now though serious changes dislocations as well as membership and leadership had taken place.

There exists Modern Art Center "TIRS" (the president is F. Kokhrikht, the director and the curator is M. Zharkova) and an association "New Art" which appeared on the basis of TIRS (curators A. Roitburd and M. Rashkovetsky). The new institutions stimulated a very rapid and intensive expansion of non-traditional for Odessa types of contemporary art: objects, installations, video installations, performances. Even sporadically exhibited paintings and drawings lose their self-sufficiency, install and become elements of environment having the one conception of the project. Assimilating the ideas of the contemporary art trends, which has been continuously actualizing in the world art process at least for 40 years Odessa painters began to speak the language of modern art. This fact in its

turn aroused interest to Odessa on the side of Kiev and foreign (mostly Moscow) critics and curators and ensured fruitful participation of Odessites in international and exhibitions and actions. On the other hand, works by representatives of contemporary art from Kiev, Kharkov, Lvov, and other countries began to appear regularly at Odessa exhibitions "League level 14" (the curator is U. Kilter). The festival "Free zone" (1994) that represented in 3 museums more than 50 authors from Ukraine, Russia, Moldova and was organized by association "New Art" became a really outstanding event. It was the first action supported by Kiev Soros Center for Contemporary Art, Odessites have been cooperating with this organization since 1993 up to now. This very festival and serious exhibition projects of the association in 1995, 1996 ("Kandinsky Syndrome"; "Doctor Frankenstein's Studio. Neochimerism", "Phantom Opera", curated by A. Roitburd, M. Rashkovetsky, E. Mikhailovska), exhibitions during the festivals "Two days and two nights of new music" (art director K. Tsepko) other forms of cooperation with Odessa Regional branch of the foundation "Vidrodzennya" became the basis for the establishment of Soros Center for Contemporary Art in Odessa (opened in April, 1997).

Such an impetuous institutionalization was accompanied by contradictory processes which defined Odessa visual art development in 90s. On the one hand, as it was already mentioned, despite lack of information and contacts Odessa artists were developing in the context of contemporary world culture. Inexperience, lack of practice and extreme scantiness in material resources were compensated by enthusiasm and energetism typical for marginals; naivety catalyzed the tending to global problems and it often led to unusual decisions. The non-existence of any strict specialization, linearly developing discourses both of the personal and cooperative practices attached them the quality characteristic for Odessa, i.e. eclecticism, which was attractive because of high level of inner freedom and variability and consequently by some negligence and even carelessness. But the seamy side of the problem was the fact that rapid entering into international context resulted in the isolation from local context. A dialogue about postmodern painting with local cultural environment was possible, even in the form of a quasi-dialogue, on the level of superficial discussion of picturesque characteristics, not very important for these works, but objective, installative and action types of art continue to be terra incognita for the majority of Odessites and for the mass-media as well. It is obviously the same problem for all post socialist countries, but in Odessa the range of this isolation is unique. It wouldn't be so obvious if our visual art got rid of its provinciality a bit quicker and the city could at least come into contact with economic and socio-cultural context of today's Europe. And

nevertheless, not numerous associations of art representatives in Odessa continue to exist in alien mental environment though the diffusion is inevitable and, alas, not for the benefit of contemporary art.

A detached observer can hardly realize the high level of artificiality, disharmoniousness and autonomy of the contemporary visual art in Odessa. Because of that theoretical purposes to consider category of "artificiality" as a positive one becomes actual in different formal and contextual aspects and is underlined in Odessa actions starting from "Kandinsky syndrome" and up to inaugural project of "The New File". Figuratively speaking those people who were mentioned as leaders of the new institutions "engrafted" a computer on corn and the archetypal dream of Soviet agro-biology and politics came true in one separately taken city.

The most outstanding role in the process belonged to A. Roitburd who vigorously and authoritatively tried to implant the new types of artistic thinking. A high level of artificiality could hardly have taken place if the art community have been more numerous, in any bigger city with western civilization. On the other hand, this voluntarism wouldn't have brought any serious results if this place hadn't had certain auspicious conditions and individuals who could positively apprehend such influences.

Presence of such auspicious factors assumed existence of latent tradition, of some "turf". So quite logically there exists active mythological practice which is obvious in conceptions of numerous Odessa projects. In reality it was more or less correct effort to make changes in paradigm of "Odessa" mythology by reconstruction of innovative and radical elements that were present in Odessa art history and by their paradoxical confronting with actual tendencies of visual art and in a wider sense actual social cultural hope. Alas, the festival "The Free Zone" was held, but archetypal Odessa myth "porto-franco" wasn't realized in the city and in the country. One can say that the project "Kandinsky syndrome" was acknowledged by some Ukrainian and foreign specialists, but instant conversion of Kandinsky's status from dauber into the local classical painter arresting attention of regional establishment (due to the presence of madam Pompidou and madam Shirak at the International conference of Kandinsky Society in Odessa) wasn't the proof of mobility in local mentality, but just on the contrary - of its stability. The city still doesn't have any museum of modern art, there's no artistic market, there is no commercial art gallery of full value, even system of traditional art education is in decay; it isn't worth even mentioning about contemporary technological art.

Nevertheless, active mythological creativity facilitated to the process of institutionalisation, which developed “from the bottom” and was based only on neophytes enthusiasm. Besides while realizing concrete projects some positive aim at collective creation helped to go out of the exclusive circle of post-modernistic linguistic deconstruction and self-reflection.

Working with local context inevitably included not only using of mythogenous zones (“Potemkinskaya staircase”, Kandinsky, etc) but solving problems which concerned premises suitable for large group exhibitions. Lack of modern exhibition halls, of “empty” premises forced to work in semantically overloaded places Historical layers of this semantics often represented nearly oxymoron eclecticism (“Shakh” Palace for Amateur and Folk art, Modern Art Center “TIRS”), its elements couldn’t be changed, architectural interior or immovable object “prices” (for example, a picture of Stalin social realism period 4x7 meters, some furniture, large-sized equipment, etc.) these things had to be installed into the exhibitions context. Actual semantics in such premises was represented invariantly, as devastation, ruins, old-fashioned equipment and communications even in buildings, which continued functioning as cultural institutions. But the greater of exhibitions and actions starting from 1995 held in really alternative premises, that is in neglected ruined places, which were not repaired or restored for a long time because of lack means (such as the kitchen and the dining room in the unrepaired basement of Scientist Club, ruined hotel rooms, theatrical premises).

Unrestored becomes the first dominant element of the local context semantics contemporary visual art of Odessa tries to contact with it. A neglected desolated place in Odessa isn’t an exotic island like an old castle, a railway station or a plant in Western Europe, which often become a refuge for an alternative group or trend, oriented to the frontier zones of culture. Here it is typical mode of life, a normal state, where there are some rare island with signs of Western civilization. There exists absolutely another situation with virtual signs. In the situation of extreme economic and political instability even a luxurious mansion of a ruined new rich or some modern shop whose master was shot by his competitors is interpreted as a possible but not actual reality. Actual are electronic mass-media, radio and TV, pop-music, advertisements, packages, fashion, a lot of “pirate” video – all these things exist together with rusted water-pipes planned cutting of electricity, unemployment, poverty. Fending to the mobile stylistics of mass Western culture is irrepressible and this style actualizes on a mass scale, especially by young people by means of “second hand” in the literal and figurative sense of this word. Youth subculture is one significant element of

the local context on the one hand. It feeds visual art as young people are very thankful spectators due to their open-heartedness and flexibility of the age but on the other hand it is dangerous for art as any non-playing submission to any stereotypes of mass consciousness, western or eastern, Soviet or postindustrial.

Some exhibitions which were held under the aegis of Soros Center for Contemporary Art - Odessa in 1997 also played their role in the pre-history of the first annual exhibition.

The projects of 1995-1996 were devoted to the problem of artificiality, they asserted actuality of corporal, genre and temporal chimerism, but in the "New File" (curator is Elena Mikhailovska) new technology trends which increased the level of mediated artifacts were accentuated and appreciated.

The author of the project "Art & Fact" Vadim Besprozvanniy defined as an indispensable curatorial condition for the participants of the exhibition their articularity of personal utterance. But "retro utterances" (concrete episodes of the artist private life, which could become the expression of social historical context) prevailed at this exhibition, that's why the project got some nostalgic meaning instead of an actual one.

The project "Supermarket" (curated by V. Checkorsky and M. Kulchitsky) announced a new non-characteristic for Odessa (we shouldn't mention generation emigrated in early 80s) intention for neo-conceptual discourse in which contextual meanings prevailed over the meaningfulness of strictly "textual" expressive forms.

The exhibition "Unnatural selection" not only summed up the results, but became the continuation of the debatable creative process, curator's utterance in a polylogue, which to a certain extent claimed to the general reflexivity of Odessa situation.

### **Selection.**

Only representatives (artists and curators) of the contemporary visual art trends which appeared from the end of 80s were invited to take part in the exhibition "Unnatural selection". I renounced my original idea to show different generations of Odessa artists at the annual exhibition. The exhibition of Ukrainian classical painter Y. Egorov was supported by SCCA-Odessa and was held in the Art Museum at the same time but beyond the limits of its context.



One more condition, rather traditional for Odessa exhibitions was to represent only new work.

As a project proposal all potential participants were offered to make utterance in the situation of a defined inner choice. There were no limits in media, there were no semantic or stylistic parameters of the utterance. The curator wasn't interested in a reflexive question "To be, or not to be?". I asked for something definite: "To be!" or "Not to be!". The vector direction is of no importance, the fact of its direction so to say of its existence is important all by itself. Originally I considered this task artificial and unrealizable due to the lack of definite total or absolute orientations in the contemporary world culture, due to peculiarities of Odessa artistic mentality, these peculiarities allowed them not to give any definite statement, to avoid extremes of logocentrism by means of sensual corporal polysemantic which was washing out articulation. But this task unrealizable in general or at least because of its prematurely seems to me very actual due to numerous reasons, including my own definite constant choice which in the general cultural context to a great extent corresponds to Liotard position and his criteria of the contemporary art "presenting unrepresentable". At least the artist could choose Pepsi, "Green peace" party, computer design, stroke homosexuality or infinite reflexive questions. But the work had to be categorically intoned, that was very important.

The tendency to amorphousness so productive in the epoch of 80s, at the end of 90s turned into amorphousness of intention to reanimate it some artificial stimulator in the form of curator's restriction was used. The general definition of artificiality as a supposed positive orientation, that was formulated in the text of the manifesto, wasn't used literally during the choice.

Energetically expressed intention to naturalness had its right to existence in full measure.

The second level of the curator's choice concerned the place of the exhibition. It had to be a big hall, one inseparable space I refused to use different exhibition places (in some cases we have done it). And what is more, even peripheral and discrete parts of the chosen building, i.e. the lobby, a balcony, a basement, as it was done at the exhibition of the "Phantom Opera" were not used. As a result, many works sank in their perception remarkably because of the heterogeneous media (especially of video installations needed in separate boxes with correspondent conditions of illumination and sound-proofing. But it was necessary to articulate the ordinary fact of the congestion of heterogeneity in an one and rather

cramped extend (either the sign of the world or the sign of Odessa) with inevitable eclecticism nowadays when works (and people behind them) interfere with each other and the purity of a style is still impossible: it demands either utopian removal (“elimination”) of those who interfere or correct comfortable separation which is possible, let us say, in Zurich but not in the world or in Odessa.

The semantic overloading of the extend that was already mentioned above was present here in full measure. Initially it was a bank, then a cinema for a long time, and then the Centre of the Ukrainian culture. International festivals of new music of 1995 and 1996 took place in the Centre, exhibitions of visual art were opened in spacious foyers. The large hall functioned permanently as a discotheque club with symptomatic names - “21” at first and then “XXI century”. By the moment of holding the exhibition the foyers had been given to Europe-oriented shops for a long time and the large hall had been standing idle being completely burnt down after the fire that had occurred a year and a half ago.

Not only individual self-determination of artists but also more distinct articulation of different and opposed in something tendencies growing extensively in the society were supposed to become one of the particular consequences of the project.

Speaking about division according to age principle elder generation of artists (those who represented the contemporary art of Odessa since the second half of 80-es) expressed itself in pure minus-method: excluding Roitburd none of them participated at the exhibition. This non-participation occurred because of different reasons and this difference seems to be not occasional but natural. In the whole world only few artists can earn their living indulging in the contemporary art. In Odessa it is absolutely impossible, there is no demand even for quite “commercial” work of high level. By the end of 1996 it was clear that the enthusiasm of the “pioneers” had dried up: somebody emigrated, somebody switched to show-business or commercial design. Having lost this generation Odessa art-community forfeited the qualities of peculiar universality: V. Ryabchenko, for instance, was perfect master of traditional genres - painting, drawing, and at the same time he worked in the genre of installation successfully and in 1995 he was named among the best artists in all-Ukrainian contest for a series of large photos. Not all the representatives of the next generation of artists possess such universality, some of them even do not seek it preferring specialization in the sphere of new media.

As a result, the situation of conflict of generations, usually painful and fraught with archetypal complexes, but stimulating existential strain of “children” in the struggle for self-identity, didn’t find its clear expression at the exhibition, though this conflict situation certainly exists in “lobby” of artistic process.

As it was already said at “Unnatural selection” only new works, which execution was destined to this exhibition project, of the participants were represented (the exceptions are only Dulfan’s poster created for “Fence exhibition” under the guidance of A.Taranenko in September, 1997 and F.Perlovsky’s video which was demonstrated for the first time on the festival “Ostranenie” a week prior the opening of the exhibition in Odessa). As usual several debutantes were included into the membership of participants. But in wider sense the overwhelming majority of the exhibition projects became debutantes. The question is new media. Roitburd and Perlovsky showed “pure” video-art (without installation loading) for the first time; A.Shevchuk specializing in the sphere of photo and photo-installation mainly applied to video for the first time and Dulfan used the technique of computer collage. But if these debuts can be partially explained by technical possibilities that the authors gained due to the appearance of the SCCA-Odessa, the monumental project of A.Taranenko presupposed traditionally “autographic” work of eleven participants who had never been engaged in graffiti before.

Thus, the majority voted for renewing media, but behind this unanimity hide nuances which will become determining in the contemporary art of Odessa in the near future. The essence of these differentiations can be described with the analytic comparison of works similar in some basis.

It should be mentioned the socially oriented and socially significant problems became the main theme of more or less clear authors’ opinions. It corresponded to curators’ expectations, the acuteness of the local political situation where not the statement, article and even not a scandal but the killing of the most popular newspaper editor in Odessa became the impulse for opening of the election campaign (a month before the opening of the exhibition).

Roitburd’s works became peculiar tuning fork in creative approach to these problems. There are not a few qualities inherent in post-modernist period of the late 80-es at the poster “Are you responsible for Beaux Art?”: the hypertrophy of the size, citing ( in this case leading to the appropriation of D.Moor’s poster “Have you volunteered?” of 1920), parody periphrasis, high

degree of self-irony, playful “makoronistic” complicity of visual (the forefinger of Moor’s Red Army man was substituted by a threatening “she-goat”, the self-portrait is given instead of “generalized” image) and verbal text (phonetically French *Beaux Arts* - fine arts - resembles the word “bazar”, argotism one of the meaning of which is “utterance”). But this work does not fit the paradigm of trans-avant-garde painting or socialist art of the last decade in principle. Being satiated with playing basis it is serious for the most part, there is not such high degree of author distance, personal setting aside, which was necessarily present in multi-layer connotational “covers” of painting of 80-es, in it. This is ingenuous and sincere reflection on the situation in Odessa (and not only Odessa) art, open claim for continuation of its authoritative role in it, direct demand of artist’s responsibility and confidence in general necessity of authoritarianism for the contemporary artistic process. At the same time enumerated post-modernistic methods allowed to add polysemantic overtones exactly expressing the local and global atmosphere of criminological situation for straightforward posterism, but what is more important these rhetoric figures preserve a certain part of self-value without its dependence on the topical context, both political and aesthetical, in the work.

Roitburd’s work “There is nothing more to see here” done in completely different material represented video which was demonstrated in a half-dark compartment “Exit” really situated at exit doors. The fragment from newsreel of the Mayor of Odessa saying the phrase “Well, there is nothing more to see here. Let’s go to the City House. We will discuss there” was repeated endlessly in various rhythmically transformed variants.

Nevertheless, the presence of the rhetorical method in this work (in this case a minimal one – the organization of rhythmical play in “ready-made” video-line) imparted a certain degree of “easel” self-sufficiency. This video became a peculiar hit, the used phrase and its fragments acquired aphoristic prevalence among the participants and the spectators of the exhibition without any link with political context and any definite political figure. I have no doubts that sensitive to rhythmical play spectator would have perceived this work even if he hadn’t been informed of the local political situation.

The work of V. Checkorsky and M. Kulchitsky “What’s going on, Mr. Dorenko?” is a direct allusion to a scandalous political episode when one of the most popular Moscow TV-reviewer who had endured the image of radical criticism and incorruptible objectivity for a long time and then suddenly displayed his engagement. The work represented a television stop-sequence which imprinted the reviewer at the moment of his running a

program and fixed captions “What is going on, Mr.Dorenko?”.

Undoubtedly, this work can be perceived as the author’s remark-estimation of the concrete episode and wider as their attitude to the quality of mass-media which characteristic to all post-soviet space. One more work of the same authors – the object “Taste the difference” – is a ready-made counter with shelves for chewing gum and correspondent labels: “Stimorol”, “Dirol”, etc. On each of these shelves were placed several samples of Odessa newspapers.

These works have a number of common features with Roitburd’s works: starting from the estimating intonation of the author’s opinion in connection with one or another level of socially significant problem to rather rare personification nowadays (all characters have certain “proper names”: Roitburd, Gurvits, Dorenko, “Odessa Herald”, “Evening Odessa”). On the face of it, the differences exist only in the ground of expressing. In this respect the works of V. Checkorsky and M. Kulchitsky seem to be simpler, having only one meaning and, correspondingly, less entertaining than Roitburd’s works. However, comparisons on this basis seem to be superficial. Preserving the social-political values of authors’ utterances, the aesthetical choice is not less, if not more considerable.

V. Checkorsky and M. Kulchitsky were blamed more than once for excessive passion for pro-western artistic conjuncture, for neglect of local context. The example of the work “What is going on, Mr. Dorenko?” says about the groundlessness of such accusations. This work does not rely on “export”, it is absolutely unreadable outside the local context. It is practically completely devoid of those moments of aesthetic self-sufficiency autonomy from the context which we could find in Roitburd’s works. The TV set and stop -sequence with captions fulfill the function of the directing index, dry “leaflet”, which recalls in memory of the spectator a concrete scandalous situation and those various relations (disputes, gossips, searches of the additional information), and in an ideal - real continuation or development of the dialogue on this theme by two or several spectators directly at the exhibition. Just these, quite real, various relations are considered as the object of art, and the task of an artist is treated as modeling (in this case, retrospectively, through mechanisms of memory) or producing of similar communicative exchanges (though, maybe, it would be more exact to speak about the tendency to more complete merge of subject – object relations). From this point of view the large expressiveness, the self-sufficient game of immanent forms would have looked as formal lack, author’s violence, displacement of the dominant from the communicative principle, the dialogue, to the principle of monologue. I have no doubts, that authors consider the main aesthetic component of work “Taste the difference” to be

not the simple and even flat objectivized comparison of the Odessa newspapers with various sorts of chewing gum, but practically unnoticed by the spectators process of “fair” daily exchange of newspaper issues on fresh, “today's” ones. Quantitative criterion (how many newspapers have been taken ?) was very important and in such simple work of the same authors as “YES/NO”: two barrel - urns with inscriptions “Yes” - “ No” between which there was a table with clean sheets-“bulletins” and a pen (all this were placed just behind entrance doors in an “Entrance” compartment ). Each filled in and dropped into the “urn” piece of paper was taken into account by the authors as creative success. The paradoxical offer to the spectator to enter into the relations of voting, obviously, concerning the exhibition even before its survey could be read as emotionally coloured even by figure of paradox out-of-context “aesthetic remnant” of the work, but most likely the presence of such paradox was unessential. The spectators “had the right” to enter into voting relations either concerning any other case, or after the survey of the exposition.

Contextualism is one of bases of the contemporary art, including trans-avant-garde movements of the 80-s. Nevertheless, the works which I determine for myself as a variation of neo-conceptualism, are in principal opposition to Roitburd's works. At the exhibition this opposition was almost not noticeable, latent, first of all because of the fact that in one space the consecutive and bright display of both parties was impossible, the opposition was softened by the mutual compromises, rapprochements, but the “watershed” existed latently. Besides the majority of the spectators, including experts, were not ready to adequate reaction to works of the neo-conceptual character. At the same time, this direction is one of most actual in the contemporary art of Europe. Its inspiration is nonviolent (so, according to the logic of its adaptors, non-artistic) stimulation of sociable activity of an audience up to its transformation from the spectators into the co-authors and accomplices of the communicative action. Nothing left is but to be surprised by the persistent survival of such tendency in completely unadapted to it art atmosphere of Odessa (even in rather narrow environment of the experimenters). The authors themselves identify this direction with “relational aesthetics “ of Nicolas Bourriaud, who asserts that “the society of spectacle” is followed by the society..., in which everyone can find illusion of interactive democracy...”, and where “the artist is focused ever more to relations, which his work creates in the environment of an audience, or on the invention of models of social dialogue”.

The independent curator's project of A. Taranenko “Kandyman” presenting a series of graffiti, became significant, if not the main part of the exhibition "Unnatural Selection". Originally project assumed the execution

of graffiti in the open space on an extended site of a concrete fencing of a near-station street. However, Taranenko agreed with the offer to transfer the realization of the project in general with other works interior of the exhibition hall. On the one hand, such transfer became possible due to the primary intention to give graffiti that "cultural", artificial character which this genre, after the period of underground spontaneity, had already acquired in the West (all paintings were done on the basis of the author's sketches approved by the curator of the project on certain motifs - separate phrases from "About spiritual in art" of V.Kandinsky were used as slogans. But the desire of the curator and participants of the project "to test" it as a possible variant of the design of an interior for youth discotheque of a club type is no less important. This desire was realized not without success immediately after the official closing of the exhibition and dismantle of three-dimensional installations and video-equipment. The stylistics of graffiti itself assumes categorically ironical statement. Paradoxical comparison of the text Kandinsky with visual pop-symbols ("Snickers", "Paramount", "Michael Jackson", "haute couture") articulated clearly enough the ironical tearing away both from the widespread stereotypes of "spirituality" and from the stereotypes of pop-culture. However the irony on "western standards" was expressed first of all in comparison of its packing marks to the given realities of the scorched hall as the sign of general disorder and maximum discomfort. Original intentional choice, even expressed implicitly in the project "Kandyman" is an aspiration to stylishness as an original indemnification of catastrophic deficiency of the normal standards of civilized life. A.Taranenko, one of the ideologists of this tendency, repeats old true about the primate of a style ("there is no art outside of style"), but behind the accentuation of stylism it is possible to distinguish deep intentions of contemporary art to utilitarianism, industriality, applied properties and qualities. More or less the close interaction with utilitarianism is observed during all the history of art and especially in the history of visual art of the twentieth century. For practice of the Odessa art process such forms of possible crossings with manufacture as various kinds of advertising, virtual, polygraphic and interior design are essential. The special interest represents show-business and its such aspects as youth and club subculture. Here game and stylized beginning form that common field, on which contemporary art can meet with utilized manufacture in the condition of complex balancing on the border separating one of these phenomena from another.

Among the works potentially gravitating to applied function besides the project "Kandyman", it would be desirable to note "Eye am Zoom" of

Perlovsky, because this work specifies one more extensive zone of crossing of the contemporary and commercial art: the production of multi-media clips.

It is necessary to note, that Roitburd himself put many efforts for inculcation the conceptual importance of the utilitaristic plan of the contemporary art in consciousness of the Odessa artists. But his works (including the models of placards for a number of exhibitions), as well as basic case of works of other Odessa artists of different generations are based on essentially other aim.

Being led up to the logic end utilitarianly oriented tendency appears outside the contemporary art quickly, if terminologically the latter is examined as analogy to fundamental science in opposition with applied one (but it is possible correctly to distinguish the terms “contemporary” and “commercial” art only as such opposition, not as qualitative hierarchy). But even as the tendency utilitarianism conflicts with both considered directions.

The spectacular character of Roitburd’s works , submitted on the “Unnatural Selection “ (on the face of it, similar with the spectacular character of graffiti), irrespective of the sizes, spatial relations and media, has easel character mainly; these works are intended for internal (in sphere of art) aesthetic consumption (as, for example, monumental in sizes and media and minimal on reception “Germany” by Hans Haacke remains easel ). Such works can become pulses to the decision of “industrial” or applied tasks can become style-formatting factor, but they can not become applied themselves.

The video installation of V.Malyarenko, one of the most entertainment or “artistic” (according to the classification, accepted in my text) appeared to be less categorically intonated at the same time. Despite of the rigidity of meaning elements (real and “screen” cell, simple gesticulating mark of a choice), typically it was from that the number of “picturesque”, moral - associative installations, which prevailed at the Odessa exhibitions in 1994-96.

To works of dominantly entertaining, but essentially easel character (irrespectively of quality or degree of loading by rhetoric methods) it is possible to relate installations of P. Perlovsky, I. Gusev, A. Romanovskaya, A. Afonin, video of Shevchuk, light installation and poster (even taking into consideration its borders with the applied social poster) of D. Dulfan, installation “Art for me” of G. Katchuk, with all the affinity of the latter to



relational aesthetics and “unreadability” outside of the local context of “video-piracy” designated by shadow silhouettes on a computer monitor. Relational character of the works of V. Checkorsky and M. Kulchitsky (on the first sight similar to an opportunity of active inclusion of graffiti in the sociable context of a club or a discotheque) is also “easel” in its purpose independently from media. The offer of coffee and Pepsi-cola to the visitors of the exhibition “Supermarket”, as well as the offer of R. Tiravanija to the visitors of Venice biennial to prepare and to eat an instant soup does not comprise a grain of utility. The fact of openness of a visitor to the opportunity of leaving the limits of reserve, including an aesthetic one, carries the aesthetic sense itself.

I repeat, eclecticism and “communal character” of the exhibition conditions of the “Unnatural selection” resulted in the absence of “pure” works consistently focused on one of the three described tendencies, but the same “communal character”, the direct comparison in common exhibition space promoted more precise opposed articulation of the tendencies. At all personal preference of traditionally “entertaining” direction, eclecticism is dearer to me. Each of the three directions is interesting and potentially fruitful. But I do not think, that in marginal conditions of Odessa the aspiration to cleanliness, independent sterility of these lines will lead to the results, appreciable outside the local region.

The production of pure ingredients and strict recipes is the destiny of capitals. Free and frequently casual mixture of these ingredients with local products and seasonings has some chances of occurrence of a new and tasty dish. For its stylistic perfection and naming in the menu it is necessary to go to a metropolitan restaurant again.