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INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN CONTEMPORARY ART: FROM PROVOCATION TO INTEGRATION

ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the forms of transmission of cultural values (meanings) through modern works of art. The novelty of the approach to artistic creation lies in it being studied both as a result of intercultural communication and as a means of conveying cultural meanings. The purpose of this article is to identify, analyze and describe the forms of transmission of values through works of contemporary art. The author identifies three forms of value translation in art: provocation, similarity, integration. Provocation means that the artist shows the interaction of the values of different cultures, focusing on their hostility and inconsistency. As an example, an art object is given by a Russian artist living in America, a representative of Sots Art A.S. Kosolapov "Lenin – Coca-Cola." Similarity, on the contrary, is a form that demonstrates the proximity of meanings, the search for common ground in the value systems of society. This thesis is visualized by the sculptures of Buddha and Christ by the Chinese artist Zhang Huan. The third form of translation of values in art is designated as integration, when the work expresses values that are universal for all peoples: a clean environment, security, peace, health, freedom, justice and others. The works of the winners of the Venice Biennale 2019 (opera-performance "Sun and Sea (Marina)" by the Lithuanian National Pavilion and "White Album" by American cinematographer Arthur Jafa) are given as an example. It is concluded that art, thanks to its supranational, symbolic and universal language, is able to build intercultural communication between peoples.

KEYWORDS

intercultural communication, contemporary art, cultural values, forms of transmission of cultural meanings.

Introduction

The relevance of studying the interaction of values of different cultures through art is connected, first of all, with the political strategy of "soft power." The spheres of "soft power" are usually education and the arts. Support for cultural projects, development of creative initiatives, training of students in other countries, support for masters of art – all this can be attributed to manifestations of "soft power," and thanks to these manifestations, people get acquainted with



the values of different peoples. Art, as a means of conveying values, is actively used in pedagogical and artistic practice. The axiological function is one of the most important among the functions of art. For example, the author Yu. B. Borev, in his discourse on the axiological function of art, posits that “art serves to orient a person in the world, aids in the development of a value consciousness, and teaches the ability to view life through the prism of imagery. Without value orientations, an individual is even more vulnerable than one who lacks vision, as they are unable to comprehend how to relate to something, prioritize their activities, or construct a hierarchy of phenomena in the world around them” (Borev 2002: 100). From the perspective of the Russian philosopher M.S. Kagan, the social functions of art within the “art-culture” system are exemplified by its capacity to serve as the self-awareness of culture and to communicate its values in interaction with other cultures (Kagan 1978: 13). This leads to the conclusion about the significant potential of art as a means of organizing intercultural communication.

Authors such as V. L. Alikhanova (2019), Yu. B. Borev (2002), N. V. Brovko (2007), M. S. Kagan (1978), N. S. Pichko (2016), L. N. Stolovich (1985) and others write about the accumulation and transfer of cultural meanings, but I am unaware of scientific works that reveal the forms of transfer of values in art. The phenomenon of a work as a result of intercultural communication occurs when an artist has a bicultural or multicultural identity, which is not uncommon in the globalized world. In this case, a work is interpreted in terms of an accomplished interaction of cultures, it demonstrates the merging of values, and at the same time, it can be used to convey to the audience the specifics of the process of intercultural communication.

1. Materials and Methods

It is important to distinguish between art as a value and art as a means of conveying values. This article explores the forms of value transfer in art: the fact that art has value in itself, connecting the world of nature (the world of rigid determinism) and the world of freedom (the world of morality, culture) is not disputed. This approach was first described in the eighteenth century by Kant (1994). In Baden’s neo-kantianism, this approach was developed by Wilhelm Windelband and Heinrich Rickert, who believed that the world of culture consists of values (Rickert 1998). Values in culture are always objectified, art as a cultural form is a concentration of meanings. Obviously, there are a huge number of cultural mechanisms that accumulate and transmit values. The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur believed that the interpretation of cultural texts, which are works of art, contains a deep meaning and possibility to overcome cultural distance, since any tradition lives only thanks to interpretation. For Ricoeur, art was the means that reproduces and transmits traditions; as a result of the interpretation of the work, “a project of the world in which I could live and realize my most secret possibilities” is created (Ricoeur 2002: 24). In Russian cultural studies, the problem of systematization of cultural meanings

was studied by A. Ya. Flier, who concluded that the cultural meaning of an artifact depends on the social context, and “allegorical polysemy, stimulating freedom of interpretation, is one of the hallmarks of art” (Flier 2017). The Russian thinker Mikhail M. Bakhtin, examining the transfer of meanings in dialogue, communication, wrote:

Meaning is potentially infinite, but it can be actualized only by coming into contact with another (outside) meaning ... The actual meaning does not belong to a (single) meaning, but only to two met and related meanings. There can be no meaning in itself, it exists only for another meaning, that is, it exists only together with it (1979: 280).

Currently, the fact that art is an accumulator of cultural meanings and a translator of cultural values is recognized, but the question of the forms of the translation process remains open. The purpose of this article is to identify, to analyze and to describe some of the existing forms of the process of translating cultural values on the example of contemporary works. Based on the purpose, the following tasks are formulated: firstly, to study the form of transferring values as “provocation;” secondly, to explore the form of value transfer as “similarity;” thirdly, to consider the form of translation of cultural meanings as “integration.”

2. Results

Contemporary art is a space for intercultural communication due to globalization processes. Understanding messages and concepts without knowledge of national languages is provided by the symbolic nature of art. The denationalization of art is a striking feature of our time. It is not the features of the national style that come to the fore, but the methods, techniques, technologies for conveying meanings and values through art. Responsibility of artists is increasing and they are forced to master the languages of different traditions in order to adequately convey the idea for people who live in a “world without borders.” In the conditions of standardization and homogenization of culture, there is an increasing need to defend one’s national identity, to establish markers of one’s presence in the world; even the term “glocalization” (introduced into scientific circulation by sociologist Roland Robertson) appeared to refer to the relationship of multidirectional trends of globalization and localization.

Let us call the first form of the transmission of cultural values in art “provocation.” In contemporary art, we often encounter taboo violations. Scandal and outrageousness are the norm of mass culture, the viewer is accustomed to scandal and is looking for it, and artists are doing everything possible to surprise the audience as much as possible and gain even more popularity. Of course, you can find a provocation in any artistic statement in the form of hints and allegories. Genius is one who establishes new rules of the game in art, according to Kant, but “at the present stage of the development of art, provocation becomes its central, and sometimes its only component” (Dmitriev and

Sychev 2017: 85). As an example, let us cite the work of the famous Russian social realist Alexander Semenovich Kosolapov, now living in New York, “Lenin – Coca-Cola.” At one time, this picture was the cause of much controversy and was even the subject of a trial. It is possible to interpret art objects in different ways, but from the point of view of intercultural communication, this piece is a vivid example of accomplished interaction of Western and Soviet values. The artist himself explained his work in an interview, stating that “American culture has produced a consumer product, while Russia has produced an ideological product, which is also a consumer product. Both of these processes are symmetrical. When I came to the West, I saw that both systems of propaganda create a void, it is the sale of a non-existent paradise. The similarities between the capitalist American advertising and the totalitarian Soviet and post-Soviet poster, slogans, are huge.” (“I create a meme” 2017).

The artist’s ironic provocation brightly highlighted the metamorphosis that took place in his mind, which is now obvious to modern viewers, but in the early 1980s produced the effect of an exploding bomb.

Much later, in 2014, the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, who entered into a confrontation with the government of his native country, repeated the artistic technique of Kosolapov, placing the same red logo on an ancient Chinese vase. The art object symbolizes the destruction of China’s traditional values by Western influence. Here is a statement by Kosolapov, illustrating the interaction of cultural meanings that simultaneously play a unifying and separating role:

At some point, I realized that I could preserve my uniqueness [in emigration] only if I introduce an element of Russian culture into art. Maybe Russian avant-garde or socialist realism. Or maybe its politicization. I try to do radical things, thanks to which I got on trial in Russia, but at the same time I entered the Western textbooks of contemporary art as a Russian artist. [...] Ai Weiwei used my idea with Coca-Cola. Because when Weiwei smashes ancient vases with Coca-Cola written on them, he builds on Kosolapov’s discovery. In a postmodern situation, we integrate everything (Kosolapov 2017).

So, the form of translation of cultural meanings in the art of “provocation” focuses on the difference and incompatibility of different peoples, combining their values.

Let us designate the following form of translation as “similarity.” The emphasis is placed precisely on the closeness of the values of different cultures, on the possibility of equal dialogue. As an example, let us take the sculptures of the contemporary Chinese artist Zhang Huan. He collects the ashes of burnt incense in Buddhist temples and makes sculptures out of them. Sculptures of Buddha and Christ were installed opposite each other. Ash sculptures became part of a larger exhibition called “East and West Wind.”

According to the artist, the material, unusual for sculpture, astounds the European and Russian public, while the Chinese do not see anything remarkable in it, considering the ashes an integral part of Chinese culture. This material, according to the artist, contains the power of prayers and holy spirits, the dust

of death and rebirth, as well as the hopes, aspirations and desires of hundreds of people who come to the Buddha to bow. Zhang Huan expressed the hope that the figures of Buddha and Christ would show similarities between Eastern and Western religions (Buddha, Ashes, and Donkeys).

We will show another form of the translation of values “integration” using the works of the Venice Biennale 2019 as an example (the 58th Biennale with the theme: “May you live in interesting times”). Integration means the unification of parts into a single whole, or the inclusion of elements in a certain community. The peculiar expression of problems common to all mankind finds the greatest response in the hearts of people. Lithuania received the “Golden Lion” award for the best national pavilion. Artist and composer Lina Lapelyte, playwright Vaiva Grainite and director Rugile Barzdukaitė presented an experimental environmental opera “Sun and Sea (Marina).” The performance was attended by professional actors, and atmosphere players, and volunteers who played vacationers on the beach, and the audience watched them from above, playing the role of the sun. Vacationers only complain about the deteriorating environmental situation, but do nothing. The beach opera speaks about an important problem of mankind – climate change (Posokhova and Saldakayeva 2019). The arias sing about everyday things such as sunscreen, garbage in sea water, unpredictable weather, people’s workaholism, but through this a symbolic reminder of the fragility of our nature and the need to protect it is subtracted.

Lorenzo Quinn’s sculpture “Building Bridges” shows how value transmission can be used to integrate values. This work is devoted to the issue of global disunity among humanity and the imperative for fostering intercultural communication. United hands symbolize love, friendship, hope, faith, wisdom and mutual assistance, these qualities, according to the artist, are necessary for dialogue and understanding.

Six pairs of giant hands symbolize the bonds between people and the connection between different cultures. Five pairs of hands can also be interpreted as five inhabited continents, and the sixth symbolizes love, without which life has no meaning. Hands touch, which means that we must strive for mutual understanding and interaction between cultures. Mankind has always achieved incredible things only by joining forces, but barriers only hinder development.

3. Discussion

The interpretation of works of art in terms of its significance in the transfer of cultural meanings is sufficiently developed in specialized scientific literature. The traditional approach to the interpretation of a work in the process of intercultural communication is as follows: it is understood as a “bearer of values” of its culture. Some part of the meanings of the work is interpreted incorrectly due to the difference in cultural codes, some part is accepted by representatives of a foreign culture due to similarity, evaluated, criticized, new meanings can be attributed to the work in the process of deciphering by representatives of

a foreign culture. Let us call this process of intercultural communication acquaintance with a foreign culture through art.

The novelty and relevance of our approach lies in the fact that we change the perspective of viewing a work of art in the process of intercultural communication. It is created as a fact of an already accomplished process of intercultural communication, because artists began to have multiple national identities, which is a clear sign of modernity. For example, the work “Lenin – Coca-Cola” by Kosolapov could only appear as a fusion of the values of two countries – the Soviet Union and America – and the sculptures of Jesus and Buddha from the ashes of Zhan Huan are the result of a combination of Buddhism and Christianity. Of course, not all works can be called “the result of intercultural communication,” some, indeed, are carriers of the meanings of their own culture only. For example, while studying an ancient vase from the Han Dynasty, the viewer gets acquainted with the main symbols of traditional Chinese culture. This is the implementation of intercultural communication through familiarization with the work. A vase with Ai Weiwei’s Coca-Cola logo tells us about the conflict between Eastern and Western values in modern Chinese culture. The work itself demonstrates biculturalism in the form of a provocation. The approach we have declared is debatable; other authors have not come across such reasoning. Work on this issue will continue, it is necessary, first of all, because such works are multiplying in our multicultural reality, it is necessary to clarify the methodology for their study, since art is a diagnostician of the spiritual health of society, its mirror, through which futurological forecasts have been and are being made.

Conclusion

The article described three forms of translation of cultural values in art: provocation, similarity, integration.

A provocative work occurs when an artist has found a common value base for different cultures, but wants to destroy some stereotyped images that have become so familiar that people are no longer aware of them. If masters set the task of shocking the viewer, they will desacralize, reduce images and ironize.

The transmission of cultural values through similarity is also based on the search for a common cultural foundation. However, the artist’s task is to demonstrate the congruence of values. Respecting cultural traditions and taking into account the mentality of a foreign culture, the master will treat sacred images with care.

Integration as a method of value transfer arises when it is imperative to convey universal values that are comprehensible to individuals from diverse cultures. The artists will seek out the most iconic images to convey their concept.

The form of translation depends on the axiology of the artist and the artistic tasks they are assigned. The works of art described in the article were interpreted by us as the result of the artist’s assimilation of the values of a foreign culture.

Knowledge of forms is necessary, first of all, for the organization of intercultural dialogue. Depending on the country, nationality, cultural context, target audience, purpose and expected results of the impact, there is a choice of the form of value transfer.

This choice result does not always have positive connotations, often the conflict of values also indicates the ongoing process of accumulation and translation of meanings. The author of the article suggests that it is possible to strategically model intercultural communication, which is of course significant both in cultural policy and at the group and individual levels, considering the forms of the process of transferring cultural meanings.

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Međukulturalna komunikacija u savremenoj umetnosti: od provokacije do integracije

Apstrakt

U radu se analiziraju oblici prenošenja kulturnih vrednosti (značenja) kroz savremena umetnička dela. Novina pristupa umetničkom stvaralaštvu je u tome što se ono proučava i kao rezultat interkulturalne komunikacije i kao sredstvo prenošenja kulturnih značenja. Svrha ovog rada je da identifikuje, analizira i opiše oblike prenošenja vrednosti kroz dela savremene umetnosti. Autorka identifikuje tri oblika vrednosnog prevođenja u umetnosti: provokacija, sličnost, integracija. Provokacija znači da umetnik pokazuje interakciju vrednosti različitih kultura, fokusirajući se na njihovo neprijateljstvo i nedoslednost. Kao primer, umetnički objekat daje ruski umetnik koji živi u Americi, predstavnik Sots Art-a A. S. Kosolapov „Lenjin – Koka-Kola“. Sličnost je, naprotiv, forma koja pokazuje blizinu značenja, potragu za zajedničkim osnovama u sistemima vrednosti društva. Ovu tezu vizualizuju skulpture Bude i Hrista kineskog umetnika Džanga Huana. Treći oblik prevođenja vrednosti u umetnosti označava se kao integracija, kada se u delu izražavaju vrednosti koje su univerzalne za sve narode: čista životna sredina, bezbednost, mir, zdravlje, sloboda, pravda i drugo. Kao primer dati su radovi pobjednika Venecijanskog bijenala 2019. godine (opera-predstava „Sunce i more (Marina)“ Litvanskog nacionalnog paviljona i „Beli album“ američkog snimatelja Artura Jafe). Zaključuje se da je umetnost, zahvaljujući svom nadnacionalnom, simboličkom i univerzalnom jeziku, u stanju da gradi međukulturalnu komunikaciju između naroda.

Ključne reči: međukulturalna komunikacija, savremena umetnost, kulturne vrednosti, oblici prenošenja kulturnih značenja.