

REVIEWS

I.

Prof. Dr. Tomaž Brejc

In modern art theory the problem of creation and representation relates to the Aristotelian conception of the ideal, real and rhetoric imitation in an entirely new way. Since modernism mimesis is no longer a creative process through which an artist represents things seen and understood, but rather it is a conceptual pattern, a grey in-between zone, which distinguishes different levels of »imitation«. A similarity to the natural object and phenomenon or an approximation of an abstract prototype is, in this respect, of minimal importance. The scope of mimesis now comprises all creative acts which establishes models of resemblance, either real or fictitious relations, and within this framework there is a massive production of duplicates, interfaces, simulations and genetic copies of the real and in particular, of the theoretical object. The foundation of imitation is no longer an analogical and technical procedure but a conceptual method enabling projections of »dissimilar similarities«, modified appearance parallelisms to the original model, such as can be seen, for example, in Duchamp's Large Glass.

The author's research focuses on Duchamp's notion of *infrathin*, on his performing outstandingly profound analyses of his artistic intentions. The *infrathin* is the tiniest, barely discernible dividing line or connection, a scarcely perceptible »imprint« between the real and conceptual time and space: it is time which denotes a moment before the onset of a moment, it is an infinitesimal distance, a shift, which allows us to recognize it; it is a trace, which forms space so as to make it disappear without leaving it. Rather it continues in n-dimensional space; it is a cerebral activity which transforms the conceptual model into a raw product (ready-made) or into a pure mental theoretical object (Duchamp's puns, plays on words, aphorisms). But it is precisely in Duchamp's *infrathin* model of hypostatic (not abstract!) »imitation« that the sensorial contents and materials are retained in the realm of thought as well, seemingly contradictory though quite justifiable. For him this is not a clean, sterile entity. None of Duchamp's intellectual games are without their sensuality, their sexual nature. The *infrathin* dimension is the grey matter or zone which within Duchamp's model of imitation effortlessly kneads sensual and cognitive data, retaining, analyzing and projecting them on the outside. Only in this conceptual inter-zone do the real objects

behave as ideas (ready-mades) and the artist's »cerebral activities« can be shaped into recognizable theoretical objects.

Uršula Berlot has written a fascinating and highly engaging analysis of these activities, firmly grounded in contemporary art theory and philosophy, introducing Duchamp as a radical thinker, and as someone who had a profound impact on posterior forms of minimal and conceptual art. She has shown that the infrathin mimetic interface is a reversible strategy, within which discursive, scientific, conceptual and artistic thought are equally operational, and that the close links manifested today between theory and the esthetic effect are largely due to Duchamp.

II.

Prof. Dr. Mladen Dolar

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Uršula Berlot's *Duchamp and Mimesis* is, in all respects, an outstanding work, which single-handedly ties the traditional problem of mimesis to the foundational issues of modernism, which happens to be modernism precisely by virtue of its breaking away from mimesis – or so it would seem. The notion of mimesis has a long history in philosophy and art theory as one of the key theoretical concepts used to shed light on artistic activity. It indicated the essential question of the relationship between art and reality and was therefore related to notions like the imitation of reality, copying, reproduction and simulation; in brief, artistic ways of representing reality in art. However, with the birth of modern art, which abandoned the norm of imitation and representation, this notion seemed to have lost much of its importance. And this is where the author sets off to formulate her primary thesis: with the demise of mimetic art and the onset of abstraction, non-figural art, conceptual art etc., this notion took on both new meaning and a different scope; it needed to be expanded to include the concepts of codifications, differences and repetitions, which subtly define non-representational art and form its very tissue. If mimesis is thus defined through a net of »differences and repetitions«, if it is transformed into a »differential mimesis«, then a thought is directed to a separation, a minimal difference and a doubling of the artistic work itself. And this is precisely what the famous notion of infrathin aims at, the notion which Duchamp identified as the central role in his work and which can serve as a connecting thread in new analyses.

The infrathin refers to the inner division of identity, which distinguishes an object from its very self, thus conditioning the notorious Duchampian move, which transforms a serially produced artifact into an original ready-made work of art. This concept also enables Duchamp to break away from the traditional mimetic procedures of reproduction to create, by way of a symbolic move, a differential operation of separation. The notion of infrathin allows Duchamp to conceive a number of other operations which are, here in this account of his work, painstakingly analyzed by the author, in terms of transparency of multidimensional spatial realities, issues concerning the affinities of opposites and paradoxical similarities, transfer of levels of various sensorial qualities, sensing of »hypophysical« similarity and more. The author convincingly demonstrates how the very notion of infrathin allows us to understand Duchamp's new perspective, in which mimesis is »deconstructed« into operations of conceptual differentiation and »dissimilar similarity«.

Uršula Berlot guides us with erudite scholarly authority through the many dimensions of Duchamp's break, within which the very status of modern art is being modified and the tradition reevaluated.

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Uršula Berlot je napisala izvirno in fascinantno analizo moderne mimesis v navidez nezdržljivi konceptualni praksi Duchampove umetnosti. Pokazala je, da je infratanka mimetična vmesnost reverzibilna strategija, mesto sovpadanja nasprotij in razlik, v kateri v enaki meri učinkuje diskurzivna, znanstvena in konceptualna, umetniška misel in da je današnja tesna prepletenost estetskega učinka s teorijo v veliki meri Duchampova zgodovinska zasluga.

Uršula Berlot has written a fascinating and highly engaging analysis of modern mimesis in seemingly incompatible conceptual art practice of Duchamp. She has shown that the infrathin mimetic interface is a reversible strategy, within which discursive, scientific, conceptual and artistic thought are equally operational and that the close links manifested today between theory and the esthetic effect are largely due to Duchamp.

Prof. dr. Tomaž Brejc

Knjiga Uršule Berlot *Duchamp in mimesis* je v vsakem pogledu izjemno delo, ki v enem samem zamahu naveže tradicionalni problem mimesis na temeljna iskanja modernizma, ki je bil modernizem prav po tem, vsaj tako je videti, da se je napravil križ čez mimesis. Vendar, če mimesis ne razumemo v tradicionalnem smislu posnemanja ampak jo osredinimo na mrežo „razlik in ponavljanj“, če jo preoblikujemo v „diferencialno mimesis“, potem jo napotimo na premislek razmika, minimalne razlike in podvojitve samega umetniškega dela – prav na to pa meri sloviti pojem „infratanko“, ki ga je postavil Duchamp v srž svojega dela in ki lahko služi kot rdeča nit novim analizam.

Uršula Berlot's Duchamp and Mimesis is, in all respects, an outstanding work, which single-handedly ties the traditional problem of mimesis to the foundational issues of modernism, which happens to be modernism precisely by virtue of its breaking away from mimesis – or so it would seem. However, if mimesis is not understood in a traditional sense of imitation, but defined through a net of “differences and repetitions”, if it is transformed into a “differential mimesis”, then a thought is directed to a separation, a minimal difference and a doubling of the artistic work itself. And this is precisely what the famous notion of infrathin aims at, the notion which Duchamp identified as the central role in his work and which can serve as a connecting thread in new analyses.

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