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The time for Futurism

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to reflect on the legacy of Italian Futurism in 20th-century art and culture, as well as to discuss over how aesthetics and futuristic ideology permeate the post-modern and globalized scenario of the present days. In seeking to demonstrate how the futuristic experience contributed to the development of a poetics of contemporary art, we intend to launch a look at Futurism as an aesthetic of time, a motion turned into a kind of archetype of future artistic experiences.

KEYWORDS: *Futurism*. Modern art. Art criticism. Contemporary art.

The oldest among us are not yet thirty years old:
*we have therefore at least ten years
 to accomplish our task. When we are forty
 let younger and stronger men than we
 throw us in the waste paper basket
 like useless manuscripts!*
 F. T. Marinetti, 1909

The first centenary of Futurism occurred in the year of 2009 and instigates us to a series of questions: is it possible – and legitimate – to think of Futurism nowadays as an ongoing experiment, or otherwise as an episode of cult to the past – using a term much quoted by members of the movement – that has long been overcome? Now that there's been a long time between then and now, are we safer to observe the future of Futurism? What would have been its most persistent legacy in the cultural environment? In times of Post-modernity, in which our concerns about the future seem to be more complex than those we had at the beginning of the last century (is it possible that, by now, we would have already found the answers to all these questions?), what does it mean to us today – the futuristic proposal made a hundred years ago?

Futurism proclaimed the need for a ceaseless renovation of all elements pertaining to the human experience, positioned itself against the conformist traditions and formulated an art imbued into daily life; it has left us creative material that is so rich and inexhaustible in possibilities that it can be explored by different areas of knowledge. Some critics and scholars, in their texts, made these remarks while they accused the group that followed Marinetti – or groups, if we make an effort to study Futurism beyond its “classical” chronology and limitations (i.e. from 1909 to the end of the first

World War) – of being a mass of contradictions, a bad joke, assuming a condemnatory stance on the movement. These scholars should bear in mind that most of the artistic avant-gardes of the 20th century, consciously or not, carried in its core various contradictions and misunderstandings – which shouldn't be seen as vexatious. Nothing prevents a contradiction of becoming itself raw material for artwork. To disregard these issues means to inhibit art's creative potential, trapping it by means of limiting concepts.

The discussions held on the centenary of Futurism also indicated the persistence of some discomfort – not from all scholars, to be clear – from distorted associations between Futurism and Fascism formulated in previous decades. These explicit – or not – associations only served to put the vanguard in the dock, thus contributing to the progression of a certain restraint regarding the development of specific studies on the movement. That avant-garde was now “evil”, hostile, reduced to a political committee of sorts; meanwhile, those who were associated with avant-garde left-wing political movements ended up being very well seen by art scholars. In this sense, Cubism, immune to contamination by any fascist ideology, acquired in art history the iconic position of a totem or of the biggest Vanguardist symbol, the prototype of the “adequate provocation” in pictorial terms. If political theories become mandatory prerequisites in deciding what should be studied and what should not, we will be losing a considerable amount of sources and important experiences. Art is not politics. Although interesting and sometimes necessary, associations between art and politics have generated prejudice in intellectuals and scholars who study images, who should at least in theory see the contradictions, shortcuts and complexities of art from another angle, imbued by the same contradictions as its creators, the humans. In summary, Futurism is still often studied in a simplified manner, which regrettably diminishes and stereotypes the meaning of the movement.

Therefore, let us ignore this diminishing relationship between Futurism and Fascism, for what interests us here is to think of the Italian avant-garde in terms of its diverse artistic production, and see how a future proposal formulated by the members of the movement laid the groundwork for the construction of various futures. It is an undisputed fact that Futurism, with all its idiosyncrasies, belongs to history; Thus, “it is a historiographical object that can be studied, from all points of view, in total serenity” (LISTA, 2001, p. 359).

As a result of its Centennial, the Futurist Vanguard has been the theme of museum exhibits around the world, such as the one at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, held from October 15 to January 26,

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2009 under the title *Le Futurisme à Paris – Une avant-garde explosive*. Another example is the Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea of Bergamo city, which, between September 2007 and February 2008, presented the exhibition entitled *Il Future Futurism: dalla "Italian rivoluzione" all' arte contemporanea*, in order to establish a link between the innovations introduced by the Italian avant-garde and its ramifications to the present day. These two examples have shown genuine intention to give rise to a new perspective over Futurism, despite the persistence of the same interpretations and catchphrases already crystallized by the historiography of art; These institutions decided to think about the vanguard in order to introduce it to the public as an agent for several inspiring artistic experiences, thanks to the complexity of its poetics – contradictions included – and show them under the light of contemporary days. This is not the place or time to remember the possible reasons that led to the withering away of the vanguard; What interests us is their libertarian aspect, the primordial element that causes the movement, as well as other artistic currents that have succeeded in perpetuating themselves beyond their own time: "many years away [...] Futurism is left to the world as an engine of the European avant-gardes and overall renovation. And, more than the immediate products, one single movement contains the many effects it may give rise to" (Aurora F. Bernardini, "*Marinetti e o Futurismo*". In: BERNARDINI, 1980, p. 13).

There is an abundance of effects resulting from the Futurist experience in the field of the arts in general. The movement would come to be seen as a reference model for the vanguards of the 10's and 20's such as the Cubism-Futurism and the Russian Constructivism, the English Vorticism, the Spanish Ultraist movement, the Brazilian Modernism, the Polish Formism, Hungarian Activism, Dadaism and Surrealism, among other groups. The works of several Futurists, who interpreted concepts such as concurrency and dynamism, thought of the aesthetic value of technological innovation, made public their fascination with an unprecedented and contagious future, informed on the artistic research with which the vanguard opened the way for experiments such as that of abstractionism, kinetic art, passing through neo-avantgardes from 1960 and 1970 until it arrived at the protagonists of contemporary art: Hirst, Warhol, Haring, Fontana, Nauman, entre muitos outros. It is, without any doubt, a journey marked by consonance, analogies and differences.

An exhaustive cast of artists, works and movements directly or indirectly influenced by the Futurist avant-garde is something that

does not fit in the space of this article, and such a procedure is not necessary to understand the presence of the legacy imparted by the movement. However, we would like to showcase some examples that reflect this symbiosis that many artists unknowingly possess regarding Futurism.

First of all, we could say that Futurism influenced itself. The vanguard often turned to itself in an attempt to find the foundations for its own resilience and recast. Many important authors have divided this artistic movement into parts, beginning with the First Futurism (from 1909 to 1918) and the Second Futurism (1920), with a third moment in 30 years, in an attempt to display more clearly the aesthetic differences between one period and another. However, this periodization does not abolish the intense dialogue that these moments kept with each other; the vanguardists from 1920 reviewed Futurism itself, repeating propositions, adding values, expanding its fields of aesthetic activity. The concept of Marinetti's words on freedom, for example, leaves the bounds of the *technical Manifesto of Futurist literature* and prints in the whole futurist aesthetics, partaking of Russolo's *intonarumori*, Balla's Futurist suit, Boccioni's sculptures' polymaterialism; it is present in the use of dynamics, of rapidness and simultaneity; we could affirm that the futurist proposal used to be more closely related to the concept of "libertarian" than of "freedom" per se.

This libertarian character was translated primarily by the desire for a new action, stimulated and disseminated through provocative attitudes. The desire to strike "a slap in the face of public taste" is something that can be identified in the Dadaist group Café Voltaire, in Duchamp's bike wheel (a work incidentally made of objects collected by the artist on the streets of New York, orphaned pieces discarded by the industrial society that made them), in animals preserved in Damien Hirst's formaldehyde tanks, in Wahoo's theme of serigraphs, in the debauchery that Gilbert and George make of "traditional" art, in Fluxus, the movement dedicated to organizing events and anarchist *happenings*.

The movement and the energy dynamics of the futurist art are in Calder's mobiles and most of the experiments of kinetic art that developed in the following decades, motivated projects, especially in sculpture, the relationships between motion and mechanics that intrigued Boccioni so much. This mechanics of bodies and objects appearing in such films as the *Ballet mécanique* by Léger and *The man with a movie camera* by Vertov, the electromechanical performances of Nicolas Shöffer, as well as the spectacular kinetic art of Jean Tinguely, which, from the end of 1950, produced

machinery, edible and musical gears, turning famous for hosting many public events involving the construction and rapid deterioration of machinery.

Upon attempting at looking at art as a human experience, as a state of spirit, Futuristic art became continuous in action and forced the public to participate in this action; in this sense, we can cite Schwitters' *Merz*, which reconfigured the relationships between man, art and space, and the so-called contemporary *Wearable Art*, clothes that can be put on and worn as art or art that can be put on and worn like clothes, a concept previously expressed by Balla in his manifesto, the Futurist suit, extended by Hélio Oiticica and his *parangolés*, and by Flavio de Carvalho, when he paraded in his *Summer Costume* along the streets of Sao Paulo in 1957. These are all invitations to live art, more than behold it or revere it, as a behavioral action.

Space, time, and motion concepts, so dear to the Futurists, were viewed by them as something absolute, as the essence of the dynamism and the dynamo of art. The art of Lucio Fontana, with his canvases razor, converses with the space, extinguishing two-dimensional aspect of painting. Pollock's *Action Painting*, a painting that depends on the artist's dynamic drive in its own making, enshrines the gesture as an integral part of the art. Nothing is really stopped, "everything moves, everything goes", extending in space – and the art itself is to be destroyed, consumed, transitory. Works by artists such as Sol LeWitt, Richard Long, Christo, refuse to become icons: they dissolve amid the transience of all things, keep the wheels moving, perpetuate in reminiscences, finally taking off their own materiality.

Futurism also paved the way for Haring's painting, Rauschenberg's collages, the angular and semiabstract shapes by David Bomberg which express the vitality and dynamism of the 20th century and the stirring machine era. The ones that left deep marks were *Arte Povera*, by Zorio, Kounellis, Boetti, Merz; it is in the felt suit made by Josef Beuys in 1970; it turned the research of the GRAV (Groupe de Recherche d'art Visuel) towards the movement, the light and the new industrial materials; to exalt the latter enabled a real *Big Bang* in artistic creation, where they featured the works of Serra and Expensive, that exploit the possibilities of iron and plastic steel and call public attention to the relationship of these with the space, the proletarian labor and human production. The use of new materials in sculpture expands. The work that pays homage to Boccioni made by Oiticica – a plastic bottle filled with a colored liquid – discusses the role of modern material and its consumption

by society. The bottle is a clear reference to the sculpture made by Boccioni, *Development of a bottle in space*, in 1912, and has also served as the inspiration to Frank Gehry in his design project for the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao.

When art takes ownership of the mass media and reverts it in reflection on the theme of information consumption, Futurism is also present. Some examples are Warhol, Lichtenstein, Basquiat and Hamilton, who used marketing, industrialized products, comic books, newspapers and magazines and even other artworks as themes of their artistic production. Moreover, Lichtenstein paid tribute to Carrà on recreating his last piece, *Cavalier rouge*.

The references are endless. In music, we can cite the experiences of Cage and Philip Glass, from the progressive rock band Pink Floyd and Aphex Twin's electronic music; in the fashion world, the cosmonauts pieces by Courrèges, or the mechanic clothing by Paco Rabanne, the male *tailleurs* created by Versace and Gianfranco Ferré's futuristic dress pay obvious tribute to Boccioni. What would be of the design Studio Alchymia without Depero's colorful and playful inventions in the 20s? In literature, the presence of Marinetti's words of freedom encompassed a range from Apollinaire to *beat* William Burroughs, with his *cut-up* writing. This trendy, avant-garde influence on design and industrial design enabled the development of aerodynamics in the most diverse objects; when the audience is thrilled at a car fair more than it would in a museum, we ask ourselves where, after all, lies the aesthetic experience. And we come to the reasoning that there is not a *locus* for it.

This doesn't mean that any cultural experience that occurred in the 20th century and in the early years of this century have some Futurism in it; the motivation here is to check how the aesthetic of the vanguard force spread and printed itself in the most diverse manifestations.

There is a difference in the perceived futuristic influence up to the first half of the 20th century and the one that comes in 1945. In that first moment, their influence is most sensitive in painting, sculpture and cinema. From the postwar period, and especially in contemporary art, Futurism's presence became more conceptual, penetrating deeper and more complex layers of artistic creation. However, it is precisely at this point that Futurism's legacy finds its most intriguing manifestation.

We could say that the modern time, the euphoria that marked industrial strongly the beginning of the last century, is history; that, immersed in post-industrial societies, we look at the past excited with the machine without great festive raptures. However, the

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fascination by technological innovations that characterized the era of Futurism persists in our society today: mobile phones, computers, videos and other types of handheld devices – in short, the wireless company that starts to develop – remember Marinetti's desire for a "wireless imagination". The machines change as time passes and our reaction to them is in most cases quite excited.

Futurism celebrated in countless ways the signs of the new, industrial and capitalist world: the speed, the mass media, the mechanization. Its main argument rests on the idea that art should get in the way of reality in a radical way and vice versa. If the world today is dynamic and immediate, so should art be: The only art that may be seen as vital is the one that finds its own elements in the surrounding environment".¹ This implies that we must first modify the notion of artistic beauty crystallized in Italian art from the late 19th century.

Fighting against a certain idea of beauty was one of the attempts of the vanguard, which sought to respond to an idea of beauty that had long been written in stone in the country. Since the Renaissance, intellectuals, European artists and writers have made Italy into a mythical place, the birthplace of a golden and *grandiose* age. This myth has strengthened further in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, turning the country into sort of open-air museum, a time travel experience available for all those who wanted to breathe a bit of the air of a refined but bygone era. The entire European romanticism turned to Italy, eager to drink of its waters, attracted by its natural beauties, archaeological ruins, cultural ancient heritage and museum archives. At the time, people considered Italy to be a compulsory itinerary in their travel plans: nowhere else in the world would allow for an identical, picturesque and beautiful experience as that generously offered by the country. Even Italians themselves built their identity driven by this nostalgic sigh for times gone by. This fascination for everything that had ever been was a sort of consolation, warranty and inevitable inheritance, maintained by political and cultural elites, by the great traditional families and their immaculate surnames, forming an aesthetic taste who went on, sleepily and smoothly, throughout history.

This scenario gave rise to Marinetti, who preached for the need to visit the *Mona Lisa* only once a year, in the same way that people follow the pilgrimage to the cemeteries in the Day of the Dead. (Such contempt for the *Mona Lisa* as the ultimate symbol of the Great Art of the Great Masters was echoed a few years later, in Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q.*) Futurism spat on the whole idea of beauty associated with that nostalgic, distinguished Italian Lady, albeit respected by

its fraying skills. Futurism rejected the concept of graceful to affirm the need to combat everything that prevented the full experience of modern man, in life and in art: the harmony, the peacefulness and tranquility of the countryside, the romantic dreams bathed in moonlight, the contemplation, the idyllic. Thus, Futurists struggled against "the thoughtful immobility, the ecstasy and the sleep", because they wanted "to exalt movements of aggression, feverish sleeplessness, the double march, the perilous leap, the slap and the blow with the fist", as can be read in the 1909 manifesto. Graceful makes room for the Futurist *antigrizioso*. The sixth point of the *Manifesto dei pittori futuristi's* program declared the need to 'rebel against the tyranny of the terms "harmony" and "good taste" as being too elastic expressions, by the help of which it is easy to demolish the works of Rembrandt, of Goya and of Rodin'.²

Many futuristic works represent this antigraceful idea: in human figures, faces are modified by environmental influences, changing the traditional perception of a face, which means the abolition of the values of beauty, proportion and harmony that have always accompanied classical representations of the human figure. Antigraceful means the beauty is in the absence of a single idea about the same. The artist has no intention whatsoever in producing a "beautiful work", covered by the varnish of the past values and trapped by the obligation to create an illusion of reality. Futurists know that the "beautiful work" paralyzes dynamic perception and does not help the renewal of sensibility: "You want to put to waste your best strengths in this everlasting, useless longing for the past, from which you can only extract exhaustion, feeling diminished and stepped onto?"³

Therefore, the "antigraceful" idea brings out a warning: beauty may fool us and make us believe in a single, restrictive, tired and antidynamic worldview, based in idyllic aged long values. It is therefore necessary to break up the notion of beauty as a rigid standard: Futurists have abdicated the limits imposed by a particular concept of beauty in art, but they did not forsake art's emotional character. It is essential to convey emotions through the deformation and reshaping of image, through perceptive amendment, to allow an empathetic identification between subject and work to alter the very construction and purpose of art and its illusionist mechanisms.

The idea of the Futurist antigraceful is in the works of Alberto Burri, constructed by materials destroyed by time, discarded

1. Umberto Boccioni et alii, *Manifesto dei pittori futuristi* (APOLLONIO, 1970, p. 51).

2. Umberto Boccioni et alii, *Manifesto dei pittori futuristi*. (APOLLONIO, 1970, p. 54).

3. Filippo T. Marinetti, *Fondazione e manifesto del Futurismo* (APOLLONIO, 1970, p. 49).

as trash, unused, dirty; the artist subverted the art and removed from it a fixed notion of what is considered a raw material of artistic creation. The antigraceful also appears in Jean Dubuffet's creations and Bacon and Auerbach's defaced images, which allude to Boccioni's paintings and sculptures precisely titled *Antigrizioso*. This is the true beauty of Futurism: its aggressive character that aims to break with the viewers' aesthetic contemplation and bring art closer to the human experience in all of the creative fields. The antigraceful is present in painting with the same force as in literature, for instance: "We boldly produce the ugly in literature and kill seriousness everywhere".⁴

If contemplation has been up to now a word associated with an idealized beauty, Futurism is asserting a beauty that does not contemplate, but lives in an aggressive and participative way. The futuristic beauty is the beauty of art-action that values the creative action just as the art itself. More than having influenced other artists and movements through its aesthetic discourse, Futurism has influenced the whole behavior of artists regarding art; In addition to the concepts of dynamism, of state of mind, of concentration of plans, of kinetic rhythm and energy, the vanguard set a *modus vivendi* upon rethink the role of the museum, by putting the manifesto written as part of artistic creation, and to draw attention to its transitional aspects. All these elements have structured the foundations of aesthetics of contemporary art: extend the field of art, build new reactions; polemize the speech, embrace the discomfort.

If art is action, it has the ability to modify human existence in a liberating manner. In his book *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche claims that the role of philosophy is identical to that of art: to give full meaning to life. The German philosopher's translated works had been around Italy ever since the first years of the past century, and Futurism captured his idea and used it to advocate for the cult of the machine, which allows humanhood to extend its limitations and multiply its potential: "Through growing familiarity and friendship with matter, which scientists can know only in its physical and chemical reactions, we are preparing the creation of the mechanical man with interchangeable parts. We will liberate man from the idea of death, and hence from death itself, the supreme definition of the logical mind."⁵

This is the rise of the mechanical man, represented in Boccioni's sculptures of 1913 that celebrate beyond-the-man and

body modification. Today, biotechnological research, robotics and the experiments with the virtual body give space for new ethical debates in the field of science and art. The human body is no longer just the theme of artistic creation, going on to become a work of art in itself, either in Body Art, Wearable Art, happenings or performances, becoming the very own "artistic becoming".

Futurism was primarily the aesthetics of time. All of the Futurist concepts are closely linked to the question of time: Bragaglia's photographs, Russolo's and Pratella's music, Boccioni's sculptures, Marinetti's words in freedom, seratas and architectural designs, they are all attempts at reworking time as well as a desire to innovatively incorporate it in art. The photographic instant, the reverberation of sounds, the verb conjugations – everything is time, time which is not restricted to the idea of future, but deeply related with the past – as something to be overcome – and the present tense – as something to be lived fully, an urgent *carpe diem*, the liberating moment. Futurism has a celebration of time and space as inseparable elements: "Time and space died yesterday. We are already living in the absolute, since we have already created eternal, omnipresent speed."⁶ In this way, the futuristic time extends far beyond the boundaries of time and "denies the unity of time and place";⁷ It is connected to a modern attitude, eager to expand and change the perception the individual has of himself, an attitude that leads us to Zarathustra: the man overcomes the man insofar as he makes now the most fruitful moment, since it is the base for the beyond-the-man.

The Futurist speech, however, focuses much more on the word Future, naturally, for an advertising-related need to strengthen the group's name, but also for understanding the future as all the possible "nows". Now is the time for creative explosion, the immediate boost, the necessary instantaneous: "We believe that a thing is valuable to the extent that it is improvised (hours, minutes, seconds), not extensively prepared (months, years, centuries)."⁸ Marinetti's statement defines much of what composes contemporary art. Life goes, and, with it, the man runs toward his mechanical, electrical, wireless future. The present time does not wait for the man, it does not risk bumping into nostalgia: contemplation, meditation and weighting are tied to a sleepy and sterile past. This hasty life should not be understood merely in terms of development of means of transport and communications, but rather as something

4. Filippo T. Marinetti, *Manifiesto técnico della letteratura futurista* (APOLLONIO, 1970, p. 111).

5. Filippo T. Marinetti, *Manifiesto técnico della letteratura futurista* (APOLLONIO, 1970, p. 112).

6. Filippo T. Marinetti, *Fondazione e manifesto del Futurismo* (APOLLONIO, 1970, p. 48).

7. Carlo Carrà, *La pittura dei suoni, rumori e odori* (APOLLONIO, 1970, p. 163).

8. Filippo T. Marinetti et al., *Manifiesto do teatro futurista sintético* (BERNARDINI, 1980, p. 181).

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that embraces all aspects of existence. If Boccioni named one of his paintings *Elasticity* (1912), it is because the vanguard aesthetic concepts were seen as thus, as elastic rubbers, who cannot and do not wish to limit their own potential due to their definitions. An example of this idea lies in the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature* and Marinetti's statement in it: "One should use infinitive, because they adapt themselves elastically to nouns and don't subordinate them to the writer's I that observes or imagines. Alone, the infinitive can provide a sense of the continuity of life and the elasticity of the intuition that perceives it."⁹

Therefore, the understanding of life is elastic, and to experience this understanding means to be immersed in continuous movement, looking at life as a dynamic process, both in its material aspects (cars, newspapers, songs, dialogues, fights, seratas, trams, aeroplanes, streets) and immaterial aspects (reminiscences, thoughts, concurrencies, streams of ideas, intuitions, imaginative associations). On valuing imagination in the same way as mechanical gears, Futurism gave way to the kickoff to build a virtual world. While he was writing his 1913 manifesto *L'Immaginazione senza fili and le parole in libertà* (*Wireless Imagination—Words in Freedom*), Marinetti explored the issue of time in its aesthetic and linguistic bias, by placing the speed as a vital ingredient in communication, capable of integrating and mediate our relationship with the world. This wireless imagination exploded decades later with the art performed in videos, televisions and computers, in new media that continually builds contemporary art by bringing the question of the passage of time to art and by exploring data and information transmission occurring at the speed of light. The video, which is a synthesis of the passage of time with the image, an information transmitter consumed in seconds, investigates our current wireless civilization, one that is distressed due to its inability to extend time. The euphoria that comes from technological innovations also brought us the disturbing and existential character of time management.

The belief in science and technology, one of Futurism aesthetic's main axes, created new opportunities for men and modified their relationship towards daily pace. The vanguard thinks of time and automatically of the pace of men's creative impulses. The new pace of industrial civilization stems from the transformation of time itself, from circular to spiraled. This idea printed in Futurism through concepts such as concurrency, intuition, continuity of events in memory, the absolute motion and relative motion, thus

building an aesthetic that incorporates all that is seen and everything it remembers in a same space. Here we say that the memory of emotions is more important than the reminder of the cause that produced it.

Modernity, elastic and simultaneous in its range of possibilities, can allow an art with its same characteristics. The idea of finishing a work of art has become too complex these days and the concept of open work as expressed by Umberto Eco, in spite of the dangers, still works somehow: the finishing – and therefore the meaning – of a work of art is a dynamic process, both intellectual and emotional, where the active participation of the spectator (a person that nowadays we would call a "transforming spectator" or, better yet, a "participant") is crucial. The reorganization of everyday life elements – art's raw materials – creates the artistic experience, more elastic than ever. What would Marinetti say of this? He, who has also taught that, precisely after suffering an accident on the road and flipping over his car, he insulated the place with ropes and called people to see the "great modern experience"? In this episode, Marinetti transformed accidental, the "now" in art, and "futuristically" heralded artistic installations that, decades later, would constitute one of the branches of contemporary art:

Together, we shall invent what I call WIRELESS imagination. One day, we shall come to an even more essential art, and in this day we shall suppress all of the first terms of our analogies, inasmuch as we do not do anything other than giving continuity to the unbroken stream of second terms. In order to do that, we must renounce being understood. Being understood is not necessary.¹⁰

This whole new relationship of Futurism with time finds its setting in the metropolis, which expresses the belief in progress, the creative possibility and the optimism of future, becoming a stage for human drama. The great urban center, the only place where printed Futurist manifests can fully be, houses the drive of the accelerated time of life, becoming a field for unprecedented aesthetic. In our postmodern society, marked by information, cities remain as places of production, departure and arrival time of real and especially virtual movement networks. Time as a multiple thing allows the mobility of ideas, persons, objects and space: this continuous flow of material and immaterial aspects, this movement of all things, as in Boccioni's triptych *States of Mind* (Left: "The Farewells," Center: "Those Who Go," Right: "Those Who Stay") takes place today in an instantaneous and more complex manner.

9. Filippo T. Marinetti, *Manifesto técnico della letteratura futurista* (APOLLONIO, 1970, p. 105).

10. Filippo T. Marinetti, *Manifesto técnico della letteratura futurista* (APOLLONIO, 1970, p. 111).

This multiplicity of time was considered by Futurists as a primordial element in the constitution of an aesthetic that privileges synthesis rather than analysis. The valorization of that, which was used by the Italian group to justify their criticisms to Picasso's Cubism, regarded as overly analytical, sought to come up with a new tradition in which every aspect of modern life would be intertwined, as a symbiotic role in which art would not be on the sidelines of the process. The fragmentation of modern life in a variety of fields due to its fast-paced rhythm is a positive aspect to the extent that this fragmentation never loses the sense of the wholesome. A Futurist – and largely Bergsonian – point of view sees the various moments of human existence as an ongoing process, not as isolated from each other. Only unity gives meaning to man's modern experience.

The futuristic synthesis is built upon the junction of the most disparate elements possible. For example, in his musical work named *Cinque sintesi radiophoniche* (1933), Marinetti used excerpts from several recognizable sounds – noises of stirring water, songbird, the Italian national anthem, a song from the Orient and another from the West, shouting and punching noises from a boxing match, the roar of a car engine, opera sounds, a crying child and pure silence – in order to build a synthesis of noises, through the purposely absurd contrast between them, that was a musical synthesis of modern existence itself. The discontinuity of a narrative – be it musical, cinematic or literary – only makes sense when its understanding leads to a sense of synthesis, keeping itself away from the analytical, surgical process.

To integrate all areas of human experience and make them all "Futuristicable" – that is the mission of the manifests drawn up and published by the Italian avant-garde. If, as we have seen, the Futurist aesthetic is guided by the absolute necessity of synthesis – temporal, spatial, emotional –, its task to integrate all components of modernity demands the elaboration and dissemination of a whole program: hundreds of manifests were produced to meet the need to fill in every area of human life with a revolutionary project.

This Futurist project was based on the desire for a radical reconstruction of the universe, an operation that led vanguard members to understand artistic expression in a different manner, not just as painting, sculpture and architecture: music, dance, photography, cinema, theater, clothing, politics, cinema, photography, cooking and furniture: everything was considered by the vanguard. Marinetti was a bold entrepreneur, one of the men who knew best how to explore marketing and advertising resources in

that period; he was the first to claim a modern cultural project for Italy, allowing Italian artists to venture away of artistic traditions and to breathe in relief. Although many artists turned up their noses at Futurism's controversial propositions, the manifestation of alternatives and possibilities was repeatedly expressed. The Futurist project was not 100 percent accepted in its own country; however, its aftershocks persisted. Even though much of the vanguard poetics has been constructed by elements that were not new whatsoever, one must consider the Futurist merit of drawing up a new speech for and about art, of breaking with the commonplace of artistic creation and encouraging change.

For Futurists, the way in which it is transmitted is as important as the message. The vanguard made the radicalism of the strict language an essential part for the foundation of a new tradition in art by breaking the straight relationship with the past in order to build itself over the foundations of new expression forms. Although the entire chronology of art is marked by breaks with certain previous traditions, Futurism did not deny or make fun of the past, as one may think; it is essentially revised in a radical way, destroyed in order to be rebuilt in a modern scope. Thus, many of the artistic tradition's elements can be found in the Futurist aesthetic, be them national or not; However, the presence of these only reinforces the desire of the movement to rethink the cultural panorama of its country in its entirety. More than being a vanguard destitute of values, Futurism had a more revisionist stance and Reconstructive thereof.

This revisionist feature marked the movement forcefully, which, in its hundreds of written manifests, sought to promote a debate on the chronology of Italian culture, pointing out its flaws, screwups, and blunders. After this step, the text presented a programmatic presentation of claims divided into specific points (a similar textual structure to, for example, the Manifesto of the Communist Party by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, written in 1848). This revisionist kind of task that marked Italian Vanguard marked so striking not only 20th century's modern art, but also contemporary art and other postmodern experiments.

If art is a project for Futurism, Futurist manifestos collaborated heavily in this sense. No other 20th century avant-garde group took so much responsibility over writing texts such as the Futurists: the manifesto is the group's propaganda strategy, an important constituent element of the integration process between art and life, a bellwether of modern society and its information vehicles; it is the futuristic action's fundamental element, designed to be disposed of by the impatient car-driving hands peppering the streets and

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sidewalks. It is the very own “city that rises”, and its importance in this process of integration with modernity art transcends the printed content it houses.

The Futurist manifesto is not meant to be read only: it can't run the risk of becoming a mere document, as well as a book, “a means absolutely Pastist to retain and communicate thought”,¹¹ however, upon being distributed in Futurist seratas, upon being hurled enthusiastically on the streets, it should be looked upon as a constituent matter of major urban centres. By being in the streets it falls upon the feet of some passerby, disturbing the view of people crossing the street, delaying that carefully planned lunch time. Its mission is only meaningful when the manifesto is torn or humiliated by stomps and the audience's laughter. The manifest is the bomb that exploded in the form of action and performs Futurism: if so desired, each person takes with themselves a shard from the explosion, as a souvenir.

If the Futurist manifesto is the bomb, the seratas thrown by the Vanguard are the battlefields. A special aspect of Futurism resides in its seratas, events where the relationship with the audience and the artists used to take place in unprecedented ways, breaking and stimulating the opposition between the spectator (passive) and exhibitor (active), in an attitude towards action-art, danger-art, provocation-art that infected Dadaism as well. Marinetti's group provoked the audience's reaction, seeking to remove the outrageous word “contemplation” of social vocabulary. By remove the word from its dictionary, a new relationship between emitter and transmitter, between man and space was thus proposed, enhancing the interaction. Today's happenings and performances demonstrate the gesture or the action of artists who question the museological space, aiming at interfering in environment – the communication between man and space is in the interaction between art and audience.

Futurists had a very good grasp on the importance of media in reaching the public, which was the center of the vanguard action and seen no longer as something passive, but rather as a vital element in the interaction with artists. The public was encouraged to react to Marinetti's provocations (Futurist performances notoriously involved fights, quarrels and sharp outcomes which were, in turn, proudly reported on the front pages of some issues of *Lacerba*); by making communication its more explosive ingredient, the vanguard has lifted up the society of spectacle, defending scandals, mobs and booing.

For Futurists, the public was regarded as something dynamic and mobile, incited to do more than watch. This manner of facing the crowd heralded the logic of our current society, marked by

appearance and alluding to Warhol's pop prophecy: “in the future everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes”. No wonder the Theatre received special attention from the vanguard, which in its various manifestos about the theme emphasized the importance of interaction, provocation, speech and celebration of the hectic modern life.

It is therefore in the proposal for an action-art that Futurism stretches its tentacles to the electrical, contemporary, postmodern, computerized, virtual experience of our days. In many aspects, the movement is still unsurpassed when it comes to its transgressive attitude. It was through seratas, manifestos, street fights that Futurism forged its more persistent legacy, more than by paintings and sculptures. It was through its relationship with the audience that, nowadays, contemporary art contemplates questions about its own production. How should one comfortably fit the word “spectator” in a context that insistently nudges the individual to act upon it? Can visitors of contemporary art museums still be called spectators, or the time has come to think of them as participants? The very condition of the current artist has to be rethought. Futurism's concept of elasticity is more alive than ever, at a time where words like “globalization” and “postmodernism” are so fashionable. The categories of creator, spectator, art critic and so many other parts of the artistic experience should be reviewed. If we are encouraged at all times to interact, interfere, modify, customize, rework and perform an upgrade in the most varied areas of life, art cannot be exempted from thinking about authorship, much discussed by scholars such as Foucault and doubted ever since the Duchamp's 1913 urinal. The futurists were already aware of these issues, when they observed that “it is necessary to abolish terms beyond “critic”, such as soul, spirit, artist, and all vocabulary that is, as such, irrevocably infected of passadist snobbery, replacing them with exact names such as: brain, discovery, energy, cerebrator, fantasticator...”¹²

The Futurist proposal of art integrated into life was a deeply involved with time. In this sense, the concept of speed transcended the idea of a quality restricted to automobiles; the very much proclaimed simultaneity in painting manifests leaked by the frame's edges and imprinted itself in everyday activities; modern life has become Russolo's noise machines; its largest gear is its own existence: “Art must be an alcohol, not a balm. Not an alcohol that creates oblivion, but an alcohol of exalting optimism that defies youth, multiplies maturity a hundredfold and revives old age.”¹³

11. Filippo. T. Marinetti et al., *Cinematografia futurista* (BERNARDINI, 1980, p. 219).

12. Bruno Corradini e Emilio Settimelli, *Pesos, medidas e preços do gênio artístico* (BERNARDINI, 1980, p. 140).

13. Filippo T. Marinetti, *Para além do comunismo* (BERNARDINI, 1980, p. 245).

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