

**THE PHENOMENON OF ANALYTICAL OPTICS
AS A NEW VISUAL INSTRUMENTALITY**
VITALY PATSYUKOV

Vadim Kosmatschof's philosophy of the visual is inseparable from the modern scientific paradigms of space and time, disclosing as it does imaginative actualities in their intellectual layers. The position of the observer in Albert Einstein's relativity theory naturally reveals itself in the "testimony" of the artist transforming the observer's point of vision into a living reflection and providing a specific context for it. Changes in the observer's position not only affect the artistic coordinate system, but also integrate the previous and potential successive states of visual experience, continually translating the sensual into the conceptual, and returning the latter to imageful reality. In the same manner as in Albert Einstein's relativity, the energy of this reality is raised to the absolute by light, by the light's ideal velocity transformed into information, into a "world picture," in Martin Heidegger's words.

In fixing reality, in denoting it, the artist's position precariously balances on the borderline between the objective and the subjective, between the observer and the participant, his personal experiences concealed by the detachment and asceticism of the testimony. It is capable of bringing reality closer or relegating it farther away; in the process, it acquires certain properties of a "vision machine": camera-like, it can zoom in or out, combining computer intelligence with artistic creativity.

The powerful ethical core of Vadim Kosmatschof's visual representation is immersed in the depth of the image, in the phenomenon of its stratification. It goes deep into the intellectualization of scrutiny, renouncing any obvious manifestation, compacting the spatial layers of the visual, and imbuing them with time and history. The process is not unlike development in photography, as in the dramaturgy of Michelangelo Antonioni's film *Blowup*, revealing the hidden reality with the aid of optical instruments that far exceed the potential of human vision.

Within these coordinates the visual-acoustic installation *The Heart* (2006-2007) becomes precisely this kind of "curvature radius" that is the basis of heterogeneity in our space as the history and "physiology" of civilization. The vectors of observing the latest artistic reality that are parallel in classical art, in Vadim Kosmatschof's optics form a non-Euclidean geometry, intersection points, energy nodes, an actuality focus highlighting in the revealed a singular light resonance where time and space are one. The glow of the artist's spatial compositions in his video techniques displays quantum visuality, a discrete sequence of information transmitted into our consciousness in a pulsating progressive persistence, provoking the cultural memory. Its signals, like sudden flashes, like Zen koans, destroy the stability of clichés from previous visual strategies, tripping over a sense of "something wrong." Formally modeled on traditional imagery as a set of visual ready-mades, they clearly establish the inner radical change in modern vision and the space of our existence going through an endless succession of disasters. The neo-constructivist view of Vadim Kosmatschof's art in fact reveals instant equilibrium in the unbalanced changes of reality, pauses, shifts and rents in its texture where the past and the future congregate and meet. The artist requires new technologies as a set of new optical instruments capable of registering the quakes, rocking and vibrations of our virtual civilization and at the same time of its actual physical essence, its "cardioactivity." The non-linearity of these states, their displacement relative to the history axis are difficult or impossible to detect by the naked eye encumbered with conformism and habitual logic of vision that shuns conflicts and retreats into gloss. Preserving fundamentality, Vadim Kosmatschof's art far exceeds the limits of guaranteed imagery. Taking bold risks, it goes back to the archetypes, to the lost

canons, the symbolism of early Christianity imparting to it the profundity of context involving mutation, cloning and new biomechanics phenomena. The human heart, as the image of destiny and historical energy, “flickers” tirelessly by means of its dual presence in the pulsating inner dimensions of Vadim Kosmatschov’s art, constantly “exercising” (as a subject) its tragic choice while never transcending its borders – in metaphysical hovering, in our eternal nostalgia and mirror recognition of our selves. Its ecological construction is immersed in a faltering dulling of anxiety, in the poignant immortality within that endless standing in front of the reality of culture and life itself. One cannot distance oneself from it, it belongs in its entirety to the continuity of being, to its knots, the family, the human race, restoring its planetary scale. Its open visuality reveals its depth, but does so while concealing it; it gets hidden, but in the process attracts us to itself inducing an encounter in the extent of its layers – in the experience of a surgeon’s and an angel’s vision, of pain and desire. The image of the heart is part of the universal tradition, but in the Vadim Kosmatschov dimensions it transcends the contours of culture and emerges as an immediate meaning of man in history’s temptations remaining in the ascesis of higher judgment. The testimony here is given by the artist’s art, which is also the poet’s incantation speech forever asking “Who are we? Where are we from? And where are we going?”

The video installation as naked evidence of the extreme condition of time and culture unembellished by painting that would convey well-being and illusory calm, it is precisely the technological phenomenality of Vadim Kosmatschov that manifests the critical point, the ultimate measure of the world, its ruinousness, its inflation and its splendid illusoriness. Its laminar nature conceals spatial paradoxes where confront the document and the reality of human presence in the world, technology-doubled and trebled and thus rendered different. Its dynamic forms perceive their own testimony as a light signal in terms of its intensity, intellectual tension and indisputable authenticity. They confirm the intensity of logos and its information phenomenon by shifting emphasis, by denying the image the profanity of cause-and-effect ties, and the banality of dramatic composition, by pointing to the lost sensuous positions of light and shade that exist already in the empire of signs. These positions are replaced by utterly new formally extra-aesthetic modules that owe their emergence to the swift pixel alignment that make up the digital representation code. To decode one of these pixels it is necessary to analyze also the preceding and subsequent phases of its “memory,” forming a computer vision mechanism. Scanned within these visual-technological strategies, reality acquires a completely new “resolution” precisely in the meaning of optimum “image resolution.” It is revealed in our immediate vicinity, attacking our feelings, without any preliminary proof, in direct artistic action.

The abstract picture of the “ideal avant-garde” within this system of plastic values is getting increasingly shabby and commercialized. Its “spiritual sensuality,” its baroque folds turn into an illusion of the real and get objectified. Its space moves toward the surface that, far from revealing the world, covers it instead. “Cezanne’s pictures prevent me from seeing Mount Sainte-Victoire,” Marcel Duchamp complained a century ago. Kazimir Malevich echoes his French counterpart, exclaiming: “today painting is out of the question,” and discovering “new systems in art” that view reality as a structure with a voice and aspect of its own, with its own genetic code and inner meaning. Vadim Kosmatschov’s Abstract Painting, the imagery of its design, scheme, outline, construction revert its abstractness to contemporary “post-history” culture, but this time in another interpretation different from the traditional pictorial understanding. It is colored by reflection, its plastic quality is rendered intellectual and is devoid of anything corporeal doomed to dying or mutation. Its forms graphically emphasize the qualitatively new connections between art and philosophy of language where vision encounters pure consciousness that does not require the authenticity of tactile gesture. Abstractness here is associated not with the infinity of matter, but with the infinity and variability of conceptual visual meditation on the quality of our environment, of its stratification in need of special dialog, which proved beyond the powers of monolog-based avant-garde. The artist

is interested in the picture not as a Renaissance window but as a system of communication links, as an integral of meanings, as its context that can be disclosed only through the fullness of visual intellectual experience.

The three-part composition “Heart” (2007), within this visual-plastic conception, takes on an iconographic and iconological aspect. It carries a special type of metrics and a starting point in the artist’s creative coordinates, observing all of its subjectivity and getting suffused with the super-personal. The graphic quality of its scheme suggests a living evolution of culture, the immutability of its procession-phenomenality and simultaneously with that, the intellectual exploration of its analytical spaces by Vadim Kosmatschhof himself. Its construction gradually builds up a gravitation of art history meanings making up a wave phenomenon of time, its “moving text display,” the geometry of its blood streams, and at the same time representing the discreteness, the atomized nature of its processes, establishing the role of a specific creative personality in the sovereign artistic gesture.

The imagery in the polyptych “Heart” is strictly linear; within it unfolds the dramaturgy of our consciousness history, of the history of our vision and its shape-forming and text fullness. Its horizons conceal a camera obscura, inventions by Roger Bacon, discoveries of the innumerable optical instruments – microscopes, lenses, astronomy devices, mirrors and, finally, electronic optics technologies. Its layers are filled with a visualized heartbeat, an acoustic cardiogram; they hide the sounds of “pointillist minimalism” – Anton Webern and Steve Reich, John Cage and Philip Glass. Formally resembling a computer monitor and an oscillogram scan, the installation of *The Heart* insists on having a witness, an observer and that special vantage point around which the entire relativity theory of Albert Einstein revolves. In its transformations, the artist becomes a natural tool of time and space; he records every minute change undergone by the culture organism during its historical development, the way a cardiogram will register the heartbeat, warning about fundamental alterations in the structure of our civilization and its spiritual corporality.

In his images the makeup of civilization, or rather its ethical component, appears identical with “the heart” – that archaic understanding of the essence of cosmos that already in ancient cultures used to be denoted by special organic machinery – the biomechanism. The consciousness of a human demiurge, his creative process within this kind of system of values manifests itself in the passive voice paradox opening toward reality and admitting reality into itself, into its own space. The artist in this conception sees himself as the perceiving and the perceived, who not only does the “looking,” but more importantly, who is “being looked at” and on whom the eye of being is focused. The presence of reality in this ecological artistic behavior is seen as its organic life. It materializes in the rhythmic states of inner energy balance and pulsation, like the ebb and flow, coming and going, inhaling and exhaling, where Yes constantly alternates with No, changing polarity and reverting to Yes. And the analytical technique used by Vadim Kosmatschhof represents precisely the kind of modern actual art that is built on the internal digital structure where the number, as in antiquity, is a metacode of culture. Changing its strategies, it becomes in this art model a structural recording of its visual image’s natural existence (appearance vs. disappearance), a universal dialog between 0 and 1. Its dramatic quality within the boundaries of the conceptual visual mechanism is clearly seen in the scanned projections of the working of *The Heart* (2007).

The art of Vadim Kosmatschhof has a rare gift of emotionalizing the image of night, its flickering curtain when the world loses visible stability and its essence is teetering on the brink of helplessness. Renouncing the corporeal, the night’s soul gets lost in the immediate vicinity of ourselves, eluding us and heading for the depths of its own birth. It dazzles us momentarily as it makes a “remembering” turn, in the borderline situation between “the living and the artificial,” in the space of salvation, giving new life to the lost. The artist registers this unique “in front of – inside” phase of image state, its “photon” vectors and light resonances.

We stop before the interminable threshold of the artist's look poised for the return of that which seems to have vanished but really is simply waiting for its next term of presence. The heart is a true model of the potential planetary unity of the future humanity, an organic clot of cosmos, a "mechanism" of created and indestructible life, a concentration of human love and its boundless energy, the iconology of future culture.