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Analyzing the Postmodernist Visual Art Events from Douglas Crimp's Viewpoint

Somayeh Saffari Ahmadabad*

Sara Saffari**

Seyed Mostafa Zaravandian***

Abstract

Postmodernism attitude towards all of the arts varies from one art field to another both in terms of motivation and temporal framework. The issue has been largely attended to and investigated in various areas of art by the contemporary critics. Douglas Crimp is amongst the contemporary art critics who have investigated visual arts, especially the effect of photography on the paintings as well as the functions of museums in modernism era and their whereabouts in the postmodernism era based on Walter Benjamin's discussions on the process of mass reproduction and also the archeological notions proposed by Michel Foucault. Thus, the present study aimed to analyze their ideas about the postmodernism art events in order to elucidate the end of painting theory and the effects of photography and the mass reproduction process on the failure of the originality and the dissolution of the sacred Aura of the artworks which will finally lead to such a crisis as the isolation of the museums in the contemporary era. Based on the findings of present study, Crimp's opinion has been based on this important principle stating that art postmodernism is radically segregated from artistic modernism and the painting dominance era; the main questions of the present study is that, from Douglas Crimp's perspective, what approach, in the contemporary era, has made the art world face the annihilation and death of painting and how it has influenced the function of the museums in the present era? Finally, the result obtained based thereon is that, considering his notions, the minimalist art, pop art, photography followed by mass reproduction and propagation as well as the shift towards audience-orientation are the most important reasons giving rise to the widening of the distance between painting and the postmodern world. As caused by all these happenings, the painting gradually lost its originality and this was the major process that eventually led to such a crisis as the seclusion of museums as places where the original works are kept. The present study employs a descriptive-analytical research method. Data from the library research was used to collect the data.

Keywords

Postmodern photography, Mass reproduction, Performance art, Sacred Aura of the artwork, Termination of painting, Museums crisis.

*. Ph. D. Candidate in Philosophy of Art, Young Researchers and Elite, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.

Corresponding author, saffari_somayeh@yahoo.com

** Ph. D. Candidate in media management, University Lecturer, Faculty of Art and Architecture, Islamic Azad University Central Tehran Branch, sara.saffari@yahoo.com

*** M. A. in Art research, Ministry of Culture & Islamic Guidance employee, Baharestan Square. shamisa47@gmail.com

Introduction

In general, "Postmodernism" is realized as the feature of the contemporary era distinguishing it from the modern era. "The title was seemingly first utilized in 1917 by the German Philosopher, Rudolf Pannwitz (1881-1969), for describing the 20th century western nihilism culture as a concept derived of Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche" (Pannwitz, 1917: 64). Nietzsche knows nihilism as a historical incident occurred in the westerners' attitudes during which the highest virtues were gradually falling. In Zimran's idea, "nihilism is the effect of the western man's ancient need to the absolute truth as a superhuman power. But, when such a power was taken into consideration for justifying and elaborating the universe, the western human being attempted to kill this external power and, for the same reason, the world-inclusive values were step-by-step destroyed in the western mindset" (Zamiran and Ershad, 2015: 60). The characteristics of the postmodern era have been generally approached by a great many critics from various fields. Despite the differences in the use of the term posited by them, some common points can be recognized in their ideas as follows: "recognition of pluralism, withdrawing from the hopes of intellectual subject, refreshed emphasis on the social and cultural life, a sort of acceptance of playing and imagination in cultural and artistic areas that were trying to find the truth before the contemporary era" (Kahoon, 2003: 4).

given what aforementioned on the term "postmodernism", in the "problem statement", it can be said that Douglas Crimp is inter alia the contemporary art theoreticians who work as critics of the prominent thinkers' notions. He has been an influential person in the development of the contemporary art theories. In Crimp's mind, the postmodern art has undergone a ponderable diversion from the art postmodernism because these two streams are associated with the originality failure of the painting as a lean art. and thereby the presence and absence of the museums and the outcomes of photographic art. In his opinion,

"the art postmodernism stream has dealt with the scattering and plurality of the artworks. But, such a plurality does not mean the numerosity of the beliefs in the governing styles and thoughts like the modernism era did; that is because the numeroisty of beliefs, in this sense, necessitates art-for-art and autonomy ideas" (Crimp, 1980: 92). Keeping this in mind, the type of plurality presented by Crimp points to the propagation of artistic versions in the contemporary era. Thus, the present study aims at analyzing the theories posed by this art critic in different areas such as the death of painting in the contemporary era and the relationship between the postmodern art and the propagation and mass reproduction processes that will finally lead to a crisis so-called as museums' seclusion. Crimp analyzes his notions based on the theories proposed by Walter Benjamin on the mechanical regeneration and in the end, he investigates the crisis that has struck the museums in the course of mass reproduction based on archaeological theories of Paul Michel Foucault (1926-1984). In fact, if it is assumed that in the view of Douglas Crimp, the painting will reach its end in the postmodernism era, it will be necessary to study the factors influencing the event with an emphasis on his ideas. So, first, the major postmodernism indicators are briefly investigated in comparison with those of the the modernism. Next, in order to approve the study hypothesis, Crimp's ideas about the postmodern photography and its effect on the process of painting termination will be explored and, eventually, the outcomes of museums' collapse as a consequence of the propagation and mass reproduction in the contemporary era are mentioned so that the ideas and notions of this art critic on the outcomes of the postmodernist attitudes towards the arts can be understood better. Moreover, considering the abovementioned points, three questions will be also taken into account as stated below:

Study Questions

What are the postmodern photography characteristics from Douglas Crimp's ideas? How a postmodern

image is characterized by Douglas Crimp?

What factors cause the death of painting in postmodern era?

How photography and mass reproduction process cause the museums to encounter seclusion in the postmodern era?

Study Method

The present study adopts a descriptive-analytical method and the data were collected via library research and searching in cyberspace. As for the library information, it was tried mostly to refer to the books and articles written by Crimp. moreover, the opinions of the other experts have also been studied in order to understand the topic better. Also, electronical purposive research was done in order to study the works of the artists who have played a major role in the formation of art postmodernism according to Crimp. In the present study, firstly, in a theoretical foundations section, the primary and basic attitudes of the postmodernism are mentioned in order to organize the ideas and notions proposed by Crimp. Then, the analytical instruments of the text are collected in order to better classify and investigate Crimp's analytical tools in the line of his approach to the postmodernist art through directly referring to the opinions of Crimp and the other philosophers considered by him in his works

Literature review

given that Douglas Crimp is a contemporary figure and there is a few translated texts on his works in Iran, no adequate knowledge of his art-related discussions exist. The available studies in Crimp's ideas are scarce and limited to his introduction as a contemporary art critic. For instance, Crimp's notions regarding the relationship between the death of art and the invention of photography have been briefly explained in the book "the philosophical foundations of art criticism and ideations" by Muhammad Zamiran (see also Zamiran, 2015: 373). Also, in another book "Aesthetics of photography" written by Stephen Ball and translated by Muhammad Reza

Sharifzadeh, Douglas Crimp has been only referred to as a postmodern art theoretician (see also Ball, 2014: 278). There are also several translations of his works published in the seasonal journal of Chide man. But, in spite of all the studies, the ideas of this art critic have been not studied coherently in any article. So, due to the need for more research on his opinions, it is necessary to perform a research on his discussions and theories widely in order to present a richer piece of writing.

Theoretical Foundations

Ihab Hassan (1925-2015) was amidst the first who applied the term postmodernism. In his book "the dismemberment of Orpheus: towards postmodern literature", he offered, in 1982, a list of the differences between modernism and postmodernism arts in term of the literary representations. These literary representations have been interpreted by Simon Malpas in his book. In the list, the features of the modern literature, including objective, design, hierarchy, perfect work (with beginning, body and conclusion), sectorial comprehensiveness, author's presence, delimitation, substitution, metaphor, selectiveness, signified idea (fixed implication), artist-centeredness and macro-scale history have been shortly enumerated; in addition, a postmodern era equivalent is proposed for each of the terms mentioned therein, including game, chance, chaos, execution process, participation, disassembling (deconstruction), the death and absence of the author, intertextuality, collocation, trope, the chain of the signifiers having no signified meaning, audience-orientation and micro-scale history (see also, Malpas, 2008: introduction). It is worth mentioning that "the binary issue proposed by Ihab Hassan is entirely concentrated on the literary area but a great many dualities can also be generalized to art, architecture, philosophy and the other social aspects, as well" (Ibid). Underlining the aforementioned differences, one can conclude that the postmodernism is a vast cultural stream taking a suspicious approach to the modernism roots. Such a contrast can also be

extended to the art areas. In Zamiran's mind, "artistic modernism is an independent and self-sufficient realm and it can form a revolution upon reaching its peak of innovation and that it emphasizes on the artwork's independence and unity; but, the postmodern art relies on pluralism and the artwork's lack of independence because the postmodern approach evaluates art based on non-artistic issues and representation of the social and political affairs in art. However, while the modern art knows itself free of the social and political affairs" (Zamiran and Ershad, 2015: 31). In a nutshell, the primary trait of the modern art is its originality of the form that is created only in the light of the artist's genius and creativity. Considering the materials presented so far, it can be said that the modern art totally emphasizes and pays attention to elitism and formalism following which the audience and the artist distance away from one another because the artist turns into an exceptional person who creates artworks in the view of his or her genius and creativity. The most distinct product of such a mindset is the emergence of Avantgrade Art. But, there is no single identity and unified "I" that can stay constant during one's whole life as postulated in postmodern attitudes. Therefore, in the postmodern art, the position of the artist downgrades from a position of being elite and as a consequence of which the artwork is relieved of the bounds of the artist's intellectual and psychological moods; so, the creation of conceptual art, whose primary goal is to emphasize the mutual relationships between the work and the audience, becomes important. Generally speaking, the postmodern era is questioning the originality of the artwork, individuality, formation of mass culture and underlining the conceptual art. Underlining these indicators, Douglas Crimp, as well, explores the photography and propagation and its representation in painting. Thus, in the present study, it is tried to investigate and analyze his analysis of photography and its effect on painting and the status quos of the museums in the transition from modernism to postmodernism.

Analyzing the Postmodern Photography Theory and its Relationship with Art of Performance

To characterize the features of the postmodern photography, Crimp compares the contemporary photography with the performance art as the starting points of the postmodern. Based on his reasoning, the aesthetic atmosphere governing the 1970s is focused on performance art. Such an artistic method is objectified within a certain state and time frame. As a result, the audience experiences his physical presence therein; in other words, the audience presence becomes important" (Crimp, 1980: 92). Thus, unlike the artistic modernism, the position of the audience in the formation of the artwork is highly accentuated in the performance art and this is contradictory to the modern artist's elitism. In explicating the role of audience-orientation in performance art, Crimp refers to the performance of two swordsmen (image 1) by Jack Goldstein (1945-2003): "the scene is about 1.5 meters away from the onlookers and it is replete with the faint red lights beamed from two projectors. Furthermore, an exciting music is being played while the show is being performed. In this scene, two men are dressed in swordsmen's clothes play the roles of the athletes but the space is arranged in such a way that their presence is more of a ghostlike and imaginative state. The two swordsmen play in front of the audience; however, they do not look real because their images are unclear and ambiguous looking more like 3D images. When one swordsman defeats the other, the projectors are moved down and the space becomes completely dark and only the music is heard but their image keeps being present in the spectators' minds" (Crimp, 1979: 78). As it was mentioned earlier, his purpose of stating such an example is to stress the presence of the audience and the ambiguous role of the subject in the performance art in order to explain his discussions on postmodern photography. Thus, he reminds the readers of the idea that "the same meaning of the audience presence seen in the performance art is also revealed in contemporary photography"

(Crimp, 1980:94). He argues that defining the audience presence in the contemporary photography can be feasible only in the absence of photography subject representation and the artist's internal intentions and individuality; these are the principles known as the essential prerequisite of the modern photography. In other words, in postmodern photography, unlike the modern era photography, the observed reality, is avoided and, instead, the potentials existent in this art are employed for the recreation of the work by the audience. In confirmation of Crimp's notions and in line with them, Stephen Ball, as well, believes that "in postmodern photography, the social identity of the photographer becomes the main subject of the photographs, even in the photos with the documentary themes" (Ball, 2014: 264). Thus, it is not the photograph's subject that is important in the postmodern photography rather other factors such as culture and social issues are valued. In this regard, Crimp cites Cindy Sherman (1945) and believes that "the performance of this artist is nothing but a blur presence. Although the images created by the artist are very vivid and precise, they are ghostlike because the artist takes into consideration the all factors contributing to the mass reproduction in the area of photography as well as in all his or her performances and actualizes a particular type of presence via copying his images and this can only be realized in the absence of the photography subject. The presence only happens in the performance art and it can be named the postmodernist photographic activity" (Crimp, 1980: 92-93). Therefore, in the postmodernist photographic activity, in contrast to performance art, the audience presence in the social issues is highlighted and Crimp analyzes the matter in Cindy Sherman's works. In this regard, David Company states: "the postmodern art theoreticians' interaction with cultural and social issues as well as their use of various kinds of media and individualization of the common or folksy? images extant in territories where the values, beliefs and identities are formed, can be observed in Cindy Sherman's works" (Company, 2003: 35-36). During

late 1977, Sherman offers a collection of photos without title to present herself as a postmodernist artist. This collection of her work includes black and white photos in which the artist is depicted like the 1950s to 1960s women (images 2&3). In Crimp's mind, "Sherman's photos all illustrate images in which she has appeared wearing disguises and acts out a drama and the mentioning of the details is avoided. Such vagueness in narration resembles the ambiguity of the artist who is both the actor of the narration and the creator of the work. Thus, Sherman's presence in her works is accompanied by a cliché because she is perceived by means of a culture that she is located in its focal point and not via the artist's internal emotions and intentions that percolate from his individual existence. Thus, the artist's real life is not unraveled in these images. To put it differently, there is no such a person as Cindy Sherman in the images and the audience is only confronted with masks put on the artist's face; hence, the artist creating these works cannot claim authorship" (Crimp, 1980: 99-100). It has to be stated in explicating Crimp's idea that the artist becomes the photo's subject in Sherman's images but the subject is not anymore an image of Sherman rather she becomes the narrator of a special generation. In Rosaline Krauss's idea, "these women are personalities from variegated genres of the prior decades and the audience has been acquainted with them through watching such types of movies. Thus, these images are seen more as criticisms of female clichés in the media and this is a sort of artistic criticism" (Krauss, 1933: 1-25). In describing one of Sherman's images, Crimp states that "in this photo (image 4), there is illustrated a young woman with short hair and wearing a hat and outfit belonging to the women from 1950s. The girl is surrounded by towers playing a substantial role in the image because they have her completely sieged and their shades emphasize on this same issue. On the other hand, a special kind of worriedness is seen in the woman's eyes that might be pertinent to an event outside the photo's framework. We do not know what has happened in the image but we surely know

that something impossible is about to come true” (Crimp, 1970: 80-83). Based what has been discussed so far, three important properties form in Sherman’s works: the first is that the trails of culture and society become accentuated and that the personalities, as subjects, do not refer to a specific person and they are only presented ambiguously and more as ghosts and, thirdly, that the artist endeavors to give the audience a more accentuated presence in making judgments. That is because the audience is free to retell from whatever the path s/he is approaching the photo a novel narration of the photos’ personalities and it is via pointing to deliberate states like the subject’s direction of the look and facial expression that the audience is encouraged to supplement the concept of the photo.

Crimp juxtaposes this ghostlike presence of the subject in postmodern photography in opposite to the concept of Aura that was proposed by Benjamin. Aura, as considered by Benjamin, is the thing that is omitted in propagation technique and reproduction art. In his mind, “in propagation technique, the reproduced subject is separated from the realm of tradition for two reasons: first of all because the numerous reproduction of a work results in the replacement of a plural collection by the unitary existence of the main work and, secondly, because the audience can reactivate the pluralized subject and gives it a new life at any occasion it faces the reproduced artwork” (Benjamin, 1969: 221). Thus, the sublimity concept of the original art, particularly in painting as a lean art of the modernism era, as considered by Benjamin, is downgraded by the mechanical technology. Parallel to this, Crimp, completing and continuing Benjamin’s ideas, remarks that “in postmodern photography, the image displaying the social identity of the photographer and his or her expression of the image enjoys an Aura which is absent from the artistic images reproduced based on mechanical methods. Thus, the interpretation of the Aura in postmodern photography is completely in conflict with same interpretation in regard of the originality of the painting and its

mass reproduction because, in painting, the aura concept depends on the painter artist’s presence and footprint of his or her individuality conveying a sort of an emotional effect in the visual effect thereof. But, in postmodern photography, the aura concept is suspended over the degree to which the image is vivid and also to the extent to which the photographer pays attention to the culture and environment of the intended subject as well as to the cultural identity of the photographer in creating an artwork and to the importance of the audience’s role, as well” (Crimp, 1980: 94-97). This way, the aura concept the way it is posited by Crimp in photography as compared to the other contemporary visual arts acquires the sacrosanctity intended by Benjamin; but, the other visual arts are stripped off of their consecration aura and sublimity concept by photography and the mass reproduction process. As it is reasoned by Crimp, Eugene Atget (1857-1927) is the initiator of the freeing of the visual arts from their aura by his use of photography technique and this event is realized as the most important objective and accomplishment of photography school in the postmodernism era because the aura concept of the visual works becomes wasted by photography and mass reproduction and the museums, as places where the genuine works garnished by cultural and traditional values, have been confronted with a ponderable crisis” (Ibid: 69). That is because photography and mechanical technology have provided for the instantaneous meeting of the artwork at any moment. On the contrary, in combating the mass reproduction process and dissolution of sacred aura in art, especially in painting, some painters and artists and art critics have begun expressing objections since 1970 on. For example, Barbara Rose (1938) states, in a text she had provided for the painting exhibition in 1980, that “painting is a sublime and superb art in opposition to which are deployed photography and the entire forms of mechanical reproduction that are seeking to deprive the artwork from its sacred aura” (Rose, 1979: 27). From the perspectives of these critics and artists, every artistic media, including painting,

should only benefit from its special attributes, not its representation, to display beauty. So, the color, form and visual values are emphasized in painting and such a mindset finally led to the abstractionism and elitism of the artists in the modernism era. In regard of these painters, Crimps declares that “the objective of the painters and critics from 1970s to 1980s was emphasizing the artist’s trace and re-blossoming of the lost originality of the painting and the other visual arts. But, beyond all these concerns, a threat, more important than the photographic activities and mass reproduction, jeopardized painting in the contemporary era and it is the fact that in the course of painting’s loss of its sacred aura, by photography, the latter, per se, succeeded in snatching the sublimity concept of the former and this made a real and difficult competition emerge between the two” (Crimp, 1980: 26). Thus, the competition between painting and photography is not for representation of the subject in the contemporary era rather it is on the place where the original artwork is kept, to wit the museum. That is because, as reasoned by Crimp, “the museums are looking for unprecedented works enjoying a sacred aura” (Crimp, 1970: 80) and such a consecration can be only be actualized in the course of a method of photography in which the cultural identity of the photographer is replaced by the subject. In short, in the postmodernist photography theory, Crimp, inclining towards Benjamin’s notions, considers a foundation for the interpretation of photography medium in which the entire attention is centralized on the cultural bedding and social application of the photographs unlike the aesthetic attitudes paying more attention to the lean form of modernism. Thus, in line with this, it can be asserted that the most important feature of the postmodern photography, as viewed by Crimp, is paying attention to audience-orientation, cultural context and social expressionism all of which are created in a specific approach adopted by the photographer; but, such a method of expression can be rendered feasible when defamiliarization permutation is carried out in the subject and nothing other than environment becomes involved in defining a subject (Fig. 1, 2, 3 & 4).

Analyzing the End of Painting Theory

Crimp presents the end of painting theory as influenced by an article entitled “an artwork on mechanical reproduction era” by Walter Benjamin (Crimp, 1980: 91-101). Thus, it is necessary to present an introduction to Benjamin’s opinions in the present study. In Benjamin’s idea, “the contemporary art is no longer in possession of a sublime and far-fetched position like before because the machinal technology has opened new ways of thinking about history and philosophy of art to us” (Benjamin, 2005: 1). The primary goal of Benjamin is understand the nature of artistic experience in the era of technology. Therefore, he contemplates about a stream of aestheticism that sets the grounding for a historical and social experience of the art. In his mind, “in various eras, the artistic experiences are formed subjected to the structures residing in the social context of the same era” (Benjamin, 1989: 122). Due to the same reason, the reproducible art grows in the machinal technology era and provides the masses with the ability to experience art and the entire individuals are drowned in the observation of an artwork. As opined by Benjamin, the humans’ sensory perceptions are associated with their human nature and social conditions. In his opinion, “the methods



Fig. 1. Jack Goldstone, Tow Fencers (1977). Source: www.artnet.com.



Fig. 2. Cindy Sherman, Untitled Film Still (1978-1980).
Source: www.artnet.com.



Fig. 3. Cindy Sherman, Untitled Film Still (1978-1980).
Source: www.artnet.com.



Fig. 4. Cindy Sherman, Untitled Film Still (1978-1980).
Source: www.artnet.com.

of humans' sensory perceptions in confrontation with the existence of the human communities have been transformed during the long history of art, so, in the present era, the propagation technique has caused changes in the experiences of artwork and, subsequently, the nature of art. But, such a change originates, not from the contents of the works, but from the quality of perception and interaction with the artworks' audience" (Benjamin, 1968: 325). Pondering over Benjamin's utterance, it can be stated that the artist is not any longer considered as an independent and creative personality but as an individual who gets involved in the production of artwork by taking his social and historical situation into consideration. In Wolf's mind, "under such circumstances, the artist becomes like a producer who has been overcome by the social and cultural conditions existent in his or her era since his job has become making use of technical instruments and formulating them in an artwork and the external facilities shape the way his or her artwork would look like" (Wolf, 1989: 80). Thus, it is through this formation of the propagation technique in the area of art, especially in painting, that the multimedia arts reserve themselves a superior position. In addition, in the area of postmodern photography, as well, the photographs and the reproductions that are exhibited via taking the general public's visual culture into account, quite contrary to representational photography, there is displayed a sort of reality that has been turned into a pluralist element in its pass through the pure formalism of the modernism in the face of which the audience suffices only to the instant the artwork is brought to its view and steps into the arena of judgment.

From Zamiran's viewpoint, "Crimp, following the lead of Benjamin, believes that the death of painting occurs with the invention of photography that is because the latter provides for the possibility of reproducing the artwork mechanically and such a propagation causes the former to be stripped of its uniqueness and originality as two primary goals of modernism art" (Zamiran, 2015: 376). In other

words, photography and mass reproduction dented the method with which the other visual arts, including painting, were judged in that the painting took steps towards abstractionism of its pure form so as to dodge the apathy and this was the reality with the inclination towards which the modern art was seeking to suppress and evade such outcomes as its seclusion brought about by painting. However, this approach made the painting to be again converted to a pioneering art in modernism era. But, during 1970s to 1980s, painting was again threatened by the photography's steps towards conceptual art, this time more seriously. That is because the painters had no way out but to be inclined towards the other artistic media and this was against the lean formalist approaches of the modernism era. In this respect, Crimp, as an art critic, announced the present era as the termination period of painting for such a reason that the postmodernist photographers, quite opposite to the representational photographers of the modern era, avoided making records of the reality of the subjects and, in return, utilized the photography's potentials to induce the audience make and remake an artwork. Thus, Crimp's logic, in this regard, is against what the headstrong defenders of painting, including Barbara Rose, claimed. In Barbara Rose's mind, "painting is a sublime and excellent artistic phenomenon that is recognized as a major element in the entire artistic areas and, considering the concept of freedom, it is inherently liberal and a meaningful human activity and the only hope of the artists for preserving such a sublime art. That is because this art is genuine, individual and the product of the inventive human mind's creativeness" (Rose, 1979: n.p). In his statements, Barbara Rose especially emphasizes on the artists' elitism and, as it was mentioned in the above lines, elitism is the primary characteristic of the modernism era. But, Crimp's objective is proving the disintegration of artist-orientation that has occurred in contemporary art by photography and it has, in the end, led to the metamorphosis of the audience-orientation in the postmodern era. Of course, there were other individuals like Paul

Dlaroche (1797-1856), as well, who, before Crimp, had declared the news of the termination of painting by photography. "About one and a half centuries ago, Paul Dlaroche announced the death of painting considering the apparent ease of heliographing unstable images in the camera obscura that were seminally inscribed on metal plates by Nicéphore Niepce (1765-1833) followed by its upgrading by Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre (1787-1851)" (Ball, 2014: 34). It has to be mentioned in explaining the issue that photography, invented in 1839, was little by little turning into an enemy of painting because it deprived the artworks, including painting, from their uniqueness trait through its adoption of a representational approach and propagation of copies. But, on the other hand, from Crimp's viewpoint, "besides photography and mass reproduction, the minimalist and pop arts, as well, were two parallel streams that were acting against the uniqueness and originality of the artworks and the traditional values of modernism and played important roles in the formation of postmodern art" (Crimp, 1980: 25-26). In Linten's idea, "the term pop art incorporates a wide domain of the various artistic activities the common feature of which is their reliance on the mass media images" (Linten, 2005: 339). Thus, the entire visual signs utilized in that area are known examples in the context of the general public's life that is created through taking advantage of mechanical methods, propagation technique and mass reproduction. Besides, these artists from the minimalism art field, as well, translocated the art's focal point from painting to sculpturing and real spaces with their industrial productions. It has to be pointed out in explaining the issue that such an artistic method was emerged from inside the abstractionism painting that had, in that time, its own great many of opponents like the proponents of purism of painting because they used to reject minimalist art for its emphasis on its audience-centeredness. The artists from minimalism art area used industrial productions in their creation of artwork and this was against the emphasis on the

artist's elitism as considered in the modern era. As opined by Daniel Marazona, "the minimalist artists were the first generation of the ones who had art academy education and as those who had studied art philosophy and history along with their practical instructions thus they eliminated whatever caused distance between the audience and the artwork and concentrated on such variables as light, motion, objects, humans and spaces via arranging simple and similar forms at the side of one another" (Marazona, 2006: 10). In fact, such a special attitude towards art questions and criticizes the traditional approach towards sculpturing and painting as predefined and delimited concepts". In this regard, Crimp believes that, in minimalism art, the relationship between human, space and volume becomes important and it is through combining the various techniques that the boundary between painting and sculpturing is endeavored to be removed and the way be paved for the creation of multimedia art. The artists of this area, especially the sculptors, create their works industrially in lieu of insisting on manual production of statues and, in doing so, they try to strip the art of its originality" (Crimp, 1980: 26). In summary, these artists' objective is transferring the visual emphasis from painting towards a special method of sculpturing by the use of factory-based and industrial methods and their most important attribute is that they try to remove manual involvement and individuality of the artists as well as their personal representativeness" (Doss, 2002: 167). Therefore, the minimalism art succeeded in creating an artificial art during the 1960s in which there was made emphasis on the denial of the influential emotional instants exerted through artist's hands and internalities so as to pale the artist's presence as the only creator of the work. For such reasons as stated above, in Crimp's mind, "the first half of 1960 is the time when the symptoms of the painting death became clearly diagnosable because this historical epoch is coincident with the formation of minimalist art methods" (Crimp, 1981: 75). Dan Flavin is amongst the artists dearly considered by Crimp as representing such an artistic

style. The important property of Flavin's works and the other artists similar to him is their fight against abstract expressionism as a manifestation of modernism art. Dan Flavin as one of the most influential minimalist artists used fluorescent lamps to create his artworks (image 5). He, along with the other artists of this field, used simple materials, produced industrially, in different arrangements so as to attract the audience's attention to the process of industrial productions in art. As reasoned by Crimp, "the method these artists used to actualize their artworks is in complete conflict with the method applied by such expressionist painters as Daniel Buren who did their best to revitalize the spiritless body of modernist painting through reiterating the forms in the painting (image 6)" (ibid: 75). Thus, it can be concluded that the painter artists were no longer representing objectivity with the invention of photography; they made efforts in keeping pace with photography to add to the painting the lean formalism of the artist's mentality and this was the art that gradually went towards abstraction and purism of form; but, it was since 1970s and exactly coincident with the photographers' emphasis both on conceptualizing the creation of artwork and on the audience mentality that the lofty position of painting was again put at stake because the creativity of this art area was proposed in a more modern manner than the creativity-orientation of the elite artist in the modern era. To put it differently, the audience-orientation permutation occurred in the postmodern era's photography and a novel space was opened to the public's judgement. Thus, it can be asserted from Crimp's perspective that three streams, i.e. photography and mass reproduction, minimalist art and pop art, could, in parallel, put an end to the painting's dominance over the history of art in the present era (Fig. 5 & 6).

Analyzing the Function of the Museums in the Course of Painting Termination

in expressing the features of the postmodern era, we pointed out that pluralism is an inevitable



Fig. 5. Dan Flavin, Untitled, (1977). Source: www.artnet.com.



Fig. 6. Daniel Buren Green, (2013). Source: www.artnet.com.

reality of the era; in line with this, Unitarianism existent in the intellectual and cultural constituents of modernism has been turned to propagational elements in the transition from postmodern attitudes

and representational format; so, it can be stated in discussion on art, as well, that the pluralism stream and amalgamation of painting with the other media have tangibly influenced the function of museums as closed systems left from modernism era and as custody of the artworks. In other words, the artworks got rid of the museums in the propagation process upon being mixed with the other media and, this way, they could be directly and with no intermediation accessed by the general public. In this regard, in an article called “on the museums’ ruins”, Crimp begins his discussions by emphasizing on Leo Steinberg’s notions from his book “other criteria of criticism”. Steinberg knows the starting point of art postmodernism lying in the works by Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008) and has the following statement in this regard: “the term ‘art postmodernism’ can be investigated in respect to Rauschenberg’s works and the special alteration of his images. The specific trait of the works by this artist is a sort of flatbed plotting. In this method, there is always displaced a fresh form of image and that for such a reason as the fact that the artistic images are placed in a vast and inhomogeneous arrangement at the side of the other cultural artefacts of the society and this is the greatest change that has come about in the contemporary art because the art subject shifts from nature to culture and such a change is clearly visible in the works by Rauschenberg as the art postmodernism era initiator” (Steinberg, 1972: 55-60). Based on Steinberg’s opinion and following his lead, Crimp, emphasizing on Mitchel Foucault’s archaeology method, deals with the investigation of the art style employed by Rauschenberg as the initiator of postmodernism era in the area of visual arts so as to figure out the roots of pop art that has contributed along with the postmodernism photography to the museums’ crisis. Thus, before dealing with Crimp’s ideas, there is a need for a first and brief contemplation over Michel Foucault’s archaeology discussions.

In his archaeological discussions, Michel Foucault is looking for elucidation of the limits and boundaries of the various topics. In his idea, “archaeology tries

to indicate how and from where recognition and theorization have emerged? In this respect, instead of history, in its traditional sense, archaeology speaks of the study of ancient cultures” (Foucault, cited in Bronz, 2002: 15). In explaining the resembling archaeology to historical studies, Zamiran writes the following sentences: “Foucault’s archaeology acts similar to the study of ancient cultures because it starts from the upper layers and explores down to the bottom layers of the field of interest. Foucault’s objective in such an attitude is postulation of the hypothesis proposing the differences in the intellectual structures of every epoch of history” (Zamiran, 1980: 91). In brief, this method examines the knowledge tenets of every period so as to justify that every historical epoch possesses its unique intellectual structure. Based thereon, Crimp, relying on this method, tries to elaborate Leo Steinberg’s notions regarding the artistic activities of Rauschenberg as the initiator of art postmodernism. In Crimp’s mind, “the term ‘post modernism’ as put forth by Steinberg, points to the deprivation that has been named epistemology and plausibility of modernism archive; moreover, postmodernism as opined by Steinberg specially underlines the different types of image levels that have been created by offsetting method causing the archive of our mind encompass a wider area of data that is classifiable and organizable. Therefore, the offsets of Rauschenberg embrace a sort of transformation that cannot at all be a continuation of modernism tradition” (Crimp, 1980: 44). Put it another way, Crimp’s reference to the term “transformation by offsetting” is the same as the engagement of the audience’s mentality in this approach which is totally contradicting the Unitarianism of the artist’s mentality in the modernism era.

Rauschenberg is amongst the individuals who paved the way for the emergence of pop art and the phenomenon of painting death. In his works, there is always a collection of various images along with a combination of oil and ink painting put at the side of one another and each associated with a

separate signified image (image 7). This artist has the following utterance regarding his idea of his creations: “painting is vastly linked to the other areas of art and life and none of these are predetermined” (Rauschenberg, 2005). And, he also states in another place that “there is no reason to consider the breadth of the universe as a regular and gigantic tableau” (Rauschenberg, 1959: 321). It has to be mentioned in describing the works of this artist that, in his method of creation, the ideas have been directed for the first time from unified and coherent formalism of modernism to external realities happening within the context of the society and the layers of the individuals’ lives; in other words, Rauschenberg succeeded in distracting the attentions from mere formalism and artist-orientation governing the modernism era and directing them towards community, policy and economy and such an attitude was later on turned to the primary mission in pop art. In other words, he made use of these two techniques, i.e. painting and photography, to create a revolution in the traditional approaches in painting. In the critics’ ideas, “his approach was a turning point at which the physical presence and internal feelings of the artist began influencing the artistic work to a lesser degree and it was envisaged as a separation from Barabara Rose’s opinions” (Pissarro, 2001: 15). Such an interpretation of Rauschenberg’s method of action is realized as separation and interception from modernism traditions in that Crimp interprets Rauschenberg’s postmodern evolution and revolution in comparison to the art modernism commencement as stated in the following words: “the initiation of art modernism is predominantly recognized with the works of Edouard Manet (1832-1883) in 1860. The artist’s works, though are inspired from the past traditions, have no sign of the ideal imitation from the prior art masters; in other words, in his works, Manet wants to question the representational method of his previous masters. In this respect, it can be stated that Manet’s paintings have the same pictorial capacity as the works at the onset of the modern art. On the other hand, Rauschenberg’s collection of works enjoys the

same situation at the beginning of art postmodernism because Rauschenberg's pictorial rationale perfectly matches the postmodernism perspective" (Crimp, 1980: 45). Unlike the modernist painters, Rauschenberg combines photography and painting to select topics from history and social culture and makes use of silk screen printing to propagate them and a propagation is the very major mission of the postmodernism mindset. Thus, the works of this artist are the golden marks signifying the beginning of a period in which the museums were gradually confronted with the crisis of losing their artworks' aura of originality. In Crimp's mind, "as in Foucault's ideas, new institutions like asylum, hospital and jail are founded based on the formation of special reasoning like insanity, disease and crime, in discussions on art, as well, museums have been founded as institutes featuring the originality of the artworks as the unique characteristic of the modernism era" (Ibid: 44). Therefore, the museums of the modernism era enjoyed a sacred aura to preserve the unique artworks. But, in the present era, this institute, a relic of the modernism, is now experiencing a critical situation with the dissolution of the artworks' sacred aura. Crimp knows the function of museums as equal to the archaeology and states that "archaeology is concerned with two aspects: originality and the passage of time; these two principles are also seen in the museums law because the museums are the places where original works having passed through a course of history are being kept but, in the postmodernism art, the originality, authenticity and credibility, as integral parts of the museums, have been lost through the propagation technology that includes narrations, selections, collections and repetitions of the previously extant images (ibid: 50). Due to the same reason, the museums of the present era have been inflicted with contradiction because the mechanical methods based on mass reproduction in various art areas along with pop art and minimalism art have targeted the originality of the artworks, particularly that of the painting. Thus, nowadays,

the artworks lack the three conditions of interest so as to become capable of enjoying the sacred aura, namely the uniqueness, distantness and eternity, and these happenings have made the museums face serious risks by turning them to the graveyard of the artworks. Before Crimp, Theodor Ludwig Wiesengrund Adorno (1903-1969) had also given the same warning. In his idea, "museums are the tombs of the artworks in that the works existent therein are not connected to life by any means and the only thing that matters is the historical aspect of these remnants; in other words, there is no relationship between them and the contemporary era's cultural needs. Thus, the present era museums, as institutes, are, per se, inflicted with cultural conflicts" (W. Adorno, 1983: 173). Besides the cultural conflict opined by Adorno, Crimp speaks of a more serious problem threatening the museums and that is "the audience's visiting of the artwork in a place other than museums because the audience can easily at any time and in whatever the place experience the artwork via the propagation technique" (Crimp, 1980: 42). In a nutshell, Douglas Crimp knows such an institute as museum as an identifier of the modernism tradition in which an authority based on self-absorption and artist-orientation rules and it is threatened to seclusion by the process of propagation, photography, pop art and minimalism art in the postmodernist audience-orientation mindset. Analyzing Rauchenberg's works, he proposes the formation of a sort of disintegration in the aesthetic area and representation field of art. In Crimp's opinion, uniform paintings based on formalism repetitions of the modernism era will present the momentaesthetic rupture and discontinuity from epistemological and plausible approach of the modern era's artist come about via Rauschenberg's method of offsetting followed by the creation of pop art, the postmodern photographers' adoption of a specific style and its emphasis on the society's culture along with the minimalism art. He asserts that such an institute as the modern museum which is a reference point

based on self-absorptive representation will be threatened to seclusion by the incongruence of its birthplace and its objective for such a reason that in pursue of paying attention to the role of audience in judging an artwork and making use of diverse media in the creation of art along with the process

of propagation, the uniqueness aura of the artwork, particularly in painting as the pioneering modernism era art, will be destroyed following which the artworks extant in the museums will be threatened to seclusion for they no longer possess originality and uniqueness they had in the past (Fig. 7).

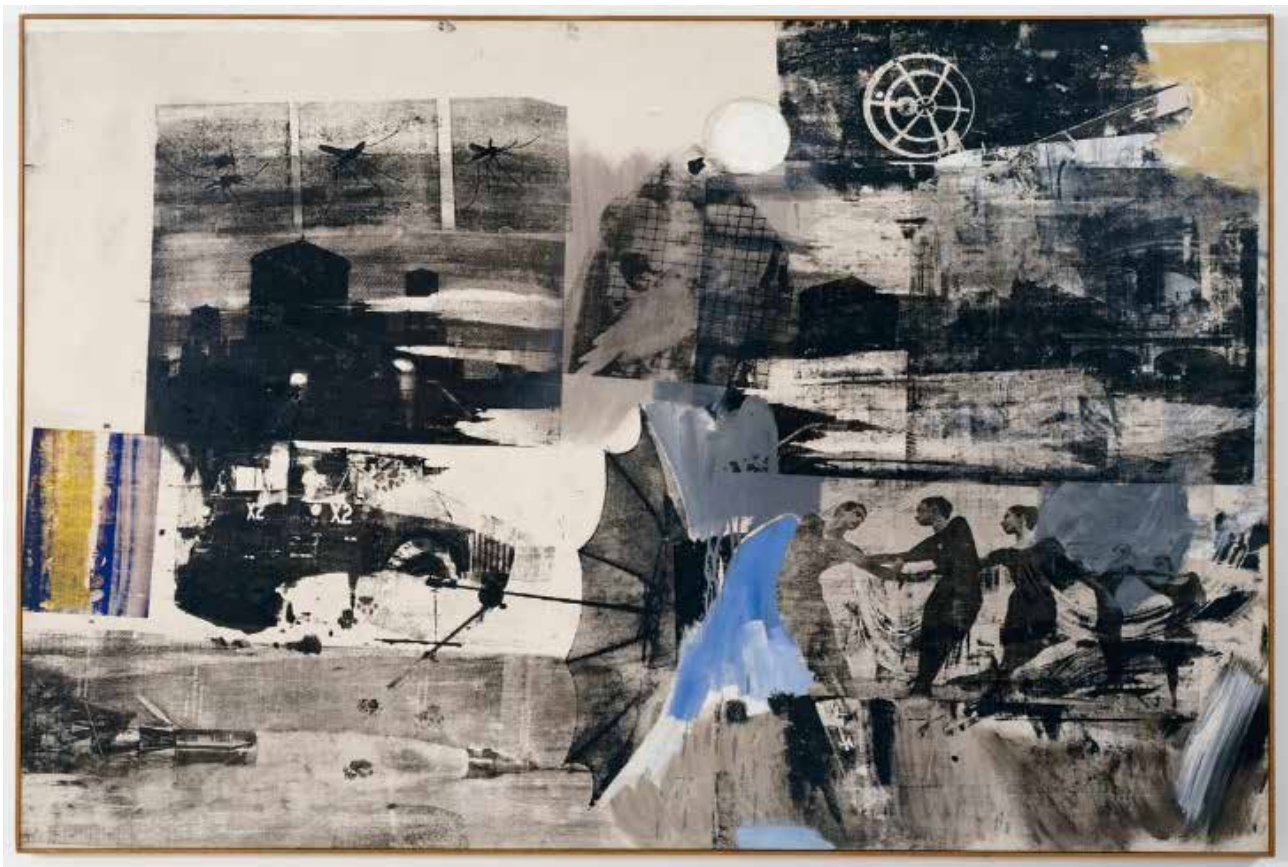


Fig. 7. Robert Rauschenberg, 1963. Source: www.artnet.com.

Conclusion

with the present study was conducted in order to analyze Douglas Crimp's ideas with an emphasis on the artistic evolutions affecting the postmodernism stream formation in visual arts that, as it was pointed out, will finally lead to the end of painting's dominance and seclusion of the museums as the only place for artworks preservation. In line with this, Crimp introduces postmodernism event in the art as a rupture in the aesthetic area of the modernism era in the formation of which numerous factors play a role, such as the audience-oriented attitudes in the postmodern photographic activities, the use of offsetting technique and propagation process

along with the combining of the diverse media, opposite to the pure formalism attitudes and artist-orientation of the modernism era, as well as the emergence of pop and minimalism arts. In Crimp's idea, the main attribute of the postmodern activity is the ambiguity in the narration imaged by a subject in order to make the audience's presence important in supplementing the concept of the images; in other words, the pictured personalities, as the subjects of artworks, are no longer referring to any specific individual. They only serve a ghostlike and cliché presence because the photographer wants to intentionally accentuate the audience's role in the interpretation of the images but such a presence of the audience, unlike the modernism mindset approach, is easible only via the absence of the artist's internal feelings and intentions in the subject of photography. Thus, the bilateral relationship between the audience and the artwork is stressed in the postmodern photography and consequently, the factors as culture, community and the audience's environment gain importance. Furthermore, in Crimp's opinion, as the result of the invention of photography, the painting has relieved itself from the representation of its objectivity because of the fear of seclusion and dissolution and turned towards adopting the mentality and formalism of the artist in the position of the sole elite creating an artwork. But, in 1970s and in coincidence with the photographers' effort in upgrading their mentality level in order to engage the audience in judging the artwork, the art was for a second time turned to a threat for painting; but, this time the painters turned to other creating media of an artwork in order to not be defeated in the competition with the photographers and photography and this marked the formation of minimalist and pop art. In other words, they practically ended the dominance of pure formalism of painting by combining different media. So, the postmodernism approach towards art led to the seclusion of painting and altered the manners of judging the painting as well as the formalism characteristics and the artist-orientation governing it. As reasoned by Crimp, the common features of the streams affecting the formation of postmodern art are as follows: paying attention to the culture and the general living of the public, applying industrial methods along with the propagation and mass reproduction, attending to the mutual relationships between the artwork and the audience as well as combining the various techniques. These features, in a vast and inhomogeneous arrangement next to each other, try to remove the definite borders between painting and the other visual arts in order to create a multimedia art. In other words, the postmodernism era artists' objective is to direct the emphasis and attention towards audience-orientation and the external realities of the society's layers. Thus, from Crimp's viewpoint, postmodernist era is the period of painting death was followed by the onset of the period of the museums' downturn and seclusion, because the museums are always looking for original and unique works. But, nowadays, with the emphasis on the removal of artist's presence and relying on the propagation and mass reproduction, the originality and uniqueness of the artworks are destroyed following which the museums as places where unprecedented works are kept are turned to graveyards in which the artworks are counting days in absolute seclusion.

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