**Ivan Sedliský  
On Culture, Contemporary Art, and Opinion Dubbing**

Last year’s major exhibitions in Venice, Kassel, Hanover, and Mannheim were essentially a global representative summary of the most acclaimed contemporary artistic tendencies. However, they provoked skepticism and often outright rejection among many prominent European art critics. It became evident that they brought nothing fundamentally new, that the epoch of modern art had definitively closed with abstraction, and that the postmodern era is concluding with a transition from the historicism of applied art, ending either in the emptiness of content or in content-driven journalism.

It has become clear that the level of civilization increasingly diverges from the level of culture and art, which, having abandoned reality and rationality, has entirely "dislocated itself from its hinges."

The scientific and technical revolution, in which reason is the decisive productive force and knowledge the most progressive capital, brings intelligence to the forefront. However, intelligence is increasingly divided into humanistic intellectuals, who live with words and from words, and technocratic intellectuals, who are tied to the development and management of vast industrial, financial, and commercial empires.

Intellectuals who have distanced themselves from reality and rationality—paradoxically the most influential in art and media today—verbally and substantially determine their form. When, after the collapse of ideologies, they had the opportunity to significantly influence development, they became preachers and commentators of this development. They overestimate their role and, as always, analyze their own problems, presenting their own weakness and disorientation as characteristic of society as a whole.

To document their superiority over "pragmatists," they seek out the superficial and dark aspects of civilization, even as they exploit and demand its advantages.

Whereas in the past, an artist who sought to "know themselves" would create a self-portrait, today they photograph (and exhibit) their genitals or feces in a jar or a bra. Under the pretense of breaking all taboos, nothing is too disgusting to be displayed as a work of art—ranging from feces in a jar or a bra, to hairy anuses in aquariums and sanitary pads, to used condoms and beer cans. According to this perspective, anything anyone creates is considered a work of art, and anyone can be an artist.

Of course, even in today's degraded postmodern era, many works by many authors are excellent and genuinely expand our perception and understanding. However, they are increasingly difficult to find amidst the flood of average and deeply subpar works, in the chaos of aggressive self-promotion by groups and individuals alike.

Yet, contemporary intellectuals form only a smaller and shrinking part of the broader intelligence. A significantly larger and more important segment is the rapidly growing new class of humanistic technocracy. This emerging class is only beginning to shape its philosophy, its culture, and its artistic taste. However, even now, it is clear that the pragmatism of technocrats will return reality and rationality to art—elements that modernism and postmodernism have expelled—thus laying the groundwork for a new renaissance. It is also undeniable that this new, historically emerging class, by combining reason and sensory perception, will unite the classical with the modern, portraying humanity in a new kalokagathia—a harmony of mental and physical beauty.

It is natural that the new humanistic technocracy will express its strength and self-confidence through art, that its new approach to reality will create new forms of realism—a new metarealism—as one of the representations of today’s complex world.

People in this country take pride in how well they can interpret foreign works, how informed they are about foreign intellectual trends, how effectively they can promote foreign work, and how skillfully they "dub" others’ opinions into their own language. This is most evident in the field of culture and art, where dependence on foreign models is presented as an advantage and is often even considered synonymous with quality.

In his poem about Bohemia, Viktor Dyk once wrote:  
"Your children will take thoughts from the tenth hand,And bring Europe already worn-out clothes to wear."

We are content with being seen as a province, and with a years-long delay, we construct our own self-important world—a world where an inferiority complex coexists with petty bourgeois self-overestimation. We pretend to be sovereigns among ourselves, yet we stand humbly before the wealthy world, cap in hand, ready to serve cheaply. The diligence with which we uncritically import "new foreign trends" deserves less admiration and more caution.

Certainly, we are good at many things and often better than those we compare ourselves to, but we are almost never the first—neither in our ideas nor in our opinions. We are the ones who expertly quote others but are only rarely quoted in the world.

In every era and every society, there are always people who refuse to settle for merely adopting and repeating ideas long achieved elsewhere—those who turn their dreams, thoughts, and work toward the future. And if they can unite, they might, despite our unfavorable conditions, at least in some areas, keep pace with the rapidly changing world—and perhaps, in some instances, even surpass it.