After Brunelleschi, after Alberti…

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Current metamorphoses in the audiovisual arts, resulting from the introduction of digital technologies into the realm of artistic practice, have already managed to affect all the elements and aspects of that particular field, reaching deep into the structure of the audiovisual experience. The transformation processes concern first and foremost the realized projects, i.e. the resulting works of art (and obviously the technological context of creation). However, they also influence the subjective, cultural conditions of experiencing works of art: the conventions, structures and perceptual-epistemological strategies, as well as the instruments that define the technological limits of reception. It happens more and more frequently that the aforementioned changes cannot be located unequivocally in one of the delimited ranges, but instead they affect (apart from the broadly understood apparatus) the structural dimension of the works – the sphere of the image and the constructed world – as well as the strategies of perception. The latter are occasionally adjusted to meet the conditions imposed by the work of art. Such instances result from the rules of image transformation (which construct both the visual discourse of the work and the condition of the presented world) defying the traditional conventions of perception, thereby defining a new perspective of the imaged world. Thus an image suggests new forms of perception, rather than conforming to the extant strategies (considered obvious or even natural). This results from mental epistemological structures being made apparent in the image structure – not as an effect of transposition (a result of projecting a primary, independent perspective on an artwork) but as an original (source) fact: it is after all the image that offers new strategies of perception. The abovementioned phenomena, increasingly common nowadays, may be fittingly illustrated by the work of Tamás Waliczky, especially his three computer animations - *The Garden (21st Century Amateur Film)* (1992), *Der Wald* (1993) and *The Way* (1994) – presented jointly under the title *Trilogy*.

In a manifesto published in 1990, Waliczky wrote: "If we approach the computer with our old way of thinking, (...) we will miss a magnificent opportunity to create a new world." (Waliczky, 1990). In *The Garden*, as well as in *The Way*, the artist presents the effects achieved by employing the opposite solution, i.e. treating the computer technology as a "new means to

understand the world" (ibid). In all the aforementioned works Waliczky rejects the traditional perspective of rendering space, inherited from the Renaissance, and proposes a completely different form, which is tantamount to a new vision of the imaged world.

The traditional perspective, as Masato Shirai reminds us in an article on Tamás Waliczky's oeuvre (1996), grants a viewpoint to the artist/observer, concurrently enjoining him/her to share it with the audience. Shirai points out that within such an arrangement, the space constructed by means of objective procedures attains a similarly objective status. The viewpoint's movement in the context of the image, expressed through variations of spatial forms, is not perceived as a transformation of the space itself, since in the case of this perspective space invariably remains static.

In *The Garden*, however, the viewpoint has been ascribed to the main protagonist of the artwork (the artist's child). In this case the viewpoint's movement not only creates a dynamic perspective of the space, but also renders the space itself constantly and infinitely variable. The horizon assumes a spherical shape, and the shifting spatial relations between the protagonist and the other components of the represented world determine their transitory shapes, sizes and forms of presentation. In keeping with Waliczky's sentiments, it may be stated that the transformations of the image and of the imaged world are a correlate of the changing interest shown by the child with regard to the individual components of that world.

Anne-Marie Duguet (1996) claims that the perspectival system of *The Garden* actually embraces two forms of perception, i.e. two perspectives. The first is a dynamic one, located within the represented space and ascribed to the child. The other is static, that of an external spectator observing the child, who perceives "the same world" in a different way. Nonetheless, one may wonder if we are not in fact dealing with an overlap of both perspectives, where the blurring of the borders between them is manifested in the experienced uncertainty of perception.

Waliczky's subsequent work, *Der Wald,* offers yet another form of visual experience – yet another contravention of the central perspective of the Renaissance. According to the rules of classical perspective, the viewpoint is located in the apex of a pyramid, the basis of which is defined by the frame. In the case of *Der Wald* the perspective eludes the rules of geometry; the pyramid structure ceases to determine the perceptual strategies, thereby also liberating the viewpoint. The permanent basis for the processes of perception disappears along with the horizon. The illusion of depth is achieved by means of strikingly different methods, and the

vanishing point no longer opens up infinity for the viewer, since it ceases to play any role in organizing the perspective. Infinity not only encompasses the entire space of the image, but it extends beyond its limits; it is the principal quality of the visual experience offered by *Der Wald*.

Waliczky explores the issue of perspective again in *The Way*, this time by inverting the whole construction of the perspective, and changing the relationship between positions of the viewpoint and the vanishing point. Although the spectator (the viewpoint) is placed outside the image space and centrally, in keeping with tradition, the aforementioned inversion makes the objects that are closer appear smaller than the ones that are further away, contrary to linear perspective. The runners, seen from behind will never disappear behind the horizon for which they are headed, but instead the buildings delimiting their route constantly vanish as they approach the spectator (thus granting him/her a dynamic character and a status of a runner), finally dissolving in the vanishing point.

All of the works discussed here, while offering unusual spatial experience to the viewer, simultaneously deconstruct the traditional concepts of perception, defy the inherited models of perspective, question the status of mental structures rooted in previous knowledge. Despite their undeniable diversity, Waliczky's computer animations consistently initiate the same discourse, suggesting that what computer technology allows is not restricted to image quality or data processing speed. By substituting traditional systems of perception with new perspectives, Waliczky's works seem to say, computer technologies enable the spectator to discover worlds never previously visited – worlds unlike any experienced thus far.

References

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