
Art in the Post-Pandemic Era: An Approach to New Proposals for Cohabitation

Arte en la pospandemia: Una aproximación a las nuevas propuestas para cohabitar

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RESUMEN

El rol del arte, al igual que el resto de la sociedad, se ha visto impactado por la pandemia, una crisis que ha generado profundas reflexiones sobre nuestras formas de vida y convivencia. Las transformaciones sociales y económicas que hemos experimentado nos han llevado a una reevaluación de nuestras prioridades y necesidades en todos los niveles. El contexto generado por este desafío ha llevado a los artistas contemporáneos a replantear conceptos como la producción artística, la cocreación y la relación con el otro, abriendo así un espacio reflexivo polifacético y multidimensional que amplía las fronteras del arte hacia espacios donde la existencia del otro, y la forma en que nos relacionamos con él, son especialmente relevantes. En este contexto, las ideas de cohabitación, creatividad e innovación adquieren una importancia especial como herramientas para la transformación social. En este artículo, exploramos las contribuciones de teóricos y artistas que abordan temas como la co-habitación, interconexión y colaboración, destacando el potencial del arte contemporáneo como un espacio de encuentro y diálogo capaz de fomentar la solidaridad, la esperanza y el cambio social en un mundo marcado por la incertidumbre.

Palabras clave: Arte contemporáneo, arte pospandemia, cohabitar, formas de vida.

ABSTRACT

The role of art, much like the rest of society, has been profoundly impacted by the pandemic, a crisis that has prompted deep reflections on our ways of life and coexistence. The social and economic transformations we have

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experienced have led to a reevaluation of our priorities and needs at all levels. The context generated by this challenge has led contemporary artists to reconsider concepts such as artistic production, co-creation, and the relationship with the Other, thereby opening a multifaceted and multidimensional reflective space that expands the boundaries of art into areas where the existence of the Other, and the way we relate to it, are particularly relevant. In this context, the ideas of co-habitation, creativity, and innovation take on special importance as tools for social transformation. In this article, we explore the contributions of theorists and artists who address topics such as co-habitation, interconnection, and collaboration, highlighting the potential of contemporary art as a space for encounter and dialog capable of fostering solidarity, hope, and social change in a world marked by uncertainty.

Keywords: Contemporary art, postpandemic art, co-habitation, ways of life.

Background

The global pandemic (COVID-19) was a period of reflection on our way of life. At first, everything that was imposed on us from the health and civil authorities was annoying, a real break in the way of life to which we were accustomed. However, later, and already fully immersed in the periods of confinement, movement restrictions and contact with others, it allowed us to look at aspects of our living space that, at best, we had parked.

Crises like the one we suffered during the pandemic force us to reconsider and reorder our priorities, they are a great lesson in humility when our arrogance and certainties are crumbled. Social transformations act as an agglutinant, as a rallying cry that guides thought, strategies and actions at levels that reveal our identity, as well as the idea of place and our sense of belonging. Returning to the old normal could be considered as an option, but we have decided to look at older and more urgent problems such as climate change or the search for the balance between collaboration and the necessary competition for innovation (Landry, 2021).

Since then, the impact of the pandemic has been felt in all areas of our lives. The flats with terrace or balcony in the cities have been revalued, as well as the houses in suburban or rural environments. People began to value or prefer remote work, many of those who had gone to work in large cities because of job opportunities returned to their

villages or smaller cities and negotiated work from there or sought alternatives, many others prioritized the possibility of traveling and being digital nomads. Our relationship with the environment, freedom and our needs changed.

Art is still a reflection of what is happening and, sometimes, also an oracle of what is to come. So, it's particularly important to focus on what is being done right now, as I write these lines, in the world of art on a global level, in terms of approaching the idea of living together.

The Post-Pandemic Questions

During COVID, a series of questions emerged related to the system that was imposed on us. On the one hand, the inherited perspectives of modern ideas, focused more on "ways of saying" things than on "realities," such as that the world could not stop just as it was moving toward a great economic movement. On the other hand, when all activity stopped abruptly, we realized that we could live without the enormous machinery of development - and progress and questions became more personal: What are we looking for? What do we-- what do we want? (Latour & Truong, 2021).

In addition to the questions, there are also possible invitations to action, such as rethinking the idea of producing, not as a verb close to planning, doing or building, but in an intransitive way, giving priority to the processes before the previous or final forms.

Producing would then be a way of interacting in and with the world, rather than just building it. In this way, we are presented with an alternative way beyond the internal or cognitive representation, a rhythmic coupling between perception and production (Jaramillo, 2014).

Some artistic calls raised in the postpandemic environment point to possible answers to the questions raised during this period of acute global crisis. The topics highlighted are: The co-creation of the world based on empathy, responding to the other; the importance of collective power; freedom; the action of planting, refunding; resist as an immunological response (Jarpa, 2021: 78).

The mechanisms of Contemporary Art Theodor Adorno foreshadowed, in his aesthetic theory, the possible crisis that contemporary artists would face because of the great con-

-version of art by the van-guards' proposals. This line, which also follows the approaches of Bourdieu (2022), points to the potential blindness of art once the redoubt of its full autonomy has been conquered. Likewise, Adorno points out, as the cultural function had been shaken, art began to feed on the idea of humanity. With the advent of postmodernity, this idea fell apart. Society has become less and less human. And the doubts that arose in art before its collapsed pillar could not be saved even by its social function. Thus, art has become increasingly blind, overshadowing its own emancipation achieved at the beginning of the twentieth century (Adorno, 1983). Is contemporary art, then, a particular return to the realm of freedom (previously achieved by the avantgardes), whose social commitment arises from a completely innovative perspective, updated to the post-pandemic context, on what are life forms, relationships and experience?

The pandemic and the forced postpandemic reflections have given way to a work that has been involved in the problem of the bond, in the way in which the other is part of our life. Art has the ability to use creative mechanisms so diverse that they range from the most philosophical to the most everyday things. In other words, artistic creativity emerges and thrives in such a broad way that it is relevant to research on the processes of elaboration of knowledge, ranging from the dialogic complexity (more typical of philosophy) to the living thought present in daily life. That is why we must pay attention to their capacity of conception, perception and re-flexion (Morin, 2017).

The art we participate in today is a fluid art, insubordinate and opposed to discipline. We are witnessing a virtualization and technification of artistic manifestations. We are facing an artistic paradigm shift, and, because of this, the diffusion, reception and interpretation of art is more linked to

sensation, perception or affection. (Larrañaga, 2017).

The current public seems to be more oriented towards the consumption of sensations and experiences. This type of sensory and affective aestheticization vs. an elaboration of the object-artistic knowledge marks a distance and, also, a possible bridge between an artist (a motivated creative) — who seeks different and novel ways of creating new events— and his spectators (Reckwitz, 2023).

We must consider that the inter-subjective and the interactive is not a new notion at all, they are the starting point and the result of artistic activity. They are the main informants of the work; in this way, interaction is the main space in which art unfolds and the one that opens possibilities for new dialogs. Art produces a relational space-time where interhuman experiences attempt to break with the ideology of mass communication. These artistic spaces generate alternative social schemas, critical models that can be considered future manifestos, art proposes itself as a deliberately fragmentary experiment (Bourriaud, 2013).

The art of cohabitation

The artistic investigations of the postpandemic have the challenge of exploring a new approach made of new lines that are drawn while art puts the focus on them.

There is a clear difference between living together and living connected. Living, then, is not just like being in a place, but traversing paths: lines. The perspective of a life made of a dotted line, a dispersion of discrete instants that follow each other, was installed in modernity. Colonialism, for example, would be the imposition of one kind of line on another kind of line. Today, on the contrary, we could understand life as a multitude of woven threads made by all kinds of beings, human and non-human. In

this regard, we could review these ideas and ask ourselves why there is, for example, a separation between writing and drawing or between technology and art. One thing and one person are, then, a knot of lines that unite in that network (Ingold, 2015).

As social animals we do not just live in society, but produce it. Producing it is not the same as inventing it, the human being has not invented himself as a social animal, that is due to a natural evolution, to a becoming as part of a whole in which his role -thanks to his ability- to act on the conditions that have been given and within which he has been transformed- is that of co-author (Godelier, 1989).

The creativity of social life is not something that a person does, but experiences, so we must understand that submitting/experiencing is a paradigm. Is experiencing or submitting included in doing or is doing the one included in experiencing/submitting? We understand subjugation as an active quality, far from the idea of victimization. It is the idea that human beings are who, in addition to doing, are producing their life, a life that is being, that is being led and to submit/experience is to admit oneself as an acting part of the whole.

In this way doing is included in experiencing/submitting (Ingold, 2018). By considering all the factors present in contemporary art, closer to a changing field of various mechanisms and processes—and the tensions, movements, connections and combinations between them—we realize that in it the idea of uniqueness or object of profitability no longer fits, has escaped from the idea of innovation, from the search for results and from its condition as a product and it is there that a more sensitive approach is necessary both from the heart of artistic training and, from there and in turn, to the rest of society as an artistic realization (Larrañaga, 2017).

We are, perhaps, facing a reconstruction of some aspects of modernity or, at least, a less destructive revision of the idealism of the Vanguards. These new art proposals could be summarized in “Welcome back to an idea” and should be understood in a broader framework, that of globalization (Huysen, 2011).

Artists for cohabitation

Olafur Eliasson is one of the most renowned contemporary artists for his exploration of co-habitation through environmental art. Eliasson and the members of his study are immersed in artistic research that has led them from experimentation with the problem of climate, human-nature interaction and the problem of the social. The points of attachment at which Eliasson puts the focus of attention thus resemble the knots described by Ingold (2015), a place where the complex fabric of life uniquely unites to create a living being. This living being materializes in various creative actions of Studio Eliasson throughout the planet, a thoughtful work that had been done since before the pandemic, but that has been driven by it. His project “Earth Speaker”, launched in 2020, invites participants to interact with virtual characters in real environments, thus creating a shared space for reflection on environmental and social issues. Also his exhibition “The Flesh of the Earth” explores the idea of leaving the anthropocentric narrative to co-inhabit the Earth with a renewed energy, a vitalistic approach through the idea of bodies and what corporeality means in this new context of greater dialog and the care of the quality of relations with the other.

Anicka Yi, continues to challenge the boundaries between art, science and technology with works such as “Biologizing the Machine (tentacular trouble)” (2021), which combines sculpture, aroma and sound to create immersive sensory experiences that question our perception of reality. More

recently, in 2023, in her exhibition *A Shimmer Through The Quantum Foam*, Yi proposes the creation of bio-technological living beings that interact with each other, these are undulating animated forms that emit light pulsations that, in turn, interact with a series of light surfaces as algorithmically generated paintings, all under the optics of the marine birth of life, where the interaction between different pieces in a given environment gives rise to unique co-relations in continuous change. It is there that the idea that contemporary art, freed from the idea of being constituted by a series of works (as with material creations/products), has been giving a turn to the construction of environments, complex spaces where the whole and the relationship between the parts is more relevant than each artistic object individually (Bourriaud, 2013; Larrañaga, 2017) takes relevance.

Tomás Saraceno, known for his community art projects, has continued to explore new forms of co-habitation through his series "Aerocene" (since 2020), which proposes floating communities in a postfossil fuel world. In exhibitions such as 'Playground' or 'Complementarity', both of 2024, Saraceno explores the idea of interconnection, focusing on ideas such as shared energy, the butterfly effect or play as an alternative form of relationship, as well as pointing to alternative systems of social relations based on values more attached to the idea of Gaia or Pachamama. To this end, Saraceno often frequents communities with strong links to the environment and the Earth, as well as sociologists and other professionals whose studies revolve around alternative systems of inter-relationship. Saraceno also frequently points to the diversity of life forms: living and non-living. With his

"Aeroke" and "Aeros-cene" research, born in 2018, which was founded by the pandemic and continues today, Saraceno wonders who has the right to breathe? To

this end, he extends his research to the importance of air with collaborations with specialized government agencies. Among the actions on the idea of being a living being, Saraceno displays in 'An open letter for invertebrate rights' a vision on the importance of species collaboration. Saraceno thus becomes the protagonist of this new volcano-style art do in relationships (Larrañaga, 2017), where the center of action begins to be different from the merely human, where sensitivity to what surrounds us gains relevance, to a new art that is able to use all conceptual and methodological resources.

Finally, Teresa Solar has stood out for her participatory art, as in the installation "Invisible Forces" (2023), where she invites participants to contribute with personal objects related to invisible forces such as gravity and magnetism, thus creating a collective space for reflection and collaboration. In 2022, for the Biennial of Venice with "Tunnel Boring Machine", Solar shows us the experience of bodies in motion, records and analyzes them and, with it, builds a network of forms that remind us of shelters; shelters made to measure of our movements and that are constituted by video pieces, sculpture and painting in interaction, it is the relational aspect that takes relevance and, also, the idea of corporality. The interrelation acquires, in Solar's work, an aspect at the same time immediate during the experience of the journey through and through the set that he proposes with the power to make us reflect on the space-time away from the idea of mass consumption (Bourriaud, 2013).

Crisis as a Creative Opportunity

The crisis triggered by the pandemic has generated a sense of urgency in the artistic realm, stimulating innovation and experimentation to new levels. Crises are moments of creative opportunity, where

established structures become fluid and malleable (Boris Groys, 2014).

Contemporary art must be analyzed from the point of view of the creator, not from the viewer, from the point of view of poetics, not aesthetics. In this context, contemporary art in the post-pandemic era can play a crucial role by providing a space for critical reflection and speculative imagination, opening new possibilities for co-habitation.

Art has a great capacity to provoke emotions and generate a sense of community (Will Gompertz, 2019). At a time when physical distance and isolation are omnipresent, contemporary art can serve as a bridge that unites people and fosters solidarity and mutual understanding.

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