

Not models but possibilities

-The supremacy of the advertisement–icons in the postmodern.

“...the following constitutive features of the postmodern: a new depthlessness, which finds its prolongation both in contemporary “theory” and in a whole new culture of the image or the simulacrum; a consequent weakening of historicity, both in our relationship to public History and in the new forms of our private temporality, whose “schizophrenic” structure (following Lacan) will determine new types of syntax or syntagmatic relationships in the more temporal “arts;”²⁴

We are all involved as individuals in a world that is overwhelmed with images, depicting fetishes of material conformity. This simulation tends to become a composition of substitutes to those images used in earlier times for the worshiping of the 'holy', the religious icons. We live in a fictitious reality, of the overuse of aesthetic forms, attained from corporate capitalism in postmodernity. The fact that this function diverts the everyday man to a consumer is already a known thing, as well as that this function also reinforces individual careers in a society of the mass.



By using the creative imagination of the artist-intellectual, that has been transformed into an advertisement campaign of the artist who has been also diverted into an employee in the service industry- corporate capitalism puts up a fragmented, a priori spectacular advertisement in the public realm. The capitalist system converses the need of people for life maintenance, the need for emotion/creation, and the need for personal and individual expression to

its fetish. This service has as a goal to turn into a magic world of suspension ideal models of human life. The image/icon of the advertisement becomes a filter to deface reality, providing the everyman prototypes to be imitated.

The function of this *prefabricated* reality deprives one from being self-creative, and also designates a *prefabricated* life style, made by connoisseurs of commercial aesthetics.

Does this fetish making, also create a false conversion of the individual critical ability, putting people in “social –preference” camps? Even if we assume that people are totally aware of this situation, how many of us will sacrifice the conformity of a life-

²⁴ *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Dr. Fredric R. Jameson, Duke UP, 1991 chapter 1-part VI, from an electronic version: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~DRBR/JAMESON/jameson.html>.

style, and go away from the prefixed schemes provided by corporate capitalism, to practice a disciplined, personally configured qualitative life?

Although my assumptions seem to be already played out, in terms of definition of the capitalist totalizing dynamics of social function, I want to emphasize on the transitional present situation of politics, the passing from modernity to postmodernity. We, the postmodern-era generation, are called to criticize and reverse the rules of this function, to bring them onto the surface of reality, present them into the open, and admit that we should create new conceptions ourselves.

-Issues of aesthetics & politics – Out of the spirit of a given place.

The capitalist model binds directly with the American consumer culture. The new advertisement messaging is directly connected to the new model of the successful



individual, processed by the corporate capitalism. According to Tomas Frank this successful prototype, seemingly, depicts a model of a person who has disrupted the old myths and the models of imitation, heroes of the beat generation and the rock 'n' roll mythology. The new consumer figure is called to replace corporate America energetically in its everyday life,

to become *heroic* through its personal choice of consuming-practice, within the context of the counter-culture. This consuming practice of the *heroic* consists of an absurd scheme, since it happens within the a priori set up level of consumerism that has already reconfigured *heroism* into a product for consumption:

“Capitalism is changing obviously and drastically.”

“Consumerism is not longer about “conformity” but about “difference”. Advertising teaches us not in ways of puritanical self-denial (a bizarre notion on the face of it), but in orgiastic, never-ending self-fulfillment. It counsels not rigid adherence to the tastes of the herd but vigilant and constantly updated individualism. We consume not to fit in but to prove, on the surface at least, that we are rock ‘n’ roll rebels, each one of us as rule-breaking and hierarchy-defying as our heroes of the 60s, who now pitch cars, shoes and beer. This imperative of endless difference is today the genius at the heart of American capitalism, an eternal fleeing from “sameness” that satiates our thirst for the New, with such achievements

*of civilization as the infinite brands of identical cola, the myriad colors, and irrepressible variety of the cigarette rack at 7-Eleven.*ⁱⁱ

An existential rebellion has become a more or less official style of Information Age capitalism, so has the countercultural notion of a static, repressive Establishment grown hopelessly obsolete. However the basic impulses of the counterculture idea may have disturbed a nation lost in the cold war darkness, they are today the fundamental agreement with the basic tenets of Information Age business theory. So close they are, in fact, that has become difficult to understand the countercultural idea as anything more than the self-justifying ideology of the new bourgeoisie that has proven itself ever so much better skilled than its slow-moving, security-minded forebears at adapting to the accelerated, always-changing consumerism of today. The anointed cultural opponents of capitalism are now capitalism's ideologies.”²⁵

Tomas Frank focuses on the American reality, and talks about consumerism and individuality in relation to the corporate capitalism. The scheme 'capitalism of the corporate America' does not differ in form from of the one that is established also in the rest of the western world, whose strategy is the widening of the global market. As Fredric Jameson also indicates:

“Yet this is the point at which I must remind the reader of the obvious; namely, that this whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal and super-structural expression of a Store new-wave American military and economic domination throughout the world;...”what has happened is that aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally...”²⁶



Advertising has always been the non-personalized face of this totalitarian system. The issue lies in matters of different quality levels. Though what Tom Frank concludes about consumerism, difference and counterculture does not directly apply to my assumptions for my project, I will borrow his notions about advertising to distinguish some of my own ideas about it.

I use the aesthetics of advertisement borrowing examples from commercial magazines for employment opportunities: Karriere-Führer, Management, Business-Spotlight, Karriere. All these magazines use a specific style of announcing the new prototype image of the successful employee, and they propose new ideas for the new global

²⁵ *Why Johnny cannot dissent*, by Tomas Frank, from the book *Cultural Resistance Reader* by Stephen Duncombe, from the chapter *Commodities, Co-Optation, and Cultural Jamming*, p. 319.

²⁶ *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Dr.Fredric R. Jameson, Duke UP, 1991 chapter 1-part VI, from an electronic version: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~DRBR/JAMESON/jameson.html>.



economy. What I try to accomplish, further on, is a depiction of the non-differentiation as it happened through my personal work-practice-changing project, where I virtually placed myself in the positions of the everyman. With the ad-posters I depict my self in action within environments in which I am vanishing, although borrowing forms with which the models of success are depicted in the advertisements of these magazines. The main point of interest is the diversion of the product presentation for creating identification of the spectator with the product, and

as Tomas Frank points out also, the tempting area of the advertisement creates an enclosure where the 'spectator' should be identified with the product-character. It becomes doubtful, whether this character could be the symbol of the freed man or an artificial social stereotype.