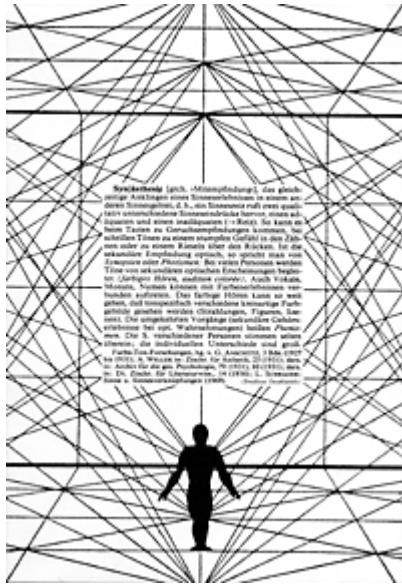


Introduction

A Historical Survey on the Subject

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SYNAESTHESIA (Greek, 'joint perception')

A sensation in one part of the body produced by a stimulus applied to another part. Touching an object may cause olfactory sensations, shrill sounds may make "one's flesh creep". Secondary visual sensations are called photisms. In many persons, sounds cause secondary visual sensations (color-hearing, audition colorée); the same is true of vowels, months or names. Color-hearing may, in some cases, even involve circular colored shapes (rays, figures, scenes) which are seen when specific sounds or notes are heard. Secondary auditory sensations caused by visual stimuli are called phonisms. Different persons rarely have identical sensations, more often than not they differ greatly. (Brockhaus Enzyklopädie)

"All the senses will be One sense in the end. One sense, like One world gradually leads to all worlds."
(Novalis)

The persistent and the transitory. One tries to stand comparison to the other, finds its expression in the other. In his "Soziologie der Sinne" ("Sociology of the Senses", 1908), Georg Simmel compared the interaction of the two principles to that of eyes and ears: they are designed to complement each other. Simmel also stated that "the prevalence of purely visual sensations in modern society has contributed to the problems of contemporary life, the feeling of having lost one's bearings, of increasing loneliness, and of being surrounded by closed doors." Maybe Alexander Skrjabin had something similar in mind when he first thought of blending colors and smells with his music. His final objective was to "free our dulled senses". In psychology, synaesthesia comes under the heading of imaginative, not perceptive faculties. Perception pertains to the objective: the visual, the haptic, the auditory. Blending sensations, synaesthesia, is subjective, a matter of imagination, sensitivity.

Science still has no explanation on how we experience sounds, light and colors, smells and tastes. According to Heinz von Foerster, the original theory was that receptors for specific stimuli were responsible for different sensations. However, this is not the case "as none of these receptors encodes in its activity the physical causes of the activity". To Foerster, the fundamental question is how we can perceive our world, overflowing with variety, when the

input is nothing but stimulus intensity and the coordinates of the stimulus source: "As the qualities of sensations are not encoded in the receptor, it is quite obvious that the central nervous system is organized in such a way that it calculates these qualities from what little input it gets."

"... it is basically boring to admire individual actors and their achievements only."
(Walter Benjamin)

This quote dates back to 1925 ("Der Querschnitt"). Benjamin was an enthusiastic follower of the theatrical revolution which was triggered by Appia and Craig at the turn of the century. Expressionism, futurism, dadaism, surrealism, Bauhaus, constructivism, the Russian avantgarde ... there is not a single artistic school or anti-school which would not have given top priority to synaesthetic visions and experiments in its innumerable keynotes and manifestos, a communism of the senses, the rejection of the individual disciplines and the monomaniacal adulation of geniuses. "Put the funny on a par with the serious!", was what even Benjamin called for with unusual emphasis, "The virtuosity of actors and theatrical engineers!" and "Vaudeville will be the Wembley of dramatic art!".

The above quote is found at the end of a discourse in which Benjamin demanded new stage concepts; a theater that does not want to emulate the Greeks is at least required to follow the Italians' example, learning "how to use theatrical artifice for a worthy subject, by having lots of beautiful women on parade, bringing on stunt flyers, setting off fireworks, putting the machinery in the place of the adored actor." At the same time, he regrets that insufficient funds no longer permit pomp and beautiful imagery. He thus reveals baroque spirit, recognizing the models and roots of theatrical revolution in antiquity and the baroque age, which is also in keeping with Benjamin's definition of the modern as that which is new in the context of the traditional.

The theater of Antiquity was a mass spectacle. During the great festivals, the Dionysia, up to 17,000 spectators flocked into the theater below the Acropolis to see performances for eight hours daily over several days. Unfortunately, we know little about the music and choreography which must have determined the theatrical appeal of the plays. It is up to us to imagine choirs comprising more than 1,000 singers whose dances, masks, props and paintings blend into an overwhelming image. Theatrical machinery (ekkyklema) which made action behind the scene visible on stage, were used as early as in the days of Aeschylus. The Gods had to enter in a spectacular way, mostly with the help of a crane-like flying machine (deus ex machina).

"From the late Middle Ages to the dying days of the Rococo, a Bacchantic pageant sweeps through the streets and gardens, palaces and churches of Europe. Night is artificially turned into day, there are lights everywhere, houses, paths, canals are skirted, a wave of light surges toward the sky, gerbs of fire explode in the night and the stars grow pale life seems but masks, light and music."
(Richard Alewyn)

It is the baroque age, the synesthetic age. In the 16th and 17th centuries a form of theatrical spectacle comprising all the arts developed from the court banquets of late Gothic and Renaissance days: music and dance, theatre and lighting, fireworks and opera. *Theatrum mundi*, the world is a stage — this is the age of theatricalization. At that time, words play a less significant role on stage, the elements appealing to the senses are more important, the joint performances of engineers, directors, musicians, painters and actors who make the theater a symbol of the world. Lully and Le Brun, Racine and Molière, Rubens and Bernini, Velázquez and Calderon: first-class artists worked for the great spectacles.

The world is a stage, the stage represents the world, the play that is being performed is none other than life itself. This is where you find the splendor, the beautiful images that Benjamin

may have wished for. Neither before nor later on was there similar extravagance, was so much revenue pressed out of the people to entertain the court. "It cost me three million and it entertained me for three minutes", Charles II reportedly said after one of those events.

Ostentatiousness and extravagance matched the spirit of the times which, it is said, were not golden at all. Everything is transitory, man is but a plaything without will, everything is make-believe, all splendor is false, all charm is deceit. Melancholy, angst and scepticism were fashionable conditions which one could escape by means of the illusionism and pomp of the theater. Never is it reality or reason that is involved, it is only important to wallow in sensations. The goal of the total appeal to the senses entails to the triumph of machinery, decorations, waterworks and pyrotechnics. Everything is geared to the use of perspective and visual tricks to symbolize the transitoriness of life and its pretensions.

"An obelisk of light held by golden griffins rose from the water. A sun radiated on the top, a dragon was flapping its wings at the bottom. Suddenly, 1,500 salutes were fired. The banks were aglow, fire, blue and red smoke flowed from the dragon's mouth, eyes and nostrils. Lightning flashed above waterfalls, 5,000 rockets shot up at the same time, burst in a dome of light and returned to earth in a shower of stars." (Le Brun, 1674). Not one effect is left out, "everything glides, floats, revolves, moves in circles, rises, sinks" (Alewyn). When it comes to appealing to the spectators' senses, not even the most drastic means are avoided. In his book on German "poeterey" (1624) Opitz publishes a list of atrocities: "slaughter/despair/infanticide and patrocide/fire/incest/war and riot/wailing/moaning/sighing and so forth." Killing and slaughtering on stage naturally requires real blood. The baroque audience wants to see blood gushing when throats are cut. When the New Market Theatre of London showed wars, executions and tortures "mutilated bodies towered high and the stage was drowned in blood". The Salzburg Hanswurst openly relieved himself on stage. Nothing was too vulgar or too lofty — it was the appeal that counted. Reinhard Kaiser managed the Hamburg opera for half a century. In front of the building there were clotheslines with the shabby trousers and shirts of the courtiers, inside there was the operatic stage with lavish decors and marvelous costumes. In the course of one production, about 50 sets were used, machinery, flying machines, ballets, acrobatics, burlesques, local gossip, blood from pigs' bladders. "Hamburger Schlachtzeit" ("Hamburg Slaughtertime") involved a cut-up ox hanging in the open corridor for the mental preparation of the spectators. On the other hand, Kaiser also organized splendid festivals and elegant concerts. He was lessee, manager, writer and composer; his compositions had titles which to us sound as if Erik Satie had invented them: "Fresh Piano Fruit", "Table Confectionery"...

The baroque age had a predilection for the elements and immaterial subjects. Waterworks and pyrotechnics were at the height of their artistic development; they were used in theater and opera performances whenever possible. The pyrotechnician as an artist was on a par with the director. Stage decors, fireworks, words, music and acting blended into synaesthetic spectacles. The visual events of fire plays were accompanied by impressing acoustic effects: the deafening scenario of a firework pantomime performed in Vienna in 1666 must have been a virtual assault on the spectators' senses: cannons, trumpets, drums, choirs, salutes from 3,000 muskets, 73,000 fireworks. A firework during the reign of August the Strong reportedly comprised as many as 150,000 rockets and petards. Pyrotechnics were a popular element of opera stagings; one could impressively burn down palaces on stage or have a sea of flames on the water, which was often used as a setting for plays. When Princess Elizabeth married the Spanish infante Philipp, the Seine between Pont Neuf and Pont Royal provided the backdrop for a show of lights and fireworks, a stage almost a kilometer long, with an orchestra in mid-river (a predecessor of "Linzer Klangwolke"?). Haendel wrote the music for fireworks on the Thames for which half a year of preparations were required. In Russia 20,000 people reportedly had to work for ten weeks to prepare a firework.

"I would say that the most perfect combination of all arts, the union of poetry and music in singing, of poetry and painting in dancing, the best synthesis and most sophisticated composition among theatrical events is found in the drama of Antiquity of which nothing but a parody, opera, has remained."
(Friedrich Wilhelm von Schelling)

When the first Academies of Art were founded during the reign of Louis XIV in 17th-century France, the baroque union of the arts split up into individual disciplines. It was only in the 19th century that romanticism, impressionism, symbolism and idealism attracted followers from all art forms. The idea of the *gesamtkunstwerk* was born. In contrast to the representational spectacles of the baroque age which blended the arts to heighten the effect, a *gesamtkunstwerk* put all artistic disciplines on a par. Odo Marquard found the origins of the *gesamtkunstwerk* idea in Schelling's monism driving at an esthetic view of reality on the whole: "no longer in works of art, but as works of art." Schelling saw the universe as a harmonic work of art, thus providing an explanation of reality.

The universalism of the 19th century is reflected in a number of peculiar inventions: diorama, noturnorama, stereorama, panorama, waxworks. When Balzac visited the diorama designed by Daguerre in 1822, he dubbed it one of the wonders of the century. The nocturnorama consisted of several colorful paintings moved by mechanical devices. The "Album of the Boudoirs of Leipzig and Stuttgart" of 1836 reported of a performance of Haydn's "Creation" with matching phantasmagoria, thus "doubly fascinating for the spectators".

"The great *gesamtkunstwerk* must comprise all artistic disciplines so as to use and destroy each of them in attaining the final goal they all have, the unconditional, direct representation of perfect human nature — the great *gesamtkunstwerk* is not found in the arbitrary potential act of the individual, but in the necessary and conceivable common work of mankind in the future."
(Richard Wagner)

The term "the great *gesamtkunstwerk*" is the essence of Wagner's artistic goals. He aspired to uniting all artistic disciplines, to joining what had fallen apart since the days of the Greek tragedy, to the great common work of art of the future, the free cooperative of artists. He was familiar with what is generally known as *synaesthesia* today, joint sensations, when a stimulus is apparently only applied to one sense. The "leitmotif" concept is based on the theory of perceptions associated with ideas. Wagner, however, did not stick to his own theory. It was self-evident for him that music held the primacy over all other individual arts. His relationship to the visual arts was clearly underdeveloped, which was what Appia and the theatrical reformers at the turn of the century criticized. Adorno saw Wagner's pessimism as the "attitude of the defected rebel": thwarted revolutionary expectations seeking consolation in the *gesamtkunstwerk*, where the "egotism" of the individual artistic disciplines is overcome by their "communism" (Marquard).

"And the great all-encompassing work of art, that cathedral of the future, will radiate and shine and light even the most petty things in life."
(Walter Gropius)

The cathedral of the future. In contrast to the enormous funds which made it possible to translate into reality the sumptuous plans of the baroque age, most of the concepts devised to revolutionize the theater at the beginning of our century remained visionary drafts, dreams, experiments, utopias. His disappointment with the way Wagner's operas were staged in Bayreuth and Dresden caused Adolphe Appia to embark on a reform of the *mise-en-scène*. He, too, wanted a synthesis of all available means of presentation; the actors, however, were to lose their focal significance. They provided one means of expression, no more and no less necessary than any other dramatic element. Alexander Skrjabin dreamt of an ecstatic union, an orgy of light, colors and motion. Music should cease to exist as an independent form of expression, it should become absorbed in a creative act touching the roots of being. To illustrate his idea of a total work of art he wrote "Prometheus" for orchestra and light voice,

and "Mystère", a universal liturgy to be celebrated in a hemispherical dome above water. Vassily Kandinsky critically examined Richard Wagner's ideas and, like Appia, dealt with the synthetic *gesamtkunstwerk* in experiments. His dramatic syntheses "The Yellow Sound" and "Pictures at an Exhibition" blended motion, forms, colors, music and sound; their overall impact was to generate "vibrations" in the spectator that resembled those generated in the artist in the creative process. His "Machine Esthetics" made Fernand Léger the beacon of the futurists and the Zurich dada group. Mechanics turned into the esthetic paradigm of a theater of surprise, of "incredible attractions" and accurate synchronization of gesture, motion and light. In his "Ballets Suédois", Rolf de Mare also aimed at putting dancing, music and painting on a par. He created synaesthetic choreographies to music by Honegger, Milhaud, Poulenc and Satie, texts by Cocteau, Cendrars and Picabia, and stage designs by Léger, Clair and Man Ray. "Die glueckliche Hand", Arnold Schoenberg's musical drama op. 18, was the composer's attempt to blend various artistic disciplines. His view of the dramatic *gesamtkunstwerk* was also a synthesis, not a simple addition of artistic means. He aspired to "making music by using the means offered by the stage".

"Our paintings will express the visual equivalents of sounds, noises and smells associated with theaters, vaudevilles, cinemas, brothels, railroad stations, harbors, garages, hospitals, factories, etc."
(Carlo Carra)



Enrico Prampolini: 1919

The futuristic theater broke with every tradition in the most thorough way: over-all use of technology, polemization, the theater as a play of colors, lights and sounds, of shock effects, of records and "physical folly" (Marinetti). Every conceivable modern means of art and technology is used to attack the traditional form of the classical literary theater. The futuristic theater is aggressive, relies on shock, thrills for the spectators' nerves, outward attractions. The audience is to be put into a state of enthusiasm, to be "flung into a maze of sensations" in large-scale theatrical activities, mass events, soirées creating a "simultaneity in states of mind". Lucini advocated a style encompassing the beauty of sculpture, painting, music, cosmetics and perfumery; Prampolini wanted to replace live actors by genuine gas actors and to show a dynamic architecture of light emitting colorful rays, as well as constructions of absolute motion and noise: "We machines, too, we, too, the mechanized ..." Azari moved the theater to the sky, he designed a futuristic flying theater for painted airplanes writing spirals in the sky, leaving traces of colored and scented dust, confetti, rockets, dolls and balloons. His friend Russolo invented a special hood to improve the resonance and sonority of car engines.

Marquard sees the futuristic theater as the "direct negation of the *gesamtkunstwerk*", destroying all the individual disciplines in a work of anti-art. From the dynamic drama totally dominated by technology it was but a short way to the glorification of war, explosions, mutilated bodies and bursting cities. After reading Marinetti's manifesto on the colonial war in Abyssinia, Benjamin stated: "So this is the Fascist idea of making politics an esthetic issue. Communism will react by making art a political issue."

Art as a political means of expression was a guideline of the Russian avantgarde of that period, of the cubo-futurists, suprematists and constructivists. Their theories did not only comprise esthetic, but also ideological principles, with art no longer a dream or a medium of entertainment, but an integral part of life itself. For the III International, Vladimir Egrafovich Tatlin designed a tower 400 meters high, which was to unite cultural and social demands, a monument of new thinking and a new system of the world. Tatlin put a hemisphere containing the propaganda center on top of the monument. This was where news were to be compiled and disseminated, information and mottos were to be projected onto a giant screen or — in case of bad weather — onto the clouds. Alexander Tairow advocated the theater as a collective art, a "synthetic construction modelled after the harlequinade, the tragedy, the operetta, the pantomime, the circus ...", a theater unbound to free itself from its dependence on literature. Kasimir Malevich founded the group UNOVIS ("affirmer of the new art"). Their projects were to translate into reality what is new in art (proun projects) aimed at re-arranging the space of living as such. El Lissitsky, who designed the figurines for Cruchenykh's electromechanical show "Victory over the Sun", was among the members of this group. Vsevolod Emiljevich Meyerhold departed from Richard Wagner's concept of the gesamtkunstwerk to create his "total theatricalization of life". He confronted the audience with an organic blend of all artistic means available. He utilized film projectors, motorcycles and cars on stage. Apart from an experimental workshop, Meyerhold also headed the "Moscow Theater of the Revolution". His theater was an instrument of political agitation, a mediator between the masses and the idea of building a new society. He devised mass events such as "Storming the Winter Palace", in which almost the entire district around the Winter Palace served as a stage and 15,000 inhabitants were assigned parts.

"Dada is God. Spirit, matter and veal chops at the same time."
(Dada soirée, 1919)

When it came to making a constructive contribution to a reformation of society, the dadaists could not care less, although their premises were the same as those of the Russian avantgarde: rejecting all traditional values of cultural history, dismantling and refusing to accept the holy cows of the educated bourgeoisie. Despite their radically negative stance the dadaists devised synaesthetic drafts and high-flown utopian projects. Johannes Baader invented the "Great Plasto-Dio-Dada-Drama", a dadaist architectural monument in three wings, five floors, a tunnel, two lifts and a cylindrical top. Raoul Hausmann applied for a Reichspatent for his "optophon" appliance which produced sounds by scanning fluctuations of light and vice versa, thus creating images to be seen and heard. (In 1935, he turned the appliance into a calculating machine and took out an English patent.) Kurt Schwitters wrote "to all the theaters in the world" and called for the Merz stage: "... the total concentration of all artistic power in the gesamtkunstwerk." He wanted a blend of all the elements and the integration of audience reactions, even protests and heckling, to influence the action on stage spontaneously. His goal was to create relationships "preferably between all the things in the world". Ivan Goll called for an "enormous" drama in a deliberately arrogant manner: "People are so dull and stupid that you can only get at them with the help of enormities." Every new technical option was to be used, the gramophone, the vocal mask, the electrical poster, physiognomic exaggerations, etc.

"This is our century: technology, machines and socialism. Don't refuse, accept your task."
(László Moholy-Nagy)

Despite the conflict Walter Gropius was faced with when he realized what was behind war technology, he provided the Bauhaus with the motto "Art and technology — a new entity": "The triumphs of industry and technology before the war and their orgiastic destructomania during the war, evoked a passionate romanticism, which was a burning protest against materialism and the mechanization of art and life." A general distrust of the development of technology became evident, comparable to the one still prevailing today, given the scandals

affecting nuclear energy and genetic engineering, environmental pollution and data manipulation. Oskar Schlemmer, however, contradicted vigorously, "But we are! We want!! And we create!". Like all artistic schools of that period, the Bauhaus stage experimented with synaesthetic ideas to make a new start. It proclaimed the liberation from decorative frills, demanding a "concentrated action" of sound, light, color, form, space and motion instead. In his essay "Human and Artistic Figure" Schlemmer conceived extraordinary opportunities based on technological progress: "The precision instruments, the scientific appliances of glass and metal, the artificial limbs in surgery, the fantastic diving suits and uniforms, etc." He created the "Triadic Ballet", for which Paul Hindemith composed the accompanying music for mechanic organ as well as the "Metal Dance". Kurt Schmidt and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy studied the mechanization of the action on stage. The latter was convinced that only technology would enable man to create a new world, particularly because it allowed mankind to turn a new leaf over without the burden of history and social classes. This was in accordance with the theories of Prampolini and Appia; man should no longer be the center of action, but have the same value as all the other creative means.

". . . that artist/ inventors, actors, organizers, directors and spectators aspire to the utmost experience in great harmony."
(Rudolf von Laban)

The new ideas demanded new stages. The traditional stage was no longer suited for the current state of the art and the demand for an intensified integration of the audience into the action on stage.

The hierarchy of rows and balconies reflecting a social hierarchy was rejected. But like most visions of a new theater, the plans for new buildings and theatrical architecture remained in dusty drawers or were only published in newspapers and magazines, but never carried out. After Richard Wagner, nobody succeeded in translating the ideas of adequate theater buildings into reality. Neither Skrjabin's temple for "Mystère", Prampolini's polydimensional spatial stage, Andor Weininger's spherical theater, Gropius' total theater nor Frederick J. Kiesler's never-ending theater were ever built. Eliminating the separation between auditorium and stage was a common concern of all theater reformers. In 1919 Max Reinhardt, one of the few who succeeded — at least in the initial stages -in implementing such ideas, built his reform theater on the remains of a Berlin market hall which housed a circus; it comprised an arena with a rising stage, concealable forestages and a cyclorama. Reinhardt wanted to reconnect the "blood flow of art to the blood flow of life" (Huesmann). Also the "future cathedral", an architectural fantasy of "Glass Chain", the circle around Bruno Taut, had its origin in the wish for a unification of the arts and for a union of the arts and the people. Georg Fuchs wrote in "The Stage of the Future": "Such art either exists in accordance with the people or it does not exist at all. In our democratic time it would be downright ridiculous to consider only the demands of one-sided esthetes." Last, but not least, Moholy-Nagy wanted the audience's activity to go beyond the mute perception of what goes on on stage and to transcend internal excitement to a point where the spectator wants to touch, to participate and to finally mingle in relieving ecstasy with the action on stage.

Gropius' total theater strove after the correspondence of the mathematics of space to the one of the human body ("man as a mobile spatial sculpture"). The audience represented an integral part of the theatrical production, it was supposed to organize feasts, create masks, design costumes and decorate halls. This total theater was based on a dramaturgic-esthetic conception of Erwin Piscator and on his idea of unleashing the entire range of performing arts; according to Piscator's concept a dramatic work should basically be considered a cooperative work of art where the stage designers' task was the creation of a "huge piano of light and space". Piscator revolutionized stage and drama in order to attain stage esthetics to fit the age of science and technology. He entirely technicized the theater by using films, conveyor belts, metal constructions, elevators, projections, etc. According to Brecht,

Piscator's experiments originally caused chaos in the theater: "They changed the stage into a machine hall and the auditorium into a meeting hall."

In "vaudeville" he eventually found a form of direct action which made use of all possible means: music, chanson, acrobatics, film projection, even lightning sketching, sports and speeches. By employing film as a medium he attained a degree of simultaneity and vividness previously unknown: it enabled him to have the revolutionary proclaim the solidarity of the international proletariat on stage and at the same time show newsreels of streetfights in China, riots in Rio and strikes in New York, thus emphasizing their interrelatedness. The demand for a dynamic set-up was met by Moholy-Nagy's concepts. He planned to employ complicated appliances and machines, movable constructions, suspension- and drawbridges, optical instruments, cars and aircrafts. At that time, almost all plans for theater buildings dealt with similar concerns: Andor Weidinger's spherical theater, a closed theatrical space as the stage for a mechanical play; the U-shaped theater of Farkas Molnár, whose technical perfectionism made him also plan waterworks and scent dispensers; the mechanical stage model of Heinz Loew, whose theater was virtually conceived as an end in itself, sat on tracks and turntables; Rudolf von Labans' circular mega-theater which advocated "synthesis as a means of expression". Friedrich J. Kiesler had the fundamental architectural idea of a "never-ending theater" for an audience of 10,000, with a system of ramps covering the entire space and a gigantic double bowl of cast glass representing the stage. Later, in 1961, he planned his "Universal Theater" in the United States: a 30-story skyscraper with several theaters, TV studios, industrial and art exhibition halls, communication towers and a stadium-like auditorium, modeled after the ancient Greek amphitheater. Like Tatlin, Kiesler wanted to convey the events in the moment they actually happened — an idea which has become a self-evident reality in our days of satellite TV broadcasting.

"Now is the moment to reevoke the concept of the universal spectacle. The problem is to make the space talk, to maintain it and to inspire it; like a shaft driven into the mountain, suddenly causing geysers and fireworks to explode."

(Antonin Artaud)

It is meant to be something like a rebirth of life in the theater. Artaud, too, wanted to create a universal spectacle by using all possible means of expression and performance, a spectacle being at the same time a thrilling equation of man, society, nature and things, as well as a refined and intensified capacity of perception. To him, the theater was nothing but a pale reflection of magic and rites. In his manifests "The Theater of Cruelty" he listed his demands on drama, which were to influence theatrical art up to the present. Artaud called for a theater being a "true means of illusion" where the spectator is able to see the reflections of his own repressed instincts: "his inclination to crime, his sexual obsessions, his wildness, his chimera, his utopic sense of life, yes, even his cannibalism ...". He wanted to create a direct relation between spectator and actor; he therefore eliminated the barrier between stage and auditorium. The audience found itself in the center of the action, unhindered by fences or barriers. "Due to the state of degeneration we experience today, metaphysics will have seeped into our minds again through our skins." Concurrence of images and motions, the physical appeal of light, music, sounds of new instruments ranging from strange or unbearable: Artaud's theater is a "blend of color, light and sound intensities and of all traditional magic means to stimulate sensitivity". He banished literary theater from his stage.

"'Gesamtkunstwerk', 'L'art total', total war — there you go with the fear of our century to ask for totality, especially after what happened to Germany under Hitler."

(Hans Jürgen Syberberg)

The Nazi regime and World War II stifled the artistic avantgarde in Europe. Artists, utopists and intellectuals fled the cultural imbrutement, heading mainly for the United States, where for instance the Bauhaus created its exile at Black Mountain College; John Cage spent two

years there, creating a "multimedia performance" comprising sound, language, music and images. This later on provided the basis for the "New School for Social Research" where Allan Kaprow was to develop "the happening".

Even fascist Germany saw the invention of synaesthetic theories which were to totally take hold of the senses of the audience. The Gaupropagandaleiter of Koblenz had the idea of not only appealing to eyes and ears, but also nose and mouth. Pitch torches, herbs and coniferous wood of the German forest, resin, burning juniper twigs and water from the spring trickling over the Thingstead stone were used. From 1933 onward, gigantic performances were held, and it goes without saying that they all unmistakably bore the mark of Nazi-German propaganda. These spectacles had titles such as "Deutscher Aufbruch" by Gustav Goes or "Deutsche Passion" by Richard Euringer. An audience of 60,000 watched the spectacle in the Berlin Grunewald stadium, with 17,000 members of the Nazi storm troopers, the Reichswehr and the military police participating as supernumeraries. Shrill trumpet calls, murmurs from the graves, ghostly whispering, hissing sounds, a machinery to create multicolored light effects and sounds as well as a choir of 1,000 people in the ancient tradition provided the basis of the *mise-en-scène*.

"The distinction between happening and everyday life should be kept flexible as well as undefinable ... and all materials, actions, images and their relations to space and time should be composed in an artless and at the same time practical way ..."

(Allan Kaprow)

After the war the artistic movements of the twenties were revived. Their rediscovery had its origin in America, to where most of the European artists had emigrated. The impulses of futuristic bruitism, dadaism, of the Bauhaus and of Artaud in the fifties led to "happenings", Fluxus movement, new realism, actionism, performance and environmental theater. The theatrical character of "the happening" is due to the call for an elimination of the barriers between art and life and the search for fresh and life-like potentials of expression. Kaprow centered his actions on spontaneity and surprise effects. Happenings were never rehearsed; they were only performed once by non-professionals. Happenings, the "live" performances of the Gutai group and of Nouveau Réalisme dominated the artistic scene of the fifties. At the same time the Fluxus movement came into being; its origin is found in the attempt to revive the spirit of dadaism and unite the media of music, theater and visual art.

The initiator of this movement was John Cage, for whom music and art are omnipresent in nature and for whom theater is where man is. Therefore, he integrates environmental sounds into music and declares coincidence to be the decisive factor in a work of art. It is not the final character of a work of art that counts for him, but its vagueness. The Fluxus movement aims at the intensification of sensual experiences by means of different media concurring. This movement was of considerable importance for the development of new trends in theater, visual art and dance. Joseph Beuys' term "Soziale Plastik" is based on fluxus ideas and so is his demand for direct democracy, his definition of society as a *gesamtkunstwerk*, and the integration of nature, art, technology and science into an extended concept of art and science.

In the sixties the protagonists of Vienna actionism, Otto Mühl, Hermann Nitsch, Rudolf Schwarzkogler and Günter Brus mounted their actions of self-mutilation and destruction, their blood sacrifices and rituals. It was in particular the "Orgien-Mysterien Theater" by Hermann Nitsch which referred to the tradition of Wagner, Skrjabin, Artaud and to the festival concept. The state of agitation and excitement, and the instinctual sphere are the basic elements of the "Orgien-Mysterien Theater", the scream being the most immediate expression of its musical concept, where the scale of existential expression ranges from excessive choirs of screams and the orchestra of noise down to the softest pianissimo. In abreacting one's frustrations, the human body, with its affections and perceptions becomes the central object of investigation.

The performance, in which no longer the work of art, but the process of its creation is significant, was another creation of the sixties. New concepts of space and scene developed and subsequently influenced the theater. While actionism is derived from painting, performance has its origin in the media (e.g. film, expanded cinema as represented in Austria inter alia, by Peter Weibel and Valie Export); thus it had more influence on future developments. The limits of the theoretically and esthetically defined artistic genres as well as the role of the artist were questioned and transcended. Apart from the artistic forms of expression of individuals, who combined different media in art, cooperative theater projects came into being, in which choreographers, musicians, dancers and visual artists worked together. In 1965, Dick Higgins epitomized the different extended genres with the term "Intermedia". From the sixties onward, intermedia have appeared in the most diverse forms of art, in concept art, performance, environmental art and installations, dance theater and experimental music. "A theater of images, a music of gestures, a poetry of signs and sounds ..." but these former enclosures are no longer just combined, they blend." (Peter Frank).

Moreover, the number of new media created by our industrial age keeps growing: video, new film and photographic techniques, computers and other electronic equipment.

New Music, too, incorporates theatrical and visual aspects. John Cage, Earle Brown, Morton Feldman and Christian Wolff were the first to base their methods of composition on graphic notations. Henning Christiansen and Anestis Logothetis invented special notation systems which leave the performing artist a wide scope for interpretation as do the works of Mauricio Kagel. Alexandre Spengler is composing his life's work "Kosmophonie", a musical mystery play, in which drama and music are equally important. György Ligeti's "Composition for a Hundred Metronomes" should not only be seen as an event of sound, but also as a visual and conceptual gesture. Performances of Karlheinz Stockhausen's works turn into rituals in which spatial effects, dramatic elements and light play crucial roles.

"It is a democratic theatrical concept. The interpretation must be done by the spectator and should not happen on stage. The spectator should not be spared the work. It is consumptionism to spare him the effort, it is spoonfeeding. This is what I call capitalistic theater. Yet it is the theater we all know."
(Heiner Müller on Robert Wilson)

Contemporary stage design reveals a tendency toward imagery, resulting in the liberation of the image from the text, the fable or the action; in many cases, elements of language and action are treated as images in entire sequences. Richard Schechner's "Environmental Theatre" provides an early example of actors and spectators sharing space and theatrical environment; the human actor is as important as the audiovisual elements. In the "Theatre of Images" by Robert Wilson, the immediate context is replaced by an extension of time which dissociates voices and figures, and uses repetition, musicality, rhythm and light. In his associative spaces, Wilson definitely refers to Wagner's gesamtkunstwerk and to the experiences of the twenties. Painting, sculpturing, music, motion and technology represent the basis for his destructive theater. His most sophisticated work is "Civil Wars", which he produced on five continents; it combines video, radio, theater, music and visual art.

Today's art still reflects traces of the twenties: Russolo's noise music in Nitsch's work, Battistelli, Mosconi, Marchetti in "audio art" works, which has its place in the twilight zone between music, visual art, sculpture and actionism and has been observed with growing attention in the past few years. In Alvin Curran's "Water-works" (Ars Electronica 1987) the open space, the sounds of more than 20 foghorns, electronic music, tubas and fireworks (Pierre Alain Hubert) melted into an impressive universal event. Traces of Piscator's theater can be found in particular in Zadek's and Littlewood's "vaudeville shows", in Mink's technicalization of the stage, in Kipphart's historical montages and in Mnouchkine's political shows.

Not only Wilson, but also Erich Wonder and Karl-Ernst Herrmann created new forms of space and scene design; this particular development was presented in their exhibition "Inszenierte Räume" (Hamburg 1979). The third part of Wonder's trilogy "Maelstromsüdpol" (Linz 1988) unites the impact of music (Heiner Goebbels), text (Heiner Müller), the landscape around Linz with the river and the industrial area, and of fight, film and motion, in which the spectator is involved. This year the Linz festival concentrates on cooperative works of artists from different disciplines, thus following a trend which has become more and more pronounced over the past few years.

"Whoever wants to see a thoroughly organized, totalitarian 'gesamtkunstwerk' today has to travel to the new EPCOT Disneyland or to satellite towns around Paris. Whoever wants to experience a 'gesamtkunstwerk' will find what he is looking for in Wagner's works, in those of the followers of the big bang theory or in the nightly TV marathons."
(Bazon Brock)

The cynical advertising industry discovers the impact of music and images on the buyer. The cultural industry, no less cynical, often winds up producing hypertrophic kitsch, thus revealing itself as important to the entertainment industry as the appendix to the body. Expectations are leveled, problems are played down by the mass media, information is taken in unreflectedly, news are presented like commercials for jelly beans and soft drinks. Flashing lights, advertising, permanent noise and muzak, speed, stress, hectic amusement and a fake reality in front of the TV screen: No doubt, we sure live in a synaesthetic age.

After the age of specialization, the age of fusion, of synthesis. "The philosophers and sociologists of our days claim that our world is getting more and more complex as we keep on experimenting, and that it is based on the principle of simultaneity. The appearances all take place next to, within or around each other. The traditional causal logic of linear reason and behavior isn't really old-fashioned, it has rather grown insufficient." This is how Peter Frank's essay on intermedia begins.

Goethe believed that the fusion of different artistic genres was one of the most obvious signs of decay and considered it the duty and privilege of every true artist to clearly differentiate between them. Even Appia warned against total chaos. Grotowski and Copeau rejected eclecticism and the idea that theater was nothing but a combination of different genres. Copeau was convinced that the extensive employment of machinery would ruin dramatic art. Feldman disliked plays, "because musical elements usually have to be sacrificed for the sake of theatrical elements".

Electronics and computer technology have created an enormous variety of new options for art. In the past few years, artists from all disciplines have cooperated in creating and performing fascinating works, especially in the theatrical field; they made use of video, film and projection techniques and employed electronic music and computer-controlled lighting. There is no doubt that the electronic production of images and sounds also comes with a lot of trash, abuse of the term "computer art"; their protagonists, however, meet at fairs and industrial meetings rather than exhibitions and art events. This is, however, of no particular relevance for this discussion. What is crucial for the evaluation of a work of art is not so much the means by which it was created, but the result and its artistic intention. Therefore, it is not so important whether a sound was produced by a violin, a cow bell or a DX 7, whether a picture was drawn with a pencil or a light pen or whether a chisel or a laser beam helped form a sculpture.

It will be fascinating to observe the impact of computer technology on art and society in the future. Ars Electronica will go on reporting. Next year's motto will be: "In the Network of Systems."

Translated by Elisabeth Großebner and Sonja Stippel