

## **Art that forgets its name**

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*Art doesn't fit the prescribed channels. It evades the very moment its name is pronounced. It likes to stay incognito. It feels itself the best when it forgets its name.*

Jean Dubuffet

The society has long ago developed a conditioned reflex to regard as acceptable only the artworks that may be found in museums and art galleries. I will present the unconventional project within traditional art museum - Art therapy programme for disabled children in The State Russian museum (which is known as a biggest art national museum in Russia and abroad). The contemporary museum is experiencing certain "loss of context", it fails to play the role of a crown above some complex multidimensional system and tends to become marginal due to its specific contents. The Museum of nowadays absorbs the most radical, challenging "audacities" of contemporary artists. But still the museum space reflects in a condensed form the genesis of human cognition and transformation of the world and itself at different stages and in a variety of areas. Hence, this space is filled with the eternal issues of the mankind - this is one of the major "ontological" functions of the museum. I think, that this project added the new "dimension" to the practice of art museum: widening forms of educational activities and inviting new audiences. It started in May 1991 in Saint-Petersburg in The State Russian museum where international group of artists, art and music therapists, teachers and children/adults with special needs and children from ordinary schools were integrated in creative process for 5 days. They produced art objects and performances - experimenting with different media (paper, paints, wood, sounds, movements etc.) and various themes, which afterwards were exhibited in the museum. That was the beginning of Art Therapy programme for disabled people in the museum, which coincided with the profound political, economic, cultural changes in Russia where disabled "community" had been isolated for a long time. The reader might ask – why these workshops and exhibition "Meeting in creativity" are so important in the end of twentieth century in the comparison to the other important cultural events? The answer is obvious: this event reflects controversial phenomena, which in my opinion, influenced art of the last century.

Contemporary culture addresses the boundary experience seeking clues to the mystery of its own essence. Nevertheless, regardless of its capability to tolerate and absorb, for a long time the culture has been keeping distance from such autonomous forms of expression as creativity of children and the mentally ill or disabled people. The common feature that unites these forms of expression is the verdict of "pre-logical thinking" on the grounds of which they've been confined to the same reservation. This verdict was jointly pronounced by ethnologists (Levi-Bruhl), children psychologists (Jean Piaget) and by almost all psychiatrists. During the twentieth century, roughly, the society has been changing its attitude to the described cultural disbalance.

Integrative process started. And these are artists who should be credited for integrating this special experience successfully and making it available to all.

However, artists creating their works “use both conscious and unconscious areas of their creative potential and the world of opposites contained in these two”. This process is similar to the nature of Art Therapy, where combination of different aspects, - such as creative spontaneity and possibility to reflect on it, - reveals itself. Every person has his own answer to the eternal questions “Who am I? What is the world I’m living in?” Creativity is that very path following which one seeks answers to these questions as well as means of answering. The Art Therapy programme quite clearly proved that in the creative process the opposed notions “healthy” and “unhealthy” retreat into the background. It is equally valuable for disabled and non-disabled people, because they can “translate” their emotions, feelings and personal experience into the language of art, discovering and experimenting with new meanings of the self and the world. Their is symbolic communication – through artistic images, music, movement – while sometimes ordinary verbal communication is not possible.

Finally, it is important to register that conventionalism of the “norm” in art was defiantly rejected in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the exceptional position of creator has become even more vivid. It is the channelled daring power that builds the interrelation between the Creator and the Spectator. Contemporary culture that has united playing, intellectual reflection and critical comments reveals an extremely complex status of the reality. On the one hand: it is the reality of art itself without any frames of a law or a system and hence, incapable of providing what’s “correct” and “erroneous”. On the other hand it’s the reality of relations between live and explored – existential adventure lasting as long as life.