

1960 'Situationists': International Manifesto

Debord, one of the spokesmen of the 'Situationists', wrote in 1957: 'Unitary town planning is defined first through the application of the totality of the arts and technologies as partnered forces in an integral composition of the environment . . . Further, unitary town planning is dynamic, that is to say in close relationship to life style and behaviour. The element to which everything is ultimately reduced is not the house, but the architectonic complex, which is the unification of all those factors that determine an environment or a series of impinging environments . . . Architecture must advance by taking as its subject exciting situations rather than exciting forms.'

A new human force, which the existing framework of society will not be able to suppress, is growing day by day along with the irresistible development of technology and the frustration of its potential applications in our meaningless social life.

Alienation and oppression in society cannot be mastered in any of their specific manifestations, but simply rejected *en bloc* along with this society itself. All real progress is clearly dependent upon a revolutionary solution of the crisis of the present time in all its forms.

What are the prospects for the organization of life in a society which, genuinely, 'will reorganize production on the foundations of a free and equal association of producers'? Automation of production and socialization of essential goods will increasingly reduce work as an external necessity and will finally give the individual complete freedom. Thus freed from all economic responsibility, freed from all his debts and guilt towards the past and other people, man will dispose of a new surplus value, impossible to calculate in money terms because it cannot be reduced to the measurement of paid work: the value of play, of life freely constructed. The exercise of this playful creativity is the guarantee of the freedom of each and all, within the framework of that equality which is guaranteed by the absence of exploitation of one man by another. The freedom to play means man's creative autonomy, *which goes beyond the old division between imposed work and passive leisure*.

The Church used to burn those whom it called sorcerers in order to repress the primitive tendencies to play preserved in popular festivals. In the society that is at present dominant, which mass-produces wretched pseudo-games devoid of participation, any true artistic activity is necessarily classified as criminal. It remains semi-clandestine and comes to light as scandal.

What exactly is the situation? The need is for the realization of a higher game, more precisely a stimulus to this game known as human existence. Revolutionary players from every country can unite in the I.S. in order to start emerging from the prehistoric phase of daily living.

From now on, we propose an autonomous organization of the producers of the new culture, independent of existing political and trade union

organizations, because we do not credit them with the ability to do more than organize what already exists.

The most urgent aim which we set this organization, at the moment when it is emerging from its initial experimental phase to embark upon its first public campaign, is to capture UNESCO. The bureaucratization of art and the whole of culture, unified on a world scale, is a new phenomenon that expresses the profound relationship between the social systems coexisting in the world, on the basis of eclectic conservation and the reproduction of the past. The retort of revolutionary artists to these new conditions must be a new type of action. As the very existence of this directorial concentration, localized in a single building, favours seizure by means of a *coup*; and as the institution is totally destitute of any possibility of meaningful use outside our subversive perspectives, we feel justified before our contemporaries in seizing this apparatus. And we shall seize it. We are resolved to take possession of UNESCO, even if only for a little while, because we are confident of promptly achieving significant results that will continue to light the way during a long period of heavy demands.

What will be the principal characteristics of the new culture, first of all by comparison with the old art?

As opposed to spectacle, Situationist culture, when put into practice, will introduce total participation.

As opposed to the preservation of art, it will involve direct organization of the lived moment.

As opposed to divided art, it will be a global practice relating simultaneously to all usable elements. It tends naturally towards collective and no doubt anonymous production (at least to the extent that, since works *will not be stockpiled like articles of merchandise*, this culture will not be dominated by the need to leave a mark). Its experiments offer, at the very least, a revolution in behaviour and a unitary dynamic town planning capable of taking in the whole planet and being subsequently extended to all habitable planets.

As opposed to unilateral art, Situationist culture will be an art of dialogue, an art of interaction. Artists – together with the whole of visible culture – have come to be entirely separated from society, as they are separated among themselves by competition. But even before this impasse brought about by capitalism, art was essentially unilateral, without reply. It will pass beyond this era of primitive enclosedness and attain total communication.

Since at a higher stage everyone will become an artist – that is to say, both producer and consumer of a total cultural achievement – we shall see the rapid dissolution of the linear criterion of novelty. Since everyone will be, so to speak, a Situationist, we shall see a multidimensional plethora of new trends, of experiments, of 'schools', all radically different, and this *no longer in succession but simultaneously*.

We shall now inaugurate what will be, historically speaking, the last of all professions. The role of the Situationist, the amateur-expert, the anti-specialist, will remain a form of specialization until the moment of economic and mental abundance when everyone will become an 'artist' in a sense which

artists have never before achieved – in the sense that everyone will construct his own life. However, the last profession in history is so close to the society without permanent division of labour that when it appears within the I.S. it is generally denied the characteristics of a profession.

To those who do not properly understand us, we say with utter contempt: 'The Situationists, of whom you perhaps believe yourselves to be the judges, will one day judge you. We await you at the turning-point that will mean the inevitable liquidation of the world of privation in all its forms. These are our aims, and they will be the future aims of humanity.'