

Reality

The context of an array of the modernist more or less avant-garde artistic movements in the decade preceding the dawn of fascism such as *Neue Sachlichkeit* (*New Objectivity*) and *Dada*, as well as controversies among aesthetic concepts,² must have helped Benjamin to expose the question of reality concerning art in a given social order. “Benjamin’s version of these ideas has the virtue above all of treating the category ‘art’ as itself having a history, and one continuing to be subject to drastic transformation” (Mattick, 2003: 96). However, Mattick, on the other hand, has a fundamental problem with Benjamin because he does not accept the idea of the disappearing of *aura* and he in fact insists on the continuation of *aura* and the *auratic* effect in art in the industrial and post-industrial society. To put it briefly, Mattick misses the point of the notion of *aura* in Benjamin’s thinking and with it he also misses the connection of “category of art subject to drastic transformation” and the vision of reality, so much interlaced with perception that it obviously becomes folded within the construction of reality, not only as a concept, but as the sensual sphere. As Habermas observed, it is exactly the destruction of *aura* that points to a “shift in the innermost structure of the works of art; the sphere once removed from and set up in opposition to the material process of life now disintegrates” (Habermas. 1979, p. 34). In other words, the destruction of *aura*, which ‘happens’ through the very act of being recognised – its being is prompted by non-being – establishes a new correlation between art and reality in the space of mass culture. Without elaborating much further on this interesting and nonetheless controversial matter, it could be assumed, that the ultimate decisive consequence of the transformation of art within mass culture is created by first photography and then, above all, the cinema in which formidable aesthetic distinctive traits (for instance close-up, slow motion etc.) could have been highlighted in Benjamin’s essay. Thus, cinema becomes the art of *mass culture par excellence* as it unites a complex aesthetic form with the machine of reproduction. Let me repeat that Benjamin points out that “/.../ for contemporary man the representation of reality by the film is incomparably more significant than that of the painter, since it offers, precisely because of the thoroughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment, an aspect of reality which is free of all equipment. And that is what one is en-

2 Mattick refers to “Alexander Dorner’s 1929 exhibition at the Hanover Provincial Museum, in which he matched original works with photographic reproductions” as a resource that inspired Benjamin in developing his concept of the *aura* (Mattick, 2003: 95).