

by virtue of being something through non-existence, in a full sense of the word, a dialectical notion, which marks a profound change in the symbolic order of things. Aesthetic objects certainly occupy a distinguished place in this order. As Benjamin found out, their *aura* secured a special sphere of the effectiveness of their symbolic power. They were a part of an order of the especially divided social imaginary, which continues to be active long after the mechanical reproduction has taken place. The disappearing of the *aura* through the intrusion of the reproduction of the classic works of art, and even more significantly, through the development of the new forms of art, made possible by technical devices, brings a turn into the function of the art itself. Characteristically, these “new forms of art” were dismissed by the privileged public as cheap entertainment for the uneducated. However, entering mass perception, the new forms of aesthetic *praxis* overturn the whole functioning of the arts in the social imaginary. Although discussing the problems of the form of the aesthetic objects, the products of “technological” arts included, may still be a “noble” task of aesthetic theory, there is no doubt that Benjamin’s observations assert that the aesthetic production interferes with the reproduction of the society in a much more decisive way than anybody has ever imagined or dreamt before the emergence of the mechanical reproduction. (Maybe today we could widen the number of synonymous adjectives, beside “mechanical,” i.e. “electronically”, “multimediatially” and so on.) In the industrial age, the recognition of the form became in a broad sense simply functional, and everybody has been trained to recognize forms automatically by being exposed to almost continuous and often unwanted influence of images, sounds, signs and designs. There is no way to sell new “contents” in approved forms. The public – or the consumers – must be shocked into perceiving the difference, which is nothing else but the form.

The cultural ideology that probably serves well to what is increasingly labelled as the “tourism industry” – and one cannot really blame it too much for this – can be comprehended as a sanctuary for everything from artists’ narcissism to what is considered the “taste”. This supposedly distinguishes class from masses, high from lowbrow, the West from the rest, and “us” from “them”. This ideology is quite transparently based on a projection into the past, in which a construction of a world, in which “true values” were respected, is the central invented idea. As we know this imaginary world of “true art” is attached to the time of romanticism, which is also the time of the peak of aesthetics as a philosophic discipline. As Berg-