Artistic Life as an Object of Analysis in the Study of Art

Natalya Ivanovna Denissova

Pavlodar State Pedagogical Institute, Pavlodar, Kazakhstan

Abstract: “Artistic life” is a broad and multi-faceted phenomenon. The notion is often used in art study, sociological, culturological and other publications. “Artistic life” is one of the derivates of “culture”, which makes it worth our while to conduct a systemic examination of this phenomenon. The article has defined and structurally analyzed the subsystems of the one of the specialized domains of spiritual culture. The content nucleus of this area is art, which is one of the crucial mechanisms for apprehending the phenomenon of Man and the world around him. Compared with sociological analysis, which focuses on public relations as a condition for artistic life, art-study analysis is about the study of the essence of artistic life, attributes and patterns of the development of various arts within a specific cultural-historical context, its role in the history of art and its interrelation with spiritual life and various cultural phenomena.

Key words: Artistic life • Artistic culture • Systemic complex • Structure

INTRODUCTION

The notion of “artistic life” has firmly established itself for use in publications devoted to art-study, culturological, public-political, sociological [1], philosophical, etc., issues, which attests to the multi-facetedness of the artistic life phenomenon itself. Thus, we find it necessary to conduct a systemic examination of this phenomenon in the context of artistic culture, which enables us to analyze the various phenomena of artistic life as an aggregate of specific systems in their complex, dialectically contradictory interaction and development [2,3,4]. We shall dwell upon the notion of “culture” and its derivates in as much detail as needed to give the reader a clear idea of what “artistic life” is about.

Today culture is defined as an aggregate of artificial orders and objects (created by people in addition to natural), learnt forms of human conduct and activity, knowledge acquired, forms of self-knowledge and symbolic labels for the world around us. Culture is a “cultivated” habitat for people, which is organized by means of specifically human methods of activity and is permeated with the results of this activity. Being the product of people’s joint activity, culture is a system of coordinated procedures and methods for collective existence, activity and interaction, labels and judgments, ordered rules and socially acceptable technology for satisfying group and individual interests and needs (both material and cognitive, symbolic and evaluative), which are actualized in the various forms of human activity. Culture can be characterized as a systemic complex, inherent to any lasting community of people, of specific and more or less standardized methods and forms of social integration, organization, regulation, cognition, communication, evaluation and self-identification, socialization mechanisms, etc., [5].

On the other hand, according to the findings of a study by B.D. Kokumbayeva, considering culture in opposition to nature is not quite correct, since the association between the two is laid down ontogenetically [6]. Therefore, we are inclined to construe culture as a spiritual phenomenon: “The priority of the eternal spirit being the kernel of culture is well-founded and is substantiated by the findings of modern post-nonclassical science, which is predicated on the theory of the single field the core whereof is some primordial entity. The fact of the natural spirituality of culture is substantiated, first of all, empirically and historically. Cultural wealth, i.e. articles of material culture, is created and acquired by the archaic man in the course of continuous real-life practice. And what is of major importance is that in the initial stages, one’s attitude towards them is non-utilitarian. First of all, the holistic view bars the division of culture into
spiritual and material; second of all, articles of material production are interpreted as culture’s phenomena, which are of cultural significance, i.e. significant not only to the comfortable existence of man but from the standpoint of their culture-carrying content” [7]. Thus, in the course of our further apprehending of the artistic life phenomenon, we shall be guided by the belief that culture as a single organic entity is people’s working, styling, spiritualizing and dignifying of the environment and themselves, their diverse relations, their activity (its processes, goals, methods, outcomes).

Main part. Artistic culture is one of the specialized domains of spiritual culture, an aggregate of artistic values, as well as a historically determinated system of their reproduction and functioning in society [8]. Artistic culture structurally comprises the following subsystems: artistic creative work per se (both individual and group); its organized infrastructure (creative associations and institutions engaged in placing orders for and marketing creative products); its material infrastructure (production and demonstration sites); artistic education and advanced vocational training (including the practice of organizing creative contests); organized reflection of processes and results of artistic creative work (artistic criticism and the artistic press, various areas of art scientific studies); aesthetic education and enlightenment (an aggregate of means of stimulating interest in art in people); restoration and preservation of artistic heritage; technical aesthetics and design (artistically styled products of utilitarian use); people’s artistic-creative amateur activity; government policy for artistic culture and a number of other subsystems of the private order.

The content nucleus of artistic culture is art, which is one of the most crucial mechanisms for apprehending the phenomenon of man and the world around him. Note that one’s artistic word-pictures are constructed from verbal, visual, sonic, or plastic imitation of observed or imagined objects, processes, sensations, etc., with a view to project certain reference specimens of standard sentience and behavior, which, in the end, have a didactic use, stimulating the formation of axiological attributes and patterns of the development of various arts within a specific cultural-historical context, its role in the history of art and its interrelation with spiritual life and various cultural phenomena.

The artistic life of a certain period is in the broadest form (an expanded interpretation of the term) is construed as an aggregate of processes of creating artistic valuables (in the sphere of fine, musical, theatrical, cinematic, etc., arts), promoting and preserving cultural heritage, which is contemplated in its evolving and interacting with the other domains of society’s spiritual life.

The Brief Dictionary of Aesthetics construes artistic life as a special “area of society’s spiritual life the content whereof is production, distribution and acquisition of artistic valuables. Artistic life is formed through an interaction of three major systems: the system of artistic production, the system of storing and distributing artistic works and valuables and the system of artistic perception” [9].

In studies on the sociology of art, society’s artistic life is traditionally regarded as a “relatively independent area of public life the basis whereof is formed by specific types of artistic creative work and public relations regulating the functioning of art and interaction between artists and the public” [10]. Based on the established system of arts, we divide artistic life into theatrical, musical, literary, etc.

The artistic life of society, being a way of existing and functioning of society’s artistic culture, is structurally represented by:

- processes of artistic activity – artistic production and consumption, which involve distribution and delivery of works of art;
- relations between individual and collective subjects, which, in turn, are differentiated based on public relations (economic, legal, organizational, etc.);
- the artistic consciousness of society, including the structure of art.

The structure of artistic life reflects the social and class structure of society, public relations and interests. The internal historical dynamics of artistic life is grounded in the dialectics of artistic production and artistic consumption. The interaction between artists and the public involves multi-variant dependencies and establishments, which get formed and function within artistic life [10].

Compared with sociological analysis, which focuses on public relations as a condition for artistic life, art-study analysis is about the study of the essence of artistic life, attributes and patterns of the development of various arts within a specific cultural-historical context, its role in the history of art and its interrelation with spiritual life and various cultural phenomena.

It should be noted that the major trend in research work of the last decade devoted to the study of the artistic life of different regions is using the definition of “artistic life” in a narrow sense, i.e. for denoting the domain of artistic culture that includes events and phenomena in the field of fine art, decorative and applied
art and architecture. Summarizing the entire accumulated research experience in respect of defining the notion of “artistic life”, we shall attempt to define it more accurately and specifically.

The tradition of dividing systems into mechanical and organic, which originates from I. Kant, makes it possible to consider artistic life as a single organic entity which is distinguished by there being heterogeneous associations between its elements-genetic, cause-and-effect, structural, etc.

Consequently, the complexity of the inner structure of artistic life as a single organic entity is the reason behind the impossibility of removing its parts without their losing the qualities they had when they were a part of the single entity, without wrecking its integrity. This is why the disappearance of any phenomenon in the system of artistic life becomes an irretrievable loss to the integrity of all culture and a premise for its destruction.

Artistic life possesses integrativeness, which is characterized by the following attributes: the emergence of something new during the development process; the emergence of new forms of integrity; the emergence of new structural levels and their hierarchical co-subordination. The parts of an organic single entity (as well as the parts and the entity) interact via not just a simple functional dependency but a considerably more complex system of heterogeneous associations-structural, genetic, governance-related, etc., within which a cause presents itself concurrently in the capacity of an effect considered as a premise.

Thus, in general, artistic life is an integral system, a mechanism for the development of society’s culture, being responsible for the begetting, adapting in the sign system, translating, interpreting, communicating, self-preserving and forming of lasting types and their reproduction in the socio-cultural environment. In a narrow sense, artistic life is construed as an organic system comprising events and phenomena in the area of fine art, decorative and applied art and architecture.

The structure of artistic life as an organic system can be pictured as an interaction of three major subsystems: the subsystem of artistic production, the subsystem of storing and distributing artistic works and valuables and the subsystem of artistic consumption (perception).

The subsystem of artistic production, which itself is a system, comprises the creative work of artists, artistic amateur activity, artistic crafts and the artistic industry. The creative activity of the artist as a subject of specific activity is realized in three two-sided relations: his relation towards reality, which is reflected and transformed by him; towards the public; towards his own activity and its results (works of art). Within the context of the development of society’s artistic life, the creative process is viewed in several aspects: from the standpoint of the public’s and pundits’ demand for a result of one’s activity; from that of the need and capability for creating conditions favorable for the creative process; from that of the impact of various factors on the creative work of a specific artist (the external and internal determination of the creative process).

The subsystem of storing and distributing artistic works and valuables unifies the activity of state and public organizations, art critics and theorists, whose major function is creating both cultural conditions for distributing artistic valuables (artistic-aesthetic education and bringing-up, interpretation) and material conditions for distributing works of art (exhibiting, publishing, replicating, copying, restoring, etc.).

A major role in forming and developing artistic life is played by the government’s cultural policy, which influences the artistic process both indirectly and directly, regulating all aspects of the creative intelligentsia’s life. Cultural policy, being part of the government’s activity aimed at planning, designing, actualizing and providing for society’s cultural life, regulates the relations between the artist and the government and oftentimes serves as the defining factor for the development of not only society’s artistic life but art at large.

Artistic education, which is represented by the activity of various studios, schools, vocational and higher learning institutions, builds the groundwork for the uninhibited development of artistic life in a given region.

The activity of artistic associations, which are formed as a result of interaction between artists, is normally aimed at realizing various creative projects (exhibitions, publishing artistic journals, etc.).

The activity of art critics and theorists relies on the functioning of various social establishments and institutions: the mass media, museums, libraries, literary-artistic publishing houses, etc. It should be noted that interaction between artistic criticism and artistic practice, reflection of exhibition, studio activity in the pages of periodicals, preparation and publication of specialized literature make up a crucial component of the integral system of a region’s artistic life.

Museum and exhibition activity helps attain one of the most crucial objectives in the development of society’s artistic life- preserving and promoting cultural heritage. The major forms of activity in this area are putting together museum collections, creating museums
and galleries, organizing exhibition activity. It is at exhibitions that the immediate contact of the viewer and the artist’s creative thought takes place, whereby the latest artistic trends are revealed, the creative activity of artists is stimulated and dynamics is brought into the development of a region’s artistic life and culture.

The subsystem of artistic consumption (perception), being the “destination point” in the movement of artistic valuables, comprises the existing forms of access to works of art (visits to exhibitions, museums, acquiring books, etc.) and the immediate artistic perception and assimilation of the content of artistic valuables depending on the level of sophistication of the tastes of various social groups. It should be noted that it is the quality of artistic consumption that is the indicator for the degree of development of society’s artistic life and artistic-aesthetic consciousness. Thus, artistic life is a “dialog between art and its contemporaries”.

CONCLUSION

The internal historical dynamics of artistic life is grounded in the dialectics of artistic production and artistic consumption. Note that the major, defining role is played by artistic creative work. This dialectics is personified in social relations between artists and the public and is actualized in their mutual activity. Each of the historical types of artistic life is grounded in a certain mode of association between artistic production and artistic consumption, the dominant type of interaction between artists and the public, forms, inherent to society, of organizing artistic-creative activity and functioning of its results. Consequently, as they fulfill the function of determining artistic activity, relations within society’s artistic life and its establishments facilitate the socio-cultural functioning of art.

Artistic life is characterized by non-linear development, which reflects the historical situation, attributes of public life and is accompanied by periods of upturn and downturn. It should be noted that society’s artistic life unfolds not only in certain historical conditions as part of the general cultural background of an epoch but also envisages a special context of an artistic-historical cycle the temporal boundaries whereof oftentimes do not coincide with the boundaries of a given socio-historical epoch. This is attested to by paradoxical facts of upturns in the spiritual domain of a certain culture against the background of current socio-economic conditions which evidently contradict them. Thus, the emergence and sweeping development of musical theater in Spain in the 16th century had taken place during the period of the reign of the Inquisition; the heyday of Kazakh spiritual culture and artistic life in the 19th century had taken place amid the heaviest economic, socio-political and ideological convulsions in the fate of the Kazakh people.

Inferences: Thus, our apprehension of the artistic life phenomenon allows us to draw the following conclusions:

1. Artistic life is a part of society’s artistic culture and cultural life, a domain socially inhabited by various types of artistic activity.

2. Artistic life is an integral system, a mechanism for the development of society’s culture, being responsible for the begetting, adapting in the sign system, translating, interpreting, communicating, self-preserving and forming of lasting types and their reproduction in the socio-cultural environment. In a narrow sense, artistic life is construed as an organic system comprising events and phenomena in the area of fine art, decorative and applied art and architecture.

3. Artistic life, being an organic system (a self-developing single entity) is characterized by a complex system of heterogeneous associations (structural, genetic, subordination-related, governance-related, etc.), within which a cause presents itself concurrently in the capacity of an effect considered as a premise.

4. Structurally, artistic life is represented by a system of interdependent components: artistic production, the domain of storing and distributing artistic valuables, artistic consumption.

5. Artistic life is characterized by non-linear development, which is accompanied by periods of upturn and downturn. Thus, artistic life occupies a special place in society’s cultural life and is both its reflection and a necessary condition for its development.

REFERENCES


