

*Although abstract in nature, following proposition is based on hands-on experiences that I gained as the programme officer of the European Cultural Foundation [www.eurocult.org](http://www.eurocult.org) and the coordinator of the AL-MOSTREAL project [www.almostweb.org](http://www.almostweb.org).*

*Furthermore, some key formulations (difference, deterritorialisation, becoming) are loosely related to the work of the french philosopher Gilles Deleuze. In this respect, particularly relevant source is his book "Proust and Signs"*

## **Different Art or about practice of difference and the ethics of art**

**Practice of difference** is NOT a violent re-assertion of incompatible and incommensurable identities in a state of collision with each other. On the contrary, practice of difference is dynamic process of diversification that, instead of proceeding from identity, is constantly and inconclusively moving away and toward it without ever reaching the point of stability. Difference is, in other words, not a result of multiplied identities because it is, in ontological terms, "coming before" it.

So, if diversity, in a globalized world is to supplement sameness as a traditional constitutive element of culture, ontology of identity which rule western thought for thousands of years need to be re-shaped into an ontology of difference. This can be done only through the persistent practice of deterritorialisation that imply strategies like systematic destabilization of identities and continuous motion of cultural, political and personal in-between-ness.

Uncertain movement of Be-coming (difference) need to keep anticipating static sovereignty of Being (identity) without ever reaching it. As such, ongoing movement of be-coming is real source of existential, social and cultural creativity. And that's where we are arriving to the concept of art.

Artistic process and **practice of difference** are essentially related. Both in her working procedures and the outcomes that are issuing from it, artist depend on an ongoing attempt to deterritorialise herself.

Contrary to the conventional belief, "good art" (to a degree to which it is different from the pure demonstration of skill - artistry) is not an expression of the fixed identity however excellent or fulfilling this identity seems to be. Art is an active exercise of difference. If it is telling us anything at all, gesture of art should be interpreted as a fleeting expression of an imaginative flight beyond fixed territory, identity and meaning.

Furthermore, while being a testimony/relic/trace of deterritorialisation attempted by the artist herself, art work is also an active attempt to trigger a motion of in-between-ness in us as an observer, to destabilize us in our artificial certainties and set us on the journey of be-coming something/somebody else than who we think we are. In other words, by being creative, artist is trying to make us creative as well.

If we assume that the **practice (and ontology) of difference** is the proper conceptual instrument necessary to transform proliferation of diversities into a positive cultural force and if we acknowledge that artistic activity both in its procedures and its outcomes is based on this ontology, than we can conclude that ethical value of cultural diversity and the aesthetical value of arts are overlapping at this point of ontological convergence.

**Social engagement (ethics) of art is related to its quality to a degree to which this quality can be articulated as a practice of difference.**

Igor Dobricic