YASAMAN FARHANGPOUR

University of Siena, Italy

INTERACTION OF MULTI MEDIA ART AND POSTMODERNISM

Abstract:

Multi Media Art, in a general concept, is referred to an art which is formed by combination of various media such as: digital, graphic, voice, images, videos, animation, and texts. Advance technologies of the present and last centuries create the possibility of combining disparate arts in which the specifications of post modern era are eminent. The point to take into consideration is that Multi Media Art has obvious differences with combining media art. Although kinds of arts such as film and opera include other arts, they are not considered Multi Media Arts. In various eras of art history, there are art works which are created by combination of some art media, which is usually referred to as Mixed Media Art. Multi Media art is not static and motionless rather it stretches in time interval and is in interaction with audience. In this article, Multi Media Art in late twenty and twenty one century is under study. After introducing the history and creators of this art, concepts such as monopolizing, lack of durability, spatial features, instability, accumulation, being discursive, connectionism are explained in postmodern Multi Media Art.

Keywords:

Multi Media Arts, Mixed Media arts. Post modernism, technology Media

JEL Classification: L, Lrtic, Lrtic

Introduction

Multimedia Term used in an art-historical context to describe art forms that include a variety of media, often unconventional. It is used mainly where a complete description of media would be too lengthy. Multimedia may also comprise live or Performance art, Happenings, Environmental art, Video art and Installation. The origins of multimedia may be traced to Dada, especially the activity in 1916 in Zurich of the Cabaret Voltaire. The concept was developed further by artists associated with Surrealism, for example at the Exposition International (http://www.oxfordartonline.com). These media could be both traditional media (such as seven arts: painting, sculpture, music…..) and media such as Installation, Performance art, Environment art, Video art, Happenings (generally, the new media arts that emerged in the twentieth century). It must be noted that there is difference between Multimedia Art and mixed media art productions. Among visual arts, tendencies for multimedia are used to mention the types of artworks in which various types of scopes of visual and traditional art media are combined in diverse forms. Here, media is used as material by which the artwork is formed; and it is not the frame of art. About the specialties of this art, it can be also mentioned that the works of Multimedia Arts utilize, aside from sight, other senses such as listening, touching, and smelling abundantly. An artwork of multimedia is able to move, rather than being in a static mode (similar to stagnation found in art works of paintings and sculptures), allocates a time to it or continues beyond a time interval. Another obvious feature of Multimedia Art is the use of advanced technologies such as productions of computers and electronic sound, videos, animation, and interaction (with audience).

Since some arts such as opera and cinema comprise other arts such as literature, visual arts, music, dance and dress design, they can be counted as combinatorial and even mixed media per se; however, these types of arts are not considered as Multimedia Arts because a Multimedia Art production often shatter the borders of traditional arts and generally in analogy with a team efforts and cooperation that exist among artists of various branches of art in opera and film making, is created totally by a single individual. The presentation of multimedia art productions are usually in museums and galleries and can be considered as the continuation of visual arts: the creators of such art works are people with foreground of visual arts.

Regarding the definitions of Multimedia Art above mentioned and other different sources, it can be summarized that something which is considered as Multimedia Art, and is under survey in this study, is an art that contains the following specifications:

This art is a combination of two or more different art media like theater, music, audio arts, video, animation, written text, imagery arts, literature, and modern arts which are created in a cyber space in virtual reality form. Even though in each era of art history, there are

artworks produced by combination of some art media displayed in a single work, only the artworks created during the late twentieth and twenty-one century are intended here.

The art in which only one medium is used for production, like video art, even if shares a lot of common specialties with Multimedia Art, is still considered an art of single medium and is not a Multimedia Art unless it is produced by using several videos or installation of videos. Also, there are discriminative features among Multimedia Art and the productions resulted from combinations of media which are usually referred to as mixed media art. These artworks are a type of collage of composition of materials. The arts which have several art media in their essence, such as cinema, opera, or theater, are not included in the definition of Multimedia Art either.

The existence of new and modern technologies can be significant factors for creation of Multimedia Art works but Multimedia Art is not necessarily restricted to using these technologies. Some of Multimedia Art productions are created without interference of new technologies and just by combining some traditional painting and sculpture.

Multimedia Art is considered as modern tendencies of visual arts; which means that even in performance works and body arts (in combination with different media) if there might be common shared features with theater or dance, are considered as Multimedia Art, rather than performing art.

Helen Gardner believes that televisions, cell phones, and the Internet have brought people all over the world closer together than ever before in history, national, ethnic, religious; and racial conflicts are unfortunate and unavoidable facts of contemporary life. Some of the most eloquent voices raised in protest about the major political and social issues of the day have been those of painters and sculptors, who can harness the power of art to amplify the power of the written and spoken word (Gardner, 2013).
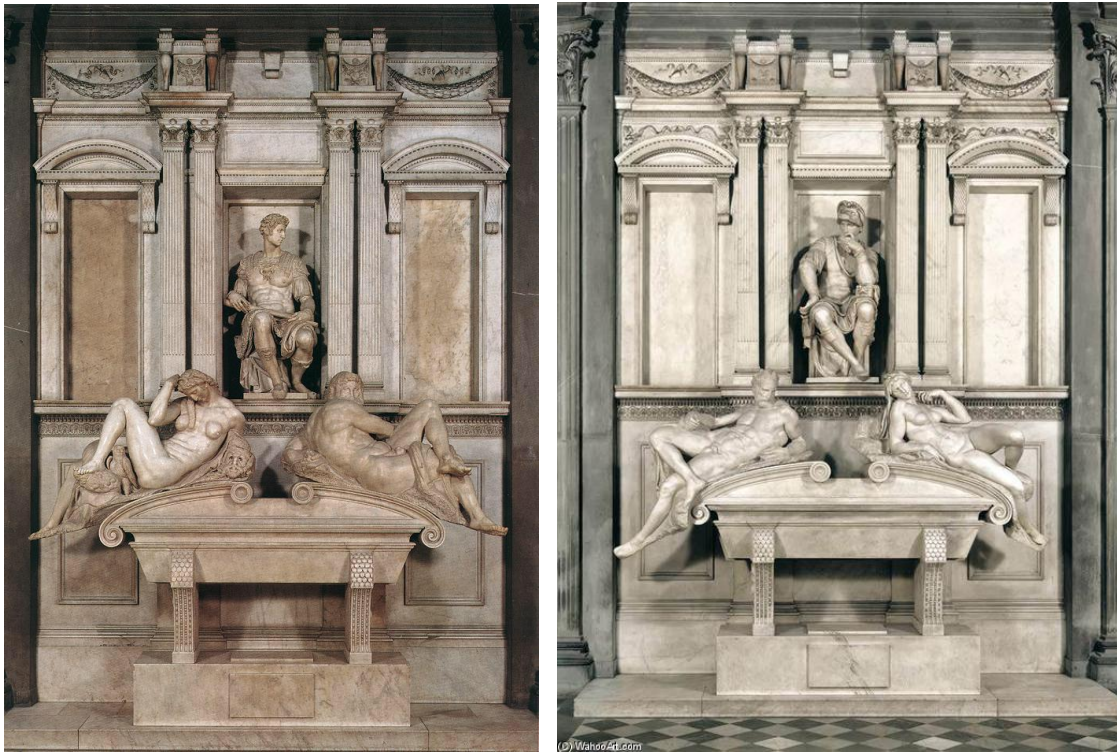
History

Multimedia Art in its general concept which is the combination of several art media maintains a very long history which in contemporary area is an interdisciplinary field of research that explores the current developments as well as the history and genealogy of new media art, digital art and electronic art (Frieling, Dieter 2004).

Among primitive tribes, artworks such as sand paintings; was not only a work of art but also a ritual action performed along with dances by using elements like fire and holy beverages and magic acts. In these works, primitive men utilized different art media in order to express his ritual and religion and created an atmosphere of Multimedia Art in its general concept. With this definition, in religious works in churches, it can be seen that sometimes, paintings and mosaics on the walls are harmoniously in relation with architecture of that place and simultaneously combine with playing religious music, performance of church special rituals, ceremonial and religious rites… These works are

located in an atmosphere of Multimedia Art in order to create deeper compact and closer relation with the audience who is the same religious person. As an instance, in Michelangelo's works in Sistine and Saint Lorentz churches, the artist challenged to intermingle sculpturing with architecture and to create a relation between these two arts (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Michelangelo Buonarroti, The tomb of Lorenzo Medici, 1524-1534, marble, 650×470 cm, San Lorenzo church, Florence.

Source: http://www.Pinterest.com

Regarding the above mentioned points, it can be realized that in each era of art history, in order to create a deeper influence and to have multiple relation with the audience, the artists, in many cases and regarding the present media in that era, combined various art media and formed a type of new Multimedia Art which is particular of the same era utilizing the media available in that period of time.

As we can see in the contemporary art and in accordance with Lucie Smith- an English writer, poet, art critic, curator and broadcaste- Multimedia art is an innovative discipline which seeks to unify a large range of art forms. This is creatively achieved by combining an array of artistic insights and crafts such as film, literature, performance, music and sound, drama, visual arts, or design. This merge of ideas and forms unveils a contemporary dimension or entity which attempts to engage an audience in a novel and unique way. (http://movementforhope.org).

It is the art of twentieth century which is resulted from combination of some art specialties; with a historical background originated from the developments of early twenty century. These changes rooted in the artists efforts to breakdown the frameworks of traditional arts. In early that century, cubists, like Braque and Picasso, tried to use elements beyond their painting canvas by mixing substances and utilizing everyday materials like printed parts of newspapers, fringe of tablecloth, or ropes in their paintings. In the spring of 1912, Picasso pasted a piece of oilcloth printed with a trompe-l'oeil chair-caning pattern to the surface of a small oval canvas representing a cafe still life (Figure 2). This work, which he also framed with a coarse rope, has acquired legendary status in the history of art as the first deliberately executed collage; the first work of fine art, that is, in which materials appropriated from everyday life, relatively untransformed by the artist, intrude upon the traditionally privileged domain of painting. (Poggi, 1988) More important was that by observing the effects of application of this technique, it was concluded that through formation of reality by combining various elements, a new real image of its own nature can be created.

Figure 2: Pablo Picasso, Still Life with Chair-Caning, spring 1912, oil and oilcloth stuck on oval canvas, framed with rope, 10/2 x 133/4". Paris, Musee Picasso.

Source: http://www.pinterest.com

Dadaism[1] was another influential factor in advent of Multimedia Art. Artists who were using many diverse methods and combined new materials in their works moved beyond painting and sculpture and their artworks were supplemented by objects and ready made parts displaying routine-everyday life. The plastic arts played only an ancillary role in Dada and Surrealism[2]; they were held useful as means of communicating ideas, but not worthy of delectation in themselves. (Rubin, 1968). Along with Marcel Duchamp, the most prominent Dadaist artist with a collection of admirable innovations of fundamental – innovative selections and also works of Kurt Schwitters's Merz[3] art objects (Figure 3), another Dadaist artist, and later Surrealists and then Pop art [4] frontiers, the setting for the advent of installation art[5] was prepared.

After these figures, the environment and installation art found a special position in Multimedia Art. Futurist painters[6], striving to insert elements of light and movement in two dimensions of canvas and also sculptors of this group, striving to insert movement into static and motionless sculptures, were improving the idea of combating with immobility and stagnation in traditional arts. They expressed their ideas about the simultaneously of vision, of metamorphosis, and of movement that evince multiplicity in moving object. In their works, there is a special concentration on conjunction of painted object with the space around it so that there is no demarcation line between them.

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[1] Dada and Surrealism proposed life attitudes that, particularly in the case of the latter, coalesced into com prehensible philosophies. But they fostered activities in the plastic arts so variegated as almost to preclude the use of the terms as definitions of style. (Rubin, 1968)

[2] Surrealism is a cultural movement that began in the early 1920s, its aim was to "resolve the previously contradictory conditions of dream and reality into an absolute reality, a super-reality". (Berton, 1924)

[3] Merz is a nonsense word invented by the German dada artist Kurt Schwitters to describe his collage and assemblage works based on scavenged scrap materials (http:// www.tate.org.uk)

[4] It was in this climate of turbulence, experimentation, and consumerism that a new generation of artists emerged in Britain and America in the mid- to late-1950s. Pop artists favored realism, everyday (and even mundane) imagery, and heavy doses of irony and wit. The movement presented a challenge to traditions of fine art by including imagery from popular and mass culture, such as advertising, comic books and mundane cultural objects. (https://www.MoMa.org)

[5] Installation Art is mostly associated with the period from the 1960s to the present; yet there are many precedents, particularly in early twentieth century AVANT-GARDE movements, such as SUPREMATISM, CONSTRUCTIVISM, DADA, SURREALISM and FUTURISM. For example, the exhibition designs of El Lissitzky, Marcel Duchamp and the alterations made by Kurt Schwitters to the rooms in his home, known as Merzbau, suggest early prototypes of Installation Art. (Kelly, 2003)

[6] Futurism was an Italian art movement that defined modernity as motion, speed and dynamism. It began in 1909 with the first manifest about the Futurist aesthetic. (http:// www.oxfordartonline.com)

Figure 3: Kurt Schwitters, Merz (Relief in Relief) c.1942–5, Tate Gallery, London

Source: http://www.tate.org.uk

Wasily Kandinsky, the first abstract artist in the world, is closely identified with the beginning of abstract painting in the second decade of this century. During the almost fifty years of his artistic career he created hundreds of paintings, watercolors, drawings, and prints, but he assigned the title Composition to only ten of his works (Abrams, 1995). He sought to get free from the framework of traditional paintings. Kandinsky, emphasizing on the formic differences among arts and the coordination of each artistic frame with its spiritual value, mentioned that the natural result of this effort [for attaining abstraction] is the approaching of arts to each other (Figure 4). Kandinsky is painting music. That is to say, he has broken down the barrier between music and painting, and has isolated the pure emotion which, for want of a better name, we call the artistic emotion. Anyone who has listened to good music with any enjoyment will admit to an unmistakable but quite indefinable thrill (Sadler, 1977). Kandinsky effort in the field of integration of music and painting was eventually terminated on the surface of two-dimension canvas but after him, in multimedia works, music arrived really in the realm of visual arts. The primer of this evolution was John Cage, John Milton Cage Jr. He was an American composer and music theorist. A pioneer of indeterminacy in music, electroacoustic music, and non-standard use of musical instruments, Cage was one of the leading figures of the post-war avant-garde. Critics have lauded him as one of the most influential composers of the 20th century. (George J, 1995). He transformed the fundament of conventional music with his ideas and creations. In 1952, Cage composed a song based on silence under the title of 4 minutes 33 seconds (4:33) in which no sound was performed intentionally.

Figure 4: Wassily Kandinsky, first abstract watercolor, 1910. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Source: http://www.wassilykandinsky.net
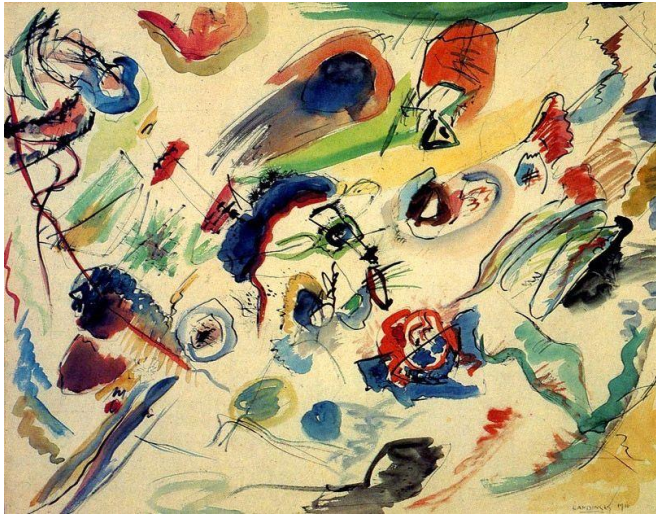
After Cage, the members of Fluxus art band were the pioneers of multimedia performances. Fluxus is an international and interdisciplinary group of artists, composers, designers and poets that took shape in the 1960s and 1970s (https://www.britannica.com). Fluxus is known for experimental contributions to different artistic media and disciplines concludes intermedia and concept art. Joseph Beuys, who cooperated with Fluxus in a period of his artistic life, was undoubtedly one of the influential figures in transforming and extension of artistic forms including the performance of conceptual plays across Europe and also America. His works can be considered as the indicator examples of multimedia performances. His career was characterized by open public debates on a very wide range of subjects including political, environmental, social and long term cultural trends. He is widely regarded as one of the most influential artists of the second half of the 20th century (Hopper, 2007).

In these decades in painting it was growing the Action painting that is a style of painting in which paint is spontaneously dribbled, splashed or smeared onto the canvas, rather than being carefully applied. The resulting work often emphasizes the physical act of painting itself as an essential aspect of the finished work or concern of its artist (Evans, 2006). This style is closely associated with abstract expressionism. Jackson Pollak, the most famous and a major figure in the abstract expressionist movement. He was well known for his unique style of drip painting that is one of the best examples of multimedia art (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Jackson Pollak, Convergence, 1952, oil on canvas, 237 cm × 390 cm, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, New York, United States.

Suorce: http:// www.paintingandframe.com

Later other visual and performance artists under the influence of Fluxus activities and multimedia performances of Joseph Beuys continued the performance works in various tendencies. Along with the arrival of electronic imagery technologies in art world, Multimedia Art entered a new and wider stage. Michael Rush, the author of New Media in Art, in his book divided the Media art in four categories (Rush, 2005),

1. Media and performance
2. Video Art
3. Video Installation art
4. The Digital in Art

Later, many artists with various artistic tendencies, by applying technological devices and multifunctional videos in their artworks and combining them with several artistic multimedia simultaneously expanded previous art boundaries. Among the most prominent figures of these artists were Bill Viola, Laurie Anderson, Bruce Newman and some more. Advent of digital technology and its arrival to art in recent decades increased the speed of art upheavals and created more transformation in presentation of works of art. Among these achievements are changing the cybernetic spaces and also creation of virtual reality art works.

Specifications of Multimedia Art

Regarding the definitions and the above mentioned history, Multimedia Art maintains specifications which distinguish it from other art forms. Some of these specifications are in relation with cultural era when industrial communities passed through modernism and arrived into post modernism period. Multimedia Art was a result of communicational technologies of 1970's. Since the basis for Multimedia Art was founded in previous eras, therefore many of the postmodern characteristics are seen. Although the term

postmodern from the view point of rupture from modernism is always with opacity and ambiguity, generally some principles are accepted for the visual works of this era which are named as postmodern approaches toward visual arts. These approaches for Multimedia Art could be discriminated in six separate categories:

1. **Monopolizing**: Based on the principle of monopolizing[7] which postmodernism is benefited from, the artist takes out any image or picture from works of predecessors and shows them off as his own creation. The artist believes that both aesthetic experiences which often have a nostalgic form and hidden culture in any image are commodities which are previously produced in a cultural process and do not belong to any certain individual, even the artist who had created them; and thus can be exploited publically. This method has appeared in many of the Multimedia Art productions. In these works, as the artist utilizes any media which has more consistency with his main purpose, employs it in order to express his intention. The artist makes it possible for himself to recourse to prefabricated definitions, which are explained and presented by previous artists to divulge the main topic of his work. There are several samples of this kind. In his work entitled as "The Greeting" in 1995, Bill Viola tried to utilize the artwork of previous artists (Figure 6). In this work, which is an installation of sound and video, Viola inspired from a painting entitled "Visiting" by Jacopo Pontormo, the mannerism painter of 16th century. Viola applied this adaptation in combination of his purposes and beliefs. The atmosphere of this video work is arranged in such a way that the audience in watching it, unsuspectingly understands its relation with the traditional paintings of the West (Balzani, Margheri, 2017)

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[7] Postmodernism associated with the historic and contextual reference, and the evolution of Western capitalism postmodern socially, economically, politically, and culturally. Also, it has been closely associated with the development of the media. Postmodernism as it came as a reaction to structural linguistics, Western and central statements that refer to the hegemony, domination, exploitation and alienation. Also, Postmodernism had been targeted to undermine Western philosophy, and the erosion of capitalist institutions that control the World, a monopoly on the means of production, and it has the scientific knowledge. Postmodernism has also worked on criticism of the Logos and logic through questioning mechanisms, dispersion and disassembly (N.Elaati, 2016).

Figure 6: Jacopo Pontormo, The visiting, Tuscany, Italy. & Bill Viola, The Greeting (poster of short film), 1995, The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, United States

Source: http://collection.whitney.org

2. **Spatial Feature**: In postmodern artworks, spatial feature maintains the concept of forming complicated spaces and areas, utilizing environmental conditions, and selection of locations where art is displayed in a certain and specified context. This strategy was in opposition with durability and timelessness. Spatial feature, in many of Multimedia Art productions, like multiple videos, and also multimedia performances, is an inseparable element in such a way that, sometimes, distinction between the artwork and the space around is obscure and challenging. In "Performance Corridor", 1968, by Bruce Nauman, the audience is passing through narrow halls while cameras overhead are recording the audience movements. The location and the space for presentation of these works are not limited to monitors and video images; the area where audiences are placed and their passageway are not out of the range of artwork. (https://www.guggenheim.org)

Figure 7: Bruce Nauman, Performance Corridor, 1968, Guggenheim Museum

Source: https://www.guggenheim.org

3. **Lack of Durability and Being Instable:** Creation of an artwork from temporal and unstable material, either in physical structure or theme and content is another method of postmodernism. The artworks created in this manner are taken from popular images and their main objective is discrediting and opposition with creditability that traditional arts and also modernism are giving to museums and galleries. Even though multimedia artworks may be presented in museum and galleries; in many cases, they are still temporal and unstable. These works are not converted into objects placed in gallery, rather they are merely moving during performance. The most prominent groups of these works are multimedia performance works. Joseph Beuys is the most outstanding figure among performance artists who presented a combination of painting, sculpture, and performance works, which he called them Action (Figure 8), in the space of gallery. Through his performances, Beuys encouraged audiences to incorporate his political and social messages into their everyday lives (http:// www.tate.org.uk).

Figure 8: Joseph Beuys: Actions, Vitrines, Environments, 2005. Tate Gallery, London

Source: http:// www.tate.org.uk

4. **Accumulation**: In postmodernism, taking advantage of duplicated logic for displaying the process of artistic creation and production of a range of apparently similar works through dialogue between congruent or contradictory elements is called "accumulation" which is considered to be one its strategy. This special feature which is obviously related to collage-like works in postmodernism is perceptibly resulted from installation of elements besides each other and combining different art media together.

5. **Discursive**: Displaying interferences, penetration of sensual attraction, silence of visual images, reflection of texts discourse and written documentation of an artwork are the main characteristic of this postmodern method. The objective of this approach is to put sound to a consonant and silent work and to display it polemical and controversial. In this group of artworks, literature arrives at the realm of visual arts as a powerful communicative media. Artists like Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, and Mary Kelly most benefited from the integration of literature and visual arts in their works. These artists turned to language to display their visual expression and created artworks in which narration dominates the visual aspects but the language for them maintains a form of art, not literature. The final result of the work was an artwork suspended between visual art and literature (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Barbara Kruger, Without title, 1991.

Source: http://www. blckdmnds.com

6. **Connectionism**: Mixing substances and materials, genders, periodic references for obtaining eclectic structures, either in form or content, is considered as one of the most popular approaches in postmodernism and its objective is negation and denial of purity of modernism. Having this definition and in a general sense, Multimedia Art can be considered as the offspring of this principle of postmodernism. Eclectic structure in form can be seen in all samples of Multimedia Art works. This connectionism is followed by eclectic structure of content as well.

Multimedia Art is on the same substrate in which the artist, for expressing his purpose, unfetters from the restraints and mixing various art media, provide possibilities of multiple communications with the audiences, which seems to be the most significant feature of this art. In confronting with an artwork, the audience may have multiple communicates

with it not just by vision rather simultaneously may listen to a sound playing or be in a cyberspace.

Conclusion

Multimedia Art, in its general concept, is an art which is formed by combining two or more art media. Such kind of special art does not belong to postmodernism era, rather in each historical era, the artists, according to the media available in that era, created Multimedia Art productions. This point is an indicator of capabilities and special facilities that the simultaneous combination of some media produces and enables the artists to utilize it for expressing their purposes. Of course, contemporary artistic idioms refer to Multimedia Art as an art that the postindustrial era makes it possible. In this respect, many features of postmodernism can also be seen and studied in this art. The most prominent features are classified in six separate groups: monopolizing, spatial feature, lack of Durability and being Instable, accumulation, discursive, and connectionism.

Aside from these specialties which are related to postmodernism, Multimedia Art has other features which are resulted from combination of different artistic media. The simultaneous combination of audible and visual media enables the artist to provide multiple communications with his audiences and in order to express his intension, in addition to eyesight, employs other senses of the audiences as well. Also, the use of advance technological devices adds up to the expressive capabilities of this type of art.

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