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Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper
ul. Mariensztat 8
00-302 Warszawa
tel. 22 538 92 03
redakcja@semper.pl
<http://semper.pl>

Zapraszamy do sklepu internetowego:

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- * Noël Carroll
on Interpretation
- * Art Criticism, Ontology
of Art, Museum Philosophy
- * Art and Philosophy from Poland

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Instytut Filozofii UW, Zakład Estetyki
Krakowskie Przedmieście 3, 00-927 Warszawa
www.sztukaifilozofia.uw.edu.pl/english/

▪ special issue editor

Ewa D. Bogusz-Bołtuć (Ewa Bogusz-Boltuc)

▪ graphic design

Jan Modzelewski

▪ publisher

Uniwersytet Warszawski, Instytut Filozofii,
Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper®
ul. Mariensztat 8, 00-302 Warszawa
tel./fax 22 538-92-03
www.semper.pl, e-mail: redakcja@semper.pl

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The claim that art needs interpretation has become commonplace. There is no doubt among the majority of philosophers of art, art critics, artists, curators and conservators that interpretation is indispensable to making sense of an artwork and for allowing the content of a work to become apparent. Moreover, how works of art are perceived is not only a theoretical matter. Curatorial practices and art conservation-restoration choices instantiate our understanding of what art is and what is significant in artworks.

However, some philosophers may still oppose the interpretation of art. They usually dismiss interpretational inquiries for two reasons. Firstly, they claim that theory driven interpretation, such as psychoanalysis, feminism, or social radicalism, impose their own particular values on artworks. Consequently, cultural interpretation does not primarily promote the attitude of art appreciation; neither has it tried to establish standards for art. But, in this situation, even if some particular interpretational theories are refuted, the general idea of interpretation – epitomized by the *cliché*, “being true to artworks” – may still be acceptable. The second reason why interpretation has been questioned is heavier in assumptions and consequences. Namely, philosophers, who urge us to give up the idea of interpretation *per se*, claim that there is no such a thing as the nature of art or the intrinsic meaning of an artwork. Hence, we can only describe a work according to what we find useful for our own purposes. Thus, our pragmatic purposes seem to guide our encounter with artworks which, in turn, are supposed to help us to rearrange our life. One of the main problems with this view is that artworks are treated as blunt incentives, without their own rights, but at the same time they are, miraculously, supposed to change our existence. Nonetheless, even those philosophers, who are against interpretation and just opt for pragmatic uses of a work, are not inclined to embrace the radical arbitrariness of critical judgment.

So, we must face the non-arbitrary normative aspects of assessing the correctness of interpretation and, perhaps, even the correctness of use. So far, no one has justified that all interpretations are equally good. At any rate, art interpretation is a powerful and complex activity that cannot ignore simple questions such as: How are we going to assess the epistemic validity of interpretation? Which interpretation is correct or true, better or worse? Does the interpretation alter the meaning of an artwork? Is interpretation constitutive to the identity of an artwork?

I’m grateful to all Contributors to *Art and Philosophy* who decided to provide us with their answers to those disturbing questions.

Ewa D. Bogusz-Bołtuć

 Interpretation and Evaluation

Noël Carroll
Criticism and Interpretation
Abstract

In "Criticism and Interpretation", I will introduce several new arguments in favor of moderate actual intentionalism. Some of these will be based on a close reading of H.P. Grice's theory of meaning. Other arguments will be based on making a distinction between two questions about artistic meaning that are often conflated: the question of what constitutes or determines meaning versus the epistemological questions about the best ways of identifying that meaning. "Interpretation" will also discuss the relation of the interpretation of an artwork to its embodiment.

"... there must, in grammar, be reasons for what you say, or be [a] point in your saying of something, if what you say is to be comprehensible. We can understand what the words mean apart from why you say them; but apart from understanding the point of your saying them we cannot understand what you mean"¹.

Introduction

Insofar as not all artworks involve meaning, broadly construed, not all artworks call for interpretation. However, where artworks invite interpretation, interpretation is a natural stage in the critical evaluation of an artwork². That is, where the artwork is about something, isolating what it is about – that is, interpreting its meaning – is an unavoidable step in establishing whether the artist has done a good or a bad job articulating whatever the work is about with respect to the means at her disposal. To take a fanciful example, if an architectural structure is about projecting strength, as a fortress like the Pentagon is, then it would be a questionable artistic choice to construct it out of plywood. For, that would hardly project strength.

In short, where a work is about something, a critical evaluation of the work will strive to ascertain whether the artist has discovered a suitable or adequate set of forms with which to embody the meaning or content of the work. In

¹ S. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, Oxford UP, 1979, p. 206.

² See N. Carroll, *On Criticism*, Routledge, London 2009.

order to perform this assessment, of course, one first needs to determine the meaning or the content at hand. And that is the task of interpretation.

For our purposes, interpretation involves not only saying what a work is about, but also pointing out how the work is designed to support that meaning³.

The meaning or content of an artwork can take various shapes. There are themes and theses. Roughly, the topic or topics of a work are its theme, as the wrath of Achilles is the theme of the *Iliad*. Where a work stakes out a perspective or position on its theme, we can say it has a thesis. The recent film *Lincoln* by Steven Spielberg is about the abolition of slavery; that is its theme. But it also advances a thesis or perspective about its theme; it is in favor of the abolition of slavery. In addition to their communication of themes and theses, artworks may also possess meaning in terms of exhibiting expressive properties like sadness, joy or gloom. The objects of interpretation then are at least themes, theses, and expressive properties. In order to evaluate works that traffic in these sorts of meanings, we must first interpret them before we go on to judge whether the artist has or has not found an appropriate way to articulate them – that is, ways that successfully will support, reinforce, or enhance the meaning of the work.

Given that so much art does involve meaning, interpretation is key to a great deal of art criticism. For that reason, philosophical questions about the nature of interpretation lie at the heart of a philosophy of criticism. And, indeed, debates about interpretation – under the rubric of the intentional fallacy – might be said to have inaugurated the emergence of the philosophy of criticism in the analytic tradition of aesthetics⁴.

In this essay, I would like to revisit that debate in the hope of suggesting how I think we should conceive of the project of interpreting a work of art.

Alternative Views of Interpretation

Even if philosophers of art agree that the object of interpretation is the meaning of an artwork, conceived in terms of what it is about, there is a continuing debate about what determines that meaning and how we can (legitimately) come to know it. Some of the leading positions in this debate are: actual intentionalism, which comes in several variations – including radical intentionalism, more moderate forms of actual intentionalism, and hypothetical intentionalism, anti-intentionalism, and what we can call the value maximizing view of interpretation.

Historically, anti-intentionalism is probably the first position on interpretation to be worked out in the analytic tradition⁵. On this view, what determines the meaning of a poem is the words of the poem in terms of their dictionary meanings, grammar, the history of words (and literary genres), and conventionally established ways of dealing with figurative language such as metaphor. What this excludes, putatively, is reference to the intentions of the poet. On

³ N.B.: By saying “how it is designed”, we leave open the question of whether it has succeeded or not.

⁴ See W. K. Wimsatt, M. C. Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy”, in: *The Philosophy of Art: Readings Ancient and Modern*, ed. A. Neill, A. Ridley, McGraw Hill, New York 1995.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

this view, the intention of the author is outside of the text, whereas in order to appreciate a poem, we should attend to what is on the page – the words and sentences in their conventional usage. This position appeals to readers' intuitions by arguing that the poet cannot make a word mean anything he wishes simply by intending it. Humpty-Dumpty cannot make "glory" mean "a nice knock-down argument" by fiat. That view would be an example of radical actual intentionalism. Anti-intentionalism emerges in stark opposition to radical actual intentionalism.

Although in ordinary discourse, we aim at discovering what our interlocutors intend or mean by their words, with respect to literature, the anti-intentionalist argues, our task is different. We aspire to learn what the text means. Insofar as a poem is a public affair, we aim at uncovering its public meaning, the meaning of the text in light primarily of the conventions of language.

The value maximizing view of interpretation shares many similarities with anti-intentionalism⁶. On this view, the aim of an artwork, such as a poem, is to afford aesthetic experience. Consequently, the best interpretation of a poem is the one that delivers the most rewarding aesthetic experience. Since the author's meaning might not support the richest aesthetic experience and, indeed, might even impede it, the interpretation of the poem need not be limited to the author's intention. What determines the meaning of the poem is whatever delivers the best experience of the poem to the reader. And there is no reason to imagine that the intended meaning guarantees that.

The value maximizing approach to interpretation is a reader-response theory. The meaning of the poem is established by the reader's response in pursuit of the best experience of the poem. Of course, this position may put various constraints on readerly interpretations. Some value maximizers will restrict the interpretive play of the reader to those respected by anti-intentionalists. That is, readerly interpretive play must be conducted within the bounds of the conventional meanings of words and sentences, the history of words (and literary genres, styles, etc.), and the protocols for managing figurative language. Of course, value-maximizers may permit even more latitude than this. What is common among value maximizers is their view that what determines the meaning of a poem is that which produces the best experience of the poem within certain specified constraints.

As already mentioned, those constraints can vary. For purposes of this essay, I will assume that the relevant value maximizers in this debate are somewhat conservative, agreeing with the anti-intentionalists about that which one is permitted to appeal in the pursuit of the meaning of the poem. I make this assumption because I intend to be dealing with the debate over interpretation from the perspective of analytic philosophers, and analytic philosophers tend to be conservative regarding the amount of interpretive play they find acceptable.

Both the value maximizers and the anti-intentionalist ground their understanding on views about the nature of the literary institution. They will admit

⁶ See S. Davies, "Authors' Intentions, Literary Interpretation and Literary Value", in: *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 46, No. 3 (July, 2006), pp. 223-247.

that the interpretation of meaning in everyday affairs aims at discovering the intention of speakers. But they argue that matters are different with respect to literature, given the nature of that institution.

Actual intentionalists, on the other hand, question this presupposition. They see the interpretation of poems as on a continuum with the interpretation of the words and sentences of our conspecifics in daily discourse. Actual intentionalists, however, can be divided into different camps. Radical actual intentionalists claim that the meaning of the poem is whatever the poet claims she intended to be – supposedly irrespective of the rules of language, etc. Other intentionalists are more moderate. They maintain that the meaning of the poem is determined by the poet's intention where that intention coincides with what the poem can be alleged to mean given linguistic practices.

Hypothetical intentionalism, in contrast, parts company with even more moderate forms of actual intentionalism⁷. Hypothetical intentionalists frequently appear to agree with intentionalists that what an interpretation is amounts to a hypothesis about what the actual author intends, however, hypothetical intentionalists do not allow certain types of evidence to serve as a basis for that hypothesis. Specifically, they maintain that reference to an author's privately avowed intentions are interpretively inadmissible. That is, authorial statements about their intentions as found in private journals and diaries, or as disclosed in unpublished interviews with the authors, their friends, family, and/or their acquaintances are all out of bounds for the hypothetical intentionalists. Whereas the moderate forms of intentionalism will allow such evidence to play a role in interpretations, so long as those authorial intentions are consistent with the pertinent linguistic practices, the hypothetical intentionalism rejects this.

Rather than tracking the utterer's meaning with respect to the meaning of the poem, the hypothetical intentionalist claims to be aiming at the utterance meaning of the poem. Thus, the so-called utterance meaning of the poem as discovered by an ideal critic appears to determine the meaning of the poem. And like the anti-intentionalist and the value maximizer, the hypothetical intentionalist bases her position on the supposed nature of the literary institution.

Joining the Debate

When considering these different theories of interpretation, it is useful to remember that each theory must answer two questions⁸. It must have a defensible answer to the constitutive question – the question of what determines the meaning of the poem. And it will also have an answer to the epistemological question of how we are to go about ascertaining that meaning, notably in terms of what evidence is legitimate and what is not. It is helpful to keep these two questions in mind when we review the strengths and weaknesses of the preceding views, although unfortunately this distinction is not always respected in the actual debate.

⁷ See J. Levinson, *Contemplating Art*, The Clarendon Press, Oxford 2006.

⁸ S. Neale, "Implicit Meaning", in: *Meaning and Other Things: Essays on Stephen Schiffer*, ed. G. Ostertag, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, forthcoming.

Anti-intentionalism answers the constitutive question by maintaining that what fixes or determines the meaning of a poem involves the dictionary meaning of the words and sentences, the history of words (and literary genres), and the established procedures for managing figurative language, including metaphors. However, these resources cannot fix the meaning of a poem, since they underdetermine what the poem can mean. That is, appealing to only these factors may support multiple textual meanings rather than establishing its unique meaning. Conventional language usage is insufficient to answer the constitutive question, not to mention the problem with the proposed manner of dealing with figurative language (since there are no purely conventional ways of handling things like metaphors).

On the question of evidence, the anti-intentionalist bars reference to intentions because they are said to be remote from the poem. Intentions are in the head of the poet, whereas readers should be paying attention to what is on the page. Concern for authorial intention draws us away from what the poet has written. But this dichotomy and its supposed consequences are false. What is written on the page is our best evidence of what the poet intended. Concern for authorial intention does not draw us away from what the poet has written but rather asks readers to attend to it closely and deeply.

Anti-intentionalists will argue that the author's intentions are often unavailable. Who knows what Homer intended? We are not even sure who Homer was. But we can interpret his *Iliad*. Why think that things stand differently with authors who are temporally less distant? Do we ever truly understand another's mind? Thus, even here, the anti-intentionalist will often maintain that generally when we read a poem, the author's intentions are not ready to hand.

Of course, if what I wrote previously is correct, this worry is harmless, since as long as the poem is available to us, we do have access to what the author intended. Moreover, the concern about Homer seems exaggerated. In no other domain except literature does there seem to be much anxiety about discerning the intentions of historical agents. Historians feel confident in hypothesizing Xerxes's intentions, although we lack access to his diaries (if he had any). Why suppose that special alarms go off only when we are dealing with artworks?

Perhaps needless to say, one reason that historians are not anti-intentionalists is that they conceive of what they are doing as on a continuum with our ordinary practices of interpreting our conspecifics – an enterprise in which we typically succeed with amazing accuracy in identifying the intentions of others. It is true that sometimes we are mistaken and even deceived about the intentions of others. But more often than not, we are successful. Social life would be impossible otherwise. So why postulate that when it comes to literature, we suddenly must regard interpretation as playing by rules other than those that govern ordinary discourse and practices like history?

At this point, the anti-intentionalist is apt to claim that literature has special purposes that mandate that interpreting literature must differ from the way in which we interpret other forms of words and deeds. That is, literary interpretation allegedly abides by different rules than does ordinary interpretation. Of course,

this does not appear to be borne out empirically⁹. As many – and possibly even more – literary critics advert to authorial intentions or to hypotheses thereof as those who refrain¹⁰.

To this, the anti-intentionalist will respond that her claim is not meant descriptively but normatively, maintaining that it is a rule of the institution, given the purposes of literature, that literary interpretation ought to differ from other sorts of interpretation (which characteristically aim at discovering authorial intent). Here it is up to the anti-intentionalist to name those purposes. Unfortunately, most often they do not or, where they do, their candidates, like artistic autonomy, are as controversial as their position on authorial intention.

Maybe it will be argued that literature is for contemplation not communication. Yet this is an article of post-Kantian doxa that has never won the battle of ideas and that is especially ill-suited for literary forms like the novel. Indeed, I would conjecture that most contemporary art, whether esoteric or exoteric, is designed with primarily communicative intent.

The value maximizing position on interpretation can be yoked together with anti-intentionalism by arguing that the purpose of literature, which the bracketing authorial intention subserves, is to secure as rewarding an interpretative experience as possible. Here, interpretive play is the relevant form of contemplation. Insofar as constraining aesthetic experience to authorial intentions might block certain interpretive possibilities, value maximizers reject a principled commitment to identifying authorial intention.

Obviously, something like the value maximizing view of interpretation could not supply a general answer to the constitutive question. It is patently absurd to contend that the meaning of what I say is determined or fixed by what will grant listeners the most pleasure in interpreting what I've said. But since this view is absurd in everyday contexts of interpretation, we can demand of value maximizers to tell us why they suppose it obtains when it comes to poetry.

Undoubtedly, we are likely to hear once again about the special purposes of literature¹¹. Here the special purposes have to do with abetting maximally rich interpretive experiences. However, even if this is *one* of the purposes of literature, it is hardly the only one. Moreover, it is far from clear that that some of the other purposes of literature do not place constraints on how much latitude our interpretive play may take.

One of the other purposes of literature, inarguably, is communication. This mandates a concern in the relevant cases for authorial intention, not only on the grounds of the nature of communication, but on moral grounds as well, since it is not only morally wrong to willfully misinterpret another's communication

⁹ One consideration that at least *suggests* that the literary institution is not categorically anti-intentionalist is that misprints in literary works are typically corrected to coincide with what the author intended. Of course, if the misprint stands because that is what the poet desires (perhaps because she thinks it makes for a better [new] poem), that too is a matter of authorial intention.

¹⁰ For example, in interpreting A.R. Ammons's poem „Mansion,“ M.H. Abrams appeals to information that Roger Gilbert culled from Ammons' papers. See: M.H. Abrams, „The Fourth Dimension of a Poem“, in: *The Fourth Dimension of a Poem and Other Essays*, W.W. Norton, New York 2012, p.27.

¹¹ Needless to say, some literary works are only for contemplation, but this too is a matter of intention.

or to ignore another's intention, but it is self-degrading to do so as well¹². The rewards of interpretive play are all well and good, however, they should not be purchased at the cost of neglecting the other purposes of literature. Communication is one of those aims. Thus, the rewards of interpretive activity should be sought within the bounds of communication, which is tied to the communication of authorial meaning.

Like anti-intentionalism and the value maximizing approach, hypothetical intentionalism claims to be grounded in the special purposes of the literary institution. For the hypothetical intentionalist, the aim of interpretation is to produce a hypothesis about what the author intended his poem to mean. In pursuit of this aim, the hypothetical intentionalist allows the idealized interpreter access to not only the author's text, but also to any of her statements about the text, so long as it is published and in the public domain, along with information about the historical context of the work, artistic and otherwise as well as knowledge of the author's oeuvre. On the basis of this kind of evidence, the hypothetical intentionalist proposes a hypothesis about what the author intended to communicate.

The hypothetical intentionalist places extreme emphasis on the notion that literature is a *public* institution. This, she believes, evidentially commits the critic in the process of interpreting the work to only information available in the public sphere, precluding reference to the author's private papers, diaries, journals, letters, etc. as well as unpublished interviews with the author, her family, friends, and acquaintances.

In most cases, the interpretation of the author's intention that is reached operating under the epistemic constraints defended by the hypothetical intentionalist and the interpretation arrived at by supplementing that evidence with insider information garnered from private letters and interviews are likely to converge. Nevertheless, it is possible for the two interpretations to part company. Where that happens, the hypothetical intentionalist, unlike the actual intentionalist, argues that only the interpretation based on publicly available consideration is admissible, even if the meaning disclosed in private authorial communication is consistent with what is discernible in the artwork. Here, the hypothetical intentionalist may describe her commitment as favoring utterance meaning over utterer's meaning, ascribing the latter commitment to actual intentionalists.

The way in which the hypothetical intentionalist answers the constitutive question is open to several interpretations. She may simply maintain that the author's intention fixes or determines the meaning of the poem. In that case, the hypothetical intentionalist and the actual intentionalist are to that extent in agreement. They only disagree about what evidence is licit when it comes to interpreting the poem. The hypothetical intentionalist argues that it must be public. However, this rides on a distinction between what is public and what is private which will be very difficult to maintain in a non-arbitrary fashion, since what are the today's private letters, journals, manuscripts, and interviews are often published or made publicly available in library collections tomorrow.

¹² In order to confirm the wrongness of misconstruing another's words, consider the indignation you feel when you are the subject of a willful misinterpretation.

Of course, the hypothetical intentionalist may suggest that what fixes the meaning of the poem is not the author's intention, but rather the interpretation reached by an ideal reader armed with the fullest powers of reason and all the information available about the historical context of the poem, artistic and otherwise, all of the published material about the author's life and times, including things such as her memoirs, letters, etc. along with complete knowledge of her oeuvre and those of her peers.

However, it is questionable whether this can serve to determine or fix the meaning of the poem. Given the Duhem-Quine postulate concerning the under-determination of hypotheses by the evidence, our ideal readers are destined to come up with non-converging accounts of the meaning of the poem. That is, the evidence allowed by the hypothetical intentionalist will support different hypotheses from different ideal observers, thus providing no way to establish which one constitutes *the* meaning of the poem. One ideal reader, for example, may weigh the strength of her hypothesis in terms of its comprehensiveness, while another prizes specificity to a greater extent.

In contrast, the actual intentionalist has an answer to the question of the determinate meaning of the poem, namely the hypothesis which coincides with the actual intention of the author (where that is consistent with what is available in the text)¹³.

At present hypothetical intentionalism and a variant of actual intentionalism which I have come to call modest actual mentalism appear to be the leading theories being currently debated by analytic philosophers¹⁴. Modest actual mentalism contends that the meaning of a poem is determined by the actual intentions and underlying, though not necessarily conscious, assumptions of the poet. That is, modest actual mentalism holds that the cognitive or, more broadly, mental stock of the artist fixes the meaning of the work, so long as said intentions, assumptions, etc. are consistent with what is available in the text. To the extent that the hypothetical intentionalist takes these to be the object of his hypotheses, hypothetical intentionalism and modest actual mentalism agree on the question of what constitutes the meaning of the poem and the two camps only disagree about what comprises the acceptable bodies of evidence for producing the relevant hypothesis.

Hypothetical intentionalism and modest actual mentalism share a roughly Gricean conception of meaning according to which someone means *x* if he intends to induce the belief in *x* in his audience *and* he intends his audience to recognize this intention¹⁵. The hypothetical intentionalist worries that the actual intentionalism may result in off-the-wall interpretations where the author intends, for example, the inscription "black" to mean "white" in his poem.

¹³ It might be thought that the hypothetical intentionalist can maintain that context determines the meaning of the text. But context is at most supplies evidence for an interpretation. It cannot fix the meaning of a poem since context underdetermines meaning. Rather it is only evidence of authorial intention.

¹⁴ See N. Carroll, "Art Interpretation", in: *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 151 (2) 2011, pp. 117-135.

¹⁵ P. Grice, "Meaning", in: *Studies in the Way of Words*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA., 1987, p. 219. See also S. Neale, "Paul Grice's Philosophy of Language", in: *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 15 (1992), pp. 509-559.

Thus, the hypothetical intentionalist contends that only public available considerations, like the conventional meanings of words, can be consulted thereby blocking any and all private, off-the-way intentions of actual authors. And this, the hypothetical argues, shows the superiority of hypothetical intentionalism over every variety of actual intentionalism, including modest actual mentalism.

However *pace* hypothetical intentionalism, there is no need to erect the aforesaid constraint, since it is already built into the Gricean conception of meaning that the hypothetical intentionalist, and the modest actual mentalist endorses. For, a genuine intention requires some expectation of success. To intend to communicate, one must operate in a way that is apt to enable one's communicative intention to be realized and that entails that the speaker use words and sentences in ways that audiences will find intelligible, i.e., in ways the audience can recognize.

Of course, typically this involves using words and sentences conventionally. So, the modest actual mentalist responds to the hypothetical intentionalist's worries by noting that off-the-wall authorial intentions are already ruled out by what is required by the speaker's *genuine* intention to have the audience recognize his communicative intention. Hypothetical intentionalism has no special advantage when it comes to blocking off-the-wall authorial intentions¹⁶. That has already been taken care of by the Gricean account of what it is to mean something¹⁷.

The Linguistic Fallacy

As astute readers have probably noticed, the preceding debate has been conducted exclusively in light of the written word, notably poetry. The reason I have framed it in this way is because this is how the issue was initially framed by Beardsley and Wimsatt in their article "The Intentional Fallacy", and the dialectic has proceeded, in large measure, in that fashion ever since. Thus, to enter the debate, I have had to engage it on its own terms, even though, as I will argue in this section, those terms are ill-advised. Indeed, I think that the attempt to model all art interpretation on the interpretation of the meaning of words and sentences is a fallacy, namely what I call the *Linguist Fallacy*.

Advancing anti-intentionalism with emphasis on linguistic meaning was immensely useful for its defenders inasmuch as it might have seemed intuitively

¹⁶ A more technical way of putting this would be to say that the hypothetical intentionalist has no reason invoke utterance meaning, since utterer's meaning, construed in terms of Gricean intentions, already commits the utterer to abiding by the conventional meaning of words and sentences insofar as that is entailed by a genuine intention to have his communicative intention recognized by audiences. Indeed, the very notion of utterance meaning itself is redundant given what is required for an utterer to genuinely intend to communicate. Utterer's meaning is enough.

¹⁷ This may leave the question of what the meaning of a poetic unit is when the author's intention is not supported by what is written. There are two alternative here. I can say that it doesn't mean anything or that it possesses whatever range of meanings the text allows. The former seems to me counterintuitive. So, I prefer the latter alternative. This, of course, concedes indeterminacy of meaning in these cases. Nevertheless, this amount of indeterminacy is less than what is found in the positions that are rival to modest actual mentalism.

plausible that language appears to have ways of fixing meaning without reference to intention, specifically through the conventional meanings of words as found in dictionaries. I, needless to repeat, do not accept the adequacy of this view. However, even if it were true, it would not support the most ambitious claims of the opponents of actual intentionalism.

For, the anti-intentionalists argue on the basis of the putative role of convention for fixing meaning in the language arts to the conclusion that anti-intentionalism obtains across the arts. That is, they generalize from what they claim about poetry to the non-linguistic arts, including the visual arts and music. But even if their contentions about poetry were completely true (a very controversial claim), the extrapolation from poetry to the nonlinguistic arts would be suspicious. For where literature in general and poetry in particular allow resort to dictionaries, the other arts don't. Most often pretending that they possess anything approximately like the meaning conventions recorded in dictionaries commits the Linguistic Fallacy.

In the 2012 movie adaptation of *Anna Karenina* by Joe Wright, much of the action of the story transpires on recognizably theatrical stage sets. Many of these scenes involve society events, such as a horse race. The audience is clearly intended to take note of this non-naturalistic handling of the relevant scenes. The viewer is invited, even nudged, to interpret the meaning of this *mise en scene*. Many commentators have surmised that, by means of this scenography, Wright intends to communicate something about the social milieu of the fiction, namely that it is one of rigidly prescribed roles that one must at least *appear* to follow. Why do we ascribe this meaning intention to Wright? Not on the basis of a cinematic dictionary that associates theater imagery with roles and appearances, but because that is the best explanation of what Wright might mean given Wright's other directorial choices.

Admittedly there is a history of using theatrical imagery to comment on society, ranging from Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* to Lars von Trier's *Dogville*. But this is not a fixed association as is the relation of a word to its referent, since theater imagery can also be used to communicate other themes, such as the ultimate artificiality of cinema, despite its usual claim to realism. With Wright's *Anna Karenina*, the audience must use the theater imagery as a metaphorical optic through which to filter the action. This is a matter of *abduction* that strongly contrasts with the way in which the audience *reads* Tolstoy's opening observation about unhappy families. We directly ask what the intention behind Wright's directorial choices might be because, even though there might be some precedents, there are no conventions we can invoke.

In the film *The Lives of Others*, the director Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck drains bright colors out of many of the scenes, so that the overall impression one has of existence in the GDR is that it is drab – the pervasive institutional grayness signaling an impoverished mode of living. There is, needless to say, no fixed, conventional cinematic correlation that links an absence of bright colors and a presence of dull ones to a diminished quality of life. Rather we infer that this is Donnersmarck's intended point since it fits so well with his other directorial choices.

Likewise when in the motion picture *Zero Dark Thirty*, Kathryn Bigelow, relative to your average suspense film, protracts the process up to the assault on Bin Laden's compound, there is no book of fixed-associative correlations or syntactical rules that establishes what this strategy means. Rather, we infer that she intends to communicate some of the tediousness that such work involves, given the overall emphasis in the film on the hunt for Bin Laden as a sort of police procedural.

Nor, of course, are movies the only artform where meaning must be sought in intention since there are none of the sort of meaning conventions you find in dictionaries available for consultation. For example, in the prelude to *Das Rheingold*, Wagner goes for one hundred and thirty five measures before there is a key change. Why? There are no opera dictionaries that reveal what such a musical structure means. Instead we infer that Wagner intended to signal by this device the calm and untroubled nature of the Rhine at the beginning of the opera. That appears to be the best conjecture for the meaning of this orchestral choice in terms of its contrastive function in the context of the opera as a whole.

In dance, consider the Rose Adagio section of *The Sleeping Beauty*. As Aurora, the Sleeping Beauty, dances with the four suitors, she becomes progressively less physically dependent upon support, until finally she stand on one leg on pointe in an *arabesque en arrière* position, signaling that she now grown-up and independent. Here it is not the case that an *arabesque en arrière* carries any conventional associations. Rather we interpret the choice of this step in this way because it is the best hypothesis we can offer of what the actual choreographer intended to communicate about the princess at this point in the narrative.

Of course, what we have been arguing about motion pictures dance, and music pertains to the fine arts as well. In Picasso's *Mademoiselles d'Avignon*, which Picasso preferred to refer to as *My Brothel*, the prostitute on the extreme left with the gray face has a right leg that looks rather like rough-hewn blade – somewhat resembling a butcher's ax. There is no pictorial code to tell us what this "ax leg" means; instead we must ask what Picasso might have had in mind when making this authorial choice; was it that he intended it to insinuate brutishness and menace into the image.

Similarly, when George Grosz depicts Weimar plutocrats as porcine, with outsized, slobbering lips and bloated bodies, fat cigars stuffing their mouths, there is no decoding manual for reading these images. In fact, we do not literally read these images; we take the distortions in these figures to mirror what Grosz ostensibly finds essential in the appetitive, consuming social system – a.k.a. capitalism -- that these bankers and businessmen represent.

The point of all these examples so far is that even if it were true that dictionary-like conventions could entirely fix the meaning of poems (which I doubt), this model could not be generalized to all of the arts, since, to a very large extent, many of the other arts, like architecture and sculpture, as well as the ones canvassed already, lack those conventions. And even some of the arts that possess language, like theater, also have communicative elements, like set design, lighting, blocking, and so forth, that must be deciphered abductively rather than by anything like reading.

For the most part, creative choices in the nonlinguistic arts can only be comprehended by hypothesizing the intentions of the artists, since there is rarely anything approaching the meaning-conventions of the linguistic arts to consult. Indeed, inasmuch as the strategies we are talking about are *choices*, they need to be understood in terms of the intentions they aim to realize. We do not approach paintings, movies, music, etc. as we read a printed page. We interpret them as we interpret actions. We ask what the artist has done by making these choices which, in turn, must involve questions about what was intended by performing the pertinent communicative action.

Of course, even if literature in general and poetry in particular did determine part of their meanings by way of associative conventions, that would not be the whole story, even for the linguistic arts. For, many of the choices in literary works have nothing to do with conventions like dictionary meanings. The dictionary can give us a range of the meanings of William Burroughs's words when he wrote: "You can cut into *The Naked Lunch* at any intersection point". But no dictionary or handbook of literary tropes is going to tell you what this strategy portends. What does Burroughs's mean to communicate by instructing the reader that she may start reading the book wherever she wishes and continue on jumping randomly from one section to the other? To determine that, we have to speculate about Burroughs's intentions, and, if we are modest actual mentalists, we will also allow ourselves access to whatever evidence, public or private, that enables us to nail it.

Perhaps needless to say, with respect to literature, we don't have to resort to such experimental examples in order to make the case that interpreting literature involves more than tracking the meaning of words. Novels have characters and we may ask why an author has invested a given character with certain properties. What is Mann's point in making Septembrini so enthusiastic in *The Magic Mountain*. Indeed, even some of our interpretive questions about the linguistic choices in literature have nothing to do with what can be gleaned from a dictionary. For example, why are so many of Edgar Allen Poe's short stories written in the first person?

Moreover, this is true even of lyric poetry, the anti-intentionalist's preferred example. Recall the opening lines of Shakespeare's *Sonnet 30*:

When to the sessions of sweet, silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past
I sigh the lack of many a thing I thought.

No dictionary will tell you the expressive meaning of the emphatic alliteration on the letters; instead one needs to intuit the melancholic quality suggested by the subdued, hushed music of the word-sounds.

Although it is true that we do not have to go to the avant-garde in order to support our claim that much interpretation cannot even be remotely conceived to be modeled on the understanding of word in terms of their dictionary meanings, the practice of various avant-gardes, literary and otherwise, drives that point home very effectively. For, the genuine avant-garde proceeds by breaking with conventions, and, obviously, it is not the case that there are conventions

for breaking with conventions. That would be self-defeating, if not pragmatically self-refuting.

Typically, avant-garde artworks proceed by a kind of conversational implicature. They are presented in a context that indicates a commitment to public communication, but they go on to undermine customary protocols of communication in the relevant milieu, leaving us to infer how this breach could be relevant in context. With his *Brillo Box*, Warhol presented a facsimile of a carton of Proctor and Gamble's famous steel-wool cleansing pads. That is, he placed on the gallery floor what looked like it more appropriately belonged in a grocery store warehouse. In other words, he put a commodity in the space reserved for art. Assuming that he was making some point that was relevant within this artworld setting, one suspects that he meant to communicate the idea that art is a commodity.

This is the way in which a very great deal of avant-garde art communicates. It adopts a strategy that subverts expectations, but in a way that intends to say something relevant to its art historical circumstances. The audience figures out what the work means by attempting to grock what an informed participant in the discourses of the artworld could intend to get across by upending our presumptions in telling directions, such as inserting the simulacrum of a commodity, a commercial packing carton, into the network of the artworld at just that point where one would anticipate finding something discernibly different, something that looked like the kind of thing we antecedently identified as an artwork.

Likewise, in *4' 33'*, by presenting listeners with silence in the context of a concert situation, Cage prompts us to locate his intention in breaking with tradition. We presume that he is committed to communicating with us something relevant to musical practice but that cannot be discovered by invoking conventions. Alternatively, we have to attempt to divine what a composer as accomplished as Cage could intend to bring to our attention by framing silence. One interpretation, amply confirmed by Cage's writings, of course, is that the absence of music is not silence and in that noise there is much that is worthy of attention¹⁸.

The practice of the avant-garde brings out very dramatically a condition of much artistic communication. That it is not to be understood in terms of conventions but in terms of authorial intentions, for the simple reason, among other things, that, for the most part, most nonlinguistic art lacks the dictionary meaning conventions found in practices like poetry and even the linguistic artforms communicate through artistic choices that cannot be parsed like linguistic associations.

To suppose that the linguistic interpretation of literature in terms of the information available in dictionaries provides a model for all the arts is to commit the Linguistic Fallacy. Even if the conventional meaning approach determined the meaning of literary utterances, which, as we saw in the previous section

¹⁸ See N. Carroll, "Cage and Philosophy", in: *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 52, 1 (Winter, 1994), pp. 93-98.

is very controversial, there is no reason to believe that it could be extended to artforms that lack those dictionary-like meaning associations. Indeed, the convention, dictionary meaning model does not even suffice to guide the interpretation of every aspect of literature. Rather, it is more appropriate to approach artistic choices across the board as actions where intentions are relevant to the interpretation of what the artist has done. Where interpretation is pertinent, the artist has performed an action – a communicative action – which needs to be comprehended in terms of what the artist intended to do. Where the artist employs conventions in pursuit of her ends, this provides us with evidence of what she means. It does not determine what she means. Her intention does.

James Grant

The Aims of Art Criticism

Abstract

Criticism of the arts is a major part of our cultural life. Critics decide to a large extent which films and plays get seen and which books get read, and criticism commonly affects our experience and evaluation of paintings, poems, music, the urban environment, fashion, and much else. Philosophers and other theorists of the arts have long disagreed, however, about what the aims of art criticism are. Is the point of criticizing an artwork to evaluate it, to explain or interpret it, to modify our responses to it, or to achieve something else besides? In this paper, I argue for a new answer to this question. I argue that art criticism has a constitutive aim. Part of what makes a remark or a piece of writing an instance of art criticism is that it ought to (be such as to) achieve this aim. My view, I shall suggest, incorporates what is right about the other principal suggestions that have been made about criticism's aims (for instance, by Arnold Isenberg, Arthur Danto, and Noël Carroll), while avoiding their shortcomings. It enables us to see what unites the various things critics do.

Criticism of the arts takes many forms. It includes reviews of films, television programmes, plays, and music; academics' interpretations of literature, painting, sculpture, and conceptual art; and various descriptions of artworks, such as many of those in museum and gallery catalogues. Criticism is a major part of our cultural life. It has a significant influence on how we evaluate and experience artworks, and on our decision about whether to experience certain works at all.

A venerable question in aesthetics, the subject of essays by Matthew Arnold, T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, and others, concerns the function of art criticism. Is the point of criticizing an artwork to evaluate it, to modify our response to it, to interpret or explain it, to describe it accurately, or something else besides? Criticism can certainly involve all of these activities. Does one of them give unity and point to the others?

There is no consensus among philosophers about the answer to this question. Critics themselves are also divided about it. A recent survey of visual-arts critics found that 62% place "a great deal of emphasis" on accurately describing artworks, whilst 27% place a great deal of emphasis on "rendering a personal judgment or opinion on the works being reviewed"¹. Critics have lately been undergoing something of a crisis of confidence about the aims of their discipline. Recent publications bearing despondent titles such as "A Quiet Crisis",

¹ A. Szántó, *The Visual Arts Critic: A Survey of Art Critics at General-Interest News Publications in America*, ed. J. Simons, Columbia University National Arts Journalism Program, New York 2002, p. 27.

What Happened to Art Criticism?, and *Critical Mess* reflect this disquiet². Some critics, such as Raphael Rubinstein, argue that lack of clarity about the aims of criticism (especially about the role of evaluation in criticism) has prevented many from developing the skills of a good critic³. Rubinstein even argues that this has resulted in the production of more mediocre art, as artists are not being challenged by enough good criticism.

Revisiting the question of the aims of criticism is therefore a timely exercise. In the first two chapters of my book, *The Critical Imagination*, I develop and defend an answer to this question⁴. I use this to explain the role of imaginativeness in criticism. Here, I shall present a summary of my account of criticism's aims.

The question of what the aims of criticism are can be understood in different ways. There are, I suggest, at least two things we might want to know when we ask what the aims of criticism are. First, we might simply want to know what makes a piece of criticism good as criticism. What does good criticism achieve, in virtue of which it is good as criticism? Second, we might want to know what the constitutive aims of criticism are, if it has any. It is common today for philosophers to make claims about the constitutive aims of such things as belief, assertion, and action. It would be interesting to know if criticism of the arts has a constitutive aim.

I argue that criticism does have a constitutive aim. Part of what makes something an instance of art criticism is that it ought to achieve (or to be such as to achieve) this aim, and any instance of criticism is defective as criticism if it does not achieve (or is not such as to achieve) this aim. It may not be defective as something else (e.g., as an essay), but it is defective as criticism, if it fails to achieve it.

I also argue for a view about what makes something good as criticism. Not all criticism is defective if it fails to (be such as to) achieve this other aim. But achieving this aim makes a piece criticism good criticism. In this paper, however, I shall only explain why I hold that criticism has a constitutive aim.

In the first section of this paper, I shall say why I reject other candidates for constitutive aims of criticism. Some of the writers I discuss, it should be noted, do not explicitly claim that their view is a view about criticism's constitutive aims. I am considering only whether the aims they discuss are constitutive aims of criticism. In the second section, I shall present an account of what it is to appreciate artworks. The aim of criticism I identify relates to appreciation. If we establish relatively modest claims about appreciation, I argue, we can identify a constitutive aim of criticism. I do this in the third section.

1. Rival Views

Monroe Beardsley argues that the primary aim of criticism is to help the critic's readers choose which artworks to experience. Critical activities such as

² R. Rubinstein, "A Quiet Crisis", in: *Art in America*, 91 (2003), pp. 39-47; J. Elkins, *What Happened to Art Criticism?*, Prickly Paradigm Press, Chicago 2003; *Critical Mess: Art Critics on the State of their Practice*, ed. R. Rubinstein, Hard Press Editions, Stockbridge, MA 2007; J. Elkins, M. Newman (eds.), *The State of Art Criticism*, Routledge, New York 2007.

³ See R. Rubinstein, "A Quiet Crisis".

⁴ J. Grant, *The Critical Imagination*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013.

explanation and evaluation are undertaken for the purpose of guiding readers' decisions about whether to listen to certain pieces of music, to look at certain paintings, to watch certain films, and so on⁵.

Beardsley's claim is certainly a plausible account of many reviews, which form a large part of criticism. However, I reject this as a constitutive aim of criticism, primarily because it is a poor model of much academic criticism. Much academic criticism is written for those who have already chosen to experience the work being criticized. Indeed, much of it is written for specialists, and would be of little use to someone trying to decide whether to experience the work. This is not necessarily a defect of the criticism.

Arnold Isenberg, among others, has argued that the aim of at least a large class of critical remarks is to cause readers to perceive certain features of the work⁶. Many statements whose truth might seem to support an evaluation instead function to cause perception. In Isenberg's example, a critic describes the outline of the figures in an El Greco as forming a wavelike contour. The critic's favourable evaluation of the El Greco, Isenberg claims, is clearly related to this description. But it is not right to think that the truth of the evaluation is supported by the truth of the description. Rather, the description serves to cause the reader to perceive a certain feature of the El Greco, and perceiving this feature caused in the critic a feeling expressible by his value judgement.

There are several problems with Isenberg's position, and I cannot enter into all of them here⁷. It is certainly true that some critical remarks have the function of causing perception. Critics quote lines of poetry to get us to read them, and they sometimes explicitly instruct their readers to look at features of a work. But not all criticism has this function. Criticism can serve to cause belief rather than perception (e.g., belief in an interpretation), and can be written about works that can no longer be perceived (e.g., a theatrical production that has finished its run) for the benefit of readers who never perceived them, without being defective on account of this. Isenberg's insistence that "reading criticism, otherwise than in the presence, or with direct recollection, of the objects discussed is a blank and senseless employment"⁸ is demonstrably untrue.

A natural view is that the aim of criticism is to provide well-grounded evaluations of a work. Noël Carroll has recently defended this position⁹. Carroll holds that "criticism, properly so-called, is not merely a matter of evaluating an artwork—of giving it a thumbs-up or thumbs-down. Critics are expected to supply reasons—indeed, good reasons—in support of their evaluations"¹⁰. In Carroll's view, "evaluation is an essential feature of criticism such that if a piece of discourse lacks explicit or implicit evaluation, it would not qualify as criticism"¹¹. Carroll's principal argument for this claim is that it enables us to explain how criticism differs from comparable

⁵ M. C. Beardsley, "What Are Critics For?", in: *The Aesthetic Point of View: Selected Essays*, ed. M. J. Wreen, D. M. Callen, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1982, pp. 147-164.

⁶ A. Isenberg, "Critical Communication", in: *Philosophical Review*, 58 (1949), pp. 330-344.

⁷ For a detailed discussion of Isenberg, see J. Grant, *op. cit.*, chapter 1, section 2.

⁸ A. Isenberg, "Critical Communication", p. 337.

⁹ N. Carroll, *On Criticism*, Routledge, New York 2009.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 43-44.

forms of discourse about art. An economic historian of art, for instance, might do many of the things critics do: she might, for example, describe and analyze Rembrandt's tendency to have large swaths of black in his paintings. She might explain that he used black to maximize his profit margin, since this allowed him to paint more canvases quickly¹². The claim that criticism provides evaluations, on the basis of such operations as description and analysis, explains how criticism differs from discourses about art that include the same operations.

Carroll is right that critics can and do provide reasoned support for evaluations of artworks. He is also right that it is desirable for an account of the aims of criticism to explain how criticism differs from comparable forms of discourse about art, such as art history. It is not true, however, that providing a reasoned evaluation is a constitutive aim of criticism.

First, some criticism provides interpretations and elucidations of artworks without explicit or implicit evaluation. A convincing explanation of why Hamlet procrastinated would be excellent criticism. But if it did not include an implicit or explicit evaluation of the play, that would not necessarily be a defect.

Second, some good criticism provides unsupported evaluations. Samuel Johnson says of *Othello*: "The scenes from the beginning to the end are busy, varied by happy interchanges and regularly promoting the progression of the story; and the narrative in the end, though it tells but what is known already, yet is necessary to produce the death of Othello"¹³. Johnson does not support his claim that one good thing about *Othello* is that the scenes regularly promote the progression of the story. But this does not make his criticism defective. It is hardly necessary to give a reason in support of the claim that this is a good thing about the play. It would have been necessary to provide support for the claim that promoting the progression of the story was a *bad* thing about the play. And it would be a defect if Johnson's evaluation were incorrect or implausible, or if Johnson were not himself justified in evaluating the work as he does. But his criticism is not necessarily defective on account of not giving reasons in support of this evaluation¹⁴.

Arthur Danto holds that the aim of criticism is to explain how and why each artwork is good in its own way¹⁵. Explanation of facts about a work's value, and of other explananda, certainly plays a significant role in criticism. But again, this is not something that all criticism ought to achieve. Take, for instance, certain kinds of criticism that provide plausible or correct evaluations without further explanation. Some entries in *The Penguin Guide to Recorded Classical Music* simply rate recordings on a scale of one to five stars without further explanation¹⁶. Such criticism is very simple, but not necessarily flawed. It can be very useful to know a qualified music critic's considered verdict on a recording.

¹² *Ibidem*, pp. 16-17.

¹³ S. Johnson, "Selections from the Notes to the Edition of Shakespeare's Plays", in: *Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. H. R. Woudhuysen, Penguin, London 1989, p. 247.

¹⁴ There is more to be said about these kinds of counterexample. See J. Grant, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-23.

¹⁵ A. C. Danto, "The Fly in the Fly Bottle: The Explanation and Critical Judgment of Works of Art", in: *Unnatural Wonders: Essays from the Gap Between Art and Life*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 2005, p. 361.

¹⁶ I. March et al., *The Penguin Guide to Recorded Classical Music 2010*, Penguin, London 2009.

A fifth view is that the constitutive aim of criticism is to enable the critic's readers to appreciate the work better than they would be likely to without having read the criticism. This view is close to the truth. In fact, I argue in *The Critical Imagination* that aiding appreciation is an aim of criticism in that achieving this can make a piece of criticism good as criticism. It is not, however, a constitutive aim. Criticism written for those who have not experienced the work might describe a film as disturbing, funny, clichéd, and so forth. This information might not enable those who see the film to appreciate it any better than they could without the criticism. It might be *obvious* to those who see the film that it is disturbing or clichéd. But it is not necessarily a problem if the criticism tells us these things.

2. Appreciation

My claim is that, although aiding appreciation is not a constitutive aim of criticism, communicating facts of certain kinds about appreciation is. To specify the kinds of fact I have in mind, I must provide an account of what it is to appreciate art.

One very basic claim we can make about appreciation is this. Appreciating a work involves responding in appropriate ways to aspects of a work, and often involves responding in appropriate ways for appropriate reasons. We can thus distinguish three basic factors in appreciation: responses, objects of those responses, and reasons for those responses.

Appreciating a work can involve several kinds of response. First, there are perceptual responses. Appreciating a jade carving, for instance, can involve looking at the smoothness and translucence of the stone. Second, it can involve cognitive responses. Discussing Milton's style, Johnson notes that Milton seems to "use English words with a foreign idiom. ... the disposition of his words is, I think, frequently Italian; perhaps sometimes combined with other tongues"¹⁷. Appreciating Milton's style can involve noticing that he uses words in this peculiar way. Third, it is worth distinguishing what I call 'cogitative' responses. These are responses that involve thinking, imagining, or acquiring or confirming beliefs. For example, in Dante's *Inferno*, it is unclear whether Ugolino, one of the damned, ate his own children. Borges suggests that Dante wanted us to suspect that Ugolino did this, even if we cannot know whether he did it¹⁸. This is a cogitative response that appreciating the *Inferno* can involve. Fourth, appreciation can involve emotional or affective responses. Appreciating *Oedipus Rex* can involve pitying Oedipus, assuming we can pity fictional characters. Finally, there are responses involving desire, which I call 'conative' responses. Taking an interest in the facial expression of a person in a portrait involves desiring to continue looking at it, and being engrossed by a story involves desiring to continue reading it. Appreciating a work can involve having such responses to it.

¹⁷ S. Johnson, "Milton", in: *The Lives of the Poets: A Selection*, ed. R. Lonsdale, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009, p. 112.

¹⁸ J. L. Borges, "The False Problem of Ugolino", in: *The Total Library: Non-Fiction 1922-1986*, ed. E. Weinburger, trans. E. Allen, Penguin, London 2001, pp. 277-279.

If a response is one that appreciating a work can involve, I call it an 'appropriate' response to that work. The word 'appropriate', as I am using it, indicates only that appreciating the work can involve having this response. I do not mean anything else by it. I am not, for example, using 'appropriate response' to mean 'merited response'. I also do not mean 'response it is possible to have to a work'. There are responses that appreciating a given work cannot involve, even though it is possible to have these responses to it. For instance, perhaps it is possible for some people to find Oedipus's suffering amusing. But appreciating the play cannot involve having this response to his suffering: insofar as a person is amused by his fate, she is not appreciating the play. Perhaps appreciating the play could involve this response if the play were very badly written. But as things are, amusement is not, to use my terms, an appropriate response to the play.

Objects of appropriate responses include parts of the work, properties of the work, and its representational content. Appreciating a work does not, however, only involve responding appropriately to certain objects. Often, it involves responding appropriately to these objects for certain reasons rather than others. Appreciating the *Inferno* can involve suspecting Ugolino of cannibalism because he seems to allude to having committed cannibalism. But it cannot involve suspecting him of this for no reason. If appreciating a work can involve responding for a certain reason, I call that reason an 'appropriate' reason for that response. Again, I mean nothing more by 'appropriate' than this.

There are four points to clarify about this account of appreciation. First, not every response appreciation can involve is a response it must involve. Noticing that the disposition of Milton's words is frequently Italian is surely not a response that you *must* have to *Paradise Lost* in order to count as appreciating the poem. Rather, appreciating his work can involve noticing this. Second, I do not mean that having any one response appreciation can involve is a sufficient condition of appreciating the work. Suspecting Ugolino of cannibalism is clearly not enough to count as appreciating the *Divine Comedy*. Third, I do not mean that there is an appropriate response to every aspect of a work. A painting's being 8.51 inches high is unlikely to be a property to which there is any appropriate response. Fourth, I do not claim that there is an appropriate reason for every response appreciation can involve. Appreciating a beautiful work can involve admiring its beauty. But appreciating it would not (at least normally) involve admiring its beauty for some reason.

3. A Constitutive Aim of Criticism

Much more could be said about appreciation. Establishing even this much, however, allows us to identify a constitutive aim of criticism. I hold that it is a constitutive aim of criticism to communicate to the reader:

- (a) what appreciation can involve responding to; or
- (b) what responses appreciation can involve; or
- (c) what appropriate reasons for these responses there are.

Thus, for example, Johnson's observation tells us of a feature of Milton's style that appreciating Milton's work can involve responding to. In a famous essay on *Macbeth*, Thomas de Quincey discusses the peculiar horror he always feels at the knocking at the gate that follows Duncan's murder¹⁹. This is a critical remark, and not merely a report of his feelings, because he has identified a response that appreciating the play can involve having. And Borges, in the course of his essay on Ugolino, gives the reasons there are for suspecting him of cannibalism. Appreciating the work can involve suspecting Ugolino of this for these reasons.

Any criticism that fails to achieve this aim, I claim, is on that account defective as criticism. Note also that, although this aim is disjunctive, it is not a random disjunction. The components are united by the nature of appreciation. The aim is to convey something about what is involved in appreciating the work being criticized, and appreciating a work involves these three factors.

This account explains, I suggest, what unites a great variety of things critics do. Indeed, my account enables us to see the truth in the rival accounts I rejected.

A critic can convey what is involved in appreciating a work by describing, evaluating, interpreting, or explaining it. For example, much criticism consists of careful and accurate description of a work's appearance, as the survey of visual-arts critics I mentioned emphasized. The point of attributing the features attributed in critical description is to convey that those features are objects of appropriate responses, or to convey that the fact the work has those features is a reason for an appropriate response. Similarly, evaluating a work can achieve the constitutive aim of criticism I have identified. Appreciation can involve recognizing for yourself that a work has a certain value. It can also involve recognizing what is good or bad about the work, and responding in various ways to aspects of the work because they have a certain value. Explanation and interpretation, too, can convey what appreciation involves. Appreciating a work can involve seeing the truth, or the plausibility, of an interpretation or an explanation. To use one of Frank Sibley's examples, appreciating a painting might involve seeing that it has a unity of tone because it has a certain concentration of blues and greys²⁰.

Moreover, it is possible to achieve various other aims by achieving the constitutive aim of criticism I have identified. Conveying what appreciation of the work involves can be a way of helping readers appreciate the work better than they otherwise could. So too, it can be a way of helping readers choose which artworks to experience. This explains why criticism often serves to achieve these other aims, without committing us to the view that they are constitutive aims of criticism.

This account also enables us to explain how criticism differs from certain comparable forms of discourse about art. Art history, for example, need not achieve the constitutive aim I have identified. Discovering how long it took

¹⁹ T. de Quincey, "On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*", in: *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater, and Other Writings*, ed. G. Lindop, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1985, pp. 81-85.

²⁰ F. Sibley, "Aesthetic and Non-Aesthetic", in: *Approach to Aesthetics: Collected Papers on Philosophical Aesthetics*, ed. J. Benson, B. Redfern, J. Roxbee Cox, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001, p. 36.

Michelangelo to paint each figure on the Sistine Chapel ceiling can be good art-historical scholarship. It is not, however, art criticism. My account explains why. The aim of this research is not to convey facts about appreciation of the kinds I mentioned. So it is not necessarily flawed as art history if it fails to do this. This is not to deny, of course, that the same thing can be both a piece of art criticism and a work of art history. But the aims it has in virtue of being criticism are different from the aims it has in virtue of being art history.

If this account is right, it is the notion of appreciation that clarifies the nature of criticism. It explains what gives unity and point to the variety of things critics do.

Simon Fokt

A Proposal for a Dualistic Ontology of Art

Abstract

While pluralism in ontology of art improves on various monistic views, through its eclectic approach it lost a lot of their simplicity, parsimony, unity and intuitiveness. The dualistic theory presented in this paper offers an alternative – it shares the advantages of the monistic views while retaining the wide scope of pluralism, and thus should be preferred for methodological reasons. On this view all artworks are at the same time abstract universals which are called recipes, and particular physical objects – realisations. The fact that various artworks seem to differ in their ontology is due to certain fairly consistent culturally determined biases which cause people to prioritise the above compounds differently in cases of different arts. Thus the diversity of arts should not be considered on the level of ontology, as the pluralists would hold, but epistemology, or even further – socially determined phenomena concerning customary perception of various artworks.

1. Introduction

It is the 'common practice' to distinguish some works of art as *types* and others as *tokens*¹. Some theories, which Wolterstorff calls *uniform*, 'develop ontologies of artworks that are uniform across the distinct arts'. Most of those are also *unitive* – 'they deny any fundamental ontological distinction as that between types and tokens'². Such unitive theories are ontologically monistic – they ascribe all artworks to single ontological category of either physical objects, mental objects, nominal objects, or hold that all artworks are universal types³.

Pluralism, on the other hand, is a non-uniform theory – it holds that some artworks are tokens and others are types. The most influential arguments for

¹ N. Wolterstorff, "Ontology of Artworks", in: S. Davies et al. (eds.), *Blackwell Companion to Aesthetics*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2 edition, Oxford 2009, p. 454.

² *Ibidem*, p. 455.

³ Respectively, physical: C. Bell, *Art*, Frederick A. Stokes, New York 1913; R. Fry, *Vision and Design*, Chatto & Windus, London 1920; E. Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music*, The Liberal Arts Press, New York 1957; S. I. Witkiewicz, "New Forms in Painting and the Misunderstandings Arising Therefrom", in: D. Gerould (eds.), *The Witkiewicz Reader*, Northwestern University Press, Illinois 1992; mental: R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1958; B. Croce, *Aesthetic*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992; nominal: N. Goodman, *Languages of Art*, Hackett Pub Co Inc, Cambridge 1976; J. Margolis, *Art and Philosophy*, Harvester Press, Brighton 1980; type: G. Currie, *An ontology of art*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 1989.

pluralism have been formulated by Jerrold Levinson and Richard Wollheim⁴. Their strategy is to show that the monistic views can be simply falsified – the physical-objects view has trouble explaining why no particular physical object has any bearing on the identity of works of literature or music, while the ideal-object and universal views are falsified with paintings or sculpture, where the work clearly is identified with a particular object in the world. Because some works are clearly universals rather than objects, and others are objects rather than universals, the sensible solution is to acknowledge that difference and incorporate it into the theory⁵. Thus for the pluralists artworks can be just physical objects, or universal indicated structures, or classes of objects, or norm kinds, or possibly belong to yet different ontological categories (none of these authors, as far as I know, excludes such possibility)⁶.

But does the ontology of art require pluralism? It certainly is far more accurate than monism in grasping what works of different arts are. However, the dualistic view I will propose can combine this accuracy with the qualitative parsimony of monistic theories, retain comparable simplicity and, rather than introducing divisions between different arts, explain how they are ontologically similar, thus providing the basis for the intuitive treatment of all artworks as members of one category. The originality of this view lies in shifting the burden of explaining the apparent diversity between arts from the level of ontology (where it is placed by the pluralists) to the level of culturally determined social phenomena – while different artworks seem to have different ontologies, this is due to our biased (culturally determined) perception of them, not actual differences. (Note also that while some notions central to my view, notably ‘the recipe’, have been discussed before, neither a detailed exposition nor its application to more than just performative arts has been ever attempted, to my knowledge.) In short, I offer a uniform, yet non-unitive theory, and argue that all artworks are both types and tokens. Importantly, I do not take this account to be complete – I am sure that it might be somewhat ambiguous in details and requires polishing. However, all this can hardly be done in one paper, and what I want to present here is a stem of a theory, which could be further developed in the future.

2. Recipe-realisation dualism

The heart of my proposal is fairly simple. While we are accustomed to treat a given painting or a musical piece as a single thing, it is actually a compound consisting of two distinct but inseparable elements – the particular object and the universal. From this point I will call the universal aspect – a *recipe* – and the particular – a *realisation*.

⁴ J. Levinson, “What a Musical Work Is”, in: *Music, Art and Metaphysics*, Cornell University Press, London 1990; R. Wollheim, *Art and its objects*, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1978.

⁵ For original arguments against different kinds of monism see: R. G. Collingwood, *op. cit.*, D. Davies, *Art as performance*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford 2004, 127ff.; R. Wollheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-26, 52-59.

⁶ Respectively: J. Levinson, *op. cit.*, N. Goodman, *op. cit.*, N. Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1980.

2.1. The Recipe

The 'recipe' is *an intersubjectively communicable abstract universal structure which provides a set of instructions of how to produce physical objects which instantiate this structure*. This understanding is very intuitive and straightforward – it is quite like the common-sense notion of a recipe in cooking. In the simplest sense, it is just a description of the thing to be realised, containing a set of directives for how to produce this realisation. The closest philosophical comparison concerns what Ingarden called the *foundation of existence* – something that, although embodied by the artist in some material object, transcends this and any other embodiment. He argued that this foundation 'must be opposed to its particular concretisations which emerge in particular readings of the same work (...) The literary work itself, as opposed to its concretisations, is a schematic construct'⁷. Yet at the same time this schematic construct can only be read and communicated through the concretisations⁸.

Let me now focus on the particular elements of the above definition. Firstly, the recipe is a *structure*. I understand this term as Levinson does – he defines the structure of a musical piece as 'the sound structure [which] is basically a sequence of sounds qualitatively defined [and] the performing-means structure [which] is a parallel sequence of performing means specified for realizing the sounds at each point'⁹. Such a structure, playing the role of a type, can be tokened in a performance which brings about the desired sounds by following the composer's instructions concerning the performing means. However, as I want to broaden the scope of application of such structures to all arts, I generalise it as a *qualitatively defined sequence or arrangement of materials typically used in a given art, together with a parallel sequence of performing directives specified for realising the arrangement at each point*. The recipe then is a universal which contains instructions for producing particular objects (or performances).

Additionally, I would like to underline the important fact which is not stressed enough by Levinson – a structure is independent in its shape from any specific way in which it is realised. Thus it is of no importance to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony itself whether it is played by the Berliner Philharmoniker or by an amateur school orchestra even if the performances differ considerably. Moreover, it would make no difference even if it were never performed at all¹⁰. I infer from this that the structure can be thought of or expressed in a number of natural and artificial languages and can typically be translated, without significant loss of meaning, from one language to another, e.g. a musical piece can be played, hand-written as a score in the universal musical notation language,

⁷ R. Ingarden, "Studia z estetyki", in: *idem, Dzieła filozoficzne*, PWN, Warsaw 1966, vol. I, 9. This and the following quotations from Ingarden are my own translations of the Polish originals, with technical terms translated after R. Ingarden, *The Ontology of the Work of Art*, Ohio University Press, Ohio 1989, and J. Mitscherling, *Roman Ingarden's ontology and aesthetics*, University of Ottawa Press, Ottawa 1996.

⁸ The same applies to other arts, see: R. Ingarden, "Studia...", vol. II: 131-2 (painting and architecture) and 240 (music). Although Ingarden preferred to call the foundation of existence a purely intentional *object*, since it could in principle be understood by anyone and did not depend on any particular understanding or concretisation of it, it can just as well be treated as a universal.

⁹ J. Levinson, *op. cit.*, p. 78; Levinson further requires the structures to be *indicated* – the need for such a complicated exposition will be discussed below.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 64; R. Wollheim, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

typed into a computer program and saved in a form of digital language, or even described in detail in any natural language – all of these are notations of the same structure¹¹.

Secondly, the recipe is *abstract*. A musical score where a ‘recipe’ for a symphony was written down, a sketch for a painting, a diagram showing steps of a dance – none of these are actual recipes. A recipe can be read out from them, but as they are themselves physical not abstract, they are already realisations of a recipe.

Thirdly, the recipe is a *universal*. The recipe is not only no single physical object, but generally no object at all. I follow the pluralists in their critique of idealistic and nominalistic monism – as embracing such views would lead into unbearable problems, we should rather accept that structures must be universals¹². Again, I understand this universality similarly to Levinson. As he recognises, this seems to have very counterintuitive consequences – for universals exist independently of humans, and thus ‘compositional activity is not necessary in order for a certain sound-structure type to exist’¹³. It seems that even as complicated structures as Beethoven’s *Kreutzer Sonata* could have, by pure accident, been played long before Beethoven. If so, the awkward conclusion looms, that at least in the case of some works there is no meaningful way in which one can say that they were in fact *created* – for they existed long before the person we regard as their author wrote them down, i.e. Beethoven did not create Beethoven’s *Kreutzer Sonata*. The best one can say in this case is that artists *discover*, rather than *create*, their works. To resolve this problem, Levinson develops the theory discussed in the following paragraph, which I only partially accept¹⁴.

Fourthly, a recipe can be *realised in an object* – its realisation. This characteristic of a recipe is parallel to what Levinson described as indicating structures, however, while he claimed that abstract structures can be indicated by an artist in a process we call artistic creation to form a universal, but indicated structure, I explain the same by saying that the process of indicating a structure is a process of creating an object – the realisation of a recipe. Thus I concur that, as Levinson wrote, the artist cannot create an abstract universal which is eternal and human-independent, and yet that his ‘discovering’ of the structure is still an act of creating – but while Levinson says that what the artist creates is a *structure-S-as-indicated-by-the-artist-X-at-the-time-t*¹⁵, I say that what is created is a *realisation-of-a-structure-S-as-made-by-X-at-t*. This treatment has

¹¹ Whether all these notations are similarly adequate, or whether the structure can be described by all of them with the same accuracy will be discussed below.

¹² Notably, the universal character of recipes does not place them in some imaginary or Platonic realm. I will not discuss what or where exactly my recipes and other universals are, leaving this to metaphysics. All I need for the purpose of this theory is for them to be in the same place where laws of physics, mathematical equations and DNA structures are – wherever it actually is.

¹³ J. Levinson, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

¹⁴ It should be noted that some authors defend the idea of artworks as universals which are discovered rather than created. Julian Dodd (2007) presented an interesting Platonic ontology of musical works as types. However, it seems that his theory would only be applicable to music and possibly some other performative arts without much hope for explaining the ontology of painting or architecture. As such it would only introduce another option for pluralists, and while I generally agree with Dodd’s characterisation of types, I want to argue that artworks are *not only* types.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 79f.

the advantage of eliminating the somewhat obscure notion of an indicated structure which is disposable once it is agreed that every artwork's structure has to have a physical realisation, thus making my view more parsimonious and yet retaining the same explanatory power¹⁶.

Similarly as in Levinson, were a realisation of the same recipe realised by another artist at another time, a different object would have been created – *realisation-of-S-by-Y-at-t'* would have different contextual properties, and thus the compound would also have different aesthetic properties, and, by Leibniz's law – be a different artwork altogether. To give an (deliberately non-musical) example, the *Oath of the Horatii* is a paradigmatically neoclassical painting, created by Jacques-Louis David in 1784 and has certain distinctive properties, e.g. being heroic, elegant, depictive of strength and pride. However, were an identical painting created after the French Revolution by, say, Eugene Delacroix, it would likely have the properties of being ironic about the Ancien Régime and depictive of smugness and arrogance. Thus while there is an artist-and-time-independent structure of the *Oath of the Horatii* – the abstract arrangement of shapes and colours on canvas – the painting as we know it is the *Oath of the Horatii-as-realised-by-David-in-1784* – a realisation of a structure which is different from the would-be *Oath of the Horatii-as-realised-by-Delacroix-in-1800*.

In practice the universal structures can be only accessed through particular objects – particular paintings, particular performances of a symphony, particular copies of a book. There is no way to avoid this – even a general description of the structure of a novel is still a particular general description. In fact, it seems that it is only through physical objects or phenomena that the universal structures can be communicated or shared among people. Thus lastly, if an artwork is to be *intersubjectively communicable* – and given Wollheim's anti-idealist critique, it had better be – every single structure that is to be an artwork *has to be realised* in at least one object¹⁷.

2.2. The realisation

The realisation of a given recipe is *any physical object(s) or action(s) created by the performer(s), which instantiates this recipe, is not guided by any other recipe and from which this recipe can be extracted*. My understanding of it is again very similar to Ingarden's notion of the *ontic foundation*, which is how he called the concretisation of the foundation of existence. The ontic foundation is an object through which an artwork is communicated, the thing which is presented to the audience. As Ingarden argued, no artwork can exist just as a mental process or ideal object, or a universal, without having a 'being' in the physical world¹⁸. Artworks can only be appreciated (and implicitly – communicated) through aesthetic concretisations, physical objects, and they are no longer available once these objects are destroyed and forgotten. However, while for Ingarden the concretisation was a mere 'carrier' of the actual object of

¹⁶ For a convincing critique of indicated structures see D. Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

¹⁷ R. Wollheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-9; cf. F. Sibley, "Why the *Mona Lisa* may not be a painting", in: *idem*, *Approach to Aesthetics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001.

¹⁸ R. Ingarden, "Studia...", vol. II, p. 131f.

aesthetic appreciation – the intentional object or the ‘content’, the foundation of existence – I claim that this carrier is also an important part of the artwork.

Let me now clarify the definition. Firstly, every realisation *instantiates a given recipe*. Again, an intuitive and straightforward parallel with cooking is most appropriate – just as a particular dish instantiates the recipe which was followed to prepare it, a performance of Beethoven’s 5th instantiates the structure it follows. I understand the term *instantiation* in a relatively loose sense, i.e. allow for slight deviations from the recipe provided that the realisation can be recognised as an realisation of this recipe, as e.g. in a poor performance of Beethoven’s 5th¹⁹. I also permit the practical allowances our culture²⁰ makes for some realisations of artworks – e.g. a reproduction of Leonardo’s St Jerome, even though it is clearly not by Leonardo, differs in size and materials used, etc., is nevertheless an instantiation of the recipe which Leonardo himself first realised. The accuracy requirements will be discussed in more detail below.

Secondly, the realisation cannot be guided by another recipe, i.e. it cannot stand in a genetic relation to any other recipe but the one it is a realisation of. It may happen that a person ignorant of a certain work of art by pure chance creates an object that resembles it – in this case this object does instantiate the recipe which was already realised by some artist. However, it is not a realisation of this artist’s recipe, nor is it a copy of his artwork, rather it is a completely new artwork altogether. However, as our culture gives priority to the person who was the first to create something, others are forgotten – an artist will rarely be praised for creating a work identical to one somebody else has already created. I use the term ‘based on’ to indicate realisations which both instantiate a recipe and are guided by it.

(Note also that sometimes objects which look the same can nevertheless be different and instantiate different recipes. For example, *Brillo Boxes* as created by James Harvey, Andy Warhol and Mike Bidlo may seem identical, but they have different contextual properties – only Harvey’s boxes are commercial objects rather than art, only Warhol’s question the distinction between art and commercial objects, and only Bidlo’s explore the difference between originals and copies. They inspired one another in a way similar to how Paganini’s works inspired Rachmaninov’s *Variations on the themes of Paganini* (though in their case the way the ‘variation’ looks is extremely close to the original), but still, they are different objects which instantiate different recipes, and thus – separate works.)

Now, to invert the above definition of the structure, the realisation is a *certain amount of materials, assembled in a sequence or arrangement qualitatively defined by the recipe and created accordingly to a parallel sequence of performing directives specified by the recipe, and not guided by another recipe*. Thus to instantiate a recipe is simply to follow its directives in creating a physical

¹⁹ I trust that the vast literature on what a valid performance of any given musical piece is provides us with at least an intuitive understanding of what it means to be able to recognise Beethoven’s 5th in a poor or even incorrect performance of it (see for example: N. Wolterstorff, *Works...*); I will discuss this below.

²⁰ By ‘our culture’ I mean the general cultural context of modern Western world, which perhaps could be better specified by social scientists. Note that this category merely explains how artworks are commonly seen, not what they actually are, i.e. it has no bearing on the universally dualistic ontology of artworks.

object. In this way the object becomes a ‘carrier’ of the recipe, and because it instantiates the recipe with a good enough accuracy, the recipe can be known through it. Note that while the recipe specifies an arrangement of materials *typically used in a given art*, a realisation does not have to be composed of typical materials, even though realisations composed of typical materials usually enjoy a privileged status – this issue will be discussed below.

Thirdly, from every realisation one can *extract a recipe*. This is a process inverse to the described above – just as a recipe can be instantiated in a realisation, so it can be read out of that realisation. While it may require a fair amount of analysis of the particular object, essentially from every realisation a structure can be read out, and later instantiated again in another object – one can learn the structure of a musical piece just by listening to its performances and play it again; one can analyse a painting in the slightest detail, discover its structure and copy it; one can inspect an existing building to study its structure and build another identical one. In practice, since we can only gain access to recipes through their realisations, we can often only tell that somebody extracted a structure once they realise it again in that form or another. This is not to say that from every realisation one can read out the same structure as the one that particular realisation is a realisation of. In some cases, e.g. in a case of a poor performance of Beethoven’s 5th, a person familiar enough with the work through other performances, scores, etc. can, through ignoring the mistakes, extract Beethoven’s original recipe; but at the same time one can extract another recipe, that which may be called *the-recipe-for-Beethoven’s-5th-as-played-by-X-at-t* (this issue will be expanded on below).

Finally, *any* object which is based on a given recipe is its realisation. Not only the actual sound waves produced during the playing of Beethoven’s 5th are the realisation of the composer’s recipe, and the paint-covered canvas called *View of Toledo* created by El Greco around 1600 is not the only realisation of the painter’s recipe. Actually, any object whatsoever which has been created on the basis of the recipe and from which the recipe can be extracted, is this recipe’s realisation. Moreover, different realisations of the same recipe can have different authors. Thus for example, the original bronze *Discobolus* is Myron’s realisation of his recipe, its many marble Roman copies are various unnamed artists’ realisations of Myron’s recipe, a 3D scan of the sculpture is a programmer’s realisation of it, and a very detailed written description of it is the person’s describing realisation of the same recipe. In short – if an object is created based on the recipe and this recipe can be read out from it, it is a realisation of this recipe.

However, this does not mean that every realisation is actually treated the same way. The main reason for introducing the above all-inclusive treatment is its parsimony – given how difficult it is to tell why a painting or sound waves in performance should be a realisation of the recipe and the sketches or the score not, it is simpler not to introduce artificial boundaries and to say that they are all realisations. While this seems very counterintuitive, it can be easily explained by the fact that certain realisations are privileged. There are two ways in which this preference can be accounted for. Firstly, artists typically intend their works

to be realised in some ways rather than others, e.g. while Beethoven did intend his symphony to be performed by an orchestra, he did not intend us to appreciate it through looking at the indentations on a CD. However, the category of the artist's intentions is an unbearably obscure one²¹ and the issue can be explained in a much simpler way with the use of methods of social sciences, in particular, the notions of physical, cultural and historical determination²². Thus while ontologically speaking a performance of Beethoven's 5th, the score for it and the indentations on a CD are all equally realisations of the same structure, we are: (1) physically determined not to appreciate the indentations, because we simply cannot see them (possibly if our senses were different, we would be treating CDs similarly as reliefs); (2) culturally determined not to appreciate the score itself, as most people cannot read it (note that new works sent to composers' competitions are judged *before* they are played, i.e. the jury can appreciate them without hearing them – thus if in our culture everyone were as musically educated as those judges, musical works could well be appreciated in the form of scores); (3) historically determined to only appreciate the sounds, as this is the traditional way to appreciate music (this may of course also be determined by our physical constitution and culture, but note that after Pythagoras and in the Middle Ages proper appreciation of music was often thought to be not listening, but analysis²³). It is now a subject for the social sciences to trace the exact reasons why certain societies have a preference for these rather than other realisations of recipes. Overall, all artworks are a compound of a recipe and its realisation, but in our society only some compounds of a recipe and its realisation are treated as artworks – i.e. the relation is that of necessity, not sufficiency.

3. Defusing possible problems

3.1. Why have two if one will do?

The simplest way to challenge my view is to falsify it with examples of works which consist of only the recipe or only the realisation. Thus firstly, let me assume that there is a possibility of a recipe with no realisation. What about a poem that has never been written? It seems that it should have a universal structure, thought by a certain individual at a certain time, just never instantiated in any object whatsoever. Although such a claim should be distinguished

²¹ Even the most careful treatments of the problem, e.g. Davies's notion of interpretative intentionalism (D. Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 89), are vague and thus it seems methodologically right to, if possible, substitute them with a more reliable alternative.

²² The social theory I implicitly draw on is Jerzy Kmita's; *Kultura i poznanie*, PWN, Poznań 1985; "Towards a cultural relativism with a small 'r'", in: *Poznań Studies in the Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities*, 47 (1996), pp. 541-614. However, the notions I use are present in many modern theories and can be derived from Émile Durkheim's views on social constraints; *The Rules of Sociological Method*, Free Press, London 1982. In aesthetics this view is present in historical and functional theories of art, see G. Currie, "A note on art as historical concepts", in: *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 40.1 (2000), p. 187.

²³ See J. McKinnon, "Christian Antiquity", in: *idem, Man & Music: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 1992.

from the mentalists' view that such poems or symphonies are "'internal" or "mental" things', which would treat them as individuals rather than universals, my argument against it will be parallel to the argument against mentalism²⁴. Allowing for such artworks would mean severing the link between the artist and the audience, and render determining the characteristics of such artworks virtually impossible²⁵.

Secondly, it seems that there could be a realisation without a recipe. And indeed, intuitively what El Greco created when painting *The View of Toledo* is the very object, the paint-covered canvas that currently hangs in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, and not some abstract structure. However, a dualist would never deny that, but merely state that while it is clear that El Greco created the object, it is less intuitive but no less true that with it he authored a recipe, and *The View of Toledo* is a compound of both. Imagine the following: were *The view of Toledo* scanned and re-created as a perfect 3D hologram, it would clearly not be the same object – while the painting consists of paint and canvas, the hologram would be a series of magnetised clusters on a computer's hard drive. It would not share all the properties of the painting, e.g. it could not be touched. It would be, however, a hologram of exactly this painting, and an intuitive way to understand what this *of* means is: it instantiates the same recipe. Moreover, it seems perfectly possible that were the actual painting lost, it could be re-created on the basis of the hologram – i.e. a recipe could be extracted from the hologram and instantiated in a painting. Obviously it would not be painted by El Greco and would lack a number of contextual properties, nevertheless it would still be El Greco's *View of Toledo* – an intuition explained by the fact that it is created according to El Greco's recipe. Now compare this with any case concerning musical pieces, all of which, the pluralists would agree, do have (or: are) universal structures. When a composer indicates the structure of his work, he is actually creating something, a particular object – the score. Treat it as the composer's realisation of his recipe. On the basis of this score, musicians play the piece – however, the object they create, the sound waves, etc., is ontologically nothing like the ink on the paper left by the composer – clearly the musicians are not just re-creating the composer's work (otherwise they would all sit on the stage rewriting the score), but read out the universal structure of the piece which the composer instantiated in the score, and instantiate it again in the form of sound waves. My question is – how is that different from re-painting the El Greco on the basis of its hologram?

The most appropriate metaphor is that of translation – when a text is translated from one language to another, the translation is utterly different from the original in most of its physical qualities – it sounds different, it looks different when written down, etc. However, something is preserved in it, and this is the overall sense of the original. For Ingarden translation of a literary work is a mere change of one of the layers the work consists of – the layer of word sounds – while the meanings, schematised aspects and presented objects remain the

²⁴ R. G. Collingwood, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

²⁵ R. Wollheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-59.

same²⁶. Now think of translation as realising an artwork in a different medium (making a marble copy of *Discobolus*, a hologram of a painting, playing from the score) and of the thing that is preserved through the translation as the universal structure – the recipe.

3.2. What about intuitions?

It looks like the pluralists could now simply shake their heads – that is just not what we commonly think artworks are. Rather, it is intuitive that paintings, sculptures and buildings are just objects, and that we do not praise Picasso for devising a recipe for *Guernica* – we praise him for painting it. Thus the charge is that the dualistic theory makes things more complicated than they are and thus is unparsimonious.

Defusing this charge is surprisingly easy. To begin with, common intuitions concerning the ontology of art (or indeed most other philosophical problems) are not a particularly good guide to the truth about the actual nature of artworks. In fact, our intuitions are very easily misguided and thus are often biased²⁷. The bias in this case is caused by the cultural and social environment in which art has evolved through centuries, and concerns the above-mentioned preference for some realisations over others. Two biases in particular obscure our view²⁸.

Firstly, because we can only perceive artworks through particular objects we have a simplifying preference for assuming that those objects are all that artworks consist in. Because art is supposed to be *aesthetic*, i.e. given to the senses, we often simplistically assume that what is given to the senses is art, and that the author of what is given to the senses is the artist. Moreover, the process of creating artworks often proceeds in stages leading to an end product, and we are accustomed to treat only the end product as the artwork. Collingwood and others managed to show that some artworks are something over and above the physical objects, and Levinson explained it in more detail – thus Beethoven strictly speaking is not the author of the sounds we hear in a performance of his 9th (which are the object and end product of his creative work) – what he created is a realisation of the structure in the form of a score, which only later is realised by other artists, the musicians, to present us with a sense-experience²⁹. This much seems quite intuitive and the same is true of other arts.

Secondly, art as a social practice is implicitly governed by the same basic economy as most branches of human activity, including the determination of

²⁶ For a detailed exposition of his multilayered theory of a literary work of art see: R. Ingarden, *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1973.

²⁷ See B. Weatherston, "What good are counterexamples?", in: *Philosophical Studies*, 115.1 (2003), pp. 1-31; I will not argue for that view here, and nothing rests on my methodological convictions, as long as one allows intuitions to be falsified when a bias which underlies them is exposed. Note that although this article often refers to intuitions which favour the dualistic view, they serve as mere additions to main arguments and nothing relies on them.

²⁸ A similar point has been raised by Sibley, who argued that perhaps the reason why we have conflicting intuitions about whether paintings are objects or structures capable of multiple realisation, is because we treat them differently in different social contexts – as art historians or curators we are interested in particular objects, while as non-owning connoisseurs we focus on the structure (F. Sibley, *op. cit.*, p. 271). The biases I describe work in similar ways.

²⁹ Levinson would say that he indicated a structure, and the above is my re-interpretation of his view.

value by supply and demand. Assuming that the demand for two products is comparable, A is worth more than B if there are less people willing or able to produce A than B. E.g. because not many people have the abilities and will required to study medicine, an hour of a doctor's work is worth more than an hour of a cleaner's work, which does not require as much skill and knowledge, and thus is easier to supply. Apart from being worth more materially, the work of a person who is less easily replaceable is also thought more valuable³⁰. For example, in science often when a certain discovery results from collaboration, and the difference between the skills of different members of the team was significant, the authorship of the product is often ascribed to the more difficult-to-supply scientist(s) only, e.g. even though many students worked in Faraday's lab repeating the experiments, the discovery of the laws of electrolysis are ascribed to Faraday alone.

The same applies to artistic practice. It is hard to think of a discipline in which the author of the work is more difficult to replace. Upon first seeing *The View of Toledo* a knowledgeable viewer instantly knows that it must have been created by El Greco – there just was no other person who could or wished to paint in that way. Although largely exaggerated (and easy to falsify with examples of copies and forgeries), this simplified judgement reveals the common social conviction that artists provide things which are extremely rare and thus valuable. At the same time, some of the work related to creating artworks is carried out by artisans who often do not need a comparably great skill – works of architecture are built by masons and construction workers, works of literature as they reach the public are printed by printers, bronze sculptures are cast by metalworkers – the list of underappreciated professions is long. They, however, are easily replaceable. In practice, it often turns out that the more difficult to supply and thus higher-valued person is he who can come up with a new recipe.

3.3. Can it be applied to all arts?

The dualistic theory has the ambition to be uniform – but can it really account for all arts? It not only can, but it also helps to explain why we think that various arts are different and what they should be valued for.

3.3.1. Architecture and some painting and sculpture

The easiest case can be made for architecture. On one hand, people who appreciate a work of architecture typically look at the finished building, e.g. the church of Santa Maria della Consolazione in Todi, and believe that this building itself is the artwork created by an artist. On the other hand, however, while they must realise that the construction itself has been carried by a great number of workers, they do not ascribe them the authorship – instead they say that the church was created by Bramante. Manifestly, though, most probably not a single stone has been laid by Bramante himself, and thus it is simply wrong to say that he is the creator of the object – instead, his role was to create the recipe. The economic mechanism described above causes

³⁰ G. Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, Routledge, London 1990, p. 66f.

us to find his unique planning and designing work to be more valuable than the work of the easily replaceable construction workers, and ascribe him the finished product. Thus technically speaking, if works of architecture were just objects, what we appreciate when looking at Santa Maria della Consolazione is an artwork created by a multitude of unnamed masons. At the same time, if we were to appreciate the work of Bramante (again, assuming that what architects create is objects), we should be looking at his blueprints only – and although we sometimes do, this is clearly not the typical way of appreciating a work of architecture. The biases cause us to appreciate the object, which is not directly created by the artist, and to appreciate the artist who created something we do not commonly appreciate.

The case of sculpture is often parallel – it is only on rare occasions that bronze sculptures are actually created by artists. What the sculptor creates is a clay model which is later cast in bronze by a metalworker. However, what is displayed in a gallery is the bronze cast – technically speaking, a creation of the artisan metalworker – while the realisation actually created by the artist, the model, is often forgotten or destroyed.

Works of architecture, most cast sculptures and some paintings (explanation to follow) are *compounds of a recipe and its privileged end-product realisation, such that those elements are created by different persons at different times, and the authorship of the whole is ascribed to those who create the element socially regarded as most difficult to create*. Bramante is the author of the recipe which he realised in the form of blueprints, from which it was extracted by the masons who then realised it in a form of a building – a privileged realisation. Since we do not value the workers, we follow a thought shortcut and take the church itself to be an artwork created by Bramante who actually is the author *of the church* rather than just the plans for it, because the church partially *is* the abstract structure Bramante realised in his plans. While technically speaking the church has other authors, taken our culturally determined bias we just do not credit them for their work.

Some intuitions, for what they are worth, are confirmed by this view: (1) while on the physical-object theory one seems to be forced to admit that because Bramante never laid a single brick of Santa Maria della Consolazione, he is not the author of it, in my view one can easily ascribe him authorship, as the church as an artwork is a compound of the realisation he may have never even touched, and his recipe for it; (2) in some cases we do value the work of the construction workers after all – when the construction requires extraordinary skill or is particularly difficult (e.g. building bridges over particularly deep valleys) the number of people who could do it is much more limited and thus their authorship of the end-product is more likely to be noticed.

3.3.2. Most painting and sculpture

In painting a similarly obvious split of roles of the creator of the recipe and the creator of the realisation is less common, however, again, examples can be given: the frescoes in the Loggias of Rome's Villa Farnesina are said to have been painted by Raphael – however, in fact the artist merely completed one

of the figures before he became too engaged in a romance with 'la Fornarina' and left the completion of the work after his design to his students³¹. Other painters relied on their students excessively – Rubens often did no more than put his signature on a painting realised by his apprentices, who often remain unnamed³². In fact, Rubens' works were often created in exactly the same way as works of architecture: the master limited himself to preparing a small coloured sketch which presented some ideas that his pupils would then transfer on to a larger canvas or a fresco³³. Those cases are parallel to architecture and cast sculpture.

Clearly, however, these examples are easily overrun with a huge amount of other artworks which were wholly created by one artist. Leonardo would never put his signature on a painting created by somebody else, even after his design, and virtually all marble, wooden, terracotta, and even some bronze sculptures are realised by the artists themselves. Nevertheless, the above examples show that there is an actual difference between creating a recipe for a work of fine arts (which for the purpose of communicating it to others is realised in a form of a blueprint, model or sketch) and realising it in a form of an object which will be displayed. At least in some cases it is clear that these two things can be and actually are distinguished, and that on the basis of one recipe an arbitrary number of (not necessarily privileged) realisations can be created.

An argument which exposes this dual nature is offered by Sibley³⁴. It is common that paintings are only appreciated through their copies – in fact, copies are created precisely to allow people who cannot travel to see the original, to still appreciate the painting. Although I am not entirely sure whether the transference of aesthetic values is as straightforward as Sibley suggests, I agree that if it is possible to appreciate the original through copies, there must be something that they share, a structure which can apparently be multiply realised. While the original might enjoy a privileged status for both practical and logical reasons (only the original has some contextual properties, the accuracy of copies is checked against the original, etc.), the possibility of multiple realisation suggests that it is more than just a physical object. A dualist can easily follow Sibley's argument and say that all this is due to the fact that both original and copies are realisations of the same recipe, and one can appreciate the original through the copies by inferring from them the recipe first instantiated in the original. Following this, Leonardo's paintings can be treated the same way as Rubens' – the only minor difference is that while in one case the author of the recipe was different from the author of the realisation, in the other they are the same person – Leonardo.

³¹ F. Hartt, "Raphael and Giulio Romano: With Notes on the Raphael School", in: *The Art Bulletin*, 26.2 (1944), pp. 67-94. The supposed Raphael's authorship is quoted by many sources, from Wikipedia to reliable articles, e.g. A. Rauch, "Painting of the High Renaissance and Mannerism in Rome and Central Italy", in: R. Toman (eds.), *The Art of the Italian Renaissance*, Ullmann & Könemann, Cologne 1995, p. 336.

³² K. van Lil, "Painting in the Netherlands, Germany, and England in the Seventeenth Century", in: R. Toman (eds.), *The Baroque: Architecture, Sculpture, Painting*, Ullmann & Könemann, Cologne 1998, pp. 438-9.

³³ E. Gombrich, *The story of art*, Phaidon Press Ltd., London 1995, p. 398.

³⁴ F. Sibley, *op. cit.*, pp. 268-70.

The obvious counterargument is that while in Rubens' case the authors of the realisation did in fact work on a basis of a recipe previously provided by the master, other artists do not do that – they proceed straight to painting, i.e. creating the object. This argument seems especially powerful in avant-garde art examples – the whole point of Miró's automatic painting is that it is done without any previous preparation whatsoever. Similarly in music, the jazzmen improvising their lines just 'make it up as they go'. Are these not good enough examples to show that certain artworks are just particular objects not created according to any universal recipe?

Yes and no. It is a different thing to say that they are not *created according* to a recipe than to say that they do not *consist of* a recipe as well as its realisation. I concur that such artworks are not created following a recipe, but this cannot challenge my view. There is no reason why the recipe and the realisation cannot be created *at the same time* – while Miró might not have worked according to any recipe, he created a recipe together with its realisation, he 'indicated' a universal structure and realised it in a particular object simultaneously, and similarly jazzmen create structures while creating sounds. That there is a structure in what is created in this way follows from the fact that it can be extracted from the realisations in precisely the same way as in the previously described cases – just as Rubens' students could paint a full-scale painting basing on the structure 'carried' by his sketch, so one can take Miró's *Figure with red sun*, extract the structure of it and re-create it, in a form of a copy, an accurate description, a hologram, etc. This may be even clearer when musical improvisations are considered – the fact that they are not following a score does not mean that a score cannot be created for them. Actually, it is precisely through such a practice that most cadenzas for baroque and classical concertos came about – while the performers were expected to improvise them, some wrote down their improvisations and it is those improvisations that are now played by modern musicians, e.g. Benjamin Britten's cadenzas for Haydn's Cello Concerto in C, or Fritz Kreisler's for Beethoven's Violin Concerto.

To conclude, such works are *compounds of a recipe and its privileged end-product realisation, such that both those elements are often created by the same person and at the same time*. Because the elements are often made simultaneously and by the same artist, due to the biases described above there is an urge to conflate them and treat these artworks as what is presented to the senses only – objects. However, the distinction becomes apparent when we realise that even though the artist might not have created the recipe separately from its realisation, those two elements can be easily separated. Granted that, there is no reason why a theory which worked well in cases of more obvious separation should not be applied here as well.

3.3.3. Literature

A work of literature is a *compound of a recipe and its realisation, such that those elements are usually created by different persons and the authorship of the whole is ascribed to the author of the recipe only*. Because the work of a printer is easy and the number of objects which instantiate the structure of,

say, the *Ulysses*, is vast, and moreover – because it hardly ever matters whether we read a copy printed by this or that printer – there is no reason to value his work. Instead, all the credit is given to the author of the recipe. Note, however, that when creating a copy of a book was not as easy as it is now, i.e. before the invention of the printing press, the work of the copyist (as well as the illuminator) was valued very highly.

Additionally, there is also a possibility of realising the recipe differently than in the form of a book – a poem can be recited, and a play or a novel can be acted out. In these cases we value the author of such realisation of the recipe much higher, similarly as in the case of musical performance or theatrical play.

3.3.4. Music, dance and theatre

Performative arts present us with a slightly more complicated model, because in their case the work of those who create the privileged realisation is valued similarly to the work of the artist who creates the recipe. However, even though this model may seem more complicated, actually it is extremely qualitatively parsimonious – it operates on combinations of the same two aspects of an artwork, and applies them in a very regular and predictable way. As in most aspects performative arts are similar, I only discuss their ontology on the example of music, noting when the other arts differ from it.

A musical work is a compound of a recipe and its realisations, such that those elements can be created by different persons and both the author of the recipe and the author of the privileged realisation are ascribed authorship of their respective parts, and moreover, the author of the realisation has the power of modifying the original recipe within prescribed or socially accepted limits.

When he was writing his *Die Kunst Der Fuge*, Bach realised the recipe of this work in a form of a score. When he played it himself, he realised it again in a form of sounds produced accordingly to the recipe's instructions, and his performance of it was a privileged realisation of the recipe, which in our culture is treated as the artwork itself. When a printer copied Bach's score, he created a number of realisations of Bach's recipe which he read out from the manuscript – itself a realisation of the same recipe. However, as this realisation is not privileged in our culture, the printer is not credited for his work and the scores are, through simplification, taken to be Bach's work only. When another performer played BWV 1080, he produced a realisation of the recipe which he extracted from the score in which it was realised by a printer who previously extracted it from the manuscript in which it was realised by Bach. In this case the author of the realisation is different from the author of the recipe, yet both are credited with the authorship of the two elements of the work respectively. When Glenn Gould played *Die Kunst Der Fuge*, he not only realised Bach's recipe, but also modified it in a substantial way, thus through his playing creating a new recipe (issue discussed below), slightly but significantly different from the original. Here the author of the original recipe is different from the author of the realisation, both are credited for their respective parts, but the latter is also an author of a new recipe, which is commonly referred to as an *artistic interpretation* of the original recipe. Now, to skip one step and limit the number

of reiterations, when a recording is produced of another pianist playing Bach's work in the style of Gould, we deal with a recording company's realisation of the recipe extracted from this pianist's realisation of Gould's modification of Bach's recipe, extracted from Gould's interpretative realisation of Bach's recipe in the form of a performance, which he extracted from the printer's realisation of the same recipe extracted from the original realisation – Bach's manuscript.

While the levels can be multiplied, they are merely reiterations of the same model. Moreover, those reiterations have the advantage of always invariably pointing at the original author of the recipe – Bach, who is thus always credited with his work. It is also easy to see how some realisations are more valued than others.

In theatre this mechanism is very much the same, and especially in modern plays the divergence from the original recipe in artistic interpretation of old dramas can be very substantial. Dance, on the other hand, rarely operates with very detailed recipes – in virtually all cases the dancers are forced to create an artistic interpretation of a recipe, because the original recipe only provides very general guidelines rather than detailed description of what to do. This can be explained by the fact that dance recipes are much more difficult to communicate, because no unified notation for them was ever developed. Thus dance is often more similar to musical improvisation discussed before.

3.4. Problems with the recipe

There might be situations in which even if objects are created according to a recipe, this recipe cannot be later read out from those objects. Umberto Eco's *Name of the Rose* is a postmodern novel created according to very strict compositional rules, concerning among other things the use of quotations from medieval and modern documents. However, these rules have never been disclosed by the author, and as he wrote in the *Postscripts to the Name of the Rose*, he himself does not remember what they exactly were, or which part of the book quotes which document. Thus it seems that in this case the original recipe has been lost even though there still exist its realisations, while according to my theory it should always be possible to extract the recipe from the realisations. A similar case can be made for Iannis Xenakis' stochastic music formed in a process of mathematical computations which cannot be heard in the performance.

Artists seem to realise that problem as well and often attempt to clarify their recipes by providing comments, programmes or other forms of explanation to the realisations. Thus even if the exact recipe cannot be read out from the realisation, it is clear that the artists do stress the fact that it exists nevertheless. This suggests that this problem is epistemological rather than ontological – the recipe is there, but not available for our perception. In this case the answer is to simply bite the bullet – yes, there are works for which the recipe cannot be easily read out from the realisation, and thus it is to some extent undetermined what those works are, which in practice makes them difficult to interpret. This might not be as much a problem as a feature of art – it is commonly accepted that some of it is rather hard to understand and interpret, and perhaps a part of why this is, is because its realisations do not allow for easy access to the recipe.

However, while we may not be able to extract *the* recipe, we still do extract *a possible* recipe, or many of them, thus interpreting a work in different ways, i.e. as if there was more than one work in it. Some artists actually suggest that this is perfectly eligible – as Eco wrote in his *Postscripts...*, he himself cannot remember the exact recipe, but this is because, although it existed, it has been deliberately obscured so that the readers can come up with their own recipes for what they are presented with, very much as Gould created a number of recipes in his interpretations of Bach.

A related problem may arise concerning the ‘instructions for realisation’³⁵. While it seems most appropriate to incorporate them as a part of the recipe in the case of music or theatre, there might be little point in doing so with fine arts. Some of Rembrandt’s paint effects, for example, have been achieved using a technique which has not been fully understood in spite of years of studies. Although his works definitely have a determined object- and structure-component, we know little about the means by which this structure was instantiated in that object. Nevertheless, it does not seem that we need to – we can even extract the structure from the object and copy it atom-by-atom without knowing anything about how it was first produced. Thus there is no point in incorporating the ‘instructions for realisation’ into the artwork itself.

However, the fact that we may not know what the instructions were does not mean they are not there. In fact, when we do know about them, we tend to individuate artworks precisely by how they were created – for example, if Roy Lichtenstein created a second, identical *Brushstroke*, but instead of printing it, actually took a huge brush and made a single stroke on the canvas, we would likely say that these are two separate works which differ in nothing but the way in which they were created. While in the Rembrandt case we might not know his exact method, were we to find out that some of his paintings were created through an extremely lucky spillage of paint that just happened to form the shapes we see, we would likely differentiate them from his other works. If in some cases we do not or even cannot know the method, we have to admit that we do not fully know the work – which is confirmed by the fact that historians of art still study Rembrandt.

3.5. Accuracy

Finally – what is the level of accuracy required for an object to be a realisation of this rather than that recipe? How much can two realisations of the same recipe differ? Where is the borderline beyond which an object is no longer a realisation of a given recipe? If it cannot be determined what the accuracy with which the realisation has to instantiate the recipe is, the argument would run, the link between the two elements is severed. Moreover, it is not clear whether the recipe can be extracted from an inaccurate realisation of it.

The initial answer to that argument can simply be: *tu quoque*. While it may be true that the problem is especially difficult for a dualist, as it applies not only to performative, but to all arts, pluralism faces it as well, and I could rely on the

³⁵ I am thankful to Berys Gaut for pointing this out.

methodological superiority of my view to outweigh this difference. However, there is a better solution. I refer to Ingarden again – on his view one of the main characteristics of the structure of a literary work of art is that it contains ‘places of indeterminacy’ which are ‘filled’ in the concretisation of the work (Ingarden 1966 I: 9). Not all and not always are those places filled in the same way and thus the concretisations can differ, but as long as they only diverge within the places of indeterminacy, they are still concretisations of the same structure. Because it is in many cases (especially in performative arts) impossible for a recipe to be perfectly precise as to how it should be realised, different realisations are permissible. Furthermore, the indeterminacy may be much greater than one would initially assume. Sibley argued that even in fine arts a great deal of detail is quite unimportant for the identity of a work – this includes things which could not be intended by the author due to physical limitations (e.g. an identical copy of *Mona Lisa* differing only in chemical structure is irrelevantly different, as Leonardo knew little about the chemistry of his paints and could not have intended the work to be created only with the use of those particular compounds), but also rather major discrepancies which would have no influence on the intended aesthetic properties (it might not matter at all for the artistic or aesthetic value of *Mona Lisa* whether Lisa Gherardini has straight or curly hair, or what is the exact shape of the rocks in the background, or whether it is painted or printed). If it is the case that a great deal of quite major details of many works do not matter much, then all realisations which differ only in such details qualify as their realisations. In this context, various realisations can be closer or further away from the first, original realisation, however they might all be equivalent in how they realise the recipe. Thus a print of *Mona Lisa* may be like an e-book of *Divine Comedy*: they differ hugely from what the originals were like, yet for the sake of realising the structure of the respective works, they are equivalent to the originals.

However, in many cases we go beyond filling the places the author left undetermined and actually change those which were determined. The artistic practice cannot be explained by philosophy here – what society finds permissible in that matter is rather determined culturally and historically. Nevertheless, the dualistic theory can deal with this problem better than others – it can treat *every single realisation which goes beyond the places of indeterminacy* of the original recipe as a creation of a new recipe, just as in the case of Gould’s interpretation of Bach. The crux is: not every single realisation is *different enough* or *important enough* to be *treated as different*. Thus while we are ready to credit Gould with creating a new recipe, we may not similarly treat Ton Koopman whose playing is far more faithful to the score, or a poor student for whose erroneous performance we simply do not care. For different arts different levels of accuracy apply, e.g. a copy of a painting can only diverge from the original in slight details (e.g. the thickness of the layer of paint) while various performances of a play can differ substantially from the script. What exactly is ‘different enough’ can change with our culture and in time and the details of the change should be explained by sociology rather than philosophy.

4. Conclusion

The recipe-realisation dualism is an alternative to pluralism. While pluralism is far better than any of the monistic views, by criticising these overly simplistic theories it becomes overly and unnecessarily complicated. Dualism combines the explanatory power of pluralism with the parsimony and simplicity of the monistic paradigms to form an ontology which is, after Wolterstorff, uniform but not unitive. All artworks share the same dualistic ontology in which they are all indivisible compounds of the recipe – the universal aspect – and its realisation – the particular aspect. The seeming difference amongst different arts which causes us to believe that while e.g. musical works might be universals, paintings are simply physical objects, follows from the physically, culturally and historically determined fact that in cases of different arts we value one of these aspects more than the other.

The main advantages of my view are of methodological nature. Firstly, it is more parsimonious than forms of pluralism which assume more than two ontological categories, or employ mysterious notions such as indicated structures. Secondly, the dualistic theory is simpler – it does not need one to consider which ontological category should be applied to which works, and in the more complex set-ups, as in the described case of music, it is very predictable. Thirdly, the dualistic view is more unified – even though it assumes the existence of two ontological categories, these are applied to all artworks, and no sub-theories are needed for different types of works. Fourthly, in a way my theory has a wider scope than pluralism, as although both theories can deal with all (or at least most) artworks, pluralism does that by combining many theories of limited scope, while on my view all artworks are brought under a single, dualistic category which is applied across the board. To reach the same scope pluralists need to construct a disjunctive definition, and disjunctive definitions should only be accepted when there is no better alternative. The dualistic view is such an alternative. Additionally, the dualistic view has some significant intuitive support – apart from the minor points described above, it primarily concurs with our intuitive treatment of all arts as a single group, by providing an ontology that shows how they are similar, instead of differentiating them as pluralism does. It also explains why we intuitively value artists both for their ideas and their skills.

All these amount to a greater explanatory power of my theory. The main problems which arise can be relatively easily dealt with, while similar issues may present a greater threat to other ontologies. While the theory, as it is offered here, might require some more work to polish the details, I believe that it could be a promising alternative to pluralism³⁶.

³⁶ With thanks to Prof. Berys Gaut.

Iris Kapelouzou

Conservation, Value, and Ontology

Abstract

Art conservation and ontology are linked in that the latter informs the theory and ethics framing the former. Ontology investigates how things, such as works of art, exist. Conservation intervenes in order to ensure that things, such as artworks, continue to exist. Therefore, almost by definition, art conservation presupposes knowledge of art ontology.

A question that immediately arises is whether this link is mutual or one way. The small amount of literature written by philosophers referring to conservation¹ suggests that the input conservation can offer to philosophy is very small or non-existent. Against this, I will argue that the link between conservation and ontology is mutually informative and reinforcing, in that conservation can raise novel and challenging questions of ontology which can feed into the discipline and contribute to its development. I propose to illustrate this mutuality by considering conservation challenges thrown up by contemporary art.

Conservation has always touched upon issues of ontology. On the one hand, conservation actions on artworks that are deemed to be heritage are mandated on account of being specific works of art, so ontology is important there. On the other hand, the heritage status of artworks under conservation outlines specific rules that conservators ought to follow and apply in their treatment. But with the advent of contemporary art in the last generation, such as conceptual, new media, and installation art, conservation raises previously unaddressed questions of ontology, which are not normally addressed within philosophy. This is not necessarily something that happens often, or on a regular basis. Rather, the input of conservation to ontology starts (and is visible) in extreme cases. By extreme cases, we are referring to conservation extremes, i.e. where artworks seem to require ethically impermissible practices, like substitution and recreation, in order to continue to exist. In the case of some contemporary artworks it seems that substitution and recreation are necessary practices so that the work may continue to exist. However, traditional perceptions of ontology that limit substitution and recreation, do not allow conservators to extend their lifespan.

¹ Characteristic examples are Mark Sagoff, "On restoring and reproducing art", in: *Journal of Philosophy*, 75 (9) 1979, pp. 453-470, A. Riegl, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Essence and Its Development", in: N. S. Price, M. K. Talley Jr & A. M. Vaccaro (eds.), *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, GCI, Los Angeles 1996, pp. 69-83, and J. Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, Dover Publications Inc., New York 1989.

The conservation demands posed by contemporary artworks steers the focus towards a specific ontology (or theory about ontology) that conservators need to adopt in their treatment. Works of art (objects) acquire a special ontology upon entering the domain of conservation. This arises from: a) the perception of works of art as carriers of a dual identity, 'artwork' and 'heritage', each imposing or restricting actions such as substitution and recreation; b) the conservation need to encompass all possible multiplicities in a unified decision-making methodology applied across all heritage entities, and c) the case specificity characterising conservation, which leads towards a re-consideration of existing perceptions of ontology each time a case presents new phenomena.

Multiple Identities

Conservation is traditionally a discipline that developed a normative frame for decision-making and action in relation to the assumed moral duty to extend the lifespan of heritage artworks into the future. As developed in the early 20th century, there was a slow shift of focus from architecture towards works of art. The reason for this shift in focus was a wide recognition of the 'unsubstitutability', the 'particularity' and 'uniqueness' of works of art. This recognition reflects certain conceptions and perceptions which persist largely until today and imposes a way of action based on these. Specifically, it reveals:

a) An implicit perception of how works of art exist, i.e. their necessary materiality – this is a question of ontology.

b) An implicit understanding of the relationship between artworks and cultural heritage, i.e. that artworks are necessarily cultural heritage and vice versa.

And it imposes specific rules of conduct (towards artworks) or guiding principles (at times 'standards') for the extension of their lifespan 'as the things that they are' by placing *authenticity* and *respect* as the highest values guiding decision making and practice. Based on the two assumptions above, the rules imposed dictate the preservation of material authenticity, hence traditional practices applied within conservation do not include substitution or recreation even, for example, in the case of prints and multiple sculptures.

Conservators are responsible for perpetuating the existence of the specific artworks which are considered to be heritage. This notion points to questions of identity and in particular of artwork and of heritage identity.

The identity of a thing determines those properties that make it unique and different from other things. The philosophical problem that was formulated around the Theseus ship example reveals concerns about the 'identity' of a preserved object.

The ship [of Theseus] was preserved by the Athenians [350-290 BC], for they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place insomuch that this ship became a standing example among the philosophers, for the logical question of things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same².

² Plutarch, *Vita Thesei*, pp. 22-23.

The Theseus ship example also points to a difference in conception of objects and conservation practice between the East and the West, which has divided the conservation world since nearly those times. Western tradition is much more associated with attempts to arrest objects in a certain physical state, or attempts to restore them to a previous condition, regardless of whether such a thing is in fact possible. Eastern tradition is closer to practices of reconstructing, rebuilding, and building with variation.

It is therefore suggested that, what becomes the primary role of conservators, is to preserve heritage artworks *as the things that they are* over time by controlling change. This role on the one hand presents the problem of determining the identity of things, and on the other hand of choosing the appropriate means by which to extend their lifespan without compromising this identity.

Gain or loss of properties through e.g. natural degradation of materials or human intervention, affects the organization of the material or information comprising the work of art, usually causing a shift towards increased entropy. This shift is perceived as change in the work's material structure and/or function. There is a limit beyond which change amounts to the annihilation of the work's identity, as of any persisting thing in general. It is then perhaps possible to declare the end of an artwork's lifespan, or its death. Death corresponds to loss of identity. Decisions about intervention depend on the identity against which the conservation question is raised. Consequently, specific rules and principles should be formed depending on the perception of the relation between artwork and heritage identities.

According to one prominent view, a thing's identity is relative to the concept under which it is subsumed. Such concepts, employed to describe of what sort things are, are called 'sortals'. Identification of sortals relies on ignoring certain differences (e.g. differences among various human creations) and regarding different items as parts of some wholes (e.g. artwork or heritage)³. 'Substance sortals' are considered definitive of the identity of a thing. Something that falls under such a sortal cannot cease to do so without ceasing to exist. Consider for example a sculpture made out of a lump of clay. If the clay is crushed, the sculpture will cease to exist whereas the lump of clay will not. 'Phase sortals', on the contrary, allow for something to stop falling under them without ceasing existing (e.g. child)⁴.

It is generally acknowledged that things such as artworks enter the domain of conservation when they are recognized as cultural heritage. Contemporary art seems to challenge the existing frame in that many works have indeterminate heritage status. Traditional conservation rules and principles seem to have emerged from the assumption that all art is necessarily heritage. However, in the contemporary treatment of art it appears that this relationship between artwork and heritage no longer holds. 'Artwork' and 'heritage' are sortals, which may overlap for certain periods of time.

³ A. Gallois, "Identity Over Time", in: *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2005, n.p., Available online at: <http://stanford.library.usyd.edu.au/contents.html> [Retrieved January 10, 2009].

⁴ M. Zemach, "No Identification without Evaluation", in: *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1986, p. 244.

Regarding 'artwork', there is a large debate as to whether artness is a property of the things called artworks, or something imposed on them by external factors. However, it appears as though there may be some essential properties to something being an artwork, or at least to being a specific artwork. Hence it is not implausible to suggest that 'artwork' is a substance sortal. As to 'heritage', although in current literature it appears as a phase sortal, in traditional conservation, 'artwork' and 'heritage' are treated as interchangeable; i.e. as two different names for the same substance sortal.

Inheritance is usually thought of as something outside the control of those who inherit. Following this line of thought, cultural heritage has traditionally been considered as something objectively given, as something that the culture one is born into hands over or entrusts to new generations. The first conservation Charters and Codes of Ethics concerning works of art seem to have supported a notion of art as integrally or necessarily heritage. The ideas of John Ruskin, Alois Riegl, and others such as Cesare Brandi, had influenced not only principles guiding the attitude and practice of conservators, but were also reflected in the notion that all art is by definition heritage and hence ought to be preserved.

In the preface to *St. Mark's Rest* (1884), Ruskin states that great nations "write their autobiographies in three manuscripts; the book of their deeds, the book of their words and the book of their art". Of the three, art is afforded the status of being the only true record of a cultural condition. "Deeds may be compelled by external agencies, (...) their policies and words may at worst be false, at best only indicative of genius of but a few of its citizens. Art, however, exists as a symbolic representation of the general gifts and common sympathies of the race"⁵. As Ruskin suggests, every great, national, architecture has been the result and exponent of a great national religion. Once built, its longevity would ensure that successive generations would be educated by its symbolic content and that the traditions which embodied the "Polity, Life, History and Religious Faith of nations" would be maintained.

Alois Riegl's notion of the deliberate monument is also supportive of this view⁶. According to Riegl, deliberate are those works of man that are erected so as to commemorate a specific human act, or event. In his view, deliberate monuments are intentionally heritage. Hence conservation has been based on the assumption that artworks are heritage in virtue of being works of art. In such a conception, if something ceases being an artwork it automatically ceases to be heritage. The identity of an artwork as artwork is conceived as one and the same with its identity as heritage (Fig. 1).

⁵ P. Hatton, "Ruskin and Architecture: The Argument of the Text", in: M. Wheeler & N. Whiteley (eds.), *The Lamp of Memory. Ruskin, Tradition and Architecture*, Manchester University Press, New York 1992, p. 124.

⁶ A. Riegl, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

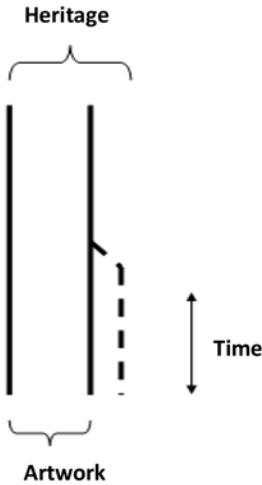


Fig. 1. Heritage-artworks may gain or lose properties over time, but so long as they are artworks, they are necessarily heritage.

However, many authors⁷ argue that the decision about what constitutes heritage is not always something already given; rather it may be selected, negotiated, and perhaps even constructed by the heirs. The fact that the decision whether or not an object is cultural heritage is based on values is widely accepted today. What is further acknowledged is that the same heritage object, e.g. a work of art, may be the carrier of multiple values at the same time. This means that people may attribute different values to the same object at the same time; that people may attribute different values to the same object at different times; and also that people may attribute same values to the same object at different times.

Indeed, in the case of contemporary art, an object's identity as artwork does not necessarily coincide with its identity as heritage. Some more recently produced art is not thought of as heritage yet. Moreover, as the proliferation of discussions on de-accessioning, de-acquisitions etc. indicate, exhibition of an artwork in a museum or gallery, does not automatically qualify it as heritage. In Kunsthalle zu Kiel, for example, temporary projects are commissioned and exhibited, however not all are accepted for acquisition (as heritage)⁸.

Joseph Beuys's *Felt Suit* (1970), for example is an editioned artwork, i.e. it exists in a number of suits, namely 100 of them. If one or some of the suits cease to exist, *Felt Suit* will still exist. One suit, which was acquired by Tate Modern in 1981 (Edition 27, no. 45) as a heritage artwork degraded to such a point that it no longer conveyed the intended meaning of *Felt Suit* and thus

⁷ E. Avrami, R. Mason & M. de la Torre, *Values and Heritage Conservation: Research Report*, The Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles 2000.

⁸ See: R. Barker & P. Smithen, "New Art, New Challenges: The Changing Face of Conservation in the Twenty-First Century", in: *New Museum Theory and Practice*, ed. M. Janet, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford 2006, p. 99.

no longer qualified as artwork. The Tate suit was de-accessioned in 1995; it is now part of the archive and is still considered heritage, albeit on account of its historic value rather than the artistic. A single thing which was essentially artwork and coincidentally heritage ceased being an artwork and yet continued to exist as heritage.

In addition, a work of art may be considered heritage because of e.g. its historical value. Although the artwork will not stop being an artwork, in terms of heritage identity it may be an historical object (which just also happens to be an artwork). Consequently, artworks may fall in and out of the category heritage. Something that was not considered heritage may be recognized as such and *vice versa*, without ceasing to exist. University collections characteristically consider the de-accessioning or disposal of cultural artefacts, which, however, do not cease to exist as the kinds of objects they are (e.g. portraits)⁹. Heritage then is a phase sortal, overlapping with the sortal artwork only for a certain period of time (Fig. 2)¹⁰.

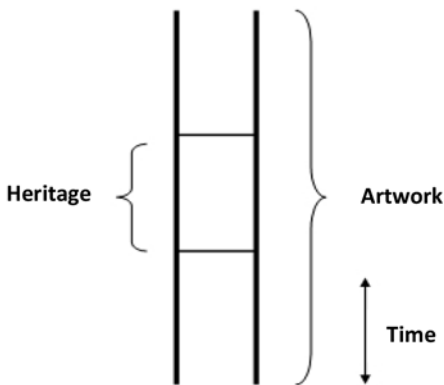


Fig. 2. An artwork may be considered heritage only for certain periods of time during its lifespan, over which artwork and heritage identities overlap.

The traditional notion of the artwork being necessarily heritage may alternatively be seen as a limited case of the latter conception, just as the circle may be seen as a limited case of the ellipse, i.e. an ellipse in which the two centres coincide.

Following the view that 'heritage' is one identity overlapping with 'artwork' identity for a certain period of time, four possible combinations emerge: a) an object is an artwork and it is also heritage (heritage-artwork); b) an object is an artwork but is not heritage (artwork); c) an object is not an artwork but it is

⁹ G. Waterfield, "Disposing of Cultural Artefacts in University Collections", in: *The Art Newspaper*, published online 21 October 2009, n.p., Available online at: <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Disposing-of-cultural-artefacts-in-university-collections%2019622> [Retrieved May 17, 2010].

¹⁰ I. Kapelouzou, "On Artworks, Heritage, and Persisting Things in General", in: M. Stefanaggi & R. Hocquette (eds.), *Art D'Aujourd'Hui Patrimoine de Demain. Conservation et Restauration des Oeuvres Contemporaines*, SFIIC, 2009, pp. 37-42.

heritage (heritage); and d) an object is neither artwork nor heritage. It may also be the case that different means and practices are required for the satisfaction of 'artwork' or 'heritage' persistence conditions.

Multiple Values ('heritage')

When an artwork becomes heritage on account of being a work of art, then it is considered heritage because it is the specific work. Another artwork, i.e. a work with a different identity or a work which has lost its identity as the specific work of art, may not be considered heritage.

The work of art has primarily been understood in conservation as carrier of aesthetic, conceptual and historical value. Alternatively, the work of art is conceived as a carrier of aesthetic, historic and conceptual information that contributes to its understanding. There is a sense in which it is possible to distinguish among interests, or values, specific to an artwork and values not specific to the same artwork. By definition, only the values that link an object to cultural identity may ascribe to it heritage status; only these values constitute cultural heritage values¹¹. Other conservation authors also draw an analogous distinction among values attributed to cultural heritage. Iwona Szmelter¹², for example, differentiates "cultural values" from contemporary "socio-economic values". David Throsby¹³ separates "cultural value" from "economic value". He asserts that cultural value is separable from whatever economic value the cultural heritage might possess, even though cultural value may be a significant determinant of economic value.

In this paper, I conceive of artistic value as the value an artwork has as a work of art; it implies intent to produce art, which is considered a necessary condition for something being art. An artwork may perform different, additional functions, just as other kinds of objects (non-art) may also be recognised to have aesthetic, etc. values. Artistic value here is defined as a value exclusive to artworks. Moreover, the artistic value of a given work of art is also linked to its identity, i.e. to the fact that it is the specific work of art. Within conservation literature, there have been many current attempts to understand the particularity or identity of an artwork (from which its artistic value stems) as residing in the essential properties of the object. Following Nelson Goodman's distinction between essential and non-essential properties, Pip Laurenson has suggested a similar distinction for Installation artworks¹⁴.

¹¹ I. Kapelouzou, "The Inherent Sharing of Conservation Decisions", in: *Studies in Conservation*, vol. 57, no. 3, 2012, pp. 172-182.

¹² I. Szmelter, "A New Conceptual Framework for the Preservation of the Heritage of Modern and Contemporary Art", in: U. Schädler-Saub & A. Weyer (eds.), *Theory and Practice in the Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art. Reflections on the Roots and the Perspectives*, Archetype Publications, London 2010, p. 40.

¹³ D. Throsby, "Cultural Capital and Sustainability Concepts in the Economics of Cultural Heritage", in: M. De La Torre (ed.), *Assessing the Values of Cultural Heritage: Research Report*, The Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles 2002, p. 103.

¹⁴ P. Laurenson, "Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-Based Media Installations", in: *Tate Papers*, issue 6, Autumn 2006, n.p., Available online at: <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/06autumn/laurenson.htm> [Retrieved September 19, 2008].

This is an essentialist conception of artworks. According to essentialists, objects or kinds of objects acquire their identity from their inherent nature. The Ruskinian perspective is an example of an essentialist conception of art and of cultural heritage. While Ruskin¹⁵ maintained that the primal aim of art is the representation of some natural fact as accurately as possible, he also argued that artists had to employ a penetrative imagination through which they would “transform the object of their sight” and “reveal its inner truth”. The ability of the artist to convey his vision of truth through the medium of art Ruskin termed “associative imagination”. The production of good art is therefore the result of two main activities: the direct perception of the eye and the creative working of the imagination. The good work of art, however, does not exist as a self-contained object to be passively received by the viewer. Rather it is symbolic and it invites the viewer to engage in an associative act which contextualises the work, locating it in a shared system of signs and meanings¹⁶. Quality resides in the relationship which the work establishes with a spectator who engages in an active interpretation of its form. Yet, just as the artist needs to guard against the danger associated with a potentially misleading imagination (i.e. one which would not reveal the truth of an object), so must the viewer be cautious in order to achieve a correct reading of the work¹⁷. Riegl is also an essentialist in that he believed that some objects are worth preserving because of specific inner features. His disagreement with Ruskin was about the essential characteristics of objects worth preserving.

Other values, e.g. aesthetic, historical and conceptual values may stem from properties of the work which may or may not be essential to its being an artwork. The aesthetic value usually refers to the sensible properties of the artwork that produce an artistic experience; conceptual value relates to an understanding of the work of art as a means of expressing ideas or concepts¹⁸; historical value may refer to provenance of the work and/or to its trajectory through history. However, different ontological frameworks and respective conservational conceptions of identity place the above mentioned parameters constitutive of artistic value in a different relationship. Thus, artwork identity has been considered to reside in knowledge of provenance, in the effect or experience generated by a specific work, in context, or in artistic intent.

Because, however, different structures may have the same function, in an essentialist perception, artwork identity is established on account of structure. The distinction between essential and non-essential properties serves to identify those elements of the structure that are necessary and sufficient conditions to instantiate a specific work of art. The artwork is the work of art that it is regardless of whether its non-essential properties are instantiated. The experience(s) generated by the work of art is necessarily a result of its essential properties

¹⁵ P. Hatton, “Ruskin and Architecture...”, p. 124.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 123.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 125.

¹⁸ M. Clavir, “The Social and Historic Construction of Professional Values in Conservation”, in: *Studies in Conservation*, no. 43, 1998, pp. 1-8.

and possibly a result of its non-essential properties, or other accidental or coincidental properties it may have or subsequently acquire (e.g. different context).

The aim of conservation is to extend the lifespan of the heritage object; otherwise put, it refers to the extension of the lifespan of the values that define the object as cultural heritage. It is these values that are pertinent for conservation decision-making only. Other values attributed to cultural heritage entities, which are not linked to cultural identity, are not relevant for conservation decision-making, at least not in idealistic models such as the one supported in this paper. The latter kind of values may be considered as second order values. That is, although they may play a role in ultimate decisions about the fate of heritage entities, they are to be considered at a secondary level; the ideal decision voiced by the conservator does not incorporate considerations of these values¹⁹. It is along similar lines of thought that John Ruskin excluded financial gain from considerations about conservation.

I maintain that the identity of an object as cultural heritage at a given point in time is provided by the hierarchical relationship of the cultural heritage values attributed to the object at that point in time and mainly by the value at the top of this hierarchy. For example, if a work of art becomes heritage on account of the fact that it is a work of art, then it is the artistic value of that object that mainly provides its identity as heritage as well. An artwork may be considered heritage on account of another kind of value, e.g. historical. In this sense the heritage object is an historic object, which just happens to be a work of art, and thus whose artistic value is ranked lower than the historic. This clarification is significant, since different values may pose different conservation demands.

A related example to the above concerns is Damien Hirst's *The physical impossibility of death in the mind of someone living* (1991). The work consists of a shark placed in a tank and suspended in a weak formaldehyde solution. It is a conceptual work of art and, as such, its significance presumably rests with the idea and concepts it communicates rather than the material manifestation of it. However, the work has decomposed to such a point that the artist himself argues that it no longer conveys the idea of "menace contained"²⁰. While the artist himself has repeatedly claimed that the shark may be replaced by another one, conservators and museums have retained the 'original' one. Even replacing the formaldehyde solution with a stronger one in order to better preserve the shark has been rejected so far as it would mean disposal of original material. This is a tricky situation, especially considering that the UK is banning formaldehyde starting this year onwards, so it is not only conservators who will have to reconsider the effect of such a change to the authenticity of the work, but the artist himself will also have to reconsider the relationship between his intent and the material used to produce his art.

Another example to consider is Joseph Beuys's *Fetteche (Greasy Corner)* (1982). The work consists in an 11-pound blob of butter mounted at a wall,

¹⁹ I. Kapelouzou, "The Inherent Sharing...", pp. 172-182.

²⁰ A. Bracker, "Oh, The Shark has Pretty Teeth, Dear", in: *V&A Conservation Journal*, no. 35, Summer 2002, n.p., Available online at: http://www.vam.ac.uk/res_cons/conservation/journal/issue35/shark35/index.html [Retrieved January 17, 2009].

initially in Joseph Beuys' studio at the Dusseldorf Academy. Such a work was *created* by the decision or act of situating the blob of butter on to the wall. Arguably, it is an artwork by virtue of location rather than form. In fact, as Beuys explicitly stated when cleaners accidentally disposed of the first piece in 1986, the work also survives if the piece of butter is replaced²¹. And yet, the work was never recreated and is now considered lost.

Because there cannot be said to exist a "true general overall ranking of the realization of one value against the realization of the other value", heritage values may be seen as incommensurable²². Yet, it is arguable that equilibrium must be reached in the realization or satisfaction of the heritage values attributed to an object. Such equilibrium, however, *is* a hierarchy of values. Because the hierarchy is not based on a true or objective criterion by which the values are measured, it is dynamic (in the sense by which a system is also dynamic). At different points in time the hierarchical relationship among the heritage values of an object may be perceived differently and therefore its identity as heritage may also be perceived differently. Thus, one should conceive of the heritage object as an aggregate of heritage identities, each provided by the hierarchy of the values attributed to the object at different points in time. The heritage object incorporates all past, present and future heritage values that may be attributed to it; what is perceived as the heritage identity of that object presently, is only one of its projections. Different projections represent different heritage identities and, as such, different value systems. By extension, in assuming the duty to preserve cultural heritage objects, conservators assume a duty to preserve value systems²³.

Multiple multiplicities ('artwork')

Different works of art exist in different ways (at least this is the common perception within the field of ontology). For example, Leonardo Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* is considered to be an undoubted example of a unique physical particular. Other works, such as prints and cast sculptures appear to be types with instances. Similar would seem to be editioned pieces like Beuys's *Felt Suit*.

Further works, however, seem to exhibit yet other kinds of multiplicities. For example, in Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* (1965), which is comprised of a chair on a gallery floor, a photograph of this chair, and a definition of 'chair' against the wall, one next to the other, conservators allow use of a different chair for the instantiation of the work, since the essential property of the work seems to be that there is a physical chair present, rather than that there is a specific physical chair, e.g. that of the 1965 instance, present.

Sol Le Witt's work on *four black walls, white vertical parallel lines, and in the centre of the walls, eight geometric figures (including cross, X) within which*

²¹ J. Dornberg, "Intensive Care", in: *ARTnews*, vol. 90, no. 1, January 1991, p. 131.

²² N. Hsieh, "Incommensurable Values", in: *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2005, n.p., Available online at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/value-incommensurable/> [Retrieved February 22, 2012].

²³ I. Kapelouzou, "The Inherent Sharing...", pp. 172-182.

are white horizontal parallel lines. The vertical lines do not enter the figures (1980-81), otherwise known as *Six Geometric Figures (+ Two) (Wall Drawings)*, includes instructions such as:

...the distance between the figures and the edge of the wall is variable... The drawing can exist with any number of the figures from one to eight but must be done in the same sequence if more than one is used... Any single figure may be used at any time... They may be used separately... It may be loaned while still installed at the Tate by being drawn elsewhere²⁴.

And, while, in principle, substitution and recreation may be impermissible as conservation actions, in practice they are very much done. If we examine different cases of artworks and the conservation treatments they have undergone, then a strong discrepancy may be observed between what is in theory permissible and what goes on in practice.

This may come as a surprise when one considers the degree to which conservators intervene upon even the most undeniably physical particular artworks (e.g. extent of retouching of painting such as the *Mona Lisa*²⁵, recreating limbs and arms from sculptures, etc.), not to mention total replacements of sharks and migrations to new media of older video in installations. Indeed, substitution and recreation have always been practiced to some degree by conservators in almost all interventions. Because conservation ethics, however, forbid such interventions, these have been unacknowledged up to recently.

In light of modern and contemporary art, and the realisation that at least some artworks seem to exist in a different way and thus require different kinds of intervention in order to continue to exist, conservators have begun to change their practice and theory in order to embrace these differences.

The observation that Installation and Time-Based Media artworks are prone to substitution and recreation, has led to parallelisms of the ontology of such artworks to that of musical works. Pip Laurenson and Bruce Altshuler have strongly supported this view in the field of conservation²⁶. Such a conception implies that the artwork may appear in multiple instances and it may have different modes of existence, i.e. as a written score, as a performance, as a description, as a set of instructions, as an installation in a museum or gallery, as an archived event. The different manifestations of a work of art need not be instantiated by the same person, in the same site, or with the same materials as the initial manifestation. Moreover, each mode of existence may be instantiated at a certain point in time or not without the work of art ceasing to exist. Just as one would not say that Ludwig van Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* (1824) does not exist if it is not being performed or if nobody is reading the musical score, or even if the musical score disappears (one could argue

²⁴ Six Geometric Figures (+Two) (Wall Drawings) 1980-81 in: *The Tate Gallery 1980-82: Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions*, London 1984, n.p., Available online at: <http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=8765&searchid=12496&roomid=3670&tabview=text> [Retrieved March 6, 2011].

²⁵ See for example Claire Finch, "The Story Behind the Well-Known *Mona Lisa* Antique Painting", in: *Artipot*, Jan 29, 2012, Available online at: <http://www.artipot.com/articles/1143253/the-story-behind-the-well-known-mona-lisa-antique-painting.htm> [Retrieved April 19, 2013].

²⁶ P. Laurenson, "Authenticity, Change and Loss..." B. Altshuler, "Collecting the New: A Historical Introduction", in: *Collecting the New. Museums and Contemporary Art*, ed. B. Altshuler, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford 2005, pp. 1-14.

that memory suffices as a tool to keep the score in existence), one would not say that Sol LeWitt's wall drawing has seized to exist if it is not anywhere installed, or if the initial format carrying the artist's instructions has been lost.

The artwork is an artwork partly on account of the intention of the artist to make work of art. Whether the instances produced are good or bad instances is a different issue, but all are equally instances of the same work of art. Moreover, the degree of variation in the performance and performance means of e.g. a musical work, perhaps allows similar flexibility of variation in the specific materials and/or means of a conceptual work of art.

The suggested conception of works of art further implies that held notions about what constitutes forgery or what contradicts artwork authenticity, which are based on a distinction between an original work and other things which are not this original, are at least limited in perspective. This entails significant implications for conservation treatments and especially for the ethical legitimization of substitution, recreation, and other practices that are not currently permissible according to conservation codes of ethics.

Conceptual art may be thought in a similar manner. Authorship distinguishes the actual work from a copy or a forgery. Authorship refers generically to the creation or invention of the structure of the work by the artist, whereby its essential properties are defined; it is only linked to performances, installations, or other manifestations of the work, in terms of whether the work is in fact instantiated, i.e. whether all its essential properties are present. Specific instances or manifestations of the artwork may be copied or forged in the traditional sense (i.e. in relation to an original, e.g. the 1938 performance of that specific work at that location). Forgery of the work proper may be thought of in terms of false attribution, but also in terms of inventive forgery, when a manifestation based on incomplete knowledge of the essential properties of a work claims to be an instance of that work.

The dematerialization of the artwork occurring with the rise of conceptual and ephemeral art phenomena from the mid. 20th c. onwards presumably contradicts traditional perceptions of works of art on a number of levels, which may be presented in terms of four pairs of dichotomies:

1. *From Object to Concept*

Traditional artworks are conceived as the end product of the skills of an individual creator through the use of a particular medium and are identified with a specific physical object. Returning to the *Mona Lisa* example, the work is the specific oils and the way they have been worked on the wood panel exhibited at this moment at the Louvre in Paris. Conceptual art challenges this intuition in that it does not need to have a specific kind of physical presence and it may exhibit processes rather than fixed objects.

As Lawrence Weiner wrote in his 1998 'Declaration of Intent': *1) the artist may construct the piece; 2) the piece may be fabricated; 3) the piece need not be built; each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist*²⁷.

²⁷ A. Alberro, "Preface": Reconsidering Conceptual Art, 1966-1977", in: A. Alberro & B. Simson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, MIT Press, USA 2000, p. xxii.

2. *From Original to No Original*

In traditional works the artist's skill and technique, as evidenced on artworks' surfaces or discovered through scientific analysis, is considered essential for identifying the original work as opposed to a forgery or a version of it. The use of fabricators and of industrial materials from the 1960s onwards however, leads to lack of an original.

Dan Flavin, for example, was an artist who used factory manufactured fluorescent light tubes in order to make his art. As Joseph Kosuth famously remarked "anybody can have a 'Dan Flavin' by going into a hardware store"²⁸. Indeed, his works are accompanied by instructions concerning their installation and tube specifications, the tubes being replaced once they exceed their lifetime of 2,100 hours. In conceptual art, there is no original in terms of physical medium.

3. *From Perpetuity to Ephemerality*

Ever-lasting endurance of the (original) material comprising a traditional artwork has often been considered an aspiration of artists themselves, as evidenced through their choice of materials, e.g. stone rather than clay or canvas rather than paper. Modern and contemporary art phenomena, however, seem to reject notions of perpetuity linked to the material and, instead, embrace ephemerality in various forms. Characteristic is the use of bananas, avocados, candy, flowers and chocolate in works where decomposition of the material becomes the marker of what constitutes the work of art.

4. *From Unique to Variations*

A traditional artwork is usually assumed to be unique; it is thought to be just one; the artwork is a very specific object and nothing else can be the same work of art. As Sol LeWitt tells us, however, contemporary artworks may be recreated, potentially many times and at any time, they may exist simultaneously at two different places at the same time, and they may appear in variations.

The challenges posed for conservators are clear:

- a) Contemporary artworks do not simply allow substitution and recreation to take place but seem to require substitution and recreation in order to continue to exist.
- b) Substitution involves removal of original material and large degrees of intervention.
- c) The large degree of creative activity involved from the part of conservators in the installation of contemporary artworks – mainly in terms of adapting a piece where conditions of exhibition change – raises questions concerning authorship and the role of the conservator.
- d) Recreation may further result in the contemporaneous existence of more than one manifestations of an artwork, in a manner similar to someone

²⁸ J. Siegel, "Art as Idea as Idea", WBAI-FM New York radio interview, 7 April 1970 cited in: J. Holzer, "Language Games: Interview with Jeanne Siegel", in: K. Stiles & P. Selz, *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art. A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1996, pp. 886-889.

taking the old planks of Theseus' ship and constructing another ship out of them. Thus contemporary art poses the puzzle of how two apparently co-existent, numerically distinct things can be identical.

As such, the practices necessary for extending the lifespan of contemporary art seem irreconcilable with existing ethics and modern art is considered as a distinct case which requires different rules and methods for its conservation.

But while these pairs of dichotomies may be said to represent a strict divide between the characteristics of traditional and modern art, this is not the case. In fact it seems that traditional characteristics of the artwork are present in the contemporary, just as contemporary characteristics are present in the traditional. While Beuy's *Felt Suit* (1970), for example, is an editioned piece, it is an *object* (comprised of its 100 editioned pieces) of which there is an *original* (all the editioned pieces); it is *ephemeral* in that the suits are consciously made out of a degradable material; it is *unique* in that it does not appear in variations; and it is potentially heritage.

Polycleitus' *Canon* is another example. In the 5th century BC, the sculptor Polycleitus wrote a treatise on the method by which to create ideal sculpture and then he made a statue to illustrate the tenets of his treatise. He called the statue, like the work, the *Canon*²⁹. The statue presumably makes manifest a concept, i.e. the principle of 'σύμμετρία' (commensurability). Both the treatise and the statue comprise the *Canon*³⁰. The statue *Canon* has been identified by many as the *Doryphoros*, but arguably all of Polycleitus' sculptures made in accordance with this treatise, such as the *Diadoumenos* or the *Discophoros* may be considered different manifestations of the concept. In the case of the *Canon*, the work is the *concept*, of which there are many *instances*, it still aims at *perpetuity*, it is prone to *variation* and, it is heritage.

Contemporary art is not a distinct case; rather it presents further dimensions to traditional conceptions about the kinds of things that works of art are.

Integrated Ontology

The suggested conception of 'artwork' has parallels to what is known as 'four-dimensionalism' in philosophy. The suggested conception of 'heritage' also dovetails nicely with the four-dimensional conception of objects. Four-dimensionalism is a branch of philosophy that examines how objects exist. It has been mainly developed by Theodore Sider and Michael Rea³¹. According to four-dimensionalism, objects encompass time as a further dimension that defines them. In this conception objects are both spatially and temporally extended,

²⁹ Galen, *de Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* 5, cited in: J. J. Pollitt, *The Art of Ancient Greece. Sources and Documents*, Cambridge University Press, UK and USA 1990, pp. 75-77.

³⁰ M. Miranda, "Roman Sculptural Reproductions or Polykleitos: The Sequel", in: A. Hughes & E. Ranfft (eds.), *Sculpture and its Reproductions*, Reaktion Books, London 1997, p. 13.

³¹ T. Sider, "Four Dimensionalism", in: *Philosophical Reviews*, no. 106, 1997, pp. 197-231. *Idem*, *Four-Dimensionalism: An Ontology of Persistence and Time*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2003. M. C. Rea, "Four Dimensionalism", in: M. J. Loux & D. W. Zimmerman (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook for Metaphysics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2003, pp. 246-280.

i.e. they occupy time much like events do (Fig. 3). What are seen in the 'actual' world at different times are distinct temporal parts of one four-dimensionally extended object. According to this philosophy, each and every temporal part of an object is authentic. The four-dimensional object always retains all of its properties, e.g. being white at a time, carrying a discus at a time, or having a specific light tube at a time, but its temporal parts may have different properties. Thus, an artwork may decay and yellow, a discus attached to a statue may be lost or broken, and a specific light tube may be substituted with another one, without questioning whether the artwork remains the same.

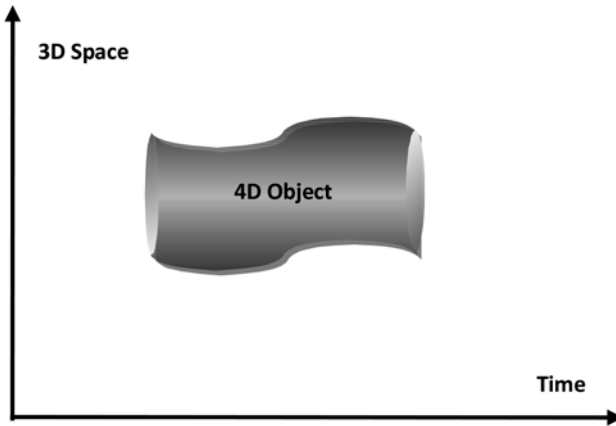


Fig. 3. Four-dimensional objects occupy time like events do.

The different modes of existence and the various instances of a work of art may be seen as projections of the (four-dimensional) artwork. They are perceived not only at different points in time, but also at different points in space. It is therefore possible to have two instances of the same work of art at the same time, in a different space, in a manner similar to LeWitt's *Six Geometric Figures*. Both manifestations are equally the work of art; neither is a copy or a reproduction of it.

The four-dimensionalist conception of objects addresses a further issue with regard to artwork ontology, namely the question of whether all works of art have common ontology. While a few of the attempts to date to address the contemporary art problem in conservation have assumed that works of art may have different ontological status, they do not examine the possibility that all works of art may have the same ontological status. It is a central point of controversy in ontological debates, whether all works of art have the same ontological status or not. It is more often argued that different forms of art have a different ontology, but it may also be the case that all art shares a common ontological status.

John Ruskin³² expressed concern that the viewer may be tempted 'to like' a sculpture as object and not, in his view, for the right reasons, i.e. as developed

³² P. Hatton, "Ruskin and Architecture...", pp. 126-127.

through association. Seth Siegelau, art dealer in 1969, also argued that in conceptual art the material presentation of the work and the intrinsic elements of the art were distinct:

...you see, one of the issues that has interested me about this art is the separation between the art itself and its presentation. This discrepancy or this difference is a relatively recent undertaking, or a relatively recent issue... (but) now you have a case where...the art is not the same thing as how you are given the information³³.

According to Siegelau, it was now possible to split the artwork into “the essence of the piece”, its ideational part and “secondary information”, i.e. the material information by which one becomes aware of the piece, the raw matter, the fabricated part, the form of presentation. Indeed, as Joseph Kosuth said, “the art is the idea; the idea is the art”.

It is not implausible that all conceptual artworks have the same ontological status. The conceptualisation of the problem and the requirement for integration further indicates that there is need to adopt, within conservation, the broader possible conception of how works of art exist. This includes the view that all works of art have the same ontological status and in particular, they are generic entities of which there are instances. While the implications of such a view may seem counter-intuitive, this does not exclude it as a plausible or possible conception of how works of art exist. In fact, the account of the *Canon* provided earlier may be considered as supportive of such a conception.

According to this conception, variation in traditional artworks may be perceived otherwise. London’s National Gallery Exhibition *Close Examination: Fakes, Mistakes & Discoveries* (30 June – 12 September 2010), for example, showcased a number of traditional paintings which had been made by various artists, either unknown or working in a master’s workshop. These were presented as either copies of the master’s original, or as versions of an original work. Several paintings of *The Baptism of Christ* (1630-1685), for example, had been at times assumed to be originals, 19th century fakes, and early copies after Pietro Perugino.

Frans van Mieris the Elder, used to paint many of his works in pairs, i.e. nearly identical, but would only sign one of them. The exhibition attempted to shed light as to which of his *A Woman in a Red Jacket Feeding a Parrot* (1663) was the original, or the actual ‘work’. Scientific investigation was expected to reveal that only one of two versions of Caspar Friedrich’s *Winter Landscape* (1811) is the original. *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (1646) in the National Gallery was presented as a work made in Rembrandt van Rijn’s studio “by an advanced pupil as an independent reworking of Rembrandt’s original design”, whereas the painting with the same title in the Alte Pinokothek in Munich is considered to be the original work³⁴.

³³ A. Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*, MIT Press, Massachusetts 2003, p. 39 and p. 56.

³⁴ The National Gallery, *Close Examination: Fakes, Mistakes & Discoveries*, The National Gallery, Sainsbury Wing, London, 30 June – 12 September 2010, Room 4 *Secrets & Conundrums* and Room 6 *Redemption & Recovery*.

The exhibits in the National Gallery exhibition suggest that, while an 'original' may have resulted from a collective creative process, presence of the signature of the master-artist usually acts as testimony that the work bearing the signature is the master's work rather than any of the other versions. However, according to the suggested conception of artworks as generic entities of which there are instances, this practice may be thought as the multiple instantiation of the structure (concept) in the master's mind; the choice of one among the instances is then a choice as the best instance or the best example of the concept. While they are all equally instances of the same artwork, the other versions are not as good an instance as the one that has been signed by the master-artist. Following this line of thought, the National Gallery examples may be re-interpreted or re-articulated; they are not fakes, mistakes and forgeries, but unrecognized or unknown instances of artworks.

The recent revealing of another version of the *Mona Lisa* in the Netherlands, created at roughly the same period as the 'original' version in the Louvre, under Leonardo's supervision and in his workshop has raised similar questions³⁵.

The four-dimensionalist conception of objects addresses a further possibility, namely that all works of art exist in the same way, or even that all heritage objects exist in the same way. Following this line of thought, works which have been instantiated only once, or of which only the best instance survives, present a special, more limited, case of the generic entities conception. Four-dimensional objects always retain all of their properties. Change, perceived in terms of gain or loss of properties through e.g. substitution and recreation, does not present an issue for authenticity. Rather, change in a four-dimensional object is defined as *difference* between successive temporal parts.

This conception does not conveniently justify just about any action from the part of conservators. On the contrary, there are two important confinements to the vague criterion of *difference*: a) the confinement of the artwork and b) the confinement of the heritage.

a) In the conception of artworks as generic entities with instances, a distinction between essential and non-essential properties serves to identify those properties that are necessary and sufficient to instantiate a specific work of art. By virtue of this distinction, a specific artwork cannot exist unless all of its essential properties are retained or instantiated. These may range from specific materials to simple signifiers of concepts (e.g. the word 'circle' to evoke Ian Wilson's *Circle on the Floor* (1968), a circle drawn on the wall).

b) Conservators' duty is to the heritage, which may not necessarily be the artwork proper. Thus the obligations conservators have in order to extend the lifespan of the heritage and the ethical legitimacy of substitution and recreation as conservation actions will depend on what exactly it is that we value as heritage. Considering LeWitt's *Six Geometric Figures*, for example, the following possibilities arise:

³⁵ No author, "Prado reveals evidence behind 'earliest *Mona Lisa* copy' claim", in: *Art History News*, February 22, 2012 Available online at: <http://www.arthistorynews.com/categories/Conservation/4> [Retrieved April 20, 2013].

- If the heritage is the artwork proper, conservators do not strictly have an obligation to keep installing the work for it may continue to exist in another mode or format.
- If the heritage is a specific mode of existence, then the conservator has a duty to re-instantiate the specific mode of existence as a means for preservation. If that mode of existence is the written or recorded instruction, then conservators ought to ensure that the written record lasts for as long as possible and/or transfer it in a different means; if the mode of existence which is heritage is the installed state, then the conservator has an obligation to ensure the re-installation of the work over time and space.
- If the heritage is a specific instance of one of its modes of existence, e.g. the last instance of *Six Geometric Figures* at Tate Modern, which the artist personally approved just before his death, then the duty to extend the lifespan of the specific instance includes its original material and involves traditional conservation methods, such as stabilization of the chalk on the wall, cleaning of smudges and possibly retouching.

The changes brought about by modern and contemporary art support a broader conception of artworks which incorporates both traditional and new art phenomena. The practices of recreation, new creation, or assistance in instantiation are subordinate to the aim of extending the lifespan of heritage-artworks. While some of these practices may appear to exist in space, they in fact serve the purposes of time. Creation therefore has not become an end in itself, but rather a means in the service of conservation as we traditionally know it. And the old rules of conservation still find applications, both in traditional and in contemporary art.

The philosopher-conservator

Conservation intervenes upon artworks, sometimes introducing changes to their material, structure, meaning, value, or function. These changes raise questions that require philosophers and conservators to review ideals authenticity, to re-examine the effect of conservation interventions, and to consider whether substitutions and recreations that were done as part of works' conservation treatments have changed them into different artworks; whether they have changed the heritage into different heritage; or whether they have achieved both; or neither.

I have attempted to illustrate the way artworks in conservation have two overlapping identities: artwork and heritage. Heritage is defined by the hierarchy of the values attributed to the 'object', artistic value (including artistic intent) being only one among these values and one that is taken into consideration only to the degree that its place in the value hierarchy permits. Artworks are usually conceived in a rather essentialist way within conservation. However, even on a non-essentialist conception, the 4-dimensionalist view is the most plausible one, even if it does not deliver a value criterion that determines which

aspect are worth more preserving or retaining. The above considerations show some of the challenging questions of ontology that conservation introduces. Regardless of whether the conservator needs to be a professional philosopher, the ontological issues thrown up by conservation mean that the two disciplines are fruitfully inter-dependent³⁶.

³⁶ The above paper is based on doctoral research conducted at the Royal College of Art under the supervision of Professors Jonathan Ashley-Smith and Nick Zangwill. I would particularly like to thank Professor Zangwill for his helpful comments on this text and on-going support.

Dorota Folga-Januszewska**Museum vs. Neuroesthetics****Abstract**

The development of neurosciences, including neuroesthetics, at the end of the 20th century and after the year 2000, compels one to apply their experiences to modern-day museology. What forms the essence of these changes? It is being aware that the emotional and sensual perception of the form (its shape, movement, and place on the space-time continuum) of an object in a museum is inseparably tied to the meaning and understanding its message. Neuronal aesthetics helps to bear the divisions maintained in artistic studies through the entire 20th century which inclined researchers to deal independently with form and the message of works of art, artistic happenings or historical objects. Neuroesthetics encourages us to revise our experiences and our understanding of the essence of the "pursuit of pleasure" – which is the essence of creativity – where the senses and the intellect are led down the same path, while nevertheless the context in which these perceived occurrences occur is taken into account.

If we apply more widely the experiences of neuroesthetics to museology, museums of the 20th century will no longer merely be storage rooms for the past, but they will become the predominant venues of multi-sensory education. They will become places that stimulate the development of perception, understanding, and cultural intelligence. We will slowly begin to see that in the world around us, many sectors which "produce" tangible goods are nearing their end of unlimited growth – the great era of objects is coming to its end and what is beginning is a new epoch of imagined, virtual activities, and scenarios which use historical artefacts (collections, anthologies) creatively in order to provoke the world to a visual (also on a neuronal dimension) revolution. In this sense, the museum must confront neuroesthetic experiences, while the studies of the changes taking place in our perception and our understanding of the surroundings should be conducted in laboratories called museums.

Neuroesthetics

The 1990s as well as the first decade after the year 2000 have brought numerous attempts of revisiting the fundamental questions related to the reasons for creating art (why do we need art?), the need for its conservation (what are collections for?), and acquisition (why do we need museums?). These questions also address the need for a re-examination of historical works of art and – imbued with thought – their composition and comparison to the reflections forming today. These questions, however, come not only from aestheticians, art historians, philosophers, anthropologists and culture experts. The circle of those interested in the mechanisms of the influence of art has expanded and

now also includes neurocognitivists: neurologists, doctors, physicists, chemists, and psychologists of perception.

The last twenty years have also seen great changes in museology. The study of museums, and their establishment, activities, educational methods, and influence on the identity of different social groups – has been gradually expanding beyond the traditional boundaries of museology – a practice which includes activities in all domains of human and natural activity encompassed in collections and presented for the pleasure of experiencing. Museologisation of life and its surroundings has surpassed its limits at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries: in addition to traditional collections of art, souvenirs, artefacts of nature and the universe, objects from the history of sciences, and literary or musical works, it has created standards and frameworks for museologising the virtual world – along with intangible heritage (such as word of mouth). Recently, museologisation has begun to create artistic events dedicated directly to museums. Museums are transforming from heterotopia into autopia right in front of our eyes¹.

The processes of amassing intangible legacy and creating virtual collections has turned museologists into directors and set designers. It is becoming increasingly more frequent nowadays to see institutions being established for whom it is not the collection of “objects” that is assembled in time which becomes its focal point. On the contrary, what is at its heart is a certain script which creates a visual perspective of a given event which often entirely forsakes historic documents. Was Walt Disney the harbinger of this phenomenon? Maybe so. The animation, enjoyment and the visual fulfillment of dreams or tales have set in motion boldness to transform reality.

It is not easy to follow this path of evolution. For the past 2500 years, philosophy, art and literature followed very distinct paths. Despite the closeness of the arts and sciences, generations of people have worked to mark their individuality and unique theoretical approaches. Why, then, do these idiosyncrasies undergo a renewed integration before us? Maybe it is because of the questions asked again by neuro-ophthalmologists and owing to the implementation of their remarks by theorists, historians and aestheticians.

A breakthrough in the “different” way of perceiving the role of artistic artefacts in life and in the learning process was initiated by a series of works connected with the psychology of art which culminated in the publication of *The Sense of Order. A Study in Psychology of Decorative Art*² by Ernst H. Gombrich in 1979. Already back then were Gombrich’s students creating works which attracted attention to a particular biological conditioning of the brain on account of which there exists the potential for observing, understanding and for emotional participation in and perception of art. Michael Baxandall published *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century*

¹ This is a reference to Michel Foucault’s concept of heterotopia – an alternative space juxtaposed to reality, which is transformed into an area of counter activity – autopia – areas of strong identity and autonomy interacting with external reality which adopts museological strategies. See: H. Belting, *Place of reflection or place of sensation?*, in: *The Discursive Museum*, ed. P. Noever/MAK, Vienna 2001, pp. 77-78.

² E. H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order. A Study in Psychology of Decorative Art*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1979.

*Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Style*³ in 1972, while in 1978, D. M. Collins and John Onians, in *The Origins of Art*⁴, clearly indicated an influence of a neuronal structure in the receptive areas of the brain on the way people react to pictures. An exhibition entitled *Illusion. Illusionism*⁵ was organized in 1981 at the National Museum in Warsaw – its script reflected the account created in Gombrich's circle of the influence of works of art on the shaping of our visual experiences, on the development of aesthetic sensitivity, as well on the process of understanding or the process of the inability to recognize the set of phenomena called illusionism in art between the 15th and 20th centuries. Shortly thereafter, a related concept was transferred into the domain of 20th century art, namely the *Spacial concepts in modern art* (pol. *Koncepcje przestrzeni w sztuce współczesnej*)⁶ exhibition – which, in the form of a museum exhibit, presented the changes which took place in the last century: as a result of the influence of new concepts in physics and mathematics (including Einstein's theory of relativity and the advancement of quantum physics) artists also began to embrace in their visual projects theoretical phenomena which – on a symbolic level – generated another, non-physical comprehension of the concepts of space and time. Both Warsaw exhibitions were visited by Professor Bogusław Żernicki who was conducting research into the neurophysiology of perception at the Polish Academy of Sciences, Institute of Experimental Biology in Warsaw. He drew interesting conclusions which clearly indicated the fact that the role of art is not limited to aesthetic delight nor is a transmission of certain coded meanings but has an enormous formative influence on the evolution of the brain and the way a person interacts with the surrounding world inasmuch as it also stimulates reactions which themselves do not occur in the material world.

The 1970s and 1980s were a time period when research on the functioning of brain structures was evolving intensively, while the results of these studies were included in clearly written and appealingly illustrated publications⁷. This contributed to this type of information reaching a wider audience – hence also the circles of art historians, aestheticians and philosophers. In 1989, Patricia Smith Churchland entitled her book *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind*⁸ thus formulating the hitherto prevailing observations. The ball started rolling – and as of that moment, nearly each traditional field received the *neuro-* prefix. The fields of neuroesthetics and neuromusicology appeared as separate authorized fields.

³ M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Style*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1979.

⁴ D. M. Collins, J. Onians, "The Origins of Art", in: *Art History*, I, 1978, pp. 1-25.

⁵ D. Folga-Januszewska, *Perspektywa. Iluzja. Iluzjonizm (Perspective, Illusion, Illusionism)*, kat. wyst. Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, Warsaw 1981.

⁶ D. Folga-Januszewska, *Koncepcje przestrzeni w sztuce współczesnej (Concepts of Space in Contemporary Art)*, exhibition no., Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, Warsaw 1984.

⁷ The most important ones include: J.-P. Changeux, *L'homme neuronal*, Fayard, Paris 1983; C. Blakemore, *The Mind Machine*, BBC Books, London 1988; F. Varela, E. Thompson, E. Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, MIT Press, Cambridge 1991.

⁸ P. Smith Churchland, *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind*, MIT Press, USA 1989.

Studies conducted in the 1960s were revisited and reflected upon. The classics of this field encompassed the deliberations of Rudolph Arnheim⁹ and the early works of Ernst H. Gombrich. Jean-Paul Changeux proposed an analysis of paintings from the perspective of neurosciences. *The Lamentation of Christ* by Jacquesa Bellange served the purpose of discovering the mechanism of “mirror neurons”, which occur solely while perceiving paintings¹⁰. Neuroesthetics became a fast-developing field in the 1990s. Semir Zeki’s *Inner Vision, An Exploration of Art and the Brain*¹¹ as well as the article, *The Science of Art: A Neurological Theory of Aesthetic Experience*¹² written by Ramachandran and Hirstein gave rise to a wave of new studies.

These studies were accompanied by great changes that were taking place in practicing art history and aesthetics which, in turn, were the result of the technological invasion of new transmission methods. The former static or dynamic picture (for instance, a film) being nevertheless just a “single and closed” picture (its creator chose its frame, or the beginning or end of its exposure) – started changing: in a quite simple way it began to be superimposed onto other frames, images, or symbols (for example, the transparency of television symbols applied over transmissions from all over the world, or the montage and application of “transparent” frames), which led to an obliteration of or fading of the borders between them. Gradually, the study of “pictures”, which until then were of interest to art historians, turned into studies of “visual events”, while their effects and field of study became known as the study of visual culture¹³.

Neurosciences had undoubtedly contributed to this change. By searching for mechanisms of visual communication and paying attention to the kinetic aspect of the arts¹⁴, many authors noticed an increasingly greater number of relationships between visual perception as a neuronal process and consciousness thus far treated as a “higher” level of knowledge and cognition. At some point, the famous discussion – known as the “imaginary debate” which started during the 1970s and lasted for over thirty years between Stephen Kosslyn and Zenon Pylyshyn¹⁵ – led, in effect, to the so-called Kosslyn’s Theory of Imagery¹⁶. His theory concludes that the previously applied divisions into visual perception, imagination and consciousness as separable areas are no longer permitted¹⁷. This

⁹ R. Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye*, University of California Press, Berkeley – Los Angeles 1954; and *Visual Thinking*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1969.

¹⁰ J.-P. Changeux, “Art and Neuroscience”, in: *Leonardo*, vol. 27, no. 3, 1994, pp. 189-201.

¹¹ S. Zeki, *Inner Vision. An Exploration of Art and the Brain*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1999.

¹² V. S. Ramachandran, W. Hirstein, “The Science of Art: A Neurological Theory of Aesthetic Experience, in: *Art and the Brain*”, ed. J. A. Goguen, in: *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, special edition, vol. 6, June 1999.

¹³ An anthology of works collected by Nicholas Mirzoeff is dedicated to the concept of perceiving not art, but visual culture, *The Visual Culture Reader*, 2nd Edition, Routledge, London – New York 2009 [1st Edition 1999].

¹⁴ S. Zeki, M. Lamb, “The Neurology of Kinetic Art”, in: *Brain*, no. 117, 1994, pp. 607-636.

¹⁵ Z. W. Pylyshyn, “Mental Imaginary. In Search of Theory”, in: *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, no. 25, 2002, pp. 157-238.

¹⁶ S. M. Kosslyn, “Mental Images and the Brain”, in: *Cognitive Neuropsychology*, vol. 22, 2005, pp. 333-347.

¹⁷ See: P. Francuz, “Teoria wyobraźni Stephena Kosslyna. Próba reinterpretacji”, in: *idem, Obrazy w umyśle*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warsaw 2007, pp. 149-189.

assumption was critical not only to artistic studies but also to aesthetics. In view of this, Kosslyn was not only transforming the methodological basis for the study of art assumed in the 20th century, but he was also reaching to the roots of the traditional depiction of images (or, in other words, works of art) – outdated by then according to neuroscientists. Their descriptions had for centuries included terms such as “form” and “content” which generally correspond to the “seeing” and “understanding” division. This dichotomy appeared to be somewhat evident not only in theoretical and critical writings as well as in literature-like treaties on art, but also in artistic studies since the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Although 20th century philosophy and art history methodologies laid out many paths and ways of initiating “the understanding” of artistic works and their interpretation – starting with “straightforward” formalisms, iconologies and studies of cultural contexts through methods drawn from linguistic and cultural theories (such as semiotics, hermeneutics, and deconstruction), to structuralism, post-structuralism, or gender studies – this dichotomy, while carefully circumvented and avoided in a multitude of ways, did not disappear from colloquial speech and our way of thinking. On the contrary, looking at art from the first decade of the 21st century in its global, world-wide dimension of diversity has intensified this issue. This initial image – this “original” – which was the carrier of **form** nearly ceased to exist while we – in a flood of copies (or simulacra as Jean Baudrillard would have put it) – are left alone with the **subject matter** (often precipitously taken as “meaning”) of the messages.

Today, when we look at works by Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, Michele Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean François Lyotard, and especially those by Julia Kristeva, Patricia Methews or David Halperin from the perspective of the last two decades of neuroesthetic-evolution we feel fear: fear that is hidden, yet founded in a unilateral approach. It is fear of the effects of drowning in an expanse of conflicting interpretations. A term which practically borders on this abandonment of the significance of the object’s form is “narration”. Not without malice do I place it in quotations marks – it was overused without moderation at the end of the 20th century, giving birth to another problematic child, namely the concept of “criticality” of works of art, events, and artistic institutions in relation to events, activities and artistic implementations. Art merged with life which does not mean, however, that every manifestation of life became art. Luckily, researchers and art historians such as John Onians, Norman Bryson or Warren Neidich turned here towards the past noticing in aesthetic and art theory history the very questions asked in the days by Plato and Aristotle, William Hogarth, Immanuel Kant or Heinrich Wölfflin which had been patiently waiting to be revisited and revived.

John Onians’ *Neuroarthistory*¹⁸ served as a turning point in this retrospection of the history of art, philosophy and European aesthetics. The summary of his 30 year-long research was published in 2007. The author inserted the following dedication: “For the art historians of the future who have the courage also to be

¹⁸ J. Onians, *Neuroarthistory. From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki*, Yale University Press, New Haven – London 2007.

neuroarthistorians". Aside from a short, merely 17-page-long introduction, the book consists of a selection of short source text fragments along with Onian's slightly longer commentaries. Its chapters successively are dedicated to the opinions of art and perception of: Aristotle, Pliny the Elder, Apollonius of Tyana, Alhazen (Ibn-al-Haytham), Alberti, Leonardo, Hogarth, Burke, Montesquieu, Winckelmann, Kant, Marx, Ruskin, Pater, Taine, Vischer, Göller, Wölfflin, Riegel, Freud, Dewey, Herskovits, Gombrich, Baxandall, and Zeki. The configuration of texts – as can be seen without hesitation – is an unveiling of the ongoing suspicions of many thinkers and artists as to the inseparability of form and meaning of a work of visual art as well as their combined influence on the process of perception. What is more is the texts' effect on the changes taking place in our brain under the influence of extraordinary artistic objects. Reading Onians' book unveils the magnitude of art's influence on the civilizational changes in our entire surroundings which are caused by the formation of many perceptive skills and conscious reflexions as important as, for instance, the shaping of the discernment of illusion of space within the frame of a flat picture.

The author's conclusions and observations, nevertheless, reach further than merely the concept of perceiving the unity of form and meaning. Onians emphasizes that the power of neuroscience involves the fact that "neuroscience also made it not just possible, but necessary, to bring back together things long treated as separate – the mind and the body, the sensory system and the motor system, cognition and the viscera"¹⁹. He also repeatedly quotes other authors, such as for example Norman Bryson. "[Poststructuralism] commits itself to an intensely **cognitive** point of view. Feeling, emotion, intuition, sensation – the creatural life of the body and of the embodied experience – tend to fall away, their place taken by an essentially **clerical** outlook that centers on the written text"²⁰, Bryson writes, listing concepts such as: *text, discourse, code, and meaning*, the use of which, according to him, would have led to a crisis of the artistic studies and the loss of contact with that which in the works of art most stimulates our development – namely their form full of meanings. In this sense, the neurohistory of Onians' art has become a proposition for a re-examination of nearly the entire artistic activity of different cultures in order to find lost trajectories and return to the paths of interest, or simply the corporally sensual fascination with some works of art.

Another critical publication appeared in 2007 which was dedicated to the evaluation of the state of the research of arts and culture. What I mean here is the synthetic depiction by the philosopher and critic Roger Scruton entitled *Culture Counts: Faith and Feeling in the World Besieged*²¹. Although he writes from the position of a sociologist and cultural philosopher, he comes to similar conclusions as Bryson or Onians. For Scruton, the "healing of the eye" will take place in the 21st century as a result of regaining consciousness and returning to

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 1. N. Bryson, "Introduction", in: W. Neidich's, *Blow-up: Photography, Cinema and the Brain*, California Museum of Photography, New York 2003, p. 11.

²¹ R. Scruton, *Culture Counts: Faith and Feeling in the World Besieged*, Encounter Books, New York 2007.

those art forms which respect our “nature”, i.e., to such forms which allow for a multi-dimensional and multi-functional way of sensing and reacting. Despite the fact that Onians’ and Scruton’s books were written independently, both authors refer to texts by the same famous philosophers, aestheticians and artists both suggesting re-reading their writings. It turns out that Burke’s *Treatise on the Sublime and the Beautiful*, or Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* bring the answers given long ago as to how we should “yield ourselves to” the influence of paintings, sculptures, or architectural works in order to connect aesthetic and emotional values with a corporal experience of pleasure.

The construction of a new neuroesthetics edifice would not have been possible, however, if not for its roots in the sciences of biology and the psychology of perception. We have Semir Zeki to thank for building a bridge between the neurophysiology of perception and artistic practice. Zeki was the co-creator and one of the first users of the imaging method of the study of the functional activities of the brain with the application of magnetic resonance (called fMRI – functional magnetic resonance imaging – functional nuclear magnetic resonance), while previously to that he applied positron tomography.

Since the mid 90s, Zeki – rather than lecturing in medical institutions or neurophysiological institutes – began lecturing more frequently in museums. Through a series of lectures in Tate Gallery, later continued in Musée d’Orsay, Gemälde Galerie in Berlin, and at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles (2003) – along with social and professional connections within the circle of the former students and seminarists of Ernst Gombrich, Zeki found his way to museologists and artists. Zeki’s observations and research reached the group of museologists and artists who in their practice were interested in development and perception of art shown in different types of museums, while in their theory their interest was piqued by the particular behaviour of people and the change in their perception when they were inside museums. It was specifically these “anomalies” of reactivity which took place only within museum contexts that attracted Zeki’s attention to such a degree that he himself became curator of exhibitions in 2003, and became involved both conceptually and practically in the organization of experimental expositions in museums (such as for example, *Colore et Cervello – Colour and the Brain* in Casa Rusca in Locarno, 2003). Zeki’s last book – *Splendors and Miseries of the Brain. Love, Creativity, and the Quest for Human Happiness*²² – constitutes a summary both of his observations related to the process of analytical and thoughtful seeing, and the influence of the mechanisms determining our perceptions and consciousness – equally on the creation of the world around us as well as on its perception.

For Zeki, Kant was the initiator of a neuronal approach to art. Furthermore, the subsequent development of phenomenology was proof of the over two-centuries-long studies of the internally forming phenomenon which is comprised of artistic occurrences in their form and content, or symbolic dimension. Zeki describes that which thus far in the history of art was expressed through the

²² S. Zeki, *Splendors and Miseries of the Brain. Love, Creativity, and the Quest for Human Happiness*, Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester 2009.

categories of style, tendency or avant-garde changes – and which from the perspective of neuroesthetics constitutes a natural chain of evolution of our brain and our need for an idea of the world that is increasingly more sophisticated and distant from its objective reality. This evolution provides more room for imagination and internal vision (the result of centuries-long training of a visual buffer²³). It leads towards “imagined pictures” and causes those “internal images” of artists to be perceived and understood as “pictures” also by other observers. Reading Zeki, what is unveiled as something natural in its entirety is the codification of non-objective art, which does not imply a “lack of its significance”. In this context, the writings by Wassil Kandinsky or Kazimierz Malewicz enlighten their reader to the artists who have been “neuroresearchers” since time immemorial. Their role consisted, and still does, of a continuous raising of the bar in the process of rational perception. Many films have been produced over the last two decades where their content consists of computer-animated worlds – pictures composed of well-known borrowings, real elements (often “taken” from the iconosphere of ancient or medieval art) and magically literary visions, as well as “abstract” effects (such as transitions of colours, lights and movement of non-objective shapes) which without any problems are today perceived and commented on by their viewers.

Zeki calls these states “Higher Levels of Ambiguity”²⁴ and analyses them based on the examples of ancient art. An already classic example of such an analysis is the description of the perception of Johannes Vermeer’s *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (around 1664, Mauritshuis, Haag). What is superimposed onto seeing the portrait of the young woman during the process of perception is the inevitable “emotional” identification of the depicted figure, which determines a suitable mental registration of the image (question: what feelings does the depicted woman express?). In short – we will read and remember *The Girl with the Pearl Earring* in such a way in which we interpret her emotional message which is inseparably linked to the layer of paint, frame and meaning. We hesitate, however, at times seeing her as inviting, at other times as distant, erotically charged while chaste, resentful but pleased, as Zeki observes. Vermeer – as a conscious neuroresearcher – does not make this task any easier for us. “The genius of Vermeer is that he does not provide an answer but, by a brilliant subtlety, manages to convey all the expressions, although the viewer is only conscious of one interpretation at any given moment”²⁵, writes Zeki.

²³ “A visual buffer [acc. to Kosslyn’s theory] is a functional structure which in a model, represents the group of primary and secondary visual fields which can be found in the occipital lobe of the cerebral cortex ... Both during perception and imagining, the buffer serves the purpose of initially organizing the visual material, or to put it in David Marr’s words, to create an initial sketch of the picture. Kosslyn compares the visual buffer to a board or a dynamic display on which pictures are continually changing due to external stimulation” – as quoted in: P. Francuz, “Teoria wyobraźni...”, pp. 156–157. David Marr’s work mentioned by Francuz entitled *Vision*, W. H. Freeman and Co., New York 1982.

²⁴ See: S. Zeki, *Splendors and Miseries of the Brain...*, p. 87.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 87. The description of experiencing “one sensation” in a given moment despite awareness that they can be different experiences resembles in the process of visual perception a so-called “double picture” or “double vision”, compositions made up of different single objects seen, however, in the whole arrangement as the representation of something different. As an example of “double vision” often referred to are paintings by Arcimbold – portraits where the face is made up of, for instance,

This insecurity causes the perceiver to imbue the viewing of the painting with a much greater mental effort because no determination of emotions is final.

Neuromuseology

Zeki's description of Vermeer's painting augmented by quotations from Schopenhauer's writings becomes an inspiring introduction to the concepts with which we from time to time are dealing with since museums have become institutions.

It is no coincidence that the great Epoch of Museums in Europe begins at the same time as the publishing of Kant's works (1764²⁶-1790²⁷). Onians points out that owing to the stipulation of the apriority of time and space, Kant has made us aware that "the integration of genius, soul and imagination can lead to a production of works that produce 'much thoughts' yet not a thought that can be represented in language"²⁸. At the same time, he directed a stream of deliberations at the problem of cohesion of mental and sensual perception, which in essence is the subject matter of modern-day neuroesthetics.

From the point of view of museum history, the reason for their foundation originated from the need to turn private collections (intentionally amassed groups of objects²⁹) into areas of aesthetic, intellectual, and emotional experiences. Museums were thus the first areas where, upon rejecting utilitarianism or ideas of usefulness of a collection for political gain, "areas of reflection" were being constructed. In these places, an observer could – while detached from religious, courtly or bourgeois rituals – "become immersed" in these artificially arranged worlds. To some degree, museums understood in such a way were derived from the theatre. In such a context, the collections constituted the stage design and the viewers became actors who performed for themselves or for others plays which were partially pre-scripted while partially improvised.

In the second half of the 18th century, a new type of museums was born, namely great museums of art³⁰, artistic agglomerations, the existence of which was, (in contrast to scientific museums or cabinets of curiosities) not exclusively linked to educating. Art museums were to take the visitor to a state of pleasure derived from an aesthetic experience (characterized – as we would say today – as *strictly neuronal*). These museums were domains of the "pursuit of pleasure". Certainly they did thus have an educational dimension because it was there that cerebral evolution was expedited – as it was simultaneously confronted with picture, imagination and consciousness.

several kitchen utensils. This phenomenon was a separate section of the exhibition: *Perspektywa, iluzja, iluzjonizm* [Perspective, Illusion, and Illusionism] at the National Museum in Warsaw in 1981; see footnote 5. Creating ambivalence of perception, as Zeki observes, is one of the intriguing features of works of art.

²⁶ Published in print format: *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*.

²⁷ Published in print format: *Kritik der Urteilskraft* – *Krytyka władzy sądzienia* [Critique of the Faculty of Judgment].

²⁸ J. Onians, *Neuroarthistory*..., s. 81.

²⁹ On defining collections and their intentionality see: K. Pomian, *Zbieracze i osobliwości. Paryż – Wenecja XVI-XVIII wiek*, trans. from French by A. Pieńkos, PIW, Warsaw 1996 [1st Ed. in French, Paris 1987].

³⁰ See: A. McClellan, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao*, University of California Press, Berkeley – Los Angeles 2008.

Essentially non-utilitarian creatures had sprung up in Europe. The collections bequeathed to museums lost their dimension of material value (because they basically were never sold). What is more, museums did not serve a receptive function – unlike residences – so the works of art gathered within them ceased to be characterized as “utilitarian art” (for example, military equipment in museums was no longer used in battles, crystal goblets – for drinking, and beautiful fabrics – to decorate rooms). A new goal appeared: constructing an area of experiences, a place for aesthetic sensations, and the “reading of paintings” for pleasure.

The 19th century, along with the philosophy of romanticism, complemented the idea of museums with one more element, namely, that of a need for illusion and deep emotions. The assembled collections were no longer expected to be beautiful and ancient, but to a larger extent they were to provide sensations which nature – despite its great potential – failed to do. What happened in museums was a real transformation of “recorded history” into emotional history. The 19th century was an era of “national museums” – characterized by a need for an emotional connection with history and assigning to the forms of particular objects a symbolic dimension. The phenomena of national identity and the feeling of belonging to a country’s structures found their reflection and constitution in tendentiously amassed collections. Their “artificiality” was physiological. In a material form, they addressed particular spiritual and mental needs and gave them an almost carnal dimension. At the end of the 19th century, museums were – next to the train station, town or city hall and tavern – the most important locations in the city. They were part of the public sphere. They became a given. This physiological aspect of creating museums remains practically undescribed to this day. The tendency to give every venture a “higher” dimension (exclusively spiritual) brought about a crisis of this institution in the 20th century. The unaddressed relationship between the “natural artificiality of a museum” and a need for the evolution of perception led to many misunderstandings.

It is quite difficult to describe in one short article the development of the concepts of the functions and aims which were and are at the core of museums. Neuronal aesthetics provides support which stems from the observation of behaviours and the perceptual process. This support is based on providing an incentive to revise certain goals at the beginning of the 21st century and thereafter, to adjust the ways of organizing museums. It is exactly within this scope that neuromuseology can intimate new and interesting solutions for the viewer.

Application of neuroscientific achievements in museums should be, however, preceded by a reflection on seemingly obvious concepts and questions about the definition, place, meaning and goal of the operation of such institutions. First, the fundamental question – **what is a museum?**, should be asked. The answer is not as simple as might be suggested by lexical considerations. In this case, we are aware that the concept behind the question of “what?” may simultaneously include a “how?”.

A museum is a living context, or area where objects interact with perceivers and these perceivers “create” objects during the perceptual process.

Material and/or immaterial objects gathered in a museum are chosen consciously³¹ and are used to create a perceptual – visual, sonic, or multi-sensory – ³² arrangement. In this sense, every museum is a “screenplay” for a performance – an intentional message in which the shape (pictorial, sonic, or received through the sense of touch) of a showpiece establishes itself in a defined space with reference to other shapes. A museum is thus an “entirety” within which objects have their position (visual, historic, symbolic, and sensory – perceived globally). A change of position may have an effect not only on a change in the perception of these objects, but even on their complete removal from the field of memory. A museum is not “empty space” but in itself, it has a defined shape and form – an area which has a powerful character. The welfare of objects within it depends on its space; the objects are there, they levitate and change – depending on their position – their individual meaning. The museum determines the existence of objects. I deliberately speak here not of an exhibit, or exposition, but of the entire museum because the existence of collections, their acquisition, their display, and their presentation requires a multi-step process which leads to “conferring space and meaning”. A museum employee (curator) who receives an object into the collection and enters it into the inventory is the first link on a choices and emplacements chain. Each work of art or any other object which is admitted to the museum becomes an atom that interacts with the others. We know of interesting examples where an acquisition (in order to supplement a collection) of a sculpture or painting – its addition to the collection – spawned a new perceptual realm, raising the expression and meaning of both hitherto existing objects as well as that of the added one.

The welfare of the viewer depends on museum space. Once we become aware of the results of neuroesthetic research it will become evident that a museum is a type of a perceptual laboratory. The organization of an exhibition which consists of hanging paintings, arranging objects, labelling them, adding multimedia presentations, creating transitions between them, their entrances and exits, and curtain falls – is a way of finding new solutions which we do not experience in “practical” reality. One says of museum employees that they “have an eye” – an ability to find such relations between objects (paintings, sculptures, and articles) which increase the values of the exhibits and give their viewers pleasure. This ability determines the creation of a new “exploratory” context – an ability, at times innate, and at times formed over years, is nothing if not a neuronal shaping of exhibition space. Intuition, whereas, which we often hear about, emerges as being a visual experience put into practice.

Each object (for instance, a work of art) is “immersed” in a museum. This immersion deforms, changes, refines or debases objects. In a museum, they become cogwheels within a new perceptual mechanism. It may be that artists

³¹ Obviously, there are storage-museums of random objects, but I propose not to call these “intentional museums”.

³² Since the beginning of the 20th century, a debate has been in progress over the motivating factors of these collections: artistic, content-related, economic, or maybe „neuronal“, i.e. such where visual subconscious coupled with theoretical knowledge is in search of “complementary objects”. See: Julian Spalding, chapter 4 of: *The Poetic Museum. Reviving Historic Collections*, Munich, London – New York 2002, pp. 51-63.

aware of this aspect had a very emotional attitude towards museums. On one hand, they wanted their works of art to find their way to museums, while on the other – like futurists they proclaimed the end of these institutions, their ruin, and devastation. Artists themselves have been creating museums for centuries. Rudolph Bauer's ideas – implemented in the first Museum of Abstract Art (Geistreich, 1926-1928) in Berlin or the Museum of Futurism in Rovereto organized by Fortunato Depero were excellent examples thereof. Studies of the branch of museology which proposes to treat a museum as an area supporting the evolution of the perceptual system should have been conducted there.

If we apply neuroesthetic experiences in museology more widely, museums of the 21st century will not merely be repositories of the past, but they will become the most important areas of multisensory education. They will be places that stimulate the development of perception, understanding, and cultural intelligence. We will slowly begin to realize that in the world around us, many sectors "producing" tangible goods are nearing their end – the great era of objects is nearly over. What is beginning is a new epoch of imagined, virtual activities, scenarios which use historical artefacts (collections, antologies) creatively in order to provoke the world to a visual (also on a neuronal dimension) revolution. In this sense, the museum must confront neuroesthetic experiences. Studies of the changes taking place in our perception and in our understanding of our surroundings should be conducted in laboratories called museums.

Translated by Anna Pyszak

David Carrier

The World Art History Museum

Abstract

In 2011 Professor Philippe de Montebello asked a number of scholars to participate in his New York University graduate class on the art museum. Because of his long-time association with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which was near to our classroom, many of my examples were drawn from exhibitions at that museum. My assignment was to discuss my writings about museums and world art history in ways that would appeal to both art historians and curators. This is a heavily edited and revised version of the presentation given October 18, 2011.

"Art museums rest on... fundamental assumptions that took shape within the eighteenth-century art world. Most obviously, the museum assumes that there is such a thing as art ...Only because they can all be regarded as 'art' can the museum's diverse contents occupy the same physical space..."¹

"The greatest aid to study and intelligent enjoyment is an historical arrangement. Such a collection, historically ordered... we shall soon have an opportunity to admire in the picture gallery of the Royal Museum constructed here in Berlin. In this collection there will be clearly recognizable... the essential progress of the inner history of painting..."²

Because I have never worked in a museum, I approach them as a consumer, trying to deduce how they function from what I see and read. What, then, can an outsider say about these institutions? Of what use to curators are academic theories of the museum and of world art history? My prior account of these questions is developed in three books, which in effect constitute a trilogy. *Principles of Art History Writing* (1991) discusses the history and validation of interpretation in art history³. I then realized that I needed to identify the institutional foundations of this activity, which I did in *Museum Skepticism: A History of the Display of Art in Public Galleries* (2006)⁴. Museums display the works that

¹ J. J. Sheehan, *Museums in the German Art World: From the End of the Old Regime to the Rise of Modernism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000, p. 3.

² G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1975, vol. 2, 870.

³ D. Carrier, *Principles of Art History Writing*, Pennsylvania State University Press, London 1991.

⁴ D. Carrier, *Museum Skepticism: A History of the Display of Art in Public Galleries*, Duke University Press Books, Durham and London 2006. See, however, the critique by Ivan Gaskell in his review "Museum Skepticism", in: *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 68 (1): 65-68 (2010).

art historians interpret. But what is the relationship between these institutions, art history and the museum? As I worked on that book, I realized that I needed to look outside of Europe if I was to provide a satisfactorily comprehensive answer to that question. My *A World Art History and its Objects* (2008) offers an accessible analysis of the prospects for a world art history⁵.

The art museum and art history developed at the same time, in Berlin in the 1820s when Hegel was presenting his lectures on aesthetics whilst the new Prussian museums were being constructed. Hegel's office was right across the street from these museums, but he himself had no connection with that activity. Indeed, by modern standards, he barely qualifies as an art historian; the best art history in his lectures is the description of Dutch genre art:

"[The Dutch people] wishes to enjoy . . . in every possible situation the neatness of its cities, houses, and furnishings, as well as its domestic peace, its wealth, the respectable dress of wives and children, the brilliance of its civil and political festivals, the boldness of its seamen, the fame of its commerce and the ships that ride the oceans of the sea . . . the real subject-matter is . . . cheerfulness and naïvete"⁶.

Although Hegel does not name any painters, you sense from the tone that he had visited the low-countries. In a brief effective account, he explains how Dutch painting expresses the spirit of Holland in its golden age. The history of art history is the extension of such a way of thinking by Hegel's academic successors, who developed accounts of all European art and, soon enough, of all art from everywhere. The history of the art museum is the story of its extension to include this art from everywhere discussed by historians.

Museum Skepticism draws obvious, unoriginal analogies between the historical narratives of book surveys and the floor plans of art museums. Walking clockwise around the National Gallery, London, you traverse the history of European art from the early Renaissance into the early twentieth century. Like a survey art history book, such collections present their art in chronological order. When you walk up the stairs of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York to the left is the art from the Islamic world; to the right, that of Asia; and straight ahead, the European paintings. My world art history, offering a structure mapping the relationship of four major traditions, presents the narrative structure of such a museum.

Curators usually focus on their own period and place. Do they need any theory of art to govern their practice? That challenging question deserves to be answered. I offer these curators three things. 1. Ideas about how to organize the permanent displays and temporary exhibitions of nonwestern art. 2. Reflections about how to stage the presentation of the relationship of these various traditions within the museum. 3. A suggestion about how to understand the concept "visual art".

Curators usually hang Artemesia Gentileschi's baroque paintings before Mary Cassatt's impressionist pictures which, in turn, appear before Agnes Martin's abstractions. They do this because they know that earlier art influences what

⁵ D. Carrier, *A World Art History and its Objects*, University Park, London 2008.

⁶ G. W. F. Hegel, *op. cit.*, p. 886.

comes later in Western tradition. But these arrangements do not presuppose any particular view of how to understand that causal history. Curators do need to study connoisseurship, for accurate attributions are important. And they certainly need the ways of thinking provided by social historians of art to organize their exhibitions. But it's not obvious that they need theories of museums to practice their craft. I do hope that some curators read *Museum Skepticism*. But I am not sure that my analysis could or should change how they work within the museum.

A similar skeptical point can be made about academic accounts of world art history. *A World Art History and its Objects* is but one of many accounts. There is David Summers' ambitious book⁷. John Onians has published a neurological theory supporting his analysis of world art⁸. David Freedberg, too, has a neurological analysis forthcoming. James Elkins has gathered various points of view⁹. Julian Bell's survey, *Mirror of the World* is a clear, visually exciting world art history¹⁰. Terry Smith, who takes world art history into the present, has produced a vast book¹¹. And there are specialist surveys of the history of relationships of visual cultures¹². It is not obvious that any of these accounts suggest how a curator might reorganize the museum.

Some commentators think it wrong or impossible to write a world art history. Such an account, they sometimes argue, is a form of cultural imperialism. One reason that the Quai Branly *Museum*, the newest large Paris museum is so unsatisfying is that it puts together art from varied visual cultures, China and Africa and Oceania, which have nothing in particular to do with one another. Indeed, the very phrase 'Non-European art' is hopelessly problematic. What have Muslims in North Africa in common with the Buddhists of Tibet or the Aztecs? Many would be offended with calling Chinese and Africans and Maori 'non Europeans', as if being *not* white gave them some common identity. Grouping their art together makes no sense.

One critical concern critics of world art history sometimes invoke concerns with use of universals, "Western art", "Chinese painting", and so on. Any universal identifies diverse artifacts. This is true even with relative narrow universal art historical categories. "Abstract Expressionism" usually includes Pollock, de Kooning but also Barnett Newman, whose paintings look very different. Broader universals may seem more problematic. Duccio and Jasper Johns are both "European painters", but since their works look very different it would take some time to explain how they are connected. And yet, put a painting by either of them alongside *Summer Mountains* attributed to Qu Ding (active ca. 1023–ca. 1056), and you will see the ways in which "Chinese art" is distinctive.

⁷ D. Summers, *Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism*, Phaidon Press, London 2003.

⁸ J. Onians, *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2008.

⁹ J. Elkins, *Is Art History Global? (The Art Seminar)*, Routledge, New York 2006.

¹⁰ J. Bell, *Mirror of the World*, Thames & Hudson, London 2010.

¹¹ T. E. Smith, *Contemporary Art: World Currents*, Pearson, New York 2011.

¹² See for example my review of *Artistic and Cultural Exchanges between Europe and Asia, 1400-1900: Rethinking Markets, Workshops and Collections* has been published at caa.reviews. Thursday, March 24, 2011.

Imagine a vast warehouse housing art from these four traditions: “Chinese”, “European”, “India” and “Islamic” art. If in most cases, we could sort out the works, then perhaps we are justified in employing those universals. For nominalists such as the philosopher Nelson Goodman, author of *Languages of Art* (1968) an important treatise on aesthetics, there are only individuals. Logically speaking, even to speak of “Poussin’s paintings” is to link together very different artifacts using that universal. But without appeal to universals, thinking is difficult. And we need some way to explain how we can sort out Chinese, European, India and Islamic art.

In museums Western art is usually displayed in chronological order. This is because earlier art leads to later art leads to the latest art: Masaccio leads to Raphael leads to Sean Scully. If a tradition does not develop in such a fashion, then a different installation is required. China also lends itself to a historical hanging, if, as the distinguished specialist James Cahill claims, in China, as in Europe we find a gradual development of naturalism¹³. Naturalism in China starts earlier, he argues, develops with different subjects and ends sooner: this development has the same structure as in Europe¹⁴. Chinese painters aspired to make representations, pictures that visually resemble what they depict. Here the results of an informal little experiment are revealing. In Southern China, near Guilin, are marvelous, seemingly unreal mountains, which are depicted in many Chinese paintings. I took a photograph, setting the representation of the mountains on the 20 RMB note against the real mountains. (Inserted image *Against Semiotics*.) As you can see, the mountains look just like their representation.

If Cahill’s account is correct, then it suggests how to display Chinese art, but that says nothing about how to relate it to European art. Would it be possible to intermingle Chinese and European paintings, not in strict chronological order but with reference to his analysis? (China perfected naturalism by the 12th century, long before Europe.) I believe that such an installation would appear incoherent. Chinese and Western paintings look too different to allow for easy display side-by-side. Recently the Metropolitan displayed two near contemporaries, Wang Hui (1632-1717) and Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) in separate galleries¹⁵. Showing their paintings in the same room would be confusing.

When we get to other art from outside Europe that doesn’t have such a tradition of development, then it needs to be hung different. At the Metropolitan, for example, art from the Islamic world is hung in part according to a geographic rather than a chronological organization. Nowadays few curators would be happy with showing African masks alongside Matisse and Picasso, circa 1910, on the grounds that they influenced Europeans. China, Europe and India have always been connected; the Muslims interacted with their European neighbors.

¹³ James Cahill defends this controversial view on his web site, <http://jamescahill.info/> which presents fully illustrated lectures, marvelous material not available in his books.

¹⁴ There is a very interesting discussion of this claim by James Elkins; see my review of his “Chinese Landscape Painting as Western Art History”, in: *History and Theory* 51, 1 (February 2012): 116-22.

¹⁵ See my “Landscapes Clear and Radiant: The Art of Wang Hui. The Metropolitan Museum of New York”, Published www.artcritical.com 12.2008 and my “The Beautiful and the Sublime: Keith Christiansen’s Poussin”, online, University of Tampa Journal of Art History, www.journal.utarts.com. August 2009.

But until the Spanish invasions, the Aztecs and Mayas had no contact with other traditions. When displaying Chinese, European, Indian and Islamic art, curators need to think about causal connections. Buddhism moved from India to China, and so in Western China, in Dunhuang you can see visual cultures in interaction. And so the museum needs to show how that happened. How, by contrast, should art from the old Americas be displayed, when the Aztecs and Mayas (and their precursors) had no contact with art in Asia and Europe?

The Metropolitan's exhibit presenting Venice's relationship with Islam was one suggestive model of how to relate visual cultures¹⁶. You find Islamic carpets in many Renaissance paintings. These imported luxury goods were inserted without reference to their original function¹⁷. Some commentators speculate that the presence of carpets in Venice influenced Venetian painting. But there is no textual evidence that any Venetian artist was affected. The Renaissance artists inserted carpets, exotic objects, into their paintings. Not until much later did European modernists like Henri Matisse treat the Islamic carpet as the basis for their compositions¹⁸.

I encountered another challenging exhibition about cultural connections in Istanbul.

In sixteenth century Transylvania, part of the Ottoman Empire, Lutheran churches were decorated with Anatolian prayer rugs. Sakip Sabanci Muzesi, a large private museum far from the center of Istanbul displayed precious carpets hung in place of paintings on the wall¹⁹. The exhibition included a full-scale installation of carpets in a church with organ music. Watching Muslims in that museum one saw how works of art are transformed when they move between cultures.

Philosophers offer definitions of art. They ask what features are shared by such diverse art as Islamic textiles, Chinese scholar rocks and Italian easel paintings. But do curators need have such a theory in order to display those artifacts within the museum? The Metropolitan's exhibit of Damian Hirst's *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (1991), a fourteen-foot long shark in a glass and steel tank could have been mistaken for an exhibit in a natural history museum. And so the museum presented alongside it paintings which underlined its status as a work of art. Like a deal of contemporary art, *The Physical Impossibility of Death* cannot be fully understood without reference to some theory. The philosopher Arthur Danto has developed an aesthetic focused on cases such as the Brillo Boxes by Andy Warhol, which are almost physically indistinguishable from non-art from outside the museum²⁰.

¹⁶ See my "Venice and the Islamic World 828-1797, The Metropolitan Museum of Art", in: *ArtUS*, 19 (summer 2007): 56.

¹⁷ See my "Islamic Carpets in Christian Paintings: An Alternative Theory of the Origin of the Public Art Museum", in: *Source* XXV, 1 (Fall 2005): 1-5.

¹⁸ J. Masheck, "The Carpet Paradigm: Critical Prolegomena to a Theory of Flatness", in: *Arts Magazine* 51 (September 1976): 89-109.

¹⁹ See my review "In Praise of God. Anatolian Rugs in Transylvanian Churches 1500-1750. Sakip Sabanci Museum, Istanbul", in: *ArtUS*, 20 (winter 2007): 8.

²⁰ See my Keynote essay, Online Conference in Aesthetics. Arthur Danto's, *Transfiguration of the Commonplace – 25 Years Later*. January 22, 2007 – artmind.typepad.com/onlineconference [Retrieved January 22, 2007].

To understand the role of such theorizing about visual art within the museum I would appeal to an analogy between aesthetic theory and political philosophy. The relationship between John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*, the canonical liberal account and everyday practice is distant²¹. Rawls's account is abstract and so its relationship to everyday political activity is not easy to identify. But since politicians make assumptions about morality, they cannot proceed without some implicit theorizing.

Is economic inequality in itself wrong? Some people feel strongly that extreme economic differences are illegitimate. Others, that sometimes such differences are sometimes justified. Bill Gates is richer than anyone I know. But if he has improved all of our lives, then maybe that inequality is justified. We all would be poorer did he not exist. Rawls offers a way of analyzing this quandary.

The division between social philosophers and politicians is akin to the division between philosophers of art and curators: It is the division between theory and practice. Just as busy politicians probably do not have time to read Rawls's *Theory of Justice*, so obviously curators may not be able to read the philosophical literature about museums and world art history. These curators do not need to do so because their everyday practice is grounded in its presuppositions. But just as a democratic culture is inconceivable apart from these ideologies, so the museum is inconceivable apart from this supporting structure provided by philosophers and theoretically-minded art historians.

The absolute rulers of the old regimes, in Europe, in China and elsewhere could not have imagined the ways in which we take for granted that the government is a servant of the people. No more than the Aztecs, the Mayas or their European contemporaries in the fifteenth-century could have envisaged that we would install their artifacts within museums. But to have an art museum, you need some implicit theory of what art is. The art museum is a highly distinctive creation of the West because it was there that the theories supporting that institution were developed. China had highly sophisticated art writing, developed much earlier than in Europe. But that country never developed museums until after the belated fall of the old regime, 1911.

Writing about cultural encounters, a historian of Aztec art says: "If (the others) are completely unknown to us, their very presence generates in us innumerable questions and sensations that range from unbridled attraction to irrational repulsion"²². Museums of world art history are exciting because they allow us to reflect on cultures that are exotic to us. Nowadays almost no one would assert that the art of any culture is essentially superior. And so in our museums, paintings and sculptures from every human culture are displayed. But doing that, we encounter much discussed, very difficult to resolve questions. Few Westerners believe that cannibalism, infanticide or polygamy are justifiable. Nor it should be added, do we deny that many of the practices of our European ancestors were barbaric. When it comes to judging slavery or

²¹ J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Belknap Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 2005. The critical literature on Rawls is immense.

²² Leonardo Løpex Lujan in: J. M. D. Pohl, C. L. Lyons, *The Aztec Pantheon and the Art of Empire*, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles 2010, ix.

women's suffrage, we are not relativists. But exhibiting an Aztec dagger does not require admiring the violent executions in which it was employed. Nor more than displaying a Counterreformation Italian altarpiece by Caravaggio demands acceptance of his barbaric counter-Reformation Catholic worldview. Within the museum, we value art aesthetically. This allows us to enjoy art from everywhere, Aztec daggers and Caravaggio altarpieces. But we can do that only because these objects are detached from their original contexts.

Unless you possess a philosophical theory of art, you cannot set objects from many visual cultures within the museum, comparing them aesthetically. In that way, the art museum is like that other, closely related product of modernism, democracy. Just as our politicians assume, and so do not need to mention (or even consciously know) the details of theories of democracy, so our curators do not have to be aware of the complex, intricate history of aesthetic theory, which makes possible their activity. You don't have to read Jean-Jacques Rousseau in order to understand that democratic societies manifest the General Will; any more than you need to read Immanuel Kant's *Third Critique* in order to know that the art museum makes it possible to compare artifacts from everywhere aesthetically.

We believe that art from all cultures is valuable. And thanks to museums, we can see all of that art aesthetically. I hope that a world art history promotes understanding between cultures. And so I would love to support exhibitions of art from non-Western cultures on the ground that they promote international understanding. Museums need support. The problem, however, is that the necessary precondition for an artifact entering that space is that we respond to it aesthetically. Admiring the artistic skills of the people whose art we view gives us no reason to think that their culture itself is valuable. Cultural encounters are often not peaceful²³.

Oleg Grabar greatly influenced my writings on world art history. And so I dedicate this paper to his memory and to Dr. Mika Natif, his student who played a central role in the editing of his collected essays and now is poised to continue this vital tradition²⁴.

²³ Consider, for example, the rugs of war, made by the refugees from war in Afghanistan, which offer decidedly pessimistic images. See my "War Rugs: Political Art from the Islamic World", in: *ArtUS*, 16 (January-February 2007): 54-7.

²⁴ O. Grabar, *Constructing the Study of Islamic Art*, vol. I-IV, Ashgate Publishing, Hampshire 2005-6.

E. M. Dadlez

Poetry Is What Gets Lost in Translation
Robert Frost

Abstract

I will argue, not very controversially, that it is not possible to translate a poem into another language and retain the full impact of the original. Because excellence in poetry involves a fusion of form with content, an alteration in the means by which such content is presented cannot provide an adequate approximation of the original. Thus the original work lost in the course of translation.

My title is a quotation attributed to Robert Frost, and I will argue here that Robert Frost has it exactly right. Because excellence in poetry involves such a fusion of form with content, a radical shift in the means by which a given content is conveyed cannot provide a sufficiently exact approximation of the original poem. Thus the original – its impact and its voice – is, literally, lost in the course of translation. This is taken here to be trivially true of all translations, since a poem's form is regarded as essential to its literary identity. Nontrivially, however, we can still accept the claim that some translations are better than others, that some originals are more conducive to translation than others, and that some translations are simply new (and often excellent) poems in their own right, just poems that owe rather a large debt to the insights of other artists.

I remember listening to an American academic talking about the poetry of Czesław Miłosz on NPR. "And it sometimes even rhymes!" she exclaimed chirpily, as if describing some inessential feature, like a weakness for archaic fonts. To be fair, that wasn't something the academic's American audience was at all likely to know. They would only have read Miłosz in translation, and the best translations of Miłosz are in free verse. Attempts to impose alien rhyme schemes on a translation can fail dreadfully, for any of several reasons. Sometimes, they sacrifice meaning on the altar of form, jettisoning entire metaphors and adding others simply to reinforce a rhyme scheme. On other occasions, there is a catastrophic failure of fit, as if a rousing call to arms had been set to the tune of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" or a Mark Rothko painting had been placed inside an overwrought rococo frame. For these and probably for many other reasons, the best translations of Miłosz are the poet's own, in free verse. But even these, quite wonderful, works never quite convey what the original does.

It would be futile to deny that much of what a poem conveys can in fact be communicated in a translation. Metaphors can be tricky, and symbols are not always universal, though that is less a matter of language than of culture. But where paraphrase is possible, so is a translation that imparts a basic meaning. It was never my intention to contest this. It is just that poetry, of all genres, makes the most of the manner in which a particular content is presented – not just with this particular focus or that surprising comparison, but with that particular hesitancy and this cadence and those emphatic rhythms. Even without a rhyme scheme, every good poem has a rhythm, a kind of pulsebeat, a natural cadence. Sometimes we only recognize this in a bad reading, where the speaker has failed to employ that cadence. And while it is possible to convey many of the ideas of the original poem, it is not possible to replicate or convey its rhythms or its music in any complete way.

When Miłosz chooses to employ a rhyme scheme, the overall effect in Polish is what I'm tempted to consider faintly Shakespearean. It is difficult to describe just how much color and richness a poem's taking this form can lend to the overall effect when compared to a translation in free verse. The best analogy I can think of is a paraphrase of some moving Shakespearean speech that retains meaning but eschews formal similarities of any kind. Imagine the "Tomorrow" speech from Macbeth rendered with as much fidelity as possible to the significance of the words and no attempt whatsoever to preserve form. Worse yet, compare the Crispin's Day speech of *Henry V* to the deathless prose of *SparkNotes*:

King Henry says that they should be happy that there are so few of them present, for each can earn a greater share of honor. Henry goes on to say that he does not want to fight alongside any man who does not wish to fight with the English. He tells the soldiers that anyone who wants to leave can and will be given some money to head for home. But anyone who stays to fight will have something to boast about for the rest of his life and in the future will remember with pride the battle on this day. He adds that every commoner who fights today with the king will become his brother, and all the Englishmen who have stayed at home will regret that they were not in France to gain honor upon this famous day of battle¹.

Even converted into the first person, this conveys nothing of martial emotions that Kenneth Branagh can arouse in the most pacific breast. My use of this example is simply intended to demonstrate that it *matters*, crucially, how a particular content is presented. To be fair, the paraphrase in the example eliminates figurative language in favor of literal interpretations and converts poetry to prose, first person to third person. However, it is very clear that some nightmarish free verse version of the SparkNotes would be equally offputting. Let us indulge in a further imaginative exercise using the SparkNotes paraphrase as a template, but making things a little more poetic in a paraphrase of the very beginning of the speech:

You should be happy that so few of you remain,
For each can now a greater share of honor earn.

¹ SparkNotes. *Henry V*. Summary: Act IV, scene iii. <http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/henryv/section9.rhtml> [Retrieved June 19, 2013].

All who want to leave may now depart,
And will be given money for the trip.
But anyone who stays to fight will have a ground to boast.

Clearly things haven't been improved at all. And things can only be rendered more horrific by the imposition of an alien rhyme scheme:

You should be glad that very few of you remain,
For each can now a greater share of honor gain.
So anyone who wants to flee should now depart

But anyone who stays to fight with us, who has the heart
For war, will...

I should stop before anyone is overwhelmed by horror. It is clear that the imposition of inappropriate rhyme schemes (clumsy hexameter couplets with mistakes, in the case above) can have perfectly awful effects. Just remember the original for a moment:

...he which hath no stomach to this fight,
Let him depart; his passport shall be made,
And crowns for convoy put into his purse;
We would not die in that man's company
That fears his fellowship to die with us.

I am afraid that I've been having some fun at the expense of the translators I like least. But the examples I have been inventing above are mild compared to some of the atrocities to which spectacular poetry has been subjected in translation, even in the case of those translations that manage to retain the metaphors and symbols and images of the original. No translation of the poetry of Czesław Miłosz that I've read comes close to conveying the richness of the original.

Stanley Cavell writes of the impact of Shakespeare on the audience, pointing out that people often forget the critically significant point that Shakespeare wrote *poetry*. Attending to poetry, Cavell contends, is like attending to tonal music. Music calls forth different modes of attention from us, different ways of listening, different expectations². Listening to music would, I suspect, give rise to different expectancies, just as the rhythm and meter and cadence of poetry would. These aren't the kinds of expectancies we experience in conjunction with prose – those are usually formed on the basis of an estimation of probabilities or necessary connections. Music and meter, instead, lead us to detect patterns the instantiation of which we come to expect, they present us with variations upon which we attempt to impose order in certain ways. Indeed, some go even further and claim that poetry has an even greater effect on those who recite it. While I have no idea if this can be true, actors have actually claimed that Shakespeare's poetry was designed to *make* the actor feel the appropriate emotion, that this was just the effect that making those

² S. Cavell, "The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of *King Lear*", in: *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1969, pp. 267-353, 321-322.

specific utterances had on the lungs, on the heart, on the senses. Whether or not this is possible, it at least seems clear that poetry can have an entire range of effects that bypasses the sense of its words, or at minimum does not depend exclusively upon them. These effects can, of course, lend power or richness, melancholy or passion to the sense of the poem in subtle or overt ways. What these effects are *not*, is expendable.

For my central example of difficulties in translation, I will respectfully depart from the work of Czesław Miłosz and reach further back in the past to one of my favorite poems: *Bajdary* by Adam Mickiewicz. This is one of his Crimean sonnets, written while he was in exile, filled with a passionate longing for home and for oblivion – vivid, evocative, and dramatic. I have loved this poem since I was eighteen. The matter of the poem is this: a sleepless rider spurs his horse into the sea. Here, as Sergei Sovietov indicates, the “dynamic of internal emotion is rendered by means of a consistent, dynamic description of the external activity of man and nature”³. Given the nationality of the writer and the date the analysis was undertaken, it is perhaps unsurprising it neglects to mention that one of the poem’s overriding themes is about the desperation of the exile. I will first attempt a more or less literal translation that can offer no more than a paraphrase, to make the matter of the poem clear, conceding immediately that it cannot hope to achieve any of the effects of the original. I will then criticize the most commonly found translation on the internet, one which attempts to impose a rhyme scheme in English. Finally I will conclude that the most that can be hoped for in translation is a reasonable approximation – one which, in this case and in my opinion, has yet to be achieved. We would be better off, perhaps, if more translators were poets in their own right. In any case, here is a translation of *Bajdary*, in the course of which undertaking I was principally preoccupied with the preservation of meaning at the expense of form:

I whip my horse into the wind;
Forests, valleys, promontories, in succession, then a jumble,
Stream past my feet, die like the receding tide;
I crave intoxication, oblivion in this maelstrom of images.

And when my lathered horse heeds no command,
And the world’s color’s lost beneath a pall of darkness,
Then, as in a mirror shattered, so in my parched eyes
Phantom forests, valleys, promontories dream themselves.

The earth sleeps; for me there is no sleep. I leap into the ocean’s womb.
A great black swell surges, roaring, to the shore,
I incline my head toward him, stretch out my arms,
The wave bursts overhead, chaos surrounds me;
I wait until thought, a vessel spun by eddies,
Is cast adrift and momentarily sinks into forgetfulness.

As indicated in the above-referenced analysis, the internal state of the speaker is reflected in the description of external activity. The rider loses control of his

³ S. Sovietov, “Mickiewicz in Russia”, in: *Adam Mickiewicz 1798-1855: In Commemoration of the Centenary of His Death*, UNESCO, Zürich 1955, pp. 61-88, 76.

horse just as the subject loses control of his train of thought and cannot impose his will upon it. The quality of the thought is exhausted, frantic, ungovernable. Some analysts stress the conflict between man and nature as one that is likewise echoed in the rider's internal turbulence. On another level, clearly, the chaos of speed, the ever-changing flicker and shift of images, the raging elements all literally drown out intolerable recollections. The subject's purpose in the ride is to achieve oblivion, to daze himself with sensory and external distractions in order to escape internal turmoil. The contrast between the sleeping earth and the sleepless rider underscores his alienation and exile, his attempt to forget what he has lost. The return to the womb of the sea signals a metaphorical dream of rebirth and perhaps the longing for return to one's birthplace, or lost homeland.

And here is the original poem, far more than the sum of such observations, glittering and bewitching by turns. With apologies to any Polish speakers in the audience, I elect to read this only to provide those unfamiliar with the language some idea of the rhythm and cadence of the original:

Bajdary

Wypuszczam na wiatr konia i nie szczędzę razów;
Lasy doliny, głązy, w kolei, w natłoku
U nóg mych płyną, giną jak fale potoku;
Chcę odurzyć się, upić tym wirem obrazów.

A gdy spieniony rumak nie słucha rozkazów,
Gdy świat kolory traci pod całunem mroku,
Jak w rozbitym zwierciadle, tak w mym spiekłym oku
Snują się mary lasów i dolin, i głązów.

Ziemia śpi, mnie snu nie ma; skaczę w morskie łona,
Czarny, wydęty bałwan z hukiem na brzeg dąży,
Schylałam ku niemu czoło, wyciągam ramiona,

Pęka nad głową fala, chaos mię okraży;
Czekam, aż myśl, jak łódka wirami kręcona,
Zbłąka się i na chwilę w niepamięć pograży.

In 1867, Victor Hugo wrote that "to speak of Mickiewicz is to speak of beauty, justice and truth; of righteousness, of which he was the soldier, of duty, of which he was the hero, of freedom, of which he was the apostle and of liberation, of which he is the precursor"⁴. Certainly it seems that ideas like liberation often have a felt presence in Mickiewicz's work.

That presence is not felt at all, of course, in some translations:

Bajdary

I whip my horse into the wind and see
Woods, valleys, rocks, tumbling and tussling, a gleam,

⁴ Victor Hugo, Letter addressed to Władysław Mickiewicz, 17 May, 1867.

Flow on and disappear like the waves of a stream:
I want to be dazed by this whirlpool of scenery.

And when my foaming horse will not obey,
When the world grows colorless caught in a dark beam,
Woods, valleys and rocks pass in a bad dream
Across the broken mirror of my parched eye.

Earth sleeps, not me. I jump in the sea's womb.
The big black wave roars as it rushes ashore.
I bend my head, stretch out like a bridegroom

Toward the wave breaking. Surrounded by its roar
I wait till whirlpools drive my thoughts to doom,
A boat capsized and drowned: oblivion's core⁵.

This translation appears, at least, to make *Bajdary* a poem about suicide. And while there are elements of that in evidence, the thrust of the original work is clearly a lot different. Suicide is a permanent solution, rather than the “momentary” one that the original stipulates. Forgetfulness is seen in the original as a *respîte* rather than something involving thoughts driven to doom. Especially dreadful things happen when the translator is scrambling to impose a rhyme scheme on his English version. This single attempt is probably the worst culprit in distancing the translation from the sense of the original. The translator tries to replicate the ABBA ABBA CDC DCD rhyme scheme without too much concern – indeed, without any – for meter or syllabics or any such regularities. The rhymes are imposed, however, at the expense of the meaning of the original poem. The difficulties emerge in the second stanza. A “dark beam”, catastrophically reminiscent of grade B science fiction, is imported to replace the shroud or pall of dusk simply in order to rhyme with “dream” in the next line. Even more outrageous is the bridegroom who miraculously appears in stanza three to rhyme with “womb”. The meter here is awkward for the rhyme scheme -- to have that rhyme work, the stress would have to be peculiarly placed on the last syllable: brideGROOM. But the problem here is mainly one of sense. Nowhere in the original is a bridegroom mentioned. It is possible, I concede, that the reference to leaping into the womb of the sea emboldened the translator to regard it as a prototypical heterosexual masculine achievement legitimately symbolized by the figure of a bridegroom set to perform his assigned task. Since the wave toward which the rider bows his head and holds out his arms is described as “he” in the original, however, the importation of sexuality into the equation seems muddling at best. Further, “bafwan” can be translated as “idol” or as “fool”, and not just as “wave”. These multiple meanings are of course not available to the English translator, another disadvantage under which translators labor. There might be some interpretive prospects to be explored here: the wave is a force beyond the rider's control that throws him into chaos. To characterize that force as a false idol or an idiot is politically

⁵ This is a translation more commonly found on the internet than any others, at least as of July 2012; <http://www.faculty.virginia.edu/introtopolish/poezja/mickiewicz/bajdary.htm#> [Retrieved June 19, 2013].

suggestive. Alternatively, to characterize it as a kind of pagan, elemental force dovetails with the theme of the rider being overwhelmed by nature.

More to the point, that which dwells in a womb does not, after all, think or reflect, and these are the very experiences the rider of the poem seeks to escape. It is more plausible, and certainly more consistent with the original, to entertain associations with maternity rather than sexuality regarding the metaphor of the womb of the sea. We might also consider further the possibility of some metaphor about returning to one's source or the arena of one's birth, whether this is tied simply to the goal of forgetfulness or to the idea of a longing to return to one's place of birth. This would be consistent with the original poem. References to bridegrooms are not.

The difficulties with this apparently popular translation arise, I think, from the attempted imposition of a sequence of rhymes fundamentally unsuited to the material, in particular because no attention is paid to meter and syllabics. So, first, the poetic form is not at all preserved since such a form involves more than a simple sequence of rhymes. The result is bad poetry, plain and simple. It doesn't scan – the proper rhythm and cadence simply aren't there. Second, the effort to obtain rhymes proceeds at the expense of meaning, importing new and sense-altering material into the poem.

I do not think that every attempt to construct a form similar to that of the original poem must of necessity fail. I think it possible that a very fine poet could issue a translation both lyrical and reflective of the meaning of the original work. I just think that this would be a new poem (bearing a heavy burden of gratitude), rather than a version of the old. The prospects seem most promising for originals in free verse, though (as previously indicated) there will still be a natural cadence that will not be replicated in a translation. Translations, even those which preserve as much meaning as possible, will probably suffer at least a little on the formal front, just because fidelity and exactitude can so restrict one's formal options. None of this means that translations should not be attempted. Clearly they should. It should just be understood and accepted that they are not versions or iterations of the original poem.

Alicja Kuczyńska

The Paths of Early Pluralism. Polish Aestheticians Between Eras

Abstract

Early artistic and aesthetic pluralism is not an accidental phenomenon in Polish aesthetic theories. This article shows its nineteenth and twentieth century origins and various theoretical considerations, and brings to the foreground the philosophical motifs entangled in the historical events of Poland. Cited documentary material focuses on two selected topics. They are: the philosophized version of history, in particular the multicultural history of aesthetics (W. Tatarkiewicz) and the extended categorization of the active site of subjectivity (R. Ingarden).

"Humans need art. Differently but no less than they need to still hunger or find shelter"¹.

Actuation as a Value

Reflections on one's own cultural tradition are perforce hampered by many limitations, some of which will need to be clarified for this rather selective essay to be readable. I have decided to refrain from rigid chronology in favour of an arbitrary review of those Polish aesthetic theories which emerged and functioned not so much *in* the 1920s or the years following World War Two, but in the period *between* these two intellectually and socially so very different realities. Those years were indeed somewhat similar to the 1920s, however I chose to focus not on this era's mature phase but its more dynamic moments. On transience and change, that which came to life and that which died. In other words – on the fluid process which led it from its beginnings to its close.

As Polish aesthetics in the two decades between the first and second world wars have been subject to rather broad study, I see the need to establish certain criteria by which to select issues for the present debate. Consequently, I assume that the sequential, spatial-temporal area in which essentially all historical experience is born and located extends between the significance of the bygone

¹ W. Tatarkiewicz, *Parerga*, PWN, Warsaw 1978, p. 92.

(that which has irrevocably become a part of the past) and its contemporary presence.

This theoretical area enables a good view of what I consider to be the basic issues pursued by Polish aestheticians at the time – namely their share in efforts to describe the broadly-understood subject (entity) and object categories and their participation in an implicit philosophical/aesthetical debate around definitions of existential identity. Here, two matters appear to be most in the foreground: *first*, building individual identity by defining relations to history as an indisputable system of values, and *secondly* seeking values in the intensive co-creation of theoretical substantiations for subjectivity, and through this imbuing essence into one's own individual existence. The first problem guided aesthetics scholars towards the values of history (history of aesthetics) while the second entailed interest in existence's dynamic form and focused on sophisticated descriptions of the intensifying processes leading to the individual's subjectivisation.

Both categories – history and subject/entity – found different and extensive expression in the Polish aesthetics of the discussed period. They were dealt with by many eminent authors but the material is so extensive that for practical purposes I will treat it selectively here. The key I have chosen for this aim should enable a general picture of the motivations underlying the evolution of aesthetics in the Poland of the day. Both the historical and subjective category carried a problem located beyond aesthetics in the strict sense. A problem which did not directly concern art and the quality, typology and classification of aesthetic experience [which, of course, most aesthetics scholars concentrated on], but the much more essential dilemma of whether the construction of entity theory should be subordinated or in opposition to history and its course. The second option entailed the rejection or disregard of these claims as a supreme value and, in their stead, the ennoblement and introduction of the subject concept in an extra-historical understanding beyond and above time, and possibly free of non-aesthetic dependencies.

In keeping with the above interpretation the first option is expressed by the recognition of the primacy of history of aesthetics, as exemplified by Władysław Tatarkiewicz. Representative for the second option is the aesthetic theory developed by Roman Ingarden.

The Aporias of Heritage

The imperative to actuate the past is usually associated with popularisation, i. e. disseminating and reminding. In the research sphere, however, the quest for an inter-generational *iunctim* finds expression in such activity as the re-interpretation, by means of successive readings, of materials (not infrequently freshly-discovered manuscripts) and reference to diverse direct and indirect sources.

When we speak about masters in a given field, we usually do not refer to the present but the past. In fact it could well be that the image of a charismatic

master is slowly but steadily becoming a primarily historical association. However this may be, it must be said that the position of mastery and the master always was and still is inseverably tied not only to scholarly attainment but, first and foremost, to ethos pursued in line with the principle that, "To teach thoroughly is to touch that which is most vital in a human being"². The master's pursuit of this credo was usually visible in the conduct of his students and followers, who carried on his work or sought guidance from it in their own.

Such bonds are complex by nature. In our contemporary times imitation of, or other forms of identification with the views of even the most valued master are no longer a primary goal. Prevalent for our era is rather that "the student (...) feels compelled to surpass the master, liberate himself from him, in order to become himself"³. Does this find confirmation in contemporary aesthetics? Is it able to define itself against its beginnings and past masters (certain of whose attainments it is our intent to outline here)? In light of the serious changes of the subject of aesthetics as well as its scope (*aisthesis*), and in the context of differences in approach to the art work and art itself and the emergence of new art and expression forms, the question that arises is whether reference to the past aims at a narrowly cognitive, informative and at times perhaps strategic, or a purely retrospective effect? And another, more serious question: did the theories and concepts developed by the below-discussed aestheticians anticipate or inspire modern-day Polish aesthetics?

It is evident that attempts at even a precursory answer to these questions must be undertaken primarily in discourse. In order to avoid the reminiscential/ anniversary convention which naturally suggests itself here, I suggest we order our rather broad material in the spirit of Władysław Tatarkiewicz's favourite road metaphor⁴. "Road" is, of course, by nature a stylistically heterogeneous figure with abundant variations – paths, turns sidings, ducts, and a multitude of other, sometimes hardly predictable, expanses. The essence and value of the road is primarily viewed through the ends it serves and the direction it takes. In effect creative work and creative influence, the overstepping of set boundaries and the resulting changes in aesthetic awareness produce values which become new perception objects – and thereby inspire new ways in which these objects are experienced.

On the Borderline. Dynamic Entity

Reflections about the beginnings of contemporary Polish aesthetics must make room for the fact that the formation period of this discipline in the 1920s and 30s was a time when Poland was in the course of regaining its long-nonexistent statehood. This was an exceptional period in which numerous philosophical and aesthetic theories were born, flourished and died. The country's situation and

² G. Steiner, *Nauki mistrzów*, transl. by J. Łoziński, Zysk i S-ka, Poznań 2007, p. 25.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

⁴ W. Tatarkiewicz, "Zapiski do autobiografii", in: Teresa i Władysław Tatarkiewiczowie, *Wspomnienia*, PIW, Warsaw 1979, p. 170.

specific history came together to create an important context, which engaged the activity and efforts of both artists and scholars. Reference to the roots and beginning stages of a studied process, especially unavoidable in investigations of situations like the above-mentioned, inevitably carries some danger of arbitrariness in the choice of discussed phenomena, facts and events. A researcher's already-possessed knowledge, from the outset imbued by his subjective stance towards the issue at hand, may acquire a new sense in a new context. With this in mind, one can well understand the caution professed by Roman Ingarden when he wrote, "I will know what I am now only when the present 'now' will belong to the past"⁵. For the sake of orderliness I will recount some well-known⁶ facts which led to the formation of the specific entity that is our culture – an entity open to multitude, diversity, variability of expression and plurality of form.

The period of our interest is a time when Poland was regaining independence after the memorable year 1918. Whatever can be said about the country's position at the time, it undeniably lay between East and West, on a crossroads between European and non-European thought. Like its neighbours, Poland was an in-between country, which is why our art and aesthetics carry Latin and Mediterranean traits (e.g. our fascination with the Italian Renaissance under the Vasa dynasty or our later leanings towards French art), Byzantine influences visible in our penchant for Orthodox iconography, Ukrainian and Lithuanian traces, and that which is so well described in the works of Isaac Singer. Being "in between", an eternal borderland was the source of deep and multi-layered intellectual and emotional tension and a periodically stronger or weaker fascination – and fear – of outside influence.

Interpretations of the above-described situation have their unintended but logically substantiated theoretical consequences. History, especially the long years without statehood, led to a predominance of defensive attitudes – which, however, were not destructive to culture. To the contrary, they inspired a broad array of specific defences against its annihilation. Tension and cultural restlessness gave rise to new forms of implicit communication, which were enabled by art and knowledge about art. Chronologically, therefore, the here-discussed material relates to the formulations of aestheticians who began their work before 1939. During the Nazi occupation of 1939-45 these scholars, unmindful of the tragic conditions of the day, continued their earlier studies in the underground and revealed them after the war when Polish universities reopened.

I am aware that the here-adopted criterion for the selection of authors and their works is not exhaustive. First and foremost, it programmatically omits many aestheticians from a generation which today not only boasts considerable theoretical achievement, but is also responsible for the introduction to aesthetic studies of totally new themes from happenings, TV, film and dance to a new kind of cultural participation.

Nonetheless, the selection that has been made will allow sufficient insight into the specifics and importance – beyond narrowly-understood aesthetics – of

⁵ R. Ingarden, *Książeczka o człowieku*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Cracow 1972, p. 55.

⁶ I wrote about the multithreaded character of culture in the introduction to a selection of Tatarkiewicz writings, *Wybór pism*, Universitas, Cracow 2004.

earlier investigations into art, its reception and cognitive functions. We owe the circumstance that World War II failed to completely destroy Polish aesthetics to those aestheticians who managed to survive it – notably Roman Ingarden, Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Henryk Elzenberg, Stanisław Ossowski, Leon Chwistek and Mieczysław Wallis. It was they who resumed studies in philosophy and aesthetics immediately after the war ended. As equally important I consider the fact that in some areas their aesthetic concepts anticipated later solutions of controversial aesthetic issues and determined the field's further development both in- and outside Poland (Ingarden).

The rebirth of academic life soon brought the resumption of the 1898-founded periodical *Philosophical Review* ("Przegląd Filozoficzny"). The editor's note to the 1949 volume read: "The forty-four to-date *Philosophical Review* volumes contain numerous essays in aesthetics. The currently broad representation of scholars in this field has inspired us to bring out a special edition devoted to aesthetics"⁷. This volume, titled *Contemporary Aesthetics*, featured material by Polish authors like R. Ingarden, W. Tatarkiewicz, K. Zwolińska or S. Skwarczyńska, as well as foreigners like H. D. Aiken. The editors also sought out and published posthumous material by young-generation aestheticians, in the mentioned volume this was an essay by Jan Gralewski⁸, one of the many Tatarkiewicz students who perished in the war.

Simultaneity or Source Reference?

Of paramount importance for the development of aesthetics in Poland were foreign aesthetic studies and the already-constituted models of approaching art. These influences, upheld by personal ties between scholars at international conferences and congresses, were multidirectional both in the theoretical sphere (publications) and on the personal plane (teaching, students and followers). Polish aestheticians thus crossed the threshold to 20th century European aesthetics, represented among others by Max Dessoir, Emil Utitz, Etienne Dufrenne, Jacques Maritain, Luigi Pareyson – and especially Edmund Husserl⁹, whom the young Ingarden considered his Master, formulating much of his argumentation and theses about phenomenological aesthetics in his correspondence with the German scholar. Important for the establishment of international ties by Polish aestheticians was their participation in international congresses¹⁰. The 1937 2nd International Aesthetics Congress saw presentations by young Polish scholars: Henryk Elzenberg submitted a paper entitled, *La coloration affective de l'objet esthétique et le problème qu'elle suscite*; Roman Ingarden – *Das ästhetische Erlebnis*, published in II- ème Congres International d'Esthétique et des Sciences de l'art, vol. I, Paris; Władysław Tatarkiewicz published his essay *Ce que*

⁷ *Przegląd Filozoficzny*, vol. XLV, book 1-2, Warsaw-Cracow 1949.

⁸ Jan Gralewski died in 1943 in an air disaster over Gibraltar.

⁹ "Fenomenologia Romana Ingardena", *Studia Filozoficzne*, special edition, IFiS PAN, Warsaw 1972, pp. 63, 64.

¹⁰ There exist no data on the participation of Polish aestheticians in the 1913 First International Congress of Aestheticians in Berlin.

nous savons et ce que nous ignorons des valeurs in *Actualités Scientifiques et Industrielles* (no. 539, Paris, 1937). This way Poland made acquaintance with and creatively incorporated Europe's aesthetic views – however without passive imitation of existing theories. Noteworthy here is that this incorporation mainly focused on aesthetics relating to art and its role, this was what Polish aesthetics of the day based upon and its main interest. Here Polish aestheticians moved together with the predominant European trends of the day, which strove to define aesthetics and its tasks as knowledge and stressed the intuitive and intellectual need for insight into the *core of things*. Somewhat less prominent in Poland were connections between aesthetic theory and emerging new art. In this respect a somewhat separate group were philosophising artists like Leon Chwistek and Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, who supplemented their unique artistic work with related philosophical studies.

It would appear worthwhile to seek an answer to the question why there were no bonds between the aesthetics and art of that era. Especially as the two inter-war decades were a period marked by a flourishing interest in art and artistic culture with novatory trends appearing in literature, drama, and even film art. Nonetheless, the avant-garde work of constructivists like sculptor Katarzyna Kobro or painter Władysław Strzemiński found theoretical response chiefly in the artistic press and were not a subject of great interest for philosophical aesthetics. Kobro's progressive experiments degraded the role of the solid in sculpture and annihilated the traditional linear approach to its boundaries. The basic novelty in Kobro's work was expressed by her belief that "the solid is a lie in the face of the essence of sculpture". This was because the solid "closed the sculpture in and separated it from space, existed for itself and treated exterior space as something quite different from interior space"¹¹. This traditional, heretofore meticulously observed boundary was now brought down and became an open border which in a sense connected the sculpture to space. Władysław Strzemiński's Unism theory constituted a re-interpretation of the concept of the whole. Other similarly avant-garde artistic groups included the Formists and the Colourists, most notable among whom were the Kapists¹².

Most noteworthy amidst the multitude of issues undertaken by the beginning aestheticians of the day was, I believe, the category of *aesthetic and artistic pluralism*, which became an alternative to the paradigm of history understood as tradition-based, compact, near-total unity. Here it must be said that in aesthetics this plurality-totality antinomy underwent some transformation, not only losing its sharpness, but acquiring properties which bound both opposing components together. Alongside the theoretical motivation mentioned at the outset, its mention in this rather narrow account of inter-war Polish aesthetics is dictated by the fact that the then quite young Polish state was in a very

¹¹ K. Kobro, "Ankieta Europy", in: *Europa*, no. 2, 1929, quoted after in: *Katarzyna Kobro 1898-1951: w setną rocznicę urodzin, 21 października 1898 – 17 stycznia 1951*, red. E. Fuchs et al., Łódź Art Museum, Łódź 1998, p. 156.

¹² Among them were members of the Kapists (Tytus Czyżewski, Zbigniew Pronaszko) and other Colourist groups (Hanna Rudzka-Cybisowa, Piotr Potworowski, Jan Cybis, Maria Jarema, Tadeusz Kantor, Erna Rosenstein).

specific cultural situation as it was building an identity of its own after years of enslavement.

History of Aesthetics as a Prologue to Pluralism

At the time Poland's young-generation aestheticians had two living masters of world renown – Roman Ingarden and Władysław Tatarkiewicz. Both have enriched aesthetics with fundamental content, both have followers in the academic world and both have influenced several generations by their work. Their aesthetic concepts vary considerably, the main difference lying in the research method (terminology, categories, systemic approach) they use. Interestingly however, despite their fundamental theoretical differences Ingarden's phenomenological and Tatarkiewicz's historical aesthetics have something in common – both are best-comprehensible in a broader philosophical context.

Unlike Roman Ingarden, Władysław Tatarkiewicz in his extensive writings deliberately avoided the temptation to create or even initially outline a comprehensive philosophical system. He analysed theories relating to aesthetic experience, the truth of artistic perfection, *mimesis*, and many others, but founded his own vision of the world and essence on history. Without delving deeper into the question of *aesthetic historicism*¹³ I will only say that Tatarkiewicz strove to reduce his role to that of an "ordering observer", who "had no other ambition but to explain and order thoughts, and shape a proper vision of the world".

Behind this modesty, however, lay a clear-cut research method and a historicism-based multivalence concept. Tatarkiewicz believed that it was history with its multiple threads that gave true insight into the simultaneous plurality and unity of the surrounding world. His accentuation of the multithreaded character of the formation and development of aesthetic concepts not only considerably extended the field but enriched knowledge about the connections between aesthetics and other forms of awareness.

The question Tatarkiewicz asked himself when he underscored the importance of historical research – and which is also useful for our present reflections – was: why, in my aesthetic studies, did I devote most attention to the history of aesthetics? Can we be satisfied by the answer he himself offered – "I wanted to explain the possibilities of this world to myself basing on history"?¹⁴

I believe that in his historical writings Tatarkiewicz had more in mind than just documenting facts: knowledge about them, their description and interpretation – as well as their sheer multitude – confirmed the multiplicity and multi-hued diversity, and simultaneously the unity and continuity, of art and culture. Tatarkiewicz regarded historical fact as the source of contemporary man's Decalogue, the mission allotted to artistic endeavour and the exceptional position of the artist. Alongside the above-described motivation behind

¹³ I have approached this subject several times in my writings but recall it here in outline to retain the logic of Tatarkiewicz's reasoning.

¹⁴ W. Tatarkiewicz, "Zapiski do autobiografii", p. 157.

Tatarkiewicz's focus on history lay his desire to preserve and present continuity and constancy as values consistently opposed to changeability and transition.

Subjectivity. Beyond or Beside History?

It is difficult to disagree with Mircea Eliade when he writes that "the more aroused consciousness is, the more it transgresses its own historicity"¹⁵. Knowledge about the fate of aesthetic objects indeed extends the limits of awareness and imagination – and thereby deepens the receiver's understanding of the flow of time – but provides no intellectual instruments to strengthen his individual subjectivity.

In his philosophical aesthetics Ingarden focused on this "transgression of history" into the extra-temporal by exposing the role of art, and, consequently, aesthetics in the consolidation of subjective identity. His formulation of the so-called "aesthetic situation" as the subject of aesthetics means he understood aesthetics as a platform on which the artist (and receiver) *associated* with the work of art. The receiver's intensive activity is a crucial condition for the creation of the aesthetic object, which puts the work of art (the object) in existential dependence from the subject (the receiver). The basic ontological distinction embraces the existential fundament of the work of art, which contains indeterminate areas. Purely intentional objects are characterised by dynamism and fluctuation, the receiver's *association* with the work of art helps fill out the indeterminate areas and create the aesthetic object.

According to Ingarden "the processes leading to the concretisation and constitution of a valuable aesthetic object may take a variety of courses (...). Both processes are inseparable and neither can be examined in total isolation from the other. This is the essential postulate of aesthetics, which has realised that the basic thing it should start its investigations from is showing man's encounter with a certain external object which is different, and at the moment of encounter still independent, from him"¹⁶. As Ingarden insists, "this is not merely a lifeless contact but an animated encounter full of activity and tension." It leads to the filling out of indeterminate areas and the constitution of a valuable aesthetic object. The potential reception possibilities – or diversity of ways in which the work of art can be co-created – contained in this formulation legitimises *multiplicity* and *diversity* as aesthetic/philosophical values.

The specific intentional existence category has far-reaching implications in Ingarden's philosophical aesthetics and embraces not just the individual but the human community at large. Ingarden emphasised the special existential status of culture products in the process of co-creating a work of art. Humans live on the border between two worlds: natural and cultural. Ingarden notes that, "human nature consists in a ceaseless striving to overstep the boundaries set by the animality contained within the human being, and rise above it by means of humanity

¹⁵ R. Ingarden, *Książeczka o człowieku*, p. 34.

¹⁶ *Idem*, "Studia z estetyki", in: *idem*, *Dzieła filozoficzne*, PWN, Warsaw 1970, vol. III, pp. 18-41.

and man's role as a creator of values"¹⁷. Cultural products satisfy human spiritual needs, they express a longing for absolute (aesthetic and moral) values and the contemplation of metaphysical qualities. In his description of intentional existence Ingarden refers to more than the work of art when he writes, "the existence of this world decides about our existence as a separate nation"¹⁸.

At this point Ingarden reflections meet with Tatarkiewicz's historically-grounded apotheosis of art and its role¹⁹. This "encounter" confirms the earlier hypothesis about the specific extra-aesthetic position of art in the society of the here-discussed era: the artistic acquired an ontological status and the relation to art works became an integral part of individual existence. Thanks to the phenomenological description of experiencing works of art the "existence" and "to exist" categories, for years founded upon values identified with historical diversity, opened to the diversity of current cognition acts and their essence-generating establishments, whose benchmark were the *multiplicity* category and its partner, the category of *unity*.

These two, frequently intertwining paths – historical and subjective – inspired interest in pluralistic aesthetics, although each in its own way.

Aesthetic Pluralism vs. Absolutism

Most noteworthy in the here-outlined theories and study trends is, in my opinion, their well-perceived multiculturalism. The rather unique social context in which this multiculturalism functioned made it radiate quite strongly. The main aim of philosophical aesthetics in the discussed era was to create a general overview of the multitude of existing values and establish rules by which they could coexist. An early expression of this was pluralism, which based on the view that culture was a multithreaded and multivalent construct. Pluralism in its general sense appeared in several versions in this period's philosophy and social thought. For Tatarkiewicz it involved recognition of, "the diversity of the manifestations of beauty, art, aesthetic attitudes"²⁰.

The pointedness of this statement becomes clearer when set against statements by other aestheticians, notably artists like the painter, logician and philosopher Leon Chwistek, who in 1921 wrote, "dogmatic faith in a one and only reality leads to paradox and cannot be accepted by all people"²¹. The philosophical theory of multiple realities and the postulate to create multiple individual systems gave very effective support to the work of avant-garde artists.

Tatarkiewicz's programmatically history-based pluralism exemplifies a more general methodology. In 1913 Tatarkiewicz published an essay titled *Development in Art*²² and he himself gave a lecture on *Pluralism in Aesthetics*, in which he saw "a common base, a common thought" in the conviction about "the

¹⁷ R. Ingarden, *Książeczka o człowieku*, p. 34, footnote 2.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ W. Tatarkiewicz, *Parerga*, p. 92.

²⁰ *Idem*, *Droga przez estetykę*, PWN, Warsaw 1975, p. 6.

²¹ L. Chwistek, *Zagadnienia kultury duchowej w Polsce*, Gebethner i Wolff, Warsaw 1933.

²² W. Tatarkiewicz, "Rozwój w sztuce", in: *Świat i człowiek*, Al. Heflich & St. Michalski Pub., Warsaw 1913, book IV.

diversity of manifestations; of beauty, art, aesthetic attitude, not to mention the diversity of concepts and views about beauty, art and ethics over various eras, in the works of various writers, or even one and the same writer"²³. This conviction Tatarkiewicz called aesthetic pluralism.

Tatarkiewicz returned to the aesthetic pluralism theory more than once. In it he emphasised that because aesthetics had gone through a variety of embodiments over history, its own history must be polymorphous. He also offered a broad explanation of the "pluralistic character" of aesthetics-related phenomena. Tatarkiewicz's entire intellectual effort to investigate the various "possibilities of thought and creativity" was a quest for the truth and its essence, also in the views expressed by other cultures. The historic character and artistic multiformity of cultural produce is why truth in culture is related to time, place and sphere. Tatarkiewicz's culture theory has no room for one ultimate and absolute truth. The search for axiological order should not be understood as defining the objective and absolute value of truth, or categories like beauty. What it is is a presentation of aesthetic pluralism, i. e. the ambiguity of aesthetic concepts and multitude of aesthetic theories. However, although he emphasised pluralism, Tatarkiewicz in his *The Concept of a Value* opposed both the subjectivistic and relativistic theory of value. These are the basic threads of this leading pluralism representative's concept; there are, however, others, which he scrutinises with emphasis on their various horizontal and vertical relations (e.g. in *A History of Six Ideas. An Essay in Aesthetics*).

Emphasis on multifariousness in the evolution of aesthetic concepts not only broadens the field but also deepens and enriches knowledge about the ties of aesthetics to other forms of awareness.

Tatarkiewicz offers a specific summary of the plurality question in his aesthetic views in his so-called alternative definition of art and the work of art. As he himself admitted, this definition evolved from his studies of contemporary-day art concepts and interpretations of the old conflict between sensualists and spiritualists. Here, Tatarkiewicz concluded that definitions of the work of art could not be reduced to any one of its functions²⁴.

"However we may define art – whether by reference to its intent, its relation to reality, its influence or its values – we will always end up with an "either-or" alternative"²⁵.

However, Tatarkiewicz's alternative art definition seems to have been inspired by more than historical studies. It may be assumed that an essential inspiration were the avant-garde artistic movements emerging in Poland at the time, which definitely did not correspond with traditional aesthetic criteria. Aestheticians found themselves confronted with the need to define themselves towards them which was a very difficult task. Here artistic praxis made theoreticians aware of the complexity of the theoretical situation. The alternative definition of art offered a compromise and was simultaneously derived from aesthetic pluralism. As Tatarkiewicz wrote, the alternative art definition leads to the conclusion that

²³ W. Tatarkiewicz, *Droga przez estetykę*, p. 6.

²⁴ W. Tatarkiewicz, *Dzieje sześciu pojęć*, PWN, Warsaw 1975, pp. 50/53.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 51.

art, "is the reproduction of things or the construction of forms, or the expression of experiences, however only the kind of reproduction, construction or expression which is able to enchant, move or shock"²⁶. The pluralism-related theory of value and reception was not homogeneous. Tatarkiewicz recognised the validity of its various versions and considered them all equal. He returned to pluralism several times in various writings and congress addresses, especially in the essay *The Truth About Art*, where he tied pluralism to moderation.

Stanisław Ossowski²⁷ outlined his somewhat different pluralism concept in 1928, somewhat later than Tatarkiewicz (1913). Ossowski's pluralism theory was largely sociologically inspired, he assumed the existence of different kinds of values and related experiences. In his main work, *On the Foundations of Aesthetics*, Ossowski accepts aesthetic pluralism *expressis verbis*, calling it "the only possible position to maintain".

Mieczysław Wallis distinguished between artistic and aesthetic pluralism: "If in the study *On the Comprehension of Artistic Strivings* I spoke in favour of artistic pluralism in the sense of recognition for a multitude of different but equivalent types of art, then here I stand on the position of aesthetic pluralism or the view that there exist various types of aesthetic experiences – of beauty, characteristic ugliness, elevation, etc., and corresponding types of aesthetic objects – beautiful, characteristically ugly, elevated, etc., and various types of aesthetic values – beauty, characteristic ugliness, elevation, etc."²⁸

To be found in subject literature are opinions that the pluralistic sympathies displayed by Polish philosophers were a defence of cultural individualism and diversity against mounting unification, or uniformisation under an absolute "one and only truth". Here I will leave aside my personal opinions about the experiences that may have led to these conclusions, however I must draw attention to the diversity of the artistic praxis of the day, which, while it indeed failed to inspire philosophical aesthetics, effected in a diversity of criteria by which art was judged and thus allowed departure from traditional methodological patterns.

Were the leanings to intellectual and aesthetic pluralism an isolated phenomenon, related solely to abstract aesthetic theories which were distant from other knowledge fields? No. There were other motives and connections, whose reconstruction, however, will require further and detailed research.

In application to Polish aesthetics the road metaphor recalled at the outset fully reveals its stylistic and varietal heterogeneity. In the course of preparing his definition of art Tatarkiewicz wrote: "We have found ourselves on uneven ground and don't know what lies in store. The comparison which comes to mind is a river which flows over unevennesses and boulders, forms eddies, and changes its flow. And sometimes returns to its old bed and flows evenly and straightly"²⁹.

Translated by Maciej Bańkowski

²⁶ W. Tatarkiewicz, "Definicja sztuki", in: *idem*, *Dzieje sześciu pojęć*, p. 52.

²⁷ S. Ossowski, "O przeciwieństwie przyrody i sztuki w estetyce", in: *idem*, *Dzieła*, Warsaw 1966-1970, 4 vols, quoted after: S. Ossowski, *Wybór pism estetycznych*, ed. B. Dziemidok, Universitas, Cracow 2004.

²⁸ M. Wallis, *Wybór pism estetycznych*, Universitas, Cracow 2004, p. 214.

²⁹ W. Tatarkiewicz, *Dzieje sześciu pojęć*, p. 61.

Wojciech Włodarczyk

Why not national? ("Novelty" and nationality in Polish art of the 20th and 21st centuries)

Abstract

The author discusses the issue of national art after Poland's regained independence in 1918. That period saw no unequivocal definition of what national art – art related to national identity – should be, despite the nascent country's need for such art, especially that which was inspired by rural life. The chief proponents of this idea did not perceive it in strictly national terms but were open to cutting-edge art and formal experimentation. Evidence to the above can be seen in the positive recognition bestowed on the Polish pavilion at the 1925 International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts in Paris.

The author believes that controversy surrounding national art (i.e. a Polish style) began to arise in the 1930s. At that time, the term "novelty" [nowoczesność] in the vocabulary of Polish art criticism began to take on a meaning that reflected a common contemporary style, one that referenced the avant-garde and was stripped of its original ideological underpinnings. For the elite, "novelty" became the de rigueur worldview and a symbol of civilisational and progressive change. Meanwhile, Polish painters returning from Paris in the 1930s spearheaded an emphasis on Colourism and a concept of autonomous modernist works which relied on timeless artistic principles. Consequently, the idea of national art receded into the peripheries of critical discourse along with the emergence of a fundamental semantic opposition in the form of national versus "novel".

This opposition was further enforced by the authorities during Poland's communist era (1945-1989). Paradoxically, this was the case not only during the height of Socialist Realism (1950-1952) but particularly during the Post-Stalinist thaw and in the 1960s and 1970s, as avant-garde tradition dominated the arts and critical discourse in Poland. Thus, the national-"novel" dichotomy was compounded by a subsequent opposition: painting (having unequivocally negative connotations) versus "novelty"/avant-garde tradition (as an undisputedly positive phenomenon).

Political events and the involvement of the Church in the 1980s (the decade of Solidarity and martial law) set the stage for a reversal in the negative attitude towards the idea of national art and the issues associated with it (for instance, we see the emergence of previously unbroached subjects such as German and Russian issues and an interest in Church art). After Poland regained her independence in 1989, however, we see a return to the erstwhile opposition among artists from critical art and oppositional art circles. Matters of national identity and national art (along with painting) were not considered modern or progressive and were thus rejected or even attacked.

In more recent years, there has been mounting interest in art addressing national concerns in the wake of, for example, Poland's accession to the EU (2004) and the Polish plane crash in Smoleńsk (2010).

In 19th and early 20th century Poland there was a rather widespread conviction regarding the need for creating a national Polish style. Contributing to the

popularity of such a belief were both the political situation at that time (Poland was not a sovereign state at this time) and the historicising concepts prevailing in the 19th century. The “Vistula Gothic” architectural trend was considered a statement of a Polish national and religious identity that stood in stark contrast to the orthodoxy of the Russian occupiers. The Zakopane style emerging towards the end of the 19th century referenced more universal sources that existed beyond classification into particular styles – folk art and art from the Polish Tatra Highlands. Propositions for new directions in art were beginning to take shape just before the outbreak of the First World War and continued developing through the war. One example would be Formism, which incorporated the language of Expressionism and Cubism while drawing inspiration from folklore and referencing Polish Romanticism. The Exhibition of Architecture and Interior Design in the Garden [Wystawa architektury i wnętrz w otoczeniu ogrodowym] held in Cracow in 1912 popularised the manor style, which became a significant trend in the early years of Poland’s regained independence. Although, by and large, the manor style utilised Neo-Classical inspirations, it avoided the trap of historical models thanks to the fact that at the essence of this movement was a focus on the building type rather than on the stylistic costume that adorned it.

Poland’s regained statehood in 1918 beckoned for a visual brand. Utilitarian graphic art (and thus the nascent country’s bureaucratic print materials) exhibiting ties to folk woodcuts as well as architecture that incorporated the manor style and Tatra Highland motifs (much appreciated in public use buildings) proved to be ideal for this purpose. The environment of Warsaw’s School of Fine Arts (renamed the Academy of Fine Arts in 1932), which was at the heart of the quest for a national style (also referred to as the Polish style), was extremely open to experimentation and new artistic developments, as evidenced by Kazimierz Malewicz’s visit to the studio of Wojciech Jastrzębowski in 1927. In one of the main documents outlining the direction for the school, Władysław Skoczylas identified three characteristics that works produced in the school should have: “Polishness”, “modernity” (taking advantage of the latest advances in art) and “unity” (art that was pure and utilitarian)¹. In the text, Skoczylas also emphasised art’s social impact. Nonetheless, this leading ideologue in the formation of a national style in 1920s Polish art did not specify what such art works should look like. The intended native style was not defined by ethnicity, while the folk influences merely constituted a basis without which new works by prominent artists could never emerge and, as Skoczylas believed, ultimately delineate a uniquely Polish quality. In Skoczylas’s concept, the national art style was not associated with a particular form or content but with a “certain defined sphere of emotions”, feelings connected to “works by our artists [...] who struggle against and resist the death of the nation and give the nation a right to a brilliance commensurate with the past, the loss of which they cannot ponder without experiencing tragic pain”². In Skoczylas’s proposal there was no room for the work of, for example, Stanisław Szukalski, who referenced Slavic tribal

¹ W. Skoczylas, “Szkoła – sztuka – państwo”, ed. W. Włodarczyk, in: *Zeszyt Naukowy Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie*, no. 4/10, 1984.

² W. Skoczylas, *Styl narodowy w sztuce*, in: *idem*, “Szkoła – sztuka – państwo”.

history. Skoczylas's proposal was also considerably removed from the ideas of critics associated with the national democratic camp, where moral-political criteria were the focus of much attention. A breakthrough came with the success of the Polish pavilion at the 1925 Paris International Exposition, which verified the importance of the national style proposed by the School of Fine Arts circle as well as the artistic quality of this movement.

The School of Fine Arts environment and the "Rytm" group (1922-1932), which was closely associated with it, both shared a belief in the superiority of drawing over colour along with the importance of form and clear composition (in line with Neo-Classical inspirations that were common in those days). That standpoint allowed them to distance themselves from the individualistic art of the Young Poland era, while simultaneously criticising the previous generation of epigones of Impressionist, subjective painting. In this setting, the term Modernism (1)³ (as applied to the art of the Young Poland movement) took on a negative connotation. However, the word Modernism (2) also had a different meaning – it was used to describe innovative advancements, such as the avant-garde that was emerging in the 1920s, or before that, Formism, both of which, much like the School of Fine Arts circle, favoured formal solutions and considered (especially the avant-garde) the social and political impact of art⁴. The most radical wing of the Polish avant-garde which drew on patterns from Soviet Constructivism and Productivism failed to find widespread approval due to the memory of the Polish-Soviet War in 1920 standing in the way of its ideological formula being accepted.

In the late 1920s, the advancing, forward-thinking meaning of the term Modernism began to be replaced by the use of the term "novelty" (2) [the Polish term "nowoczesność" typically translates to "modernity", though for the sake of clarity, let us accept the term "novelty" in the herein article]. Early in the 1920s the word "novelty" (1) had meant currentness, pertinence or contemporaneity in Polish art criticism. In the 1930s "novelty" (2) came to signify the spirit of a new era and new art, mass democracy, a lifestyle and technical progress⁵. In line with this new mentality, the most resonant event of the decade – the 1937 Paris International Exposition – took place under the banner of "Art and Technology".

The intertwining of the modern with the national, marking one of the more important developments in Polish art of the 20th and 21st centuries, began in the 1930s. But first, to see the primary source of this plait we must look back to 1903, when Roman Dmowski produced his *Thoughts of a Modern Pole* [Myśli nowoczesnego Polaka] as a charter for the National Democratic Party. It was

³ In contemporary art study, precise terminology is vital. Therefore, I have decided to numerically differentiate the various meanings of the terms "Modernism" and "nowoczesność" as they appear in criticism and research papers.

⁴ D. Wasilewska, *Przełom czy kontynuacja? Polska krytyka artystyczna lat 1917-1930 wobec tradycji młodopolskiej*, typed doctorate dissertation manuscript at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (in print, Universitas Publishing). This interesting study does not account for the evolution of the term "nowoczesność", and relies too little on what I believe to be the artists' own decisive ideas. It also practically omits any mention of Skoczylas's proposition and the impact of his ideas.

⁵ *Ibidem*, particularly the subsection *Styl*.

this very party that stood as the chief opposition to Józef Piłsudski's Sanation movement, which took control after the May Coup in 1926 and was in the midst of carrying out a programme of political reforms in the country. Sanation criticised their opponent for its modern, partisan and Darwinian views of the country. To the Sanation supporters, the positivist approach to work was a fundamental negation of Poland's romantic tradition – its severance, and above all, a dismissal of Poles' armed efforts to regain the country's independence. The Piłsudski-led act of independence was averse to positivistic, modern, and egotistical biding of time in wait for favourable political conditions. From the moment they took power, the ideology inspiring the Piłsudski legion to action began to rapidly transform into a nation-building ideology – a project of social solidarity, work and organisation. That is why the ideas coming out of the School of Fine Arts, which was a milieu tightly connected to Sanation (and refereed to, not entirely accurately, as a nation-building circle) never reflected the National Democratic concepts for a national art. We also notice a reluctance, if not to say an unwillingness, to using the word "modern". The term "contemporary" was seen to be better suited to the project of nation-building at hand⁶.

The term "novelty" was subject to fundamental changes until the early 1930s. As mentioned earlier, it ceased to be a neutral quantifier and began to be increasingly associated with a worldview blueprint of an enlightened pedigree⁷. The term Modernism (3) was still in use, and continues to be to this day, but in a slightly modified meaning, referring almost exclusively to Polish architecture of, initially, the 1930s and 40s and later to the period after 1956⁸. In spite of this, use of the term was obviously in sharp decline. "Novelty" (2) began to be understood as the style of the 20th century utilising experimentation and innovative form (though not as radical as amongst the avant-garde), as well as the social consciousness coinciding with it. Because of the stylistic universality of the 1930s, "novelty" also applied to art coming out of Western Europe, which for Poland meant the Paris art scene more than any other. Yet "novelty" (2) was an exceptionally voluminous term that also covered the modern design and residential architecture of Nazi Germany.

To further trace the relationship between what is national and modernity in Polish art we must take note of a new tendency gaining in popularity in painting throughout the 1930s – Colourism. Associated with Impressionism in the 1920s, it was later recognised by critics as a distinct movement. The turning point for Colourist ideas came during an exhibition of the Komitet Paryski group (known as the "kapistas") in Warsaw in 1931. The painters arriving from Paris represented an idea of art that we today would call Modernist (4) (in the sense of it applying to autonomous works, as defined by Clement Greenberg

⁶ W. Włodarczyk, "Niepodległość i nowoczesność", in: *Sztuka wszędzie. Akademia Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie 1904-1944*, red. nauk. J. Gola, M. Sitkowska, A. Szewczyk, [katalog] Zachęta, Warsaw 2012.

⁷ Enlightened novelty (3) as a worldview-philosophical construct dominated by great narratives usually appears in connection to Post-Modernist views. It is not a goal of the herein article to present the various views of nowoczesność, Post-Modernism or Post-Structuralism, or to provide even a cursory relation on the immense literature on the subject. I refer to the ways in which these phenomena were understood and named in their time, as employed by artistic or other, related communities.

⁸ Modernism (3) in this sense was situated in between the avant-garde and novelty (2).

in the second half of the 20th century). Modernist art was and still is closely associated with the idea of the artist as a clerk (as defined by Julian Benda in the late 1920s) and with a radical rejection of all notions of national art as well as of all art intended to serve functions beyond the purely artistic. Czapski wrote: "Today, having 'a land, a country, a home and people' – having *freedom*, we cannot sacrifice our ambitions of creating the highest values in art..."⁹ This stood in opposition to the Piłsudski circle's and the School of Fine Arts' conviction that independence was paramount and to nationalist concepts in general. Now, as per Czapski's diagnosis it was time that independence be replaced by freedom. This way, freedom was divested of political connotations and began to be perceived as a value that is, above all, artistic, a moral creative impulse and the foundation for an artist's identity.

In 1930s Poland, the idea of the nation was becoming an instrumental category, markedly political, terse and, like independence, irrelevant to an artist's identity. It was starting to become overshadowed by the notion of "novelty" (2), which was often used to describe the work of the *kapistas* from Paris. And, though this notion was marked by a shade of National Democratic leanings, it took on the shape of a leftist worldview blueprint as a result of changes that were taking place not only in Poland. It became a label covering everything in art that was not connected with nation or independence. A semantic reshuffle was underway: the nation was replaced by society (which figured heavily in the avant-garde vocabulary) and independence (affiliated with the School of Fine Arts and the Academy of Fine Arts) gave way to freedom (the Colourists' premier concern). The nation and nationalism was endowed with a new interpretation; a new shade of meaning. "In the period in question, we can identify the beginnings of theoretical analyses of the ways in which nationalism and modernity are linked, which forecast the emergence of a «Classical Modernist» school in the 1950s and 60s"¹⁰... Up to 1939, works which attempted to «classify» or «present a typology» of nationalism laid the foundations for a modernist approach, which gained strength after the Second World War. Though very few works touched on the issue of national history, nationalism was finally beginning to be perceived as a 'modern' phenomenon in and of itself"¹¹. In this new view, the nation became an invented tradition, a community of ideas, a construct of the Enlightenment¹². This type of understanding of nation, of casual nationality, can be noticed in the works of the *kapistas* and in avant-garde circles¹³. The post-war years confirmed the direction of the changes which had begun in the 1930s. The moment when Nazi occupation ended was not described

⁹ J. Czapski, "Wpływy i sztuka narodowa", in: *Droga*, no. 3, 1933.

¹⁰ P. Lawrence, *Nacjonalizm: historia i teoria*, "Książka i Wiedza", Warsaw 2007, p. 134.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 86.

¹² For more on this, see: W. Włodarczyk, "Niepodległość i nowoczesność", cf. J. Chałasiński, "Antagonizm polsko-niemiecki w fabrycznej osadzie *Kopalnia* na Górnym Śląsku", in: *Studia socjologiczne*, 1935, an interesting text from the Polish point of view and relevant to the herein article. It also preceded Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*.

¹³ J. Sosnowska, "Kapiści na tle dyskusji o sztuce narodowej", in: D. Konstantynow, R. Pasieczny, P. Paszkiewicz (eds.), *Nacjonalizm w sztuce i historii sztuki 1789-1950*, Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Warsaw 1998, p. 213; J. Sosnowska, "Sztuka w oczach polskiej prawicy do 1939 roku", in: *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, R. XLVI, no. 4, 1998.

as independence but simply as freedom. The reason was that many people believed it was only a shift from one occupation to another – Nazi to Soviet. The nation, which the language of communist propaganda often touted, was replaced with the idea of a people and, above all as it seemed, was associated with scientific objectivism and society.

The Exhibition of “Novel” Art in Cracow [Wystawa Sztuki Nowoczesnej] in 1948 (later called the first WSN on account of subsequent editions in 1957 and 1959) featured none of the leading representatives of the Polish pre-war avant-garde. Leftist contemporary artists headed by Tadeusz Kantor, the exhibition’s main organiser, strived to present “novelty” (2), which was understood as the style of the day and a worldview of an innovative nature, as a proposition for the new authorities. The position of the Colourists, though they remained faithful to their idea of art ensconced in an ivory tower, i.e. Modernist (4) art, and were a group capable of working towards their own interests, changed very little in the 1940s. Though the leading ideologue of Polish post-war Colourism Jan Cybis made certain concessions to the new authorities (an example being his involvement in the propagandic and extremely “novel” (2) Recovered Lands Exhibition [Wystawa Ziem Odzyskanych] in Wrocław in 1948), he also spoke out for the Polish nature of landscape painting and devoted serious thought to the Polish school of landscape¹⁴.

The Colourists were the most menacing opponents in all of the arts to the communists, who since 1947 made increasingly stricter demands on artists to create art for the masses and who postulated a cultural policy which would allow them to control the world of culture. After all, the Colourists still propounded an exclusive idea – Modernist (4) art of separation that did not acknowledge social or political context. Meanwhile, “novel” artists or those from the avant-garde tradition acknowledged social context heavily. Socialist Realism began to dominate in late 1949 and the role of the chief codifier of Socialist Realism in Poland fell to the art historian Juliusz Starzyński. Prior to the war he was the director of the Art Propaganda Institute, an institution that was open to all forms of art but was closely tied to the School of Fine Arts and, obviously, the Sanation camp. Therefore, it is not surprising that Colourism was deemed a more dangerous type of formalism than even “novel” abstraction. Abstraction was an obvious antithesis to Socialist Realism, whereas Colourism could seriously weaken the ideological concepts on a Socialist Realist canvas. What is more, it was much more difficult to undermine the tenets of the Colourist approach than it was to simply reject the language of obvious deformation or unrepresentative works. Starzyński was closely attached to the idea of “domestic” art: the painting of Felicjan Szczyński-Kowarski, the graphic art of Tadeusz Kulisiewicz and the sculpture of Xawery Dunikowski. There was no room for the Colourism of the kapistas. Starzyński’s vision did however conjure the unrealised pre-war hope held by artists of all camps that art would make a considerable contribution to the aesthetic face of the country and its social character.

¹⁴ W. Włodarczyk, *Akademia Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie w latach 1944-2004*, WSiP, ASP, Warszawa 2005, pp. 57-58; A. Markowska, *Definiowanie sztuki – objaśnianie świata. O pojmowaniu sztuki w PRL-u*, Wydawnictwo UŚ, Katowice 2003.

One of the foremost aesthetic catchphrases of Socialist Realism was the postulate of a “national form and proletarian (socialist) message”. Here, national form was treated like a slogan; it was a fig leaf attached to works that were at the core contradictory in spirit to, for example, Polish architecture. The Palace of Culture and Science (1951-1955), a gift to Warsaw from Joseph Stalin, crowned by a form inspired by St. Florian’s Gate in Cracow, its attics designed to resemble the ornamentation adorning Polish Renaissance town halls – this structure confirmed that it was not about a national canon but about imposing the eclectic Soviet style on Poland. The national form category drew on models of “progressive” eras (such as the Renaissance and Classicism) and 19th century Realism. The chief deciding criteria were the attitude of the artists and the subject matter of their works with respect to oppressed classes. What Socialist Realism did was to effectively trivialise national points of reference for artists.

The doctrine-driven approach and the battle against Colourism were very soon verified by the authorities. In spite the expectations of artists, the authorities did not see art as an indispensable tool in their domination (physical violence and economic repression were effective enough) and found no reason for its use in the indoctrination of the public. The communist authorities were not interested in art but in artists. As early as October 1951, hundreds of artists were invited to a meeting organised by the Minister of Public Security Jakub Berman at the State Council building. There, the artists were presented with a vision of art based on values of the Enlightenment; an art, as the authorities claimed, that was socially effective. The result of the meeting was the dismissal of the partisan and ardent Socialist Realist editor-in-chief of *Przegląd Artystyczny*, the leading periodical on art. The editor-in-chief post was then handed to the art historian Mieczysław Porębski and other high-ranking positions were awarded to non-partisan artists. Additionally, the first-ever poster art studios were established and their management was entrusted to such icons of “novelty” as Henryk Tomaszewski and Józef Mroszczak. This gesture of good faith on the part on the authorities was indeed merely a gesture. It was extended because the authorities were busy with plans to address matters they believed to be most urgent: to crack down on the kulaks and on the Church, which manifestly emphasized its national character. The communists made use of the “novelty” (2) of the 1930s, which suited the conditions of a repressive state and was more than enough to satisfy (as per the postulate for art to be socially effective) the expectations of the liberal and lay intelligentsia¹⁵. We must note that Primate Stefan Wyszyński was arrested in 1953, after the death of Stalin.

There was another factor that was conducive to the term “novelty” (2) taking on new meaning. The moment the cold war was announced and the “iron curtain” divided Europe, the previously-unknown concept of an East-West rivalry germinated in the consciousness of not only artists. The West was understood in a two-fold manner: as a bordered and inaccessible land of “novel” (2) art and as a basic point of reference in one’s personal artistic pursuits and a sort of

¹⁵ W. Włodarczyk, “Po co był socrealizm?”, in: J. Goszczyńska, J. Królak, R. Kulmiński (eds.), *Doświadczenie i dziedzictwo totalitaryzmu na obszarze kultur środkowoeuropejskich*, Instytut Slawistyki Zachodniej i Południowej, Uniwersytet Warszawski, Warsaw 2011.

criterion for self-assessment. In this sense, the local, national tradition seemed not to belong to the West and, at best, could only try to keep up with this Western role model.

It is no wonder then that the main artistic slogan in Poland in October of 1956 was "We want to be 'novel'". This phrase was coined by an architect who was a member of the communist parliament¹⁶. References to the category of nation (sporadically borrowed by the extreme nationalist wing of the communist party in 1956) and especially to the category of independence no longer entered the into the artistic equation under such conditions. "Novelty" (2) pushed notions of Polish cultural identity (nation, religion) into the peripheries. Hopes for a political thaw, even an insincere one, only solidified the attitude of artists and intellectuals. The term freedom did not appear in commentary on the abstract paintings that dominated the second and third editions of the Exhibition of "Novel" Art or in the critical texts of that time¹⁷. The yearning for a civilisational leap forward gave priority to architecture and utilitarian art; a fact that complemented the political modernisation project of the associates of Władysław Gomułka, the new head of the communist party¹⁸.

The latter half of the 1950s was the most creatively fruitful period in Polish "novelty" (2,4). This includes both "novelty" (2) understood as a worldview, and "novelty" (4) understood as a historical/artistic period taking place here and now and covering all artistic manifestations, including Modernist (4) (as defined by Greenberg) painting. Polish "novelty" (4) of the second half of the 1950s was marked by Modernist (4) abstract art and a "novel" (2) approach to issues of space. Artists addressed the subject of space unmindful of the fact that its sole administrator was the communist state. The belief that art could have an effective social impact in public space (through architecture, graphic art, etc.) for the purpose of shaping a new mankind had a distant source in the "novelty" (3) of the Enlightenment. Once again, the first time being in the 1930s, "novelty" (4) pushed the national and the religious into the background. It was only on account of the exceptional pressure from the political events of the autumn of 1956 and, above all, artists' involvement in the dubious thaw of 1951 that artists believed it correct to disregard the issue of the political prisoners who were being freed at that time and of the recently-released Primate¹⁹. Upon going to take up a position at Harvard University's school of architecture, Jerzy Sołtan cited the Church's disapproval of his Modernist (3) church designs as one of the main reasons for his decision to leave Poland.

What brought about serious scrutiny of this construction – the "novelty" (4) project and timeless Modernist (4) painting without references to national

¹⁶ J. Hryniewiecki, "Kształt przyszłości", in: *Projekt*, no. 1, 1956, p. 7. Written in 1955.

¹⁷ P. Juskiewicz, *Od rozkoszy historiozofii do „gry w nic”. Polska krytyka artystyczna czasu odwilży*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza, Poznań 2005.

¹⁸ P. Koryś, "Idea nowoczesności w działaniach i planach partii komunistycznej w Polsce 1945-1980. Przegląd problematyki", in: E. Kościak, T. Głowiński (eds.), *Gospodarka i społeczeństwo w czasach PRL-u (1944-1989)*, Wydawnictwo Gajt, Wrocław 2007.

¹⁹ Such a view reinforcing the mythology of the thaw in the mid-1950s can also be found in newly-published books, such as: A. Markowska, *Dwa przełomy. Sztuka polska po 1955 i 1989 roku*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2012.

history – was a reflection on the historical interdependency between the functioning of the state and long-term historical determinants of what Polish culture means, which surpassed the short scope of the Stalinist period in the country. The political source of these reflections was a programme of festivities celebrating the 1000th anniversary of Poland as a Christian nation announced by the still-imprisoned Primate Wyszyński along with a novena that preceded the festivities. In this context, the communist episode in Poland was confronted with the millennial history of the country. The response of the authorities was to announce celebrations commemorating 1000 years of Poland's statehood. The moment when these two diametrically opposed ideas come into confrontation with each other was compounded even further by the communist authorities' anti-German stance, hailing the Soviet Union as the guarantor of Poland's western border. The authorities' loyalty to the Soviet Union was in turn demonstratively countered by Polish bishops with a much-publicised letter of amity to their counterparts in Germany, which was the first instance of a sovereign Polish voice in the international arena. The anniversary year falling on 1966 was also a deciding moment in the strengthening of the Polish avant-garde and marked the beginning of a new stage in its development, referred to as the neo-avant-garde. Having been on the peripheries of the Polish art world until then, avant-garde tradition made the first great stride in its development at a symposium in Puławy organised as part of the 1000 years of statehood celebrations. The symposium, a review of contemporary and innovative Polish art, was headed by Mieczysław Porębski and the director of the Łódź Museum of Art Ryszard Stanisławski. The idea to make avant-garde tradition the leading undercurrent amidst the changes in Polish contemporary art and a kind of chronological framework for it was informed by the modernisational, political (the symposium coincided with the launch of the Azoty chemical plant in Puławy) and historical views of the 1960s²⁰. The notions of progress, development and experimentation inherent to the avant-garde paradigm fit in nicely with the concept of a Polish "novelty" (2,4) and even enriched it²¹. The avant-garde paradigm also became the foundation for a new – though exploiting earlier premises – dichotomy which aimed to scrutinise the art status quo: painting versus neo-avant-garde work or action.

In the eyes of the neo-avant-gardists, painting was a symptom of anachronism and insularity. But it was precisely painters (e.g. Jerzy Jurzycki, Wiesław Szamborski, Zbysław Grzywacz) who undertook the task of criticism towards the system and the subject of patriotism, acting in response to the dramatic political events of the times (March and August 1968, December 1970). These were things the neo-avant-gardists seldom did. Only a small few, such as Anasazy Wiśniewski, criticised the authorities, though it can be said that it was done within rules that the authorities themselves established, i.e. through political

²⁰ W. Włodarczyk, *Ustanawianie obrazu. Sztuka lat 60-tych*, in: *Wiesław Szamborski. Malarstwo*, [katalog] ed. J. Dąbrowski, Akademia Sztuk Pięknych, Warsaw 2011.

²¹ One of the artist "statements" for the Puławy symposium was a performance by Włodzimierz Borowski in which he sang the words "mocznik, mocznik" [urea, urea] to the tune of the Polish national anthem. This took place against a backdrop of urea production apparatus.

revisionism. Those neo-avant-gardists who did speak out were scorned at the time and labelled “pseudo-avant-garde”²². There was no talk of references to nationalist ideas or of concepts for a national style. The general lack of political statements was partly due to the fact that such action could easily be mistaken for sympathy with the “Moczarians” (an extremist faction of the communist party led by Mieczysław Moczar propounding strongly-nationalist views) but mainly because there was no room for national pursuits in the ethos of the neo-avant-garde. Juliusz Starzyński’s 1973 book *Polish Road to Independence in Art* [*Polska droga do samodzielności w sztuce*] was already irrelevant although it created an interesting context for the much-talked-about exhibitions of the late 1970s, particularly the one titled Polish Self-Portrait [*Polaków portret własny*]. That exhibition was one of the most highly-attended events of the time but it had no influence on the artists of the neo-avant-garde and made only a slight impact on painters. Neo-avant-garde art was being increasingly perceived as an institutionalised art that enjoyed the support of the authorities. In its first issue in 1974, *Sztuka*, the leading arts publication of the 1970s, ran an article titled “Realism and the Avant-Garde” [*Realizm i awangarda*] which was intended as a sort of bridge between the communists’ cultural policy programmes of the early 1950s and the 1970s²³.

It occurred that what had originally determined the neo-avant-garde’s position in the Polish art world in the late 1960s and early 1970s became the cause of its downfall ten years later. The neo-avant-garde was detached from social and political context, and it was practically official. Faced with growing resistance from the working class and the expansion of underground opposition network, the avant-garde tradition was the first victim of the events of 1980. In 1976 a vehement protest erupted against constitutional amendments in which the socialist character of the country, the leadership of the communist party and the country’s alliance with the USSR would be officially entered into the constitution. Painters and sculptors such as Henryk Błachnio, Jacek Sempoliński, Hanna Rudzka Cybisowa and Barbara Zbrożyna added their names in support of the protest while representatives of the neo-avant-garde were conspicuously absent.

The face of art in the 1980s would be decided by a young generation who didn’t know Stalinist oppression, didn’t comprehend the quiet pact of artists during the period of the thaw, and didn’t understand those artists’ entanglement in “novelty” (2,4). But what shaped the phenomenon of Polish art of those days even more were changes in humanities studies brought on by Post-Modernism and Post-Structuralism. Post-Modernism challenged the great narratives of “novelty” (3): History, Nation, God, Art. But it was the exact opposite on the Polish art scene in the era of Solidarity (1980-1981) and during martial law (1981-1983). Narrative painting began to address subjects that had never, or at least very infrequently, arisen in the past. Young artists, without complexes and ignorant of the older generations’ experiences, undertook subjects like

²² That was the term applied to artists who challenged the hegemonic arrangement between Galeria Foksal and the Museum of Art in Łódź, the two foremost institutions which defined the shape of art in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The art exhibited at these two institutions was of a Modernist (4) nature.

²³ K. Kostyrko, “Realizm i awangarda”, in: *Sztuka*, no. 1, 1974.

Polish-German and Polish-Russian relations, their personal stories, and political restrictions. Young Ukrainians talked about Ukrainian art. The painter Leon Tarasewicz affirmed his Belarusian roots. A boycott of official exhibition venues and a tendency to organize shows in places of worship brought a part of the intellectual community back to the Church. Jerzy Nowosielski's iconic paintings were achieving their greatest triumphs at that time. Not only the works but the actions of artists were starting to take on meaning. The "Battle for the walls" [Walka o mury] initiative of the underground opposition during martial law set the stage for the unique shape of Polish art in public space in the 1990s. A radical shift in social awareness was driven by Pope John Paul II's first visit to Poland in 1979 and the establishment of the massive Solidarity labour union.

We must attribute the young generation's rejection of Post-Modernist perspectives to Poland's specific history and culture. Just like the year 1920 influenced the unique reaction to the avant-garde, the year 1980 (as well as subsequent years) triggered an essentially different adaptation of Post-Modernism. In a nutshell: Post-Modernism validated the meaning of painting and challenged the erstwhile dictates of the neo-avant-garde. It did not, however, undermine great narratives. References to religion and national history stemmed from experiences with totalitarianism and "novelty" (2,4) and from knowing how they had been overcome. It was in the 1980s that we see the appearance of texts examining the role of "novelty" (2,4) in Polish culture and, at the same time, pointing out its ambivalent character. Yet, a noteworthy summit of art historians in 1984 put forth another diagnosis: the impact of totalitarianism's ubiquitous and unwavering ideological pressure – the concept of "ideoza"²⁴ [the term relates to the link between authority and artistic activity, where the authority dictates what belongs in the cultural mainstream and what must remain outside it – trans]. Similarly to what Czesław Miłosz expressed when escaping Poland in 1951, an "ideoza" challenges the subjective sovereignty of individuals living in a system of total enslavement²⁵.

It is interesting that the year 1989 – the beginning of independence – saw a resurgence in the communist-era relationship between nationality and "novelty", bypassing the experiences of young art of the 1980s and eliminating them from the reserves of recent art tradition. The reason for this was partly political. A compromise reached during the round table proceedings between the exiting communists and members of the opposition stipulated a vague treatment of communist times. The compromise made it easier to deny historical experience and to forget, while also rendering it unclear whether the year 1989 should in fact be acknowledged as the moment of the independent state's establishment. After all, the first free parliamentary elections were not held until 1991. On the other hand, the reason was also rooted in art and worldview.

In the 1990s and into the new millennium, the Polish art scene was dominated by critical art. Artists belonging to this category generally acted on two

²⁴ The term was coined by Andrzej Turowski, a scholar of the Polish avant-garde with ties to Galeria Foksal. A. Turowski, "Polska ideoza", in: *Sztuka polska po 1945 roku: materiały Sesji Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki Warszawa, listopad 1984*, PWN, Warsaw 1987.

²⁵ C. Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, Penguin Books LTD, London 1980, p. 20.

premises: artistic criticism of medium, and criticism of the broadly-understood, in a Foucauldian sense, power. The medium of painting and Modernist (4) works were deemed to conserve the political status quo, to conform to the authority, which in the currently-free country meant the authority of the Church and of conservative opinion²⁶. The body of work of the previous decade's young painters was discounted along with their cultural diagnoses. The medium of painting, politically interpreted this way and negated, was replaced with new electronic media, with the body and with art in public space. It was a public space diametrically opposed to the public space of the 1980s, when its unpermitted use could have serious repercussions and all types of public actions were strictly controlled. In the 1990s, though, it was a public space of a free and democratic country where artistic performances are subject to public debate, or in the most extreme, arguable cases, to proceedings in an impartial court of law.

The criticism of power found new meaning in the "ideoza" diagnosis: the ubiquitous authority and the inescapable threat associated with it were now identified in the Church and in xenophobic and nationalistic worldviews. Hence, it was not a direct criticism of political authorities but of the authority of public opinion. It concurrently elevated art and its creators to the top of the cultural practice hierarchy.

Critical art took on all of the aspects of "novelty" (2,4). This included the ones from the 1930s, but most of all, those attached to "novelty" (2) in communist times: an ambivalence to reality, a denial of historical experience, an avoidance of Polish circumstances, an assignment of a specific role to the artist and the designation of art as a locus for formulating moral and political diagnoses, and finally, an advanced level of institutionalisation. This happened because critical art, just like the neo-avant-garde before it, quickly found institutional support at the hands of galleries and museums, not to mention subsidies. Aside from conducting cursory examinations of Polish artists' works on the basis of a simplified painting/critical art dichotomy, scholars from this artistic circle ideologise the artistic environment, spotting the main threats to contemporary artistic life in the dominance of Christian values and in the preservation of a national awareness²⁷. Moreover, in doing so, they regularly disregard the self-regulating and protective mechanism of democracy and the instances of impartial courts.

It is a fact that after Poland's accession into the European Union interest in symbols of national identity spiked. With the current fashion for all things vintage, ethno-design – in this case meaning the Polish style of the 1920s and folk crafts from the communist era – enjoys great popularity and is garnering international recognition. The Smoleńsk air catastrophe of 2010 elicited a wave of immense social emotion and reflection on national identity, which was channelled in at least two high-profile exhibitions: "THYMÓS. The Art of Anger 1900-2011" in Toruń and "New National Art" at the Museum of Modern Art in

²⁶ Such a view is expressed in the book: P. Piotrowski, *Znaczenia modernizmu. W stronę historii sztuki polskiej po 1945 roku*, Dom Wydawniczy "Rebis", Poznań 1999. Piotrowski's book was the most important publication and constituted one of the most important theoretical substantiations for critical art theoreticians and scholars.

²⁷ "Independence of the nation, and thus, of the ethno-cultural collective is often of a negative nature". P. Piotrowski, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

Warsaw in 2012. The emotions accompanying both exhibitions (and even the demonstrative withdrawal of artists taking part in the Toruń show) indicate that exhibitory institutions are seeking to respond to these unusual social interests and to escape the methodological trap of critical art study and the dead end that the selective premises of critical exhibitory practices had led them into.

Today, when we talk freely of the wane of Post-Structuralist theory, when we can spot the limitations of the enlightened “novelty” (3) project, issues of nationality are being increasingly noted by artists and scholars. These issues cannot be contained in a post-colonial trauma formula the way that practitioners of critical art would like to see them. Today, questions surrounding subject and community belong as much to the philosophical realm as to the field of economics. Certain scholars anticipate a conservative turn in the world of art on the basis of earlier such reactions to Post-Structuralism. It appears that, at least in Poland, the current changes have a deeper foundation and cannot be explained – like the concept of national art – solely on the basis of changes in art. They must take into consideration the historical and cultural context as well as the collective memory.

So, why not national? Because “novel” art was preferred. The imperative of “novelty”, a liberal, nationally-indifferent – and thus, perceived as progressive and leftist – worldview was stronger than an observance of national identity and collective experience. Colourism, with its ideas of Modernist (4) works of art and avant-garde tradition was not different from “novelty” (2,4) in this regard. The source of this attitude lay in the hazy position of artists with ties to the Piłsudski camp – a camp that was, after all, leftist, composed of liberal-leaning Colourists – and in the convictions of pro-communist artists drawing on avant-garde tradition. What is important in this arrangement seems to be the relationship. It is not only that “novelty” (2,4) can give critical insight into the trend of national art tradition but that taking a look at what is national in art can reveal much about the character of the “novel” (2,4) art that has taken over the Polish art scene. In a perspective befitting novelty (2,4), art that reflected national values could not be treated seriously and was therefore pushed into the margins, into the same territory as religious zealotry, political deviance and artistic banality²⁸. But this also shows the shortcomings of such a perspective. One of these shortcomings, particularly when it comes to critical art theory, is the interpretation of a painting on the basis of what it is, as a Modernist (4) work bearing a politically negative mark. The examples of works and painters involved in oppositional activity mentioned earlier obviously contradict this. Certain analogies can be found in the work of Gerard Richter and George Baselitz.

The “novel”/national dichotomy can occur to be a simplification or a trap if we fail to take into consideration the complex historical and political circumstances. The majority of works of art addressing the issues of the Holocaust (this also being a very relevant subject in deliberations on national art in Poland)

²⁸ “The taboos of sex, death and violence no longer exist in art. The only one that remains is nationality. That is because the subject of nationality is in poor taste and redolent of provincialism. Nobody knows how to broach the subject” – this is the sentiment of one of Poland’s most high-profile artists of the middle generation P. Uklański, “Orzeł z balonów”, in: *Rzeczpospolita*, 10 December 2012.

arose on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. They were commissioned by the painter Marek Oberländer, a Jew from Lviv, among his artist friends. Aside from his sister, Oberländer's entire family lost their lives in the ghetto while he himself spent the war toiling away waist deep in water in Ural Mountain mines. He harboured leftist beliefs and though he filed the necessary paperwork, he was never granted party membership. The pieces commissioned by Oberländer were meant to be shown in an exhibition requested by New York's Jewish community. Yet, they ultimately refused to go ahead with the project citing a reason that baffled the would-be curators: it was decided that a depiction of the Holocaust as drastic as that one must have been the result of the artist's fantasy and an unthinkable idea. That experience was an impulse for him to organise an exhibition two years later at Galeria Arsenal; an exhibition that would be one of the most significant ones in communist-era Poland. Oberländer's reaction to the insincerity of the thaw in the 1950s, as to the reception of the Arsenal works, is rather thought-provoking. His riposte to Modernist (4) abstraction, which in line with "novel" (4) premises was to be an appropriate answer to Socialist Realism, was not a polemic against the language of Socialist Realism but against the rules of artistic life. In 1956-1959 he headed Salon "Po prostu" [Simply Salon] and Salon Nowej Kultury [New Culture Salon] in Warsaw. The extremely diverse shows organized there are among the most important events in the history of Polish contemporary art. Oberländer's diagnosis took into consideration something that is absent in the perspective of "novelty" (2,4): truly alternative and extra-institutional (as opposed to the exhibition programmes of official institutions) ways of organising artistic activity. "Novelty" does not allow us to see the deeper nuances in the course of such activity, the peripheral issues connected with artistic work, for example, those involving the question of ownership²⁹. The private nature of space was nearly eliminated during communism, with space being solely at the disposal of the authorities. There is no need to state what a dream situation that was for a designer. Or how "novel" it was.

The nature of art interpreted as national, containing national motifs and patriotic subject matter, does not allow us to relegate it to the margins of "novelty." It is likewise impossible to not note the Church, and above all, its critical function in communist times, when examining the relationship between "novelty" and that which can be deemed national. To omit the role of the Church as an essential point of reference to the shifts in Polish culture in the latter half of the 20th century is a basic research error of an obviously "novel" pedigree. The issue of "novel" (2,4) art's, neo-avant-garde art's and critical art's institutional embroilments is another example that points to the potency of "novelty" tradition and the selectivity of perspectives associated with that tradition. I use the term "'novelty' tradition" because it seems that today we can notice its limitations more than in the early days of Post-Modernism. For instance, we can do so by comparing 'novelty' (2,4) with national art. In the

²⁹ W. Włodarczyk, "Przestrzeń i własność", in: M. Kitowska-Lysiak, M. Lachowski, P. Majewski (eds.), *Grupa „Zamek”. Konteksty – wspomnienia – archiwalia*, TN KUL, Lublin 2009.

'novelty' (2,4) perspective, just the term "art" in the context of national art gives many a researcher considerable trouble.

Edited by Maryann Chodkowski

Ewa Izabela Nowak**Magdalena Abakanowicz****Abstract**

Magdalena Abakanowicz, along with Tadeusz Kantor, Roman Opalka and Krzysztof Wodiczko, finds herself among the limited number of Polish artists who have managed to overcome the world's long-lasting political division into the East and the West, winning recognition beyond the former communist bloc. Nevertheless, their art has been deeply influenced by the culture of their home country and its socio-political situation.

The statement repeatedly uttered by German painter Anselm Kiefer: "The biography of my country is my biography; had I not been born in 1945, my work would have been entirely different", might as well be ascribed to any of the aforementioned Polish artists. Yet each of them has created works that address the imagination and sensitivity of any viewer regardless of their personal cultural experience.

This is particularly true for Magdalena Abakanowicz, who in her unique way has managed to reach vastly differing cultural environments. Her early works – large sculpture forms made of natural fibers – have permanently transformed the concept of fiber art worldwide. For years she had remained a role model for its disciples, and her art appeared to speak in an understandable, expressive and universal language.

Later, when Abakanowicz was slowly but consistently evolving from monumental three-dimensional forms of fiber to monumental sculpture, her works gradually started to emanate with an existential message, delivering her reflection on the condition of man in the contemporary world.

"Only speaking about ourselves do we speak about the world at large.
Our confession may become a discovery, provided it is sincere"¹.

On the 40th anniversary of Art Press², Catherine Millet, the magazine's founder and long-standing editor-in-chief, organized a meeting with Robert Storr and Georges Didi-Huberman. The goal was to confront American and European visions of art criticism. The conference, light in form and creating the appearance of an informal social occasion, in fact was highly meaningful. A confrontation of two strong personalities generated the important content.

¹ See M. Abakanowicz, text *Abakans*, in exhibition catalogue, Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw 1995, p. 24.

² Prestigious French art magazine. The first issue was published in December 1972. It presented, among others, a translation of the statement of Josef Albers on the method of teaching painting based on the optical effects of colours that he had developed at the Black Mountain College. Later, he applied this method at Yale University in New Haven, United States. Art Press is a bilingual magazine, in French and English. Website: www.artpress.com [Retrieved December 19, 2012].

While discussing the methodology of art criticism, Didi-Huberman recalled that as a child he would often watch his father, a painter, at work. The artist used to look at freshly painted canvasses from a distance of several meters, and then put them aside and returned to them in several weeks. In this way, the French philosopher and art historian made a suggestion about how diligent critics should work. Just like a painter puts their work aside, and later comes back to finish it, the critic should get some distance from their own words and opinions before they formulate their final statement. Observation and intellectual analysis of a given artist's evolution is important; in order to develop a mature vision of their creative output, but the critic's ability to feel and experience a work of art plays the decisive role.

My encounter with Magdalena Abakanowicz's art began a long time ago, and went through different stages. For the first time I came across her works as a teenager. The secondary school of visual arts that I attended held a screening of films on art. Most of them I cannot remember, but the film on *Abakans* has stuck in my memory for good. The Polish artist had developed sculpted spatial structures made from soft fibres. They were mostly created with the use of weaving looms, but traditional materials – wool and cotton – were replaced by such fibres as sisal and jute, which the artist dyed herself. After taking them off the loom, the artist shaped the tapestry into three-dimensional forms and exposed them in the free space. The first, sporadic attempt of this kind was made in the 1930s by another Polish artist, Katarzyna Kobro, a former student of Kazimierz Malewicz. Nevertheless it was Magdalena Abakanowicz who started a revolution that swept through the world of fibre art in the 1960s and '70s. The spatial structures created by Abakanowicz are named after her last name. She wrote about them in 1970: "My three-dimensional woven forms constitute a protest against systematisation of life and art. My woven forms grew with leisurely rhythm like creations of nature and like them they are organic"³. For years, this exceptional artist seemed an unsurpassable model to me, and her work fascinated me.

Seated Figures exposed in Zachęta Gallery in Warsaw, was my first physical contact with this work, which had touched my imagination as strongly as Alberto Giacometti's sculptures. The Swiss artist's slender works were made of metal, whereas, Abakanowicz created her human half-skeletons, hollowed out in the back, resembling halved cocoons, from jute sackcloth stiffened with resin. The figures, apparently identical, differed in many details. The headless figures carried a strong emotional load and provoked questions about human existence. The forms were hard and coarse, and the artist herself said of them: "The cycles touch upon the questions of empty space which can be filled by means of our imagination and with the sphere of the palpable, the rigid, which is an incomplete trace of our bodies spatial adherence to its material surroundings"⁴. The times were grim. The system that had taken root in postwar Poland was facing a collapse. Hollowed out on one side, the asexual figures seemed to

³ See M. Abakanowicz, exhibition catalogue, p. 28.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 48.

express the feelings of many of the people immersed in the grey Polish reality of the late 1980s.

A few years later while I was in France, I discovered that Magdalena Abakanowicz was among the few Polish artists known in this country. Textile artists associated her mainly with the *Abakans* and her multiple participations at Lausanne Biennales⁵, but the majority would know also her expressionist drawings and sculpture series, namely, *Crowds*, *Embryology*, and *Incarnations*. The Japanese I had met, associated her with a group of bronze *Backs* made for Hiroshima⁶, the Americans – with an exhibition in the P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center in New York curated by Michael Brenson⁷, French art critics with the Polish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1980 and with an exhibition in Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris⁸. Her works evoked much admiration due to expression achieved by simple means. British art critic Jasia Reichardt wrote in the catalogue of Abakanowicz's exhibition at Yorkshire Sculpture Park⁹, "The entire population of standing figures, the crowds, the flocks and the others, are enough to fill a large public square. (...) No other 20th century artist has realized three-dimensional crowds of grey men that are at the same time passive urgent"¹⁰. The way in which Abakanowicz expressed emotions in her works was completely different from what the Western audiences, raised in the cult of art rooted in the tradition of the first early 20th century avant-gardes, were accustomed to. What the Polish artist was offering was far away from the heritage of Ecole de Paris and it could not be ascribed to subsequent art trends that appeared in the United States and Western Europe in the 1960s and '70s. Even Italy's Arte Povera – perhaps closest in formal terms, due to the employment of simple materials – seemed light-years away.

All the weaving art epigones eagerly ascribed themselves to her oeuvre, completely oblivious of the fact that in the early days of her art career although Abakanowicz indeed used soft and easy to store textile materials, she had never been interested in the decorative art that they were practicing. Her works, made of jute and linen, not only meticulously avoid any kind of prettiness, but in the first place, they possess a power of expression whose form approximates expressionist sculpture initiated by the ingenious French sculptor August Rodin. This was perhaps best noted by Michael Brenson¹¹. When comparing the two artists, the American critic stated that both of them had created works of *powerful inner strength* and *organic vitality*.

Abakanowicz's works are perhaps remotely reminiscent of postminimalist quests of Eva Hesse. The American artist, several years younger, attempted to

⁵ The International Fibre Art Biennale was held in 1960-1992 in Lausanne on Lake Geneva in Rhaeto-Romanic Switzerland.

⁶ In 1991 Magdalena Abakanowicz's solo exhibition visited several Japanese cities. It was displayed, among others, at the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art.

⁷ American critic with a Ph.D. in history of art from Johns Hopkins University; a contributor to *The New York Times* in 1982-1991; in 1993 he curated Abakanowicz's *War Games* exhibition.

⁸ *Abakanowicz. Alterations* exhibition was held in 1982.

⁹ The exhibition was held in 1995.

¹⁰ A fragment of the text's Polish translation was published in Magdalena Abakanowicz's exhibition catalogue, pp. 144-145.

¹¹ In the text referring to Magdalena Abakanowicz's links with modern sculpture. It was published in 1995 in the artist's solo exhibition catalogue.

contain any anxiety she experienced in original installations made primarily from light, easily modulated materials. Both Abakanowicz and Hesse expressed in their works the untold emotions, accumulated over years.

The influential Marlborough Gallery with which the Polish artist collaborated for many years, on numerous occasions juxtaposed her works with the works of Beverly Pepper, an American living in Italy. Both artists belonged to the same generation and had strong personalities, yet this was a strategic move resulting more from the gallery's market policy than from genuine reasons of artistic and critical nature. The two artists, who pursued radically different artistic paths, have never established close contact. Just as Abakanowicz's works are marked by organic form, Beverly Pepper displays a liking for straight lines. She probably developed her use of lapidary forms while studying under Fernand Léger and André Lhote¹² at Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris.

Living in Paris at the end of XX century, I became, altogether unconsciously, increasingly acquainted with Abakanowicz's works. Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris allotted to her a whole room that combines displays of contemporary and modern art. This meant that whenever I visited the museum, I would invariably pass by the twenty five bronze *Crowd* figures from the museum collection. My increasing awareness of art was accompanied by a growing realization of the Polish artist's individualism, of her functioning outside any categories, patterns or divisions. She seemed increasingly comprehensible and close to me, but I had not expected that I would have the opportunity to meet her in person and to win her friendship.

The Polish Institute in Paris organized a meeting with Abakanowicz to accompany her exhibition opening in the now-defunct Marwan Hoss gallery, not far away from the Louvre. At that time I was writing my master's thesis on American minimalist and postminimalist art, with particular emphasis on the works of Eva Hesse; and it took me only one hour to decide on whom I would focus in the next stage of my studies. Abakanowicz allowed me to visit her Warsaw studio and to have a look at her meticulously run archive. In it, I discovered not only valuable documentation materials, but above all, excellent paintings never shown from the artist's student years that signalled the direction of her future quests. Made in the early 1950s, they revealed a liking for monochrome, synthetic forms and a slightly frayed organic line. They evidently augured her first tapestry. These small pictures were like a well-known composer's youth works, ones that reveal the character of symphonies yet to be written.

When I was beginning to work on my postgraduate theoretical thesis, a shift from the analysis of American art of the 1960s to an entirely different cultural area might have seemed a little illogical. To this day I remain convinced that without acquiring a thorough knowledge of Western art from the period of economic prosperity it is impossible to properly understand and describe the specific nature of art created in so-called former Eastern Europe. Incidentally, during the evening at the Polish Institute, Abakanowicz stated that the fact

¹² French Cubist, 1885-1962. His students included William Klein, Tamara de Lempicka, Henri Cartier-Bresson. He wrote several art theory books.

that her works were created in a country suffering from material shortcomings and difficult social relations determined their character in a natural way. This is visible not only in the choice of materials; primarily, these works reflect the tensions existing in the environment in which she lived and worked.

The artist is an organic part of the milieu in which they were born and shaped. They are often perceived as an atypical person, with strong feelings and experiences, one who finds it difficult to fit into norms and patterns. This sometimes leads to marginalization. As a person who escapes norms, and creates in solitude, they spend time seeking their own artistic truth, trying to reach into their inner world. They have their own sense of aesthetics, formed under the influence of the surrounding world and of the experiences strongly imprinted in their mind. The creative act is a moment of liberation, exposing their inner world. All opinions, knowledge, emotions and beliefs are reflected in the finished work like in a mirror. Sometimes this becomes clear only after they reach artistic maturity. In case of Abakanowicz, one of the most meaningful and stirring works is *Katarsis*, a group of thirty-three bronze sculptures installed in 1985 in the open air on the property of Italian collector Giuliano Gori¹³ in Celle in Tuscany. This former industrialist fell in love with artists as a teenager. Initially, he would buy works directly from artists but in 1961, influenced by a trip to Barcelona and meetings with artists such as Osvaldo Licini and Antoni Tàpies, Gori changed his collection concept. He started to invite artists to his property, encouraging them to create artworks on the site. On arriving in Celle, Abakanowicz saw monumental sculptures by Richard Serra, Daniel Buren, Dennis Oppenheim and Sol LeWitt. She had the impression that the park was becoming crowded, so she decided to install her sculptures on a field in the open air. Ten years later she commented: "KATARSIS – the decision came abruptly, in the way that excess must boil over. I seemed to be an onlooker, astonished by what was growing inside me, as though not with me and, removed outside, it swelled and took on force and personality"¹⁴.

In the traditions of Orphism and Pythagoreism, *catharsis* is an attempt to separate body from soul as much as possible. Plato was convinced that music was capable of purifying and liberating an impure soul, and Aristotle applied this theory in theatre. According to him, a tragedy may trigger purification from egoist passions through artistic and emotional experiences (*katharsis ton pathematon*). Freud, on the other hand, believed that reliving a traumatic situation under hypnosis might liberate the patient from unpleasant emotions that had accompanied it. Magdalena Abakanowicz has never confessed what kind of situation resurfaced in her memory when she was staying in Celle. The only hint is in the fact that the thirty-three figures, hollowed out on one side and reaching toward the sky like menhirs¹⁵, were called by her man-coffins...

¹³ Giuliano Gori was born in 1931. In June 1982 he launched a contemporary sculpture park in Villa Celle in Santomato di Pistoia in Tuscany, 26 kilometres away from Florence. More information: www.sculpture.org/documents/parksdir/p&g/gori/gori.shtml [Retrieved January 13, 2013].

¹⁴ See M. Abakanowicz, *Katarsis*, exhibition catalogue, p. 108.

¹⁵ The word *menhir* was adopted from French by 19th century archaeologists. It is a combination of two words found in the Breton language: *men* and *hir*. A *menhir* is a large upright standing stone. Menhirs may be found singly as monoliths, or as part of a group of similar stones. Their size can vary considerably,

Magdalena Abakanowicz was only 14 when she suffered the trauma of watching the glow of fires over the dying Warsaw Uprising. Leonard Sempoliński, who took part in the Warsaw Uprising, is the author of an exceptional album¹⁶ with photographs of the city taken in May 1945. Some of the pictures of buildings turned into ruins include charred bodies of people who were burned alive. Among the gloomy rubble, one can spot black stumps whose shape remarkably resembles *Katarsis* figures standing on the field in Celle. Perhaps this similitude is not just a coincidence? Does the gentle Tuscan sun have the power to liberate one from horrible memories, long carried in the subconscious, a burden that is difficult to shake off?

In the 1960s and early '70s Magdalena Abakanowicz delivered a series of enormous sculptural forms made out of natural fibers. These included *Abakans*, *Environments*, and *Penetrations*. The *Abakans*, the world's first three-dimensional woven structures, won her international fame and contributed to a change in the perception of the art of weaving. They encouraged many artists dealing with the fibre art to experiment with technological possibilities and with atypical materials. The artist herself has stressed on many occasions that the technique is of secondary significance, because it is only the concept and the final visual effect that matter: "Weaving as wall decoration has never interested me. I simply became extremely concerned with all that could be expressed through weaving: how to form the relief of the surface, how the mobile markings of horsehair will react and, finely, how this constructed surface can swell and burst, showing through the cracks its mysterious inside"¹⁷.

In the mid-1970s Abakanowicz made the first version of the *Crowd*. This indicated a radical shift from soft, thick materials to more durable and harder ones. Already in her previous sculpture groups, made from textile materials, it was visible that the artist was concentrating on formal solutions of a certain type. She was primarily interested in the dialogue between the inside and the outside, between the two sides of the artwork – the visible and the hidden one; between the positive and the negative, both in a literal sense and metaphorically. When groups of human and animal figures appeared in her works the empty space between them gained particular significance. According to Abakanowicz, this space is filled by our imagination that complements the world that surrounds us.

The first version of the *Crowd* signalled the artist's turn toward humanity's existential problems. These works owe their impact to their mass and accumulation; they appear to be collections of bizarre creatures. Headless human figures with a rough, unappealing surface, built from heavy, bulky forms, seem to be an incarnation of the carefully hidden human suffering. The bodies, deprived of any sexual connotations, appeal to the viewer in an ambivalent way: dislike for

but their shape is generally uneven and squared, often tapering towards the top. Menhirs are widely distributed across Europe, Africa and Asia, but are most numerous in Western Europe; in particular in Ireland, Great Britain and Brittany. They originate from many different periods across pre-history and they were erected as part of a larger megalithic culture that flourished in Europe and beyond.

¹⁶ E. Borecka, L. Sempoliński, *Warszawa 1945*, Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warsaw 1983.

¹⁷ See M. Abakanowicz, in text *Abakans*, exhibition catalogue, p. 22.

apparent ugliness is combined with delight over apt reflection on the condition of man exposed to group pressure. Let the artist speak:

I immerse in the crowd, like a grain of sand in the friable sands. I am fading among the anonymity of glances, movements, smells in the common absorption of air, in the common pulsation of juices under the skin. I become a cell of a boundless organism of the crowd like others already integrated and deprived of expression. Similar in our bone structure, in the construction of our brain, in sensitivity of our skin we are prone to emotions. Through hate and love we stimulate each other. Destroying each other we regenerate¹⁸.

The individual figures in Abakanowicz's anonymous crowds only appear to be identical. They are marked by an internal stiffness typical of people focused on their own problems, who with every move of hands or legs reveal suffering on the one hand and resistance to pain on the other. Just like an Asian yogi immediately notices our deeply coded traumas with his trained eye, the artist externalises our dilemmas and deficits that are invisible to the naked eye.

Abakanowicz prepared her most surprising, visionary project, *Vertical Green, Arboreal Architecture*¹⁹, for a 1991 competition, a development plan for Nanterre, a Paris suburb situated on the extension of the historical axis connecting the Louvre and the district of La Défense. She proposed to build sixty houses-trees, from 60 to 80 metres tall and with a diameter of 7-30 metres. The project was Abakanowicz's reaction to the architecture of La Défense that may delight with geometric excellence on the one hand and terrify with anonymity on the other.

In her bold proposal of *Arboreal Architecture*, Abakanowicz seems to enter dialogue with the concepts of Claude Lévi-Strauss presented in his most famous book *A Word on the Wane*²⁰. According to the French anthropologist, the city combines elements of the natural and the artificial. It is the outcome of biological procreation, organic evolution and aesthetic creation; it constitutes both an object of nature and a subject of culture. The city reflects individual and collective elements, the experienced and the dreamed ones. Unfortunately, according to Abakanowicz, over recent centuries, along with the progress of civilization, people have lost their former balance between instinct and mind. Man is the only living creature that builds artificial surroundings for himself. This increases his distance from nature. His environment is becoming a stone desert, an urban agglomeration located in the proximity of miserable parks. Introduction of art into this environment might provide a bridge between nature and the artificial surroundings built by man.

In order to save the cities, Abakanowicz suggests, urban structures should be reorganized, so that the existing disadvantages of the city could be compensated for. Of course, it is the artists whom she entrusts with the responsibility of seeking new solutions. However, caution is needed to prevent this from turning into the artificial insertion of decorations into a sick organism. Only radical actions can heal the situation. Introduction of greenery, oxygenation of

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 147.

¹⁹ This was one of two projects that won an award of distinction. An exhibition presenting the project was held at Kordegarda Gallery in Warsaw in the winter of 1994.

²⁰ C. Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes tropiques*, Plon, Paris 1955. First Polish edition: PIW, Warsaw 1960. Translated in English in 1973 by John Weightman and Doreen Weightman, translated also as *A Word on the Wane*.

urban agglomerations suffering from industrial pollution seems to be a necessity on the way to re-establishing the balance between the rhythm of nature and the rhythm imposed by modern civilization. The unimplemented project of *Arboreal Architecture* seems to be a utopia, but it was a bold attempt to change the patterns of thinking about urban planning and space in the city.

Magdalena Abakanowicz's art attracted the attention of international critics early on, already in the 1960s. Although created in very peculiar political conditions it seems to carry a universal message. It appeals to the sensitivity of Europeans, Asians, and Australians, as well as the people of North America. This is probably due to the fact that anyone can relate to it and interpret the works in their own way. But, as Ryszard Stanisławski, the long-standing and distinguished director of the Museum of Art in Łódź, has stressed on numerous occasions, perhaps what is most important is that Abakanowicz continues to tackle the issues of dignity and courage.

Translated by Agnieszka Zych
Edited by Maryann Chodkowski

Collection and Its Meaning

An Interview with Krzysztof Musiał

Ewa D. Bogusz-Bołtuć – *You are one of the foremost collectors of Polish art. You have a Polish background but, these days, you seem to rather be a citizen of the world. Why do you collect modern Polish art?*

Krzysztof Musiał – Even though I have lived abroad for some around 35 years, I have kept in touch with Poland and collecting Polish art is one on my ways of not losing my roots. On the other hand, I believe that I know Polish art best and, hence, I'm more competent in this field than in the contemporary art of any other country.

EBB – *When and why did you decide to collect Polish modern art? Often Polish collectors begin collecting art by gathering paintings with horses and uhlans, which are often regarded as typically Polish motifs. What were your beginnings as a collector?*

KM – I began with art from the region around Kielce. That's where I come from and so I bought because of sentimentality, mainly landscapes, souvenirs from my homeland. It didn't have the characteristics of a serious collection. The paintings, which I bought at the time, are not part of my current collection. They were bought haphazardly, as if by accident. It was only in the middle of the 1990's that I made a conscious decision to focus only on Polish art and create a complete collection. I knew it best and intuitively felt it. I began with the end of the 19th century, so from Boznańska, Pankiewicz, and Fałat, until I went into the 20th century and onwards to modern art. I have only one painting of Juliusz Kossak, but not a typical one, portraying horses. This one is an exception. It's his auto-portrait. He painted it when he was 23, while in Paris.

EBB – *Wiesław Ochman, a Polish tenor and art collector, in one of his interviews, mentioned that in European museums he is able to recognize Polish painters from the XIX century without reading the gallery labels. Do you think that there is a national specificity to Polish art?*

KM – I'm not as great a specialist in Polish XIX century art as Mr. Ochman is, but I guess I could say the same thing about art from the last 50-70 years. I could

easily recognize works by Fangor, Lebenstein, Opałka, Tarasin, Tarasewicz or Bałka, to name just a few, but, unfortunately, there aren't that many European museums exhibiting these artists. On the other hand, I wouldn't be able to tell a Sasnal from dozens of other similar artists.

I think that the 50's and 60's were the most interesting out of the second half of the 20th century. It was then that the most new things were being created. After the exhibit in Arsenal in 1955 Polish artists decided to abandon social realism, and choose their own path. That's when the best paintings by Dominik, Tarasin, Kobzdej or Bogusz were created. That's also when Fangor created his best paintings.

EBB – *However, you mentioned that these works are not being exhibited in European Museums and that they're not widely known outside of Poland. Ewa Izabela Nowak, an art critic active in both France and Poland, gave me a letter for you, and asked me to ask you one question, which touches upon this issue. The question reads as follows: Did you ever desire to contribute to promoting, showcasing or reminding people about one of the prominent artists from your collection, outside of Poland?*

KM – At the exhibition of Alina Szapocznikow, at MoMA, one work from my collection was being shown. I was also at the opening of that exhibit. However, I don't think that's the job of a private collector to promote Polish artists abroad. That's the job of governmental institutions, such as the Ministry of Culture or the Mickiewicz Institute. I have my own gallery, aTAK. There's art there that I appreciate, but I don't use it to promote my own collection. That's not my mission. However, I want to create an exhibit of art from my collection outside of Poland, but it probably wouldn't be an exhibit of just one artist. The curator will decide about the exact form of the exhibit, not me. I'm looking for a curator, and/or an institute, which would be interested in the subject. I will give them what I have. I will open my collection to them and I will say – 'create some scenario, think of something that make sense.' I don't fully grasp what would interest a viewer outside of Poland. The exhibition of works from my collection should be based on a person from there, not here, not by someone from Poland.

EBB – *And the second part of Ewa Izabela Nowak's question: Your gallery, aTAK, has a very good exhibit schedule and presents great, exceptional, artists. Wouldn't you want to present your gallery during one of the many renown European trade fairs?*

KM – There are a few Polish galleries, which regularly attend various art trade fairs and showcase worthwhile Polish artists. Of course, we could do that. I suppose that I haven't undertaken that endeavor for personal reasons. I live in Spain, but I manage a gallery in Warsaw. I travel to Warsaw once a month, for four or five days to keep an eye on the most important matters. Maybe, if

I lived in Warsaw I'd be more involved as a merchant. Besides that, promotion isn't a simple matter. Merely traveling to an art fair doesn't make an artist visible.

EBB – *Currently it's said that a more or less invisible art market decides about what is valuable, and the works of art themselves are only a pretext.*

KM – If you look carefully then you will know that this market is visible. It's known who decides about the price of art works. The connections between galleries and auction houses are well known. I'm not sure however, if it's possible for the art market to work differently. Often the works of efficient, but mediocre, artists reach astronomical prices. That is where an independent critic should step in and show the average collector or auction house buyer the value of the presented works of art.

EBB – *Is there any major aesthetic or artistic idea which guides your collection? How do you choose pieces to include in your collection? To what extent do you rely on experts' opinions?*

KM – What governs my purchasing is my personal admiration for a given work of art, and a conviction that it is a piece with high artistic value. How can I distinguish good art from bad? Well, I guess it's some basic knowledge of art history and a lot of experience. After years of visiting the world's best museums and examining thousands of works of art in auctions and galleries, one develops a "gut feeling", which makes it possible to tell what is good and what is not. Of course, this process is more complex but in a few words, that's how it works. As far as experts are concerned, I certainly listen to any advice I can get but, in the end, the decision is mine.

I wanted to create a holistic collection of art from the middle or end of the 19th century to today. I want to show what changes occurred in Polish art. If I've completely done it, I don't know. I know there are gaps in my collection. Of course that's my subjective opinion. Of course there are artists I value more than others. Some of the artists out of my collection I exhibit more often, because I think their works are more important.

EBB – *These days museums are bigger and more ambitious than ever, but, at the same time, some art theoreticians have expressed their skepticism about a museum's ability to preserve and convey to the public the meaning and understanding of a work of art. What kind of role would you see for a museum in the modern world?*

KM – Recently works from my collection have been presented in the Museum of the City of Łódź, The Poznański Palace. This is a very interesting situation. A public museum has designated an area where works from a private collection have been displayed – The Polish Masters Gallery. Paintings, drawings and sculptures from the collection of Krzysztof Musiał. Most of the older works from my collection are there, from 1850 to about 1940. Not all, but a significant

number. I transferred the works under a fixed deposit. The area where my works are being displayed has been renovated and remodeled by the city.

Only museums can assure continuity and the long term preservation of various artifacts. Individuals are not around long enough to fulfill that task. That's why so many splendid collections get split and sold in auctions. But, on the other hand, that's exactly how so many great pieces of art are made available for purchase and make their way into new collections.

EBB – *You share art you have collected with others and you sponsor a variety of artistic enterprises and activities. Why are these activities important to you?*

KM – I try to share my collection with as many people as I can, through various exhibitions organized by myself or through loans to different museums. I believe that sharing art that one has collected is a duty on the one hand and a source of pleasure and satisfaction, on the other.

Sponsoring artistic activities is a different matter. To me, the most rewarding are workshops for young artists, which I organize in Tuscany, Andalucía or Provence. And of course, it's not only that participants come and paint some landscapes, but that they visit all the major local museums and get acquainted with the region's culture and history and thus charge their batteries for years to come.

Even though I'm unable to have daily contact with all works in my collection (over 1,000 pieces), I have several hundred around me in my home. A large part of the remaining paintings or sculptures is on display in several major Polish museums, so at least other people can admire them. I'm not sure I have just one favorite work in my collection. But I certainly have my favorite core of 50-100 pieces with which I would not like to part. Also, having contact to artists helps enrich my buying experience, mainly on a personal and emotional level. Sometimes it also helps understand what is behind a given piece of art, to learn about its conception.

EBB – *Charles Saatchi says that today art critics are mercenaries, who write at the behest of collectors or auction houses. One can add, as if an excuse, that modern art has no criteria, thus judging a piece is extremely difficult. Do you need art critics?*

KM – I wouldn't fully agree with Saatchi's opinion. Of course, there are those critics who write according to the expectations of collectors or merchants but I wouldn't generalize. However, today it is really difficult to find a criteria list of what's good and what's bad. I'm somewhat traditional in focusing on painting and sculpture. However my younger acquaintances and artists often fret at painting. If they display their paintings, they want to also display photographs or videos. It seems they are convinced that if you don't exhibit art connected with new media you won't be taken seriously. Paintings seem *passé* for them. From my perspective, painting thankfully continues to exist. It won't disappear. Often an artist thinks that in photography or in video he has reached mastery.

I, in turn, often have the impression that it is something banal, something extremely average.

EBB – *Is there a certain type of art criticism that you're especially close to? Two different attitudes are represented by Rosalind Krauss and Jerry Saltz. Krauss describes his reaction to a work of art. She gives diary notes, including dreams, which were inspired by art works. Saltz evaluates works of art, and believes that only such an evaluative attitude, even if the evaluation is fallible and may need some corrections in the future, gives justice to the arts.*

KM – I agree more with the second approach. For me the role of an art critic is that of an educator. An art critic shouldn't write for his circle and art historians, or for refined collectors, because these already have their opinions basically formed. An art critic should show broader groups what is important and what is not, and be a guide to the art world. We definitely need art critics but must be 'critical' in our approach to what they are telling us.

EBB – *Jaakko Hintikka, a Finish philosopher and logician, told me once that he couldn't keep one of the works of art he has in the living room, simply because this work was too intense. Do you believe that art, or some pieces at least, can have such force that some viewers may wish to limit their contact with the given piece? Have you ever experienced something like that?*

KM – I must admit that I have never had this experience but I can imagine that sometimes some works of art may have this kind of influence on viewers. I often have the opposite feeling: I can't get enough of certain works of art.

Warsaw – 2013

contributors

David Carrier – taught philosophy in Pittsburgh and art history in Cleveland. Now an independent scholar, he has been a Getty Scholar, a Clark Fellow, and a Senior Fellow at the National Humanities Center. David Carrier's books include *Principles of Art History Writing* (1991); *Poussin's Paintings: A Study in Art-Historical Methodology* (1993); *High Art. Charles Baudelaire and the Origins of Modernism* (1996); *The Aesthetics of the Comic Strip* (2000); *Museum Skepticism: A History of the Display of Art in Public Galleries* (2006); and *A World Art History and its Objects* (2008). With Joachim Pissarro he is co-author *Wild Art: Art Outside the Art World* (Phaidon, 2013) and *The Blind Spots of Art History: How Wild Art Came to Be – and Be Ignored* (forthcoming).

Noël Carroll – a Distinguished Professor in the Philosophy Program of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. A past president of the American Society for Aesthetics, his recent books include *On Criticism*, *Art in Three Dimensions*, and *Living in an Artworld*. His book *Minerva's Night Out: Philosophy, Movies and Popular Culture* will be published by Wiley-Blackwell in September of 2013.

E. M. Dadlez – a professor of philosophy at the University of Central Oklahoma. She received her Ph.D. from Syracuse University. She writes on issues at the intersection (often at the collision) of aesthetics, ethics and epistemology. She has written two books on the preceding: *What's Hecuba to Him? Fictional Events and Actual Emotions* (Penn State Press 1997) and *Mirrors to One Another: Emotion and Value in Jane Austen and David Hume* (Wiley-Blackwell 2009), as well as numerous journal articles and book chapters. Dadlez is also a feminist ethics dilettante and occasional novelist. She has indulged in the composition of a mean-spirited academic satire (*The Sleep of Reason*) that lampoons higher education in America.

Simon Fokt – a graduate of University of Glasgow (2008, MA in Philosophy), University of St. Andrews (2009, MLitt, 2012 PhD in Philosophy) and Adam Mickiewicz University (2010, MA in Culture Studies), as well as a musician holding a diploma of F. Chopin Music School in Poznań. His work focuses on classification of art, aesthetic properties and art ontology, as well as exploring the borderlines of art and the aesthetic. His publications include "Constructive thoughts on Pierre Menard" (*Philosophy and Literature* 35.2, October 2011) and "Pornographic art – a case from definitions" (*British Journal of Aesthetics* 52.3, June 2012).

Dorota Folga-Januszewska – an art historian, museologist and art critic. She did her MA, PhD and habilitation at the University of Warsaw. During the years 1979-2008 she worked at the National Museum in Warsaw, first as an assistant, then as a curator, and eventually as an education and research director and a chief-director of the museum. A lecturer at Warsaw University and the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. Since 2008, a professor at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, a head of the Department of Art, Theory and Contemporary Museology, Art History Institute, 2011-2012 the Director of the newly established Institute of Museology CSWU. The author of the program and the initiator of a new program of study – Museology. The President of ICOM-Poland (2002-2008 and again from 2012), a founding member of the Central European ICOM Group. Since 2005, she is a member of an eight-member group of experts of the European Union for museums (Culture Unit). The author of over 250 books, catalogues, articles and studies in the field of art of the twentieth century, the theory of art and museology, and a curator of over 50 exhibitions.

James Grant – a lecturer in Philosophy at Birkbeck, University of London. His research interests include ethics, aesthetics, and the philosophy of language. His most recent

book, *The Critical Imagination* (Oxford University Press, 2013), is a study of metaphor, imaginativeness, art criticism, and their interrelations. His current work focuses on the theory of value and evaluation in criticism.

Iris Kapelouzou – an independent researcher and conference producer. In 2011 she completed her doctoral research on modern art conservation theory and ethics at the London Royal College of Art. Previously she studied conservation of antiquities and history of art in Greece and the UK, and spent a year in Oxford reading in aesthetics and applied ethics. She has lectured at graduate and undergraduate students, worked as a conservator, and conducted research at Tate Gallery for the 'Lost Art' project. She has published and presented papers in a range of subjects including systems approach, art, values, identity and change, codes of ethics, and key conservation concepts and principles.

Alicja Kuczyńska – a professor of philosophy and long-term head of the Department of Aesthetics at the Warsaw University. The founder of the half-yearly journal *Sztuka i Filozofia* ["Art and Philosophy"]. She has lectured in Canada, Israel, Italy, Germany, Bulgaria, Russia. She is the author of numerous articles and books, including *Filozofia i teoria piękna Marsilia Ficina* [Philosophy and theory of Art of Marsilio Ficino, 1970]; *Piękno, mīt, rzeczywistość* [Beauty, myth and reality, 1972, 1977]; *Przemiany wyobraźni. Z problemów recepcji kultury renesansu* [Changes of Imagination, 1970]; *Człowiek i świat. Wątki antropologiczne w poetykach włoskiego renesansu* [Man and World. Anthropological trends in poetics of Italian Renaissance, 1976]; *Wzory modne w życiu codziennym* [Fashion as Pattern in everyday life, 1983, 1988]; *Sztuka jako filozofia w kulturze renesansu włoskiego* [Art as Philosophy in Italian Renaissance, 1988]; *Piękny stan melancholii: filozofia niedosytu i sztuka* [The Beautiful State of Melancholia: philosophy of "the lack" and art, 1999]. She is the editor and co-author of 10 books in philosophical aesthetics.

Krzysztof Musiał – an alumnus of the Warsaw University of Technology, as well as the prestigious business school INSEAD in Fontainebleau. Since 1979 he has worked in France, Germany, England and the USA. In the years 1990-2001, he had managed his own company, ABC Data in Warsaw, which was one of the leaders on the Polish computer market. For years he has sponsored various art endeavors, both domestically and abroad. He owns an extensive collection of Polish paintings, drawings and sculptures. A member of the Foundation for Polish Modern Art in Warsaw and Social Council of the Museum of Art in Łódź.

Ewa Izabela Nowak – an art critic and a freelance curator of contemporary art. She studied painting at the Department of Fine Arts in Warsaw (graduated in 1993), she continued to study art in E.S.A.A. "Duperre" in Paris (1993-1996) and at Department of Fine Arts of the University of Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne (1995-1999). She was a scholarship recipient of the French Government as well as the Stefan Batory Foundation. She completed her PhD in aesthetics and art theory, on the relationship between art and politics, in 2008. She is interested in contemporary art, and any areas connected with it. Since 2001, she has worked regularly with Polish and French journals devoted to art, photography, and architecture.

Wojciech Włodarczyk – an art historian. A professor and Dean of the Management of Visual Culture Department at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. He specialises in contemporary Polish art and the relationships between art and politics. He is the Chairman of the Polish Association of Art Historians.

notes for contributors

We inform all prospective contributors to „Art and Philosophy“ (*Sztuka i Filozofia*) about our preferences concerning texts submitted for publication:

1. Articles submitted should not exceed 22 pages of normal typescript e.g. 1800 characters per page. Reviews should be no more than 8 pages long.
2. All notes in the article should be footnotes in accordance with the style used in the last volumes of *Sztuka i Filozofia*. Additional texts such as mottos should also be accompanied by footnote with all bibliographical data. Examples of footnotes: B. Wallraff, *Word Court: Wherein Verbal Virtue Is Rewarded, Crimes against the Language Are Punished, and Poetic Justice Is Done*, Harcourt, New York 2000, p. 34.
3. Authors are advised to submit two printed copies and a computer disc when sending by post or an electronic version (formatted most preferably in MS Word, or Open Office) to: sztuka.wfis@uw.edu.pl.
4. We remind authors to enclose information about their current academic affiliation and position, including postal address, email address and telephone number.
5. A short summary (up to 200 words) and keywords should also be provided.
6. *Sztuka i Filozofia* reserves the rights to make additional changes in texts submitted when necessary. Materials sent will not be returned.

acknowledgment

Countess Karolina Lanckorońska, an art historian, of an ancient and noble Polish family, established The Lanckoroński Foundation in 1967. For many years The Lanckoroński Foundation has been granting funds to Polish causes. Editors of Art and Philosophy ("Sztuka i Filozofia") offer their gratitude to Zygmunt Tyszkiewicz, the President of the Lanckoroński Foundation and the Board of the Foundation for their assistance with publishing the special issue of the journal. Without their support it would not be possible.

Karolina Lanckorońska

Not until the year 2000 did Karolina Lanckorońska, then aged 102, give permission for her war memoirs, written in 1945, to be published in Poland, where they had an immediate success and won a prestigious prize. Beautifully translated by the late Noël Clark and with a thoughtful and moving preface by Eva Hoffman, the book is now available in English. It is a gripping page-turner and a testament to the human capacity for evil and for transcending it. Its subject is the suffering of the Polish people and the dismemberment of their nation.

Lanckorońska's account is factual, almost journalistic, relating all that she saw and experienced. It begins with the invasion by the Soviet Russian army of Lwów (now Lviv in Ukraine), then a major Polish city, where Karolina was Professor of Fine Art at the university.

She escapes to Cracow in Nazi controlled Poland. There she works openly for the Red Cross and for its Polish Committee, (tolerated by the German occupiers), which distributes food, medicines and blankets to prisoners held in German-run gaols. This work allows her to tour extensively throughout Nazi-occupied southern Poland, gathering information which she passes to the clandestine Polish Home Army of which she is a secret member.

Inevitably, the Germans suspect her. She is arrested in May 1942, and interrogated by the Gestapo chief in Stanisławów, Hans Krüger. He cannot understand how Lanckorońska whose mother was a German aristocrat, could remain loyal to Poland. Krüger does his best to break her and loses control of himself when she stands firm. He boasts that it was on his orders that some 25 Lviv University professors, all former colleagues of Karolina, had been brutally murdered after the Germans attacked the Soviet occupiers of that city. Karolina knows that Krüger would never have confessed to this crime if he did not intend shortly to put her to death.

What Krüger does not know is that influential people, among whom the Italian Royal Family and the head of the International Red Cross will plead to Himmler on her behalf. Furthermore, Walter Kutschmann, a senior member of the SS who hates Krüger, gets Karolina to write her account of the latter's confession and sends it to the Gestapo high command in Berlin, resulting in

Krüger's arrest and trial, not for murder of course, but for informing a Polish prisoner of Nazi responsibility for that crime.

Karolina's life is spared, but she is sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany. Her account of life in this camp is a tribute to the ability of human beings to survive even the most horrendous treatment. It is also a stark reminder of how, in our modern and supposedly civilised society, man's cruelty to man can know no bounds. Her character sketches of prison inmates and guards from diverse countries and backgrounds are a memorable aspect of the book.

Karolina is fortunate in that she has an iron constitution which helps her survive starvation and stave-off fatal disease. She is sustained by deep religious faith and a love of literature and of the arts. She gives lectures on Michelangelo and on the Renaissance to fellow prisoners. She comforts the so-called "Rabbits", young women used by Gestapo doctors for foul, unethical medical experiments. She reminds herself that Germany, despite the brutality of the Nazis, had produced great authors, artists and composers. She firmly believes in the ultimate triumph of good over evil.

After her release from the camp, Karolina admitted to a priest that all through the war, when reciting the Lord's Prayer, she could not bring herself to say the words "as we forgive those who trespass against us", because she could not forgive the German and Russian invaders of Poland, and did not wish to lie to God. The priest replied "Do not worry. We all did that".

As the last surviving member of the Lanckoroński family, Karolina was sole heir to their great fortune, held mainly in Austria and therefore not lost to the Communists after the war. She could have settled into a life of luxury. Instead, she lived modestly in Rome and used her money to create the Lanckoroński Foundation. She devoted the whole of her long life to the promotion and defence of Polish culture and assistance to Poles in need. The Foundation continues this work. Her large collection of paintings, among which two splendid Rembrandts, she donated to the Polish nation in 1994. They can be seen at the Royal Castle in Warsaw and in the Wawel Museum in Cracow.

*Zygmunt Tyszkiewicz,
President, Lanckoroński Foundation*

"MICHELANGELO IN RAVENSBRUCK: One woman's war against the Nazis"

By: Countess Karolina Lanckorońska, Translated by Noël Clark, with a preface by Eva Hoffman

Published by Da Capo Press



1. Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Seated Figures*
1974-79, figures: burlap and resin, pedestal: steel
Whole sculpture: 145×47×75 cm
Sydney Lewis Collection, Richmond, Virginia
Second group in National Museum, Wrocław.
Courtesy of Magdalena Abakanowicz



2. Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Arboreal Architecture*
Project for enlargement of the Grande Axe of Paris 1991.
International competition organized by Paris authorities.
Courtesy of Magdalena Abakanowicz



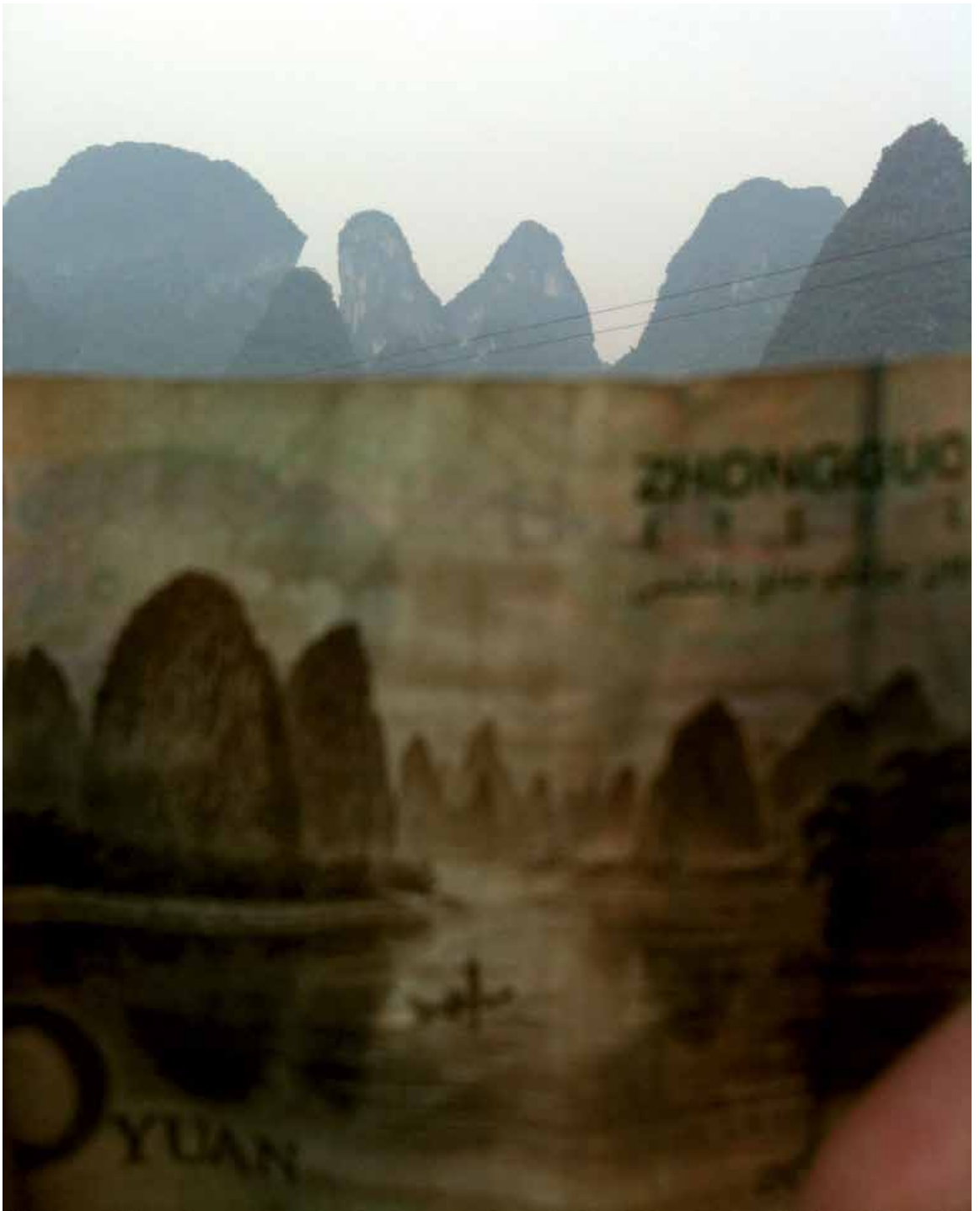
3. Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Katarsis*
1985, bronze, 33 figures
each ca. 270×100×50 cm
Collection: Giuliano Gori, "Spazi d'Arte", Italy.
Courtesy of Magdalena Abakanowicz



4. Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Agora*
2005-2006, iron, 106 figures 285-295×95-100×135-145 cm
Permanent installation in Grant Park, Chicago
Courtesy of Magdalena Abakanowicz



5. Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Yellow Abakan and Black Environment*
1970-1975, sisal weaving on metal support, 300×300×50 cm
Collection: National Museum in Wrocław
Courtesy of Magdalena Abakanowicz



6. David Carrier, *Against Semiotics*

The photograph was taken in Guilin. It shows the representation of the mountains on the Chinese currency right against the real mountains. It is called *Against Semiotics* to note that, contrary to what semioticians seem to claim, in fact the mountains look like their visual representation!

Courtesy of David Carrier



7. Krzysztof Musiał's study
Courtesy of Krzysztof Musiał



8. Alina Szapocznikow, *Ponytail (Portrait of a Mexican woman)* 1956, gypsum/plaster, 45×20×38 cm. Recently included in the exhibition: *Alina Szapocznikow: Sculpture Undone, 1955-1972*, October 7, 2012 – January 28, 2013, MoMA.
Krzysztof Musiał Collection. Courtesy of Krzysztof Musiał