

## THE PROCESSUALITY OF ART

Contemporary creative activities do not conform to the traditional model of art and its theoretical methods of analysis. The concepts that were used in the study of traditional aesthetics, such as: beauty, a work of art, artistic experience and creative inspiration are inconsistent with today's thinking about art. As Bogusław Jasiński notes: 'art tries not to be "art" by creating it as if it is directly part of everyday life'.<sup>1</sup> The change in the role of art is related to its new way of functioning in today's society. The processual participation of a creator and a viewer in the creation of reality does not only consist of exhibiting works, but also of interfering with current affairs. In art that goes beyond traditional aesthetics, an artist's attitude towards initiating actions changes significantly. The destruction of the paradigm of art is related to the abandonment of the rules of traditional aesthetics, which expresses itself immanently towards the outside world through the developed rules of imaging. It is replaced by a creative strategy based on practical and direct action, which does not consist of creating aesthetic qualities recognised in the art world, nor is it involved in criticising them, but it has a real impact on society. By focusing on the complexity of human behaviour, and not on setting an ideal goal – a desire detached from reality – it makes the empirical world appear as dynamic and reformable and not as a fixed and unchanging order. The abandonment of the existing, permanent, ossified system makes it possible to focus on the genesis of a fact and its connections with others, and also allows for a critique of the reified temporality.<sup>2</sup> Going beyond the aesthetic immanence is connected with the way of acting characteristic of reactionary artistic practice. Rebellion and negation, as the

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<sup>1</sup> Bogusław Jasiński, *Twórczość a sztuka. Wprowadzenie do estetyki procesów twórczych*, Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1989, p. 9 (all quotes from non-English sources are my translations).

<sup>2</sup> For more see: Bogusław Jasiński, *Estetyka realizmu György Lukácsa i jej przesłanki filozoficzne*, Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1984.

characteristic attitudes in establishing new artistic models, were often used by avant-garde artists. 'These conventions were changing, transforming into others faster and faster, and this is how we observed, particularly at the end of the nineteenth century, how various phenomena were simultaneously applied to the artistic net, leading to the clash of these phenomena, conflicts and fights.'<sup>3</sup> The progressive 'relativisation of creative attitudes'<sup>4</sup> and the greater atomisation of art led to the emergence of 'separate artistic positions',<sup>5</sup> which represented the idea that 'each artist creates their own specificity'.<sup>6</sup> This allowed art to blend into reality and made it pointless to divide creativity into material and non-material, into theory and practice. This also weakened the criterion of the inventiveness of art. In this situation, the distancing from everyday life characteristic of the 'artworld'<sup>7</sup>, as understood by Arthur C. Danto, began to function in a changed formula. In addition to artistic activism, a strategy aimed at commodifying a work of art emerged in art. Creative searches based on the institutional-market system do not seek to completely change the social functions of art. They usually form common aesthetic propositions within an inviolable homogeneous system.

Due to the attempt to maintain the traditional model of art, reality must perversely come true. An image is organised according to traditional canons, based on the distance to life, enabling the creation of solutions that often become idealised and thus unrealistic. As a result, art is considered a manifestation of comfort and luxury, and is treated as decoration and entertainment. This apparent anti-art is replaced by a fusion of creativity and everyday life, which has a positive effect on lifestyle. In this case, the creative process contributes to

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<sup>3</sup> Jerzy Ludwiński, *Perspektywy krytyki artystycznej*, [in:] *Sztuka w epoce postartystycznej i inne teksty*, Poznań: Akademia Sztuk Pięknych w Poznaniu, Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych we Wrocławiu, 2009, p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur C. Danto, 'The Artworld', *Journal of Philosophy* LXI, 571-584, 1964.

socialisation (the art of participation). It consists of going beyond the particularity of an individual towards general values directly related to everyday life. Then 'you create without thinking about creating',<sup>8</sup> and the teleologicality related directly to setting a goal is combined with causality, which has a large impact on the creative process. As a consequence, the subject-object division that separates being from thinking is lost.<sup>9</sup> The new approach to creativity merges the form and content of a work of art:

For the work of art ought to bring a content before the mind's eye, not in its generality as such, but with this generality made absolutely individual, and sensuously particularized. If the work of art does not proceed from this principle, but sets in relief its generalized aspect with the purpose of abstract instruction, then the imaginative and sensuous aspect is only an external and superfluous adornment, and the work of art is a thing divided against itself, in which form and content no longer appear as grown into one.<sup>10</sup>

According to this idea, creativity always refers to a specific cultural space, to a complex social phenomenon. Its impact on the changing reality shortens the distance between art and everyday life. It enables the shaping of social relations, as well as (but not exclusively) contemplating the 'artificially separated object of cognition'.<sup>11</sup>

Practical creativity in everyday life does not mean that the visual message is degraded, nor does it weaken the interpretative complexity of artistic activity and its means

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<sup>8</sup> Bogusław Jasiński, *Twórczość a sztuka. Wprowadzenie do estetyki procesów twórczych*, Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1989, p. 82.

<sup>9</sup> By maintaining the dichotomy, one ultimately favours theoretical idealistic thought.

<sup>10</sup> G. Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, London: Penguin, 2004, online version; no pagination: [https://books.google.pl/books?id=c\\_XLms\\_IFHcC&printsec=frontcover&dq=hegel,+Lectures+on+aesthetics&hl=pl&sa=X&redir\\_esc=y#v=snippet&q=generality&f=false](https://books.google.pl/books?id=c_XLms_IFHcC&printsec=frontcover&dq=hegel,+Lectures+on+aesthetics&hl=pl&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=snippet&q=generality&f=false) (accessed on 17 February 2022).

<sup>11</sup> Bogusław Jasiński, *Twórczość a sztuka. Wprowadzenie do estetyki procesów twórczych*, Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1989, p. 174.

of expression, but it makes a change to art, which consists of 'a new way of being acquired by artistic phenomena, and not in the possession of aesthetic qualities by works of art'.<sup>12</sup> Sculptural, painting or graphic values in creative activities become important when attention is focused not on an object itself, but on the impact it has on social space. Replacing the traditionally understood work with the processuality of action suspends the division into an idea and the way in which it is implemented.

The creative process requires taking account of contexts. Thus, a multi-element message is created whose individual parts (including circumstances, time and spatial conditions) can change the meaning of a work of art. Practice and theory are combined, drawing attention to an exhibition. This makes it difficult to delineate the specific boundaries of a work of art and thus makes it impossible to treat it as an object, event or action.<sup>13</sup>

Hence, defining a work of art:

... is something uncertain, because... we consider only the last act of the creative process, that is, one moment in the entire creative process, which is something immeasurably broader than what we call a work of art and we even realise that what we understand behind the concept of a work of art, an image that is an object existing in space, in a specific material, or even an event existing in time, is actually a special case, some single moment of the creative process.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 248.

<sup>13</sup> In museums, works of art are reconstituted to some extent. For more see: *Muzeum sztuki. Antologia*, Maria Popczyk (ed.), Kraków: Universitas, 2005; John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, New York: Penguin, 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Jerzy Ludwiński, *Funkcja i znaczenie galerii nieoficjalnych*, [in:] *Sztuka w epoce postartystycznej i inne teksty*, Poznań: Akademia Sztuk Pięknych w Poznaniu, Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych we Wrocławiu, 2009, p. 33.

The connection of a here-and-now event with general social laws – rules, systems and historical genesis – is reorganised each time in new spatial and temporal conditions.<sup>15</sup> As a consequence, each creative interference subjectively reveals socially important issues. By intensifying the reality, a multi-element action indicates a social problem, but does not necessarily solve it as a whole. It becomes important not only how the world should be changed, but whether it can be changed at all.<sup>16</sup>

Currently, creative activity in art is aimed at implementing objectlessness, and not at objectifying the objectless. Processuality becomes a method that stops reification and its consequences, including the alienation of a human being.<sup>17</sup> The departure from the fetishisation and reification of art is connected not only with ephemerality, but also has a culture-forming role. As a result, it becomes important to socialise art so that it takes into account the space of everyday life that is being shaped here and now. The contextual nature of social creative activities inhibits the emergence of narrow specialisations which, on the one hand, influence the improvement of skills and, on the other, reify and limit the development of an artist's personality.<sup>18</sup> The barren personality resulting from passion in its specialised devotion to something individual, which only in the imagination of the subject is

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<sup>15</sup> For more see: György Lukács, *The Ontology of Social Being*, Vol. 2, London: Merlin Press, 1978.

<sup>16</sup> Bogusław Jasiński, *Twórczość a sztuka. Wprowadzenie do estetyki procesów twórczych*, Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1989, p. 379.

<sup>17</sup> Alienation creates problems that are often solved in a transcendent manner. They do away with development and process. This leads to distortions in the interpretation of reality and negative consequences. 'And there are still many to whom it has not yet occurred that the only truly consistent thought-form of such a conception of a superhistorical substance of national character is – race-theory. From Gobineau through Chamberlain to Hitler and Rosenberg, this conception predominates'. *The Culture of People's Democracy: Hungarian Essays on Literature, Art, and Democratic Transition, 1945–1948*, S. Budgen et al. (eds.), p. 247.

<sup>18</sup> In order to rule out any distorting simplifications, it must be stated that, naturally, at the level of particularity, in the course of the expansion and improvement of the social division of labour, a certain type of personality must also be created, on the same social path on which individual abilities are developed. ... It is enough to think about bureaucrats, frozen in their routine, about careerists and bootlickers, about domestic tyrants and so on, who not only accept these properties as components of their own personalities, but, thanks to these features, and not in spite of them, are also considered individualities by the environment'. Cf. György Lukács, *The Ontology...*, p. 1003.

considered to be 'an issue' in our sense, the subject itself most often becomes stunted by specialising in some domain to the point of being weird.<sup>19</sup> The complex structure of creative activities is based on the diversity of the outside world. A creator makes a choice, and does not compulsively duplicate reality. They select what is important for society through participation and involvement in the work. It is only from these multifaceted interactions between individuals and society that a person can emerge as a real, that is, processually existing, personality.<sup>20</sup>

Idealistic features and utopias in art that are useful in reforming reality may arise when they are anchored in the concrete existence of specific people in specific social situations<sup>21</sup> and when they rise beyond their own particularity.<sup>22</sup> The departure from subjective experiences is related to the criticism of the existing everyday life and the real possibilities of its development. A creator's participation in changing reality – aimed at improving the existing status quo, regulating the relationship of an individual with society – enables the shaping of individuality and contributes to self-improvement. Thus, it makes it possible to give more to others.

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 1006.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 1041.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 889.

<sup>22</sup> Public opinion, both that objectively expressed and that spontaneously spreading in everyday life... works towards making the particularity of man not only something insurmountable, but even more, something most desirable, but also in everyday life, they give it the form of some fetish, some taboo not subject to criticism. All of this aims to crush people's resistance to their own alienation. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 998.