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## **ART – AESTHETIC AND CRITICAL POTENTIAL OF INNOVATIVENESS**

*The article presents point of view on the modern art as the field for innovations of the artists. The author critically describes main features of the modern art, investigates its background, analyse its main techniques and finds the place of “the new” in the art.*

**Keywords:** modern art, innovations, novelty, aesthetics.

**Problem statement.** For the modern man “*the new*” has become intriguing not only because of expansive (and compulsive) character of cognition but also in the context of existing aesthetization processes. It is not known if the desire for “*the new*” originally contributed to the modification of aesthetic criteria, or aesthetic perspective prejudged of innovativeness charm – what is important is that the criterion of originality, apart from strengthening of creation of newer and newer class of objects dynamics, has led to distancing oneself towards something which is traditional and routine generating a critical potential of a discourse.

It has also been noticed that the alluring *novelty* had started to oust a banal monument – growing dynamics of civilization changes caused that disproportion between the innovative and original and this which is the ordinary and stereotyped has increased. Faster and faster “getting old” of some objects, which the man is surrounded by, has become another phenomena which is symptomatic and assisting the chase for innovativeness. The time when they stay attractive is shorter and shorter – as a consequence they become redundant earlier. It happens before they stop being useful, before they become completely used and obsolete. In place of them there appear newer objects – not necessarily more original or unconventional – and therefore desired.

**Previous research.** The problem of modern art was highlighted in works of such scholars as Barthes R., Bauman Z., Bürger P., Douglas M., Clair J., Rancierre J., Welsch W., but still the issue of innovativeness and aesthetic in moder art was not studied enough so it needs further and more detailed review.

**The main aim** of the paper is to describe critically main features of the modern art, to investigate its background, to analyse its main techniques and to find the place of “the new” in the art.

**Main body.** Innovation polarizes therefore the area of things separating what is original from what is up-to-date and these objects which retain their value, functionality and attractiveness from those which independently of their physical features are becoming useless. In this way a part of objects receive the status of unnecessary surplus, waste – and so their story comes to an end.

As a result of such dynamic changes, satisfaction which was connected with possession of some class of objects has transformed into distress resulting from discovering of their status’ instability – liquidity connected with not with using up

but with the change of context in which they function. The pressure of innovation has therefore increased a discomfort of communion with these objects. This ambivalent character of redundant things has decided about inconvenience connected with using them.

However – which was pointed out by Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger* – not always everything which is becoming ambiguous, as a result of dynamics and modification of use, must be repulsive or troublesome for us. The distress which is conventionally bound with such a situation may be replaced by some kind of aesthetic satisfaction, when related to not articulated forms [6, p. 78–79]. That kind of objects is found in the field of reflection of new art, which has therefore found another aesthetic niche.

Modern art seems to have a basis just on this which is ambiguous, arise from the experience of maladjustment, disorder or original discomfort. And its interest in the subjects pushed aside at the margin of life may bear in itself, apart from aesthetic, also critical potential, because again it makes trouble for easily accepted polarization of the world. At the same time, art would confirm its innovative power – would arise from the same pressure of looking for *the new* (as unconventional and attractive), which profiles modern culture. However, it would not prejudge the status of objects, reaching for even those which have become outdated and redundant. As a consequence, this would be make it different from other forms of activity because such an attitude would not only oblige to constant redefining of objects' status but would also generate creativity and critical caution (alertness), reaching for the background of used requisites of modern culture.

Artist, creating a work of art out of useless things, may draw from this seemingly unattractive and barren part of the world, may bestow a form to something that has already lost it as a result of ordering strategies. She or he is able to extract new content out of what is redundant – in this way, he/she may make the object of reflection out of what has been marginalised. In this sense art is a critical activity. We can also formulate it, as Mary Douglas does, as a renewing of the system, restoring what is ordinary and unnecessary to the ritual as well as another change – through aesthetical frame – the status of objects *out of place*<sup>1</sup>. At the same time exposing of “consumed” objects, unnecessary, which only express instability and redundancy with their condition, and placing them again in the area of significant artefacts is becoming a creative activity.

However, such a reversal must be accompanied by a new set of artistic means. Hence, there is an increasing interest of modern artists in reaching for ready products, modifying the existing forms, using of casual materials, mixing any components, stratifying or combining, using the remnants, scraps and fragments. This *recycling* has become, however, not only introduction of redundant objects again in the space of culture but also polemic exhibition of instability and conventionality of their status. In general, artists using this arsenal of new means do not cover the original form of used objects leaving them legible, recognizable

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<sup>1</sup> One should remember that objects highly valued before, like literary texts, works of art or inventions status may also be entitled such a status.

although they are the components of other structures giving a new meaning to them.

The sources of such artistic attitudes should be searched for in the area of avant-garde art. Its protest, aimed at the previous reception standards and therefore transforming critically a modernistic norm of not engaged creation and dominant artistic and aesthetic stereotypes, was the first of symptoms of a new situation. It concerned what was conventional and not attractive – to any canon. In this sense violation of traditional order has become an expression of protest against fossilized artistic conventions and also stability of social order and revealed mechanisms of power. It was also located in the frames of postulated broadening of freedom space.

At the same time the way in which artists perceive the surrounding world has changed. There has been stressed the diffusion of modern life and destabilization connected with it, liquefying which achieves the shape of late modern ambivalence. They have already demanded consolidating and synthesizing actions. It was originally thought that art may provide such consolidating strategy, that we can restore in its area the lost unity of existence even if it would be realized only in the area of imaginative performances. However, trust towards constructive power of artistic practices has disturbed the experience of cultural consequences of such unifying actions. After all, artistic transformation might also be perceived as violating of things' durability, liquefying of its status, depriving of unequivocal foundation.

Such strategy was meant to serve successive destruction of traditional image of art and existing reception habits. It has enabled the access to not only various ways of expression for the artists but also previously marginalized matter – mass produced goods, forgotten texts, deserted objects have made the work of art constructed with them a problem.

An earlier dominant tendency was, as Peter Bürger noticed, a desire to present the whole even if it was not directly available and one could only assume its existence on the basis of the revealed fragment. The fragment represented at the same time the wholeness – as if announcing it. An avant-garde artist longed for something different – uniting, compiling and collocating of extracts was leading him/his to such a reinterpretation in which one would not find a place for the wholeness and the meaning was associated with the part [4, p. 90]. To make such a reinterpretation, the very matter had to be treated by an avant-garde artist in a different way. Traditionally, the meaning was searched for in it – now the meaning has been implanted by composing, connecting or putting source neutral elements together.

Thereby, artistic universum has revealed fragmentation and dispersion along with exposed episodic character of existence. It refers to fine arts as well as literature or the culture of sound. In this way durability and stability, deeply rooted in modern discourses, have been displaced. Up till now durability of things surrounding the man has guaranteed constancy and stability of the world. Modern culture directed towards attractiveness of novelty and episodic character of presence has disturbed this apparent balance.

Such liquefying, destabilization and as a consequence confusion forced to look for new and more reliable tools of regulation in order to regain power over resistant matter of the world, re-ordering and capturing of the lost territory. It extorted the increase of inner mechanisms of control and led to much clear pressure of ordering of life space, achieving a repressive character. At the same time technological development, appearance of new tools and common access to them have determined the quality of participation in culture.

Although these processes have largely been connected with the flow of information, they also influenced the change of art perception's model and significant transformation of modern artistic reality. Technological progress has also been correlated with artistic workshop and results in constituting of a new creative attitude as well as receiving one being a symptom of deeper changes in anthropological sphere. The ability to use new communication and processing devices has become indispensable in active participation in culture. It was to be accompanied by the knowledge concerning functioning of these devices and possibilities and ways of its use. Creative use of these new means has largely resolved to processing of the content, processing of available elements and also edition, which in artistic space means using of technical apparatus used to record, reproduction and distribution both of the pictures and words and sounds.

Art is undergoing a metamorphosis similar to that of a whole social space but all tensions, dilemmas, controversies in its area gain a special – as it is aesthetically framed – attitude. Simultaneously, it has to be noticed that the very way of perceiving of art has changed. For the activities described, the work of art's status has changed, as well as position of the artist and as a result of aesthetic and artistic modifications – the situation of the recipient.

The aesthetics of creative assimilation and processing, which has been constituted at a new position of both creator and preceptor required therefore a new look at the role of the artist and “consumer” of art. Changed, traditionally leading role of the creator and an author of the work of art, until now superior to a passive recipient, had to be redefined because of an active character of the latter. He/she has become an equal participant of culture and aesthetic reproduction. Mastering of new technologies and common access to them along with broadening of media repertoire have not only multiplied the potential of artists but also gave the recipients a possibility of active participation in culture, increasing their creative opportunities, allowing for a critical reference, their own comment and statement. Therefore in the range of competences of modern culture participant there are orientation and selection, the need of a critical approach to the received contents – creation, however, similarly to any cultural activity, has become an establishing of significant order. In this way evoking, referring or copying have been assimilated as tactics of appropriation and reorganization of this territory.

As I have already pointed out modern artistic strategies, which are largely based on processing, have been elaborated by modern authors. They were originally aimed against academic understanding of art. An avant-garde artist was more of an experimenter, constructor than an inspired creator, and his art, radical

in form, was to perform important social tasks. The artist has elaborated a new form of unlimited work of art, based on a novelty which is abolishing and reinterpreting the canon, which was looking for its originality in reconstruction. This form was contrasted with modernistic and organic work of art which – as Peter Bürger noticed [4, p. 92] – camouflaged the source of creation trying to suggest some universal order with its totality.

The idea of unlimited work of art was a consequence of appearing of new avant-garde means of expression, inspired by science, civilization and technological progress. It helped to redirect the attention, exposing the elements which were ignored until now. Hence, using the fragment of the work of art already functioning in the artistic circle as a matter of new creation has been considered as original artistic strategy.

Nowadays, there is no indignation at realizations which base on borrowing and processing of elements extracted from the world of art, and compounded on the rule of assembling and compiling of a selected parts. They may originate from the area of so called high culture as well as from this degraded class of objects meaning “hollow”, which constitute common things or redundant ones. Work of art created in such a way may have a revitalizing character – serve as a refreshment, reminder of old contents, themes, motifs, forms, styles, works.

One can use this strategy as a form of reinterpretation – then new qualities are created, previous forms gain new contexts, new arrangements which often take on rebellious character in relation to the original meaning. This recontextualization brings critical content which might be helpful to overcome the borders, leaving tradition and conventional way of thinking.

A radical form of such artistic practices is “provocative” reduction of source content – this way of processing in which the prototype, original undergoes its effacing. In this case not only aesthetic but also ethical or even formal and legal status of such realizations is becoming problematic.

However, modern culture has established such a model of life in which manipulating which demonstrates its creative power in assembling and constructing, has drawn our attention, in a tricky way, from pejorative meaning combined with this notion. What is more, its aesthetic dimension has received a common approval, confirming, at the same time, some social valorization. In this way operational sense hiding behind this notion has somehow reduced its psychological or also social and technical context – any political or ethical consequences have been reduced to pragmatic sphere of expected profits, while manual aspect (dexterity, ability to use tools and efficiency) have neutralized suspicions of persuasion, misleading, indoctrination. Therefore, attractiveness of innovation has covered this ethical or political dimension.

Only deconstructing of original context of manipulation has started revealing critical potential of artistic manifestation. They were uncovered as manipulative procedures of cultural output’s reproduction and phenomena serving dynamic multiplication and enriching of social life space. At the same time these technologically mediated artistic strategies have become an effective way of

accustoming of hybridic nature of cultural reality. They have enabled filtering and selecting of meanings.

This common manipulative tendency to construct and compose a new order, placing itself not only in the area of artistic practices, is also accompanied by decomposing, having a subversive potential, introducing the elements behind its context in the area of ordered form, and which is incoherent, incongruous disturbing the inner order. However, one can understand these attempts of destabilization also as a specific aesthetic test in which redundant, chaotic or accidental things are to make a recipient of refined modern art and literature sensitive again or to sublimate his/her taste. One can – as by Jean Clair [5, p. 32–33] – describe these practices as nearly homeopathic anaesthetic therapy, anesthetizing at what is unattractive, tasteless, or simply repulsive. Then, things which in social space would reveal the need of order by exposing incoherent redundant elements would correlate with aesthetic desire for attractiveness and satisfaction.

Art and literature would be in such a comfortable situation that their imaginative – or as by Jacques Rancière, “phantasmagoric” [7, p. 98–99] – power would enable to isolate the chosen fragments of reality and modify established hierarchies. However, it has nothing to do with illusiveness but rather a specific distance and aesthetic framing which is enabled by artistic practice, exposing at the same time and critically transforming reality. One can also, referring to Roland Barthes’s suggestion [1, p. 12–13], appoint “two edges” for a modern work of art – the first one: learned, reproductive, reaching for the canon and the second one: rebellious, destructive and liquefied, abolishing any ready pattern.

Hence, such a work of art would be placed between indicated borders (“edges”), ensuring a pleasure of communing with them. However, the affirmative pleasure would be opposed to subversive delight, which would be placed not on the side of dialectics of repetition and rupture but opposing the old to *the new*, ousting of sentiment for past achievements and desire for an absolute innovativeness<sup>2</sup>. Therefore *the new* would be an escape from stereotype and repetitiveness of the language of power [1, p. 58–60], from the pleasure to repressed delight. As Barthes points out, repetitiveness deprives things from charm (magic) and that is why the power of delight is combined with *the novelty* and the rule of modification.

Yet, does any repetition annihilate magic aura shrouding originally the world of objects? However, on the other hand, all artistic strategies referring to assembling of the work of art out of *ready made* fragments, evoking past contexts, revealing hidden dependencies which resemble some magic practices. The same analogy is also pointed out by Jean Clair, when he notices the traces of original magic in compiling works of art out of remnants, scraps, *mana* which would serve to again submit resistant reality [5, p. 48–49]. In this way magic could help to recreate a

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<sup>2</sup> One can refer to the category *jouissance*, introduced by Jean Lacan, which originally described delight of erotic nature and which was spread to all satisfaction submitting to desire and allowing for individual not entangle in the space of the other, manifesting of me. Then *jouissance* would rather be a radical affirmation of individual. Life in its imperfection. It would also be life’s disturbance, emphasis of its incoherence, while pleasure constitutes the attempt of its synthetic remedial unification.

pleasant thread linking the scattered world in one unit, as it would possess the power of synthesis.

**Conclusions.** Thus, *the new* does not necessarily possess this rebellious, abolishing character – it may be created also by the repetition of what is obsolete. Especially in the world which exhausts the potential of originality so fast, innovation may take on the form of evoking (repeating), recontextualization or “recalibrating” (change of perspective). These ways are the result of modern artistic practices which again made interesting both what had seemed banal up till now, and necessary what had been qualified as redundant, and satisfaction has been already found at the level of fragment leaving the ambition of a total approach.

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### **Анотація**

***Пастушек Артур. Мистецтво – естетичний і критичний потенціал інноваційності.***

*У статті презентується погляд на сучасне мистецтво як поле для інновацій митців. Автор критично описує головні риси сучасного мистецтва, досліджує передумови його виникнення, аналізує його головні прийоми та знаходить місце “нового” в мистецтві.*

***Ключові слова:*** сучасне мистецтво, інновації, новинки, естетика.