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DOI: 10.35765/pk.2025.4902.02

Editorial

Man cannot escape from his own achievement. He cannot but adopt the conditions of his own life. No longer in a merely physical universe, man lives in a symbolic universe. Language, myth, art, and religion are parts of this universe. They are the varied threads which weave the symbolic net, the tangled web of human experience.

E. Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*

We are pleased to present to our readers this issue of *Perspectives on Culture*, in which the central theme is contemporary art – understood here as beginning in the 1970s – with particular attention to its current condition, relevance, and role within modern culture.

Art, like science, morality, and religion, is one of the fundamental expressions of human activity and thus constitutes a vital domain of culture. The continuous interplay between these spheres ensures that art remains in ongoing dialogue with science, morality, and religion.

Contemporary art, often socially engaged, draws on the achievements of science and technology, allowing it to shape cultural activity and influence individuals in new ways. Even art that embraces radical autonomy – aligned with the ideal of “art for art’s sake” – continues to be a meaningful element of culture capable of reflecting the condition of contemporary society.

Engaging with contemporary art also invites anthropological reflection, as it is the human being who is both the creator and the subject of

artistic expression. Even the rise of generative art – enabled by technological advancement – ultimately reflects the creative potential of the human mind that conceived and developed those technologies.

The articles gathered in this volume – written by scholars representing a range of academic disciplines and research perspectives – highlight the multifaceted and complex nature of inquiry into the phenomenon of art.

The issue opens with Elżbieta Wąsik's article *Intertekstualność i nomadyczność sztuki w semiotycznym stawaniu się współczesnego człowieka* (*Intertextuality and Nomadism in the Semiotic Becoming of the Contemporary Human Individual*). The author explores intertextuality and nomadism as key concepts in postmodernist semiotics, clarifying the meanings these terms assume in the processes of creating, interpreting, and disseminating works of art, as well as their impact on the individual and society. She demonstrates the ambiguity and utility of the terms *text* and *intertextuality*, which apply not only to language, but also to culture more broadly, encompassing such domains as visual art, music, photography, architecture, and sculpture. Cultural texts exist in constant interaction, referencing one another through allusions and echoes, leading to multilayered interpretation. The approach that views art as a system of dynamic relationships among various cultural texts – the theory of nomadism – reveals parallels between the internal development of the individual and the transformations occurring in various realms of life, including the arts. The human being, shaped by nomadic forces, develops a relational personality – one that coexists with art within a network of mutual influences.

In her article “*Nieobliczalna fantazja*”? *Artysta i „tworzące” maszyny* (*Unpredictable Imagination*? *The Artist and ‘Creative’ Machines*), Beata Gontarz addresses the timely issue of cultural transformation brought about by machine technologies and artificial intelligence. Within this framework, she examines the perspectives of selected artists on the act of creation and the evolving status of the artist in relation to images produced by machines. She first considers the works of an image-making machine designed by Belgian artist Francis André, as well as the reception of his creative stance as interpreted by Polish writer Jan Józef Szczepański. She then turns to the work and public declarations of Agnieszka Piłat, a Polish-born artist collaborating with Boston Dynamics and SpaceX on a project aimed at teaching robots equipped with AI the art of drawing.

In the article *Abstraction as a Source of Inventive Creativity: Ethical-Moral Issues of Artistic Expression*, Zdzisław Wąsik explores how abstract form can stimulate human creativity and what ethical or moral challenges arise from artistic expression in a social context. The author argues that abstraction may be regarded as a fundamental mode of inventive activity for artists and that various imaginative strategies exist for altering

the perceived qualities of real-world objects. Wąsik examines the compatibility of artistic forms of expression with widely accepted ethical standards, as well as with the moral codes adopted by artists themselves. He places particular emphasis on the intentional and emotional dimensions of art, taking into account audience responses to controversial content, including taboo subjects and religious themes. His discussion draws on examples from art exhibitions and public reactions – especially those voiced through social media.

Sposoby przedstawiania techné w sztuce współczesnej w perspektywie filozofii techniki (*Ways of Representing Techné in Contemporary Art from the Perspective of the Philosophy of Technology*) is an article by Mariusz Wojewoda, in which the author analyzes various modes of representing *techné* in contemporary art – including instrumental, mythological, threat-diagnosing, and adaptive approaches. According to Wojewoda, *techné* constitutes a significant theme in artistic expression. Through art, the relationship between humans and technological systems enters public discourse and becomes culturally visible. The author treats artistic reflections on technology as part of the broader cultural imaginary.

Contemporary art at the crossroads of two cultures is the focus of Bożena Prochwicz-Studnicka's article *Arabic Calligraphy as a Form of Artistic Expression. Ahmed Moustafa and His Perspective on the Role and Meaning of Art*. The text presents the perspective of an internationally recognized Egyptian-born artist now living in London on his artistic mission and the key role he assigns to Arabic calligraphy. The article primarily analyzes the artist's own statements regarding his works, their spiritual dimension, and their rootedness in Islamic tradition. For Ahmed Moustafa, Arabic calligraphy is not only a means of artistic expression but also a spiritual practice leading toward God. The Qur'an remains the artist's primary source of inspiration, endowing his works with both aesthetic and spiritual value. Beauty and Goodness in his creations arise not only from precise geometric principles but also from the very essence of the Word, which calligraphy brings into material form.

The next article concerns the *Dotyk Sztuki II* (*Touch of Art II*) project, a nationwide competition for professional artists organized by the Institute of Fine Arts at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. In her text titled *Professional Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Their Reception by Blind People. Based on the Example of the Art Touch of Art Project*, Ewa Niestorowicz highlights that the project resulted in a series of exhibitions designed for multisensory reception, with particular consideration for individuals with visual impairments. She presents research on the perception of contemporary art conducted as a case study involving a person blind from birth. The study employed an original survey tool assessing

artworks in terms of content, form, creativity, and emotional impact. The results indicated that audio description based on curatorial texts significantly enhances the reception of artworks, improving understanding and contributing to a more positive artistic and emotional evaluation.

The article by Aleksandra Dębska-Kossakowska, *Gustaw Herling-Grudziński i Konstanty A. Jeleński o malarstwie Jana Lebensteina* (*Gustaw Herling-Grudziński and Konstanty A. Jeleński on the Painting of Jan Lebenstein*), is devoted to the critique of contemporary art. The author presents reflections by Gustaw Herling-Grudziński and Konstanty A. Jeleński on the work of Polish painter and graphic artist Jan Lebenstein (d. 1999). Both writers adopt a critical stance toward neo-avant-garde currents in visual art, including Lebenstein's oeuvre. While they share certain conceptual paths in their thinking, their methods of argumentation remain distinct.

In his article *Bytowe braki a prywatywna teoria sztuki – w świetle metafizyki tomizmu egzystencjalnego* (*Ontological Deficiencies and the Privative Theory of Art in Light of the Metaphysics of Thomistic Existentialism*), Mateusz Woch identifies and further specifies various types of ontological deficiencies within the framework of the so-called privative theory of art. Drawing on the writings of Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and their 20th-century successors associated with the Lublin School of Philosophy, the author explores the idea that, according to this theory, the *raison d'être* of art lies in addressing and supplementing ontological lacks. In Woch's view, the privative theory of art calls for further investigation, particularly with regard to the classification of possible ontological deficiencies and the ways in which specific artistic disciplines respond to them. The article introduces a compelling and rarely discussed theory of art to a broader audience.

Contemporary architecture is the springboard for Dominik Ziarkowski. In his article *Architektura współczesna i jej znaczenie dla turystyki kulturowej* (*Contemporary Architecture and Its Significance for Cultural Tourism*), the author emphasizes its unquestionable value as utilized within this economic sector. This phenomenon is termed architourism, whereby visitors organize their itineraries not according to established sites of ancient art, already recognized and valued as heritage of past centuries, but rather according to the latest works of living architects. Attractions may include the unconventional form of a building, innovative technical solutions, or the renown of the architect. Thus, contemporary art stimulates tourist traffic and, consequently, the economy of a given region and, frequently, even that of an entire country.

In his article *Transformacja postaci kobiety jako zwierciadło przemian społeczno-kulturowych w musicalu polskim po 1989 roku* (*The Transformation*

of the Female Figure as a Mirror of Socio-Cultural Change in Polish Musicals after 1989), Mateusz Borkowski analyzes the representation of women in Polish musical theatre in the post-1989 period. His study encompasses selected stage musicals – from the now-classic *Metro*, through *Polita*, inspired by the life of actress Pola Negri, and *Irena*, dedicated to Irena Sendler, to the rap musical *1989*. The author identifies musical theatre as a medium through which cultural identities are shaped and redefined. Within this context, the evolving portrayal of female characters serves as a significant reflection of broader societal transformations and the values characteristic of contemporary Poland. Art, therefore, emerges as a tool for shaping public opinion and for envisioning – or perhaps constructing – a new (modern?) society.

The main issue section concludes with the article *Wartości sztuki wizualnej w opinii studentów wybranych kierunków UMCS i UIK (The Value of Visual Art in the Opinion of Students from Selected Programmes at UMCS and UIK)*, which advocates for an expanded presence of visual art within the academic environment. Its authors, Przemysław Bukowski and Agnieszka Piasecka, present the results of empirical research and their analysis concerning students' perceptions of the value of visual art at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin (UMCS) and the Ignatianum University in Krakow (UIK). According to the findings, students most highly value art in terms of creativity, aesthetics, artistry, emotional impact, and authenticity, while historical value is considered the least significant. The authors call for the inclusion of more courses related to the broadly understood field of art in university curricula, the expansion of extracurricular artistic offerings, as well as active promotion of art within academic institutions – for instance, through exhibitions and film screenings.

Enjoy your read!

