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**ABSTRACT**

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**Art of 21-st century between value and price**

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The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, scientific contributions, used sources. The total length of the dissertation is 263 pages, of which 235 pages are the main text, 28 pages are the bibliography comprising 55 titles in Cyrillic and 189 in Latin, plus 64 non-specialized sources (content analysis of results from profiled sites and platforms, electronic as well as print media, etc.) with 36 in Cyrillic, 28 in Latin.

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the IPS-BAS building at

Defense materials are available in the Human Resources Department and on the IPS website.

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## **I. General characteristics of the dissertation work**

This dissertation considers "art of the 21st century" what is accepted as art in the context of Western Europe and America. The arts of other cultures and contexts are generally local in scope and do not gain global visibility unless they are appropriated by and adapted to the dominant Western context of the arts. Most examples considered are from the realm of visual arts that use an exhibition space, whether defined as sculpture, painting, visual art, performance, installation, ready-made, etc. The scope of the subject is in the bounds of institutionalized art and does not consider art on the independent scene.

The period was chosen, tentatively, after the end of postmodernism in the 1990s up to the present day, because trends and authors that appeared then are still relevant today or are the basis of modern processes and practices. In this period, information and communication technologies became a massive and dominant phenomenon in all spheres of life, and culture was influenced by globalization and dominated by market mechanisms, media and technical means for creating and distributing information and art.

### **Relevance of the topic**

The formation of aesthetic value in the latest forms of art is an actual topic for modern axiology. Contemporary art practices make it increasingly difficult to define and distinguish art from non-art, original from copy, high from mass culture, and biological creation from technogenic. Current research challenges are the factors that lend value to art that is not appreciated or experienced through the senses, lacks aura and authenticity, is indistinguishable from non-art, is completely abstract, non-psychological, or even immaterial.

The juxtaposition and comparison of the cultural-aesthetic values of the art works with their market valuation is a new and different perspective that has not been developed so far.

### **Object and subject of the research**

The object of the study is the art of the 21st century (1990-2023) from the perspective of the theory of values, and the topic is relationship between the polar terms - values and price of art in Western Europe and America.

### **Purposes and goals of the study**

The dissertation "The art of the 21-st century between value and price" attempts to answer the following questions:

Chapter One: What does the term "contemporary art" include and in what contexts is this term used?

Chapter Two: Is it possible to identify the subjective (who) and objective (what) factors determining and legitimizing the values of contemporary art in a situation where norms and criteria are missing?

Chapter Three: What are relationships between value and price in the art of the 21st century?

### **Research hypothesis**

The connections and interdependence between art, value and price have been broken.

### **Research methodology**

The dissertation is a systematic study of the art of the 21st century as a philosophical, aesthetic, sociological and economic phenomenon. The field of contemporary aesthetics is global and consists of many localised nuances in different places around the world, but Western aesthetics continue to dominate on a global scale. The aesthetic loses its status as a metacategory and is replaced by the artistic. While modern aesthetics no longer has priority in the study of aesthetics and art, many other sciences deal with it: cultural anthropology, social philosophy, culturology, philosophy of art, as well as the new interdisciplinary field of visual studies that appeared in the second half of the twentieth century, which borrows methods from semiotics, structuralism, hermeneutics, language sciences, psychoanalysis, sociology of culture, and others.

The realities of contemporary art cannot be covered by traditional aesthetic theory. Research of these requires an interdisciplinary approach and the use of data and methods from various scientific fields - history and philosophy of art, aesthetics, ethics, epistemology, sociology, psychology, anthropology, economics, philosophy of money, art studies, visual studies, philosophy of perception, etc.

This dissertation includes research on the influence of the media and information technologies, as well as on the two trends in contemporary art - on the one hand, the dematerialization, dehumanization and virtualization of the world and the subject, and the opposite trend of fusion and creation of indistinguishable artefacts/art processes from reality. Special attention is given to the paradoxical transformation of aesthetic values in the modern world, when its own negation and the absence of peace of art become a new kind of value.

The theoretical-methodological part includes earlier theories that have undergone re-modernization and continue to be relevant and applicable: Kant, Danto, Bourdieu, Baudrillard, etc., as well as completely new theoretical studies that appeared as a result of the need to conceptualize new phenomena. Conclusions and generalizations are illustrated and proven with specific examples from contemporary art practices.

## **II. Brief presentation of the dissertation work**

### **CHAPTER ONE: THE ART OF THE XXI CENTURY**

#### **1. Periodization of XXI century art.**

There is no consensus of opinions about what is considered contemporary art. Harvard economics professor Donald Thompson made a study of the major auction houses - Christie's uses the definition of "contemporary art" for art made after 1970, while Sotheby's defines works from the period 1945-1970 of the twentieth century as "early modern ", and after 1970 as "contemporary". He points out the inaccuracy of definitions of contemporary art as "the works of living artists" or "artists born after the Second World War". Thompson himself accepts this definition: "contemporary art must be unconventional and created after 1970, or offered by a major auction house as "contemporary" (Thompson, D. 2009: 7). Some theorists shift the starting point of contemporary art to the beginning of the twentieth century, specifically at 1910 with Marcel Duchamp's "Fountain" and the emergence of conceptual art. For example, Nathalie Heinich (Heinich, N. 2014) considers modern and contemporary art as two different paradigms: modern challenges the conventions of representation, while contemporary challenges the concept about what is a work of art.

#### **2. "Contemporary" as a criteria for evaluating art**

The adjective "contemporary" functions not only as a temporal indicator, but also as a qualitative, evaluative definition with connotations of "modern, innovative, avant-garde, up-to-date." Contemporary art has a fetish for the 'new' - an artefact or practice is declared valuable simply because it hasn't been done before, and vice versa - anything that isn't innovative or newly created is denied as valuable, automatically being considered as outdated and irrelevant or denied as art altogether.

#### **3. "Contemporary" as a paradigm**

"Modern" is used as a denotation of a certain worldview, way of thinking, or stage of development of scientific and technical progress. The factors shaping the modern world are modernization, globalization, neoliberalism, decolonization, fundamentalism, terrorism, scientific and technological progress, network culture, climate change, and many others that are not so obvious.

In his book *What is Contemporary Art?*, Terry Smith (Smith, T. 2009) divides contemporary art into typologies to capture its diversity. It outlines three key currents, the first of which includes three subdivisions: "spectacular repetitions of avant-garde shock tactics", a trend of "re-modernization" and "retro-sensationalism". Smith brings these together as a contribution to the "aesthetics of globalization."

The second current is "post-colonial art", and the third current consists of artists who seek to "grasp the changing nature of time, place, media and mood today".

According to many theorists, the definition "contemporary" is not so much a temporal but a qualitative characteristic - a delimitation concept that refers to a certain type of art. Krasimir Delchev and Peter Tsanev agree with this view. Terry Smith points to the works of Giorgio Agamben, Jacques Rancière and Peter Osborne as defining the outer borders of the theoretical discussion of contemporary art and its relation to other phenomena in the world today. In his article *Philosophy in the Art World: Some Recent Theories of Contemporary Art* (Smith, T. 2019), Smith also presents the theses of Jean-Luc Nancy, Nestor-Garcia Canclini and Jean-Philippe Antoine as contributions to this debate. In his essay *What is the Contemporary?* Giorgio Agamben (Agamben, G. 2007) takes Nietzsche's idea from *Untimely Meditations* that "the modern is untimely". He notes the simultaneity and differences between individual and collective-historical time. The present is not only the actual time, but also a polychronic sum of different interconnected temporalities, which is a new kind of historical phenomenon.

Jean-Luc Nancy links artistic practice to the broader state of being-in-the-world today—an echo of Heidegger's idea of the world as a totality of signifieds that are possibilities for meaning rather than tied to fixed meanings. According to Nancy: "Art today is art that above all else asks: 'What is art?'" Jacques Rancière (Rancière, J. 2004). He borrows an example from Foucault and his 'regimes of truth', which examine how knowledge and discourses taken as truth are produced by society's power structures, and uses the term 'regimes of perception' - systems of divisions and boundaries that define what could be visible and audible within a certain political-aesthetic regime. He defines three modes of perception in the Western tradition that have emerged since Ancient Greece: ethical, representational, and aesthetic.

In his 2014 book *Art Beyond Itself: Anthropology for a Society without a Story Line*, Mexican sociologist Nestor-Garcia Canclini agrees with the opinions that contemporary art is spreading into a globalization that has failed to articulate itself and is in a situation of post-autonomy, functioning in a world that does not know what to do with the contradictions of narratives. Object-based art practices are replaced by context-based art practices, aesthetic definition fades and dissolves in artworks that are embedded in media, urban spaces, digital networks and social forums.

In his book *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, Peter Osborne (Osborne R. 2013) condemns many discourses about the "modern" that are in a process of constant, self-serving fictionalization. Fictionalizations attempt to create the false sense that our contemporary condition, though internally divided, is a single historical time. This has to do with Fredric Jameson's characterization of modernism in his book *A Single Modernity* (Jameson 2002) as a self-defining, historicizing narrative rather than a world-historical reality.

Osborne published a short essay "The Post-Conceptual Condition, or the Cultural Logic of High Capitalism Today" (Osborne R. 2014) in which he argues that what "contemporaneity" means most profoundly is a new form of historical time: "internally disjunctive global historical-temporal form". He insists that the term "post-conceptual" most accurately defines the state of contemporary art.

In his essay "The Historicity of the Contemporary is Now!" (Antoine, J-P. 2013), Jean-Philippe Antoine argues that the contemporary is not identified with a "present" reduced to a slice of chronological time, but is an interweaving of a particular variety of times. The art to come may come from one of our pasts or another past, as much as it may come from the future.

#### **4. The art of the 21st century and globalization**

The rapid development in the 20th century of transportation, communication techniques, and computer technology enabled the global spread and interpenetration of ideas, capital, technology, and elements of culture. Art becomes an international currency. Culture sells, attracts tourists, creates economic activity and is an integral part of the entertainment industry. The art of the 21st century is supranational and global. Its mass distribution through the new means of communication and the media lead to the unification of the values and horizons of expectation of the heterogeneous global audience of viewers and consumers. Cultural and national identity become major issues for artists and their art. Many of them become cultural nomads – coming from one culture, being educated in another, and realizing and performing in many different cultural contexts. The collision of cultural codes and value systems necessitates the search for a balance between "our" and "foreign", so that they gain international visibility and comprehensibility of their works in a wider context, but at the same time preserve their uniqueness and originality.

Part of the negative impact of globalization is the domination of a single culture based on consumerism. This is the culture of Western societies, in which are concentrated the largest and most well-funded cultural centers, record companies, film studios, auction houses, publishing houses, cultural industry conglomerates and the most prestigious cultural institutions. They are a determining factor in the legitimation of contemporary art through the processes of inclusion and exclusion.

Belgian critic and curator Thierry de Duve theorizes the impact of globalization on art in his article *Glocal and Singuversal* (De Duve, T. 2012). With the neologism "glocal", formed by the fusion of "global" and "local", he describes the transformations in the field of culture industry: According to him, glocal means: "overcoming the geographical division, making a leap from the private to the general. But when moving into the field of aesthetics, the concept of glocal turns out to be insufficient - aesthetic judgments imply the overcoming of an even greater division. In them, two even more distant poles merge: the singular and the universal" (De Duve, T. 2012).



De Duve makes the clarification that the concept of "visual art" is no longer necessarily painting or sculpture, but includes various experimental fields. Visual art is fueled by cultural differences and confrontations, the norm in it is determined not by consensus but by "dissensus" in Rancière's term.

The reality of the Internet and globalization erases cultural boundaries and differences - it makes mass culture comprehensible everywhere and turns the world into a market without borders. Elite and mass no longer have a clear differentiation.

## **5. The Covid-19 pandemic and its effects on contemporary art**

Art and culture are among the areas most affected by the imposed anti-epidemic restrictions. The art sector worldwide has readjusted to the new conditions of making, distribution and perceiving art by using the technical possibilities of the World Wide Web for digitization and distribution.

This has repeatedly increased the audience of any cultural event - Internet broadcasting can gather an audience unlimited in space and time. Art has reached new audiences previously unable to access it due to financial inaccessibility or geographic remoteness.

## **6. What is (not) art in the XXI century? Definition, legitimation, features**

### **6.1. Definition**

Defining what is (not) art in the 21st century is both an ontological and an epistemological problem. It can be an idea, object, action, process, event, static or dynamic, tangible or intangible. Contemporary art is a post-media art without borders – its ontological essence varies from complete immateriality, as in conceptual art, whose work is the idea, to countless material forms.

In 2000, Rosalind Krauss (Krauss, R. 2000) defined the state of contemporary art as "post-media" in her book "Art in the Age of the Post-Media State". Krasimir Terziev (Terziev, K. 2014) writes about post-media aesthetics and the hybridization of criteria for art classification. Peter Weibel (Weibel, R. 2005) connects the emergence of technological media with the crisis of representation and the "death of the author". In contemporary art, the representation of reality is often replaced by reality itself. After the appearance of the ready-made objects in the exhibition halls and the use of everyday life as material for art projects, it becomes more and more difficult to distinguish between art and life. Technobiological art problematizes the boundaries of science - nature - art. It uses the latest information and biotechnology - bioengineering, genetics, prosthetics, implantation, use of stem cells, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, etc.

### **6.2. The issue of legitimation**

There are no necessary and sufficient conditions by which something is legitimized as art or excluded from it. This means that art has no identity and autonomy – anything can be art, it does not exist

as a separate domain from reality. The concept of art is in a continuous process of definition and redefinition - open, relative, conditional, situational and variable.

According to **phenomenology**, art is the work of art itself - everything is inside itself, in its pure, immediate perception, unencumbered by interpretations, regardless of context, discourse or other external factors. For **institutional theory**, art is what is generally recognized as such in the relevant era. Bourdieu's aesthetic theory of the social conditioning of aesthetic experience demythologizes the idea of the eternal and timeless power of art. The aesthetic view constructs the work of art as such, and this view is a product of history and a particular cultural and social context.

The first who used the legitimizing formula "If someone declares his work to be art - then it is art" was Marcel Duchamp, who founded the beginning of conceptual art through ready-made objects. In the book *The Name of Art*, the French art critic Thierry de Duve (De Duve, T.: 2014) explores the different approaches to legitimizing art as a separate domain from reality and arrives at the nominalist theory that "calling something art makes it art". De Duve's conclusion is that "The name 'art' has as many particular meanings as those who use it, the situations in which it is used, or as how many are theories about art. This infinite number of possible meanings of the word makes the search for a single meaning pointless."

The American philosopher Ken Wilber (Wilber 2002) replaces the question "**What is art?**" with the question "**Where is art?**", or more precisely "**Who/what determines the meaning and significance of art?**" Different answers formulate different theories.

According to the **intentional theory**, art expresses the inner world of the creator. This is what hermeneutics deals with - the interpretation of artistic, linguistic and poetic symbols. The discoveries of psychoanalysis prove the existence of multiple unconscious intentions and, according to K. Wilber, they give rise to the so-called "**symptomatic theories**": *Marxist*, *feminist* and many other similar theories that see the work of art as a symptomatic manifestation of much larger, unconscious currents of the artist – sexual, economic, political, cultural, ideological.

**Structuralism** seeks the nature and value of art in the form of the piece of art itself. This formalism has its origins in Kant and the *Critique of Reasoning*. Interpretation examines the formal relationships between elements within a work, often coupled with a denial of the importance and significance of the creator's intention. The author is declared dead - the producer of the text is the language itself, and structural analysis is considered to be the only true method of artistic interpretation.

The next step after the "death of the author" is to "kill" the art work and concentrate entirely on the recipient. Art is in the viewer according to **hermeneutics** and **phenomenology**, and the faithful interpretation of a work of art consists of an analysis of the viewer's reactions or resides in the cumulative

history of those reactions. Meaning is created by the interpreter, not the author of the work. The traditional concept of truth as an unchanging and objective set of facts has been replaced by the concept of "historicity of truth" in M. Heidegger's hermeneutic theory: what we call truth is conditioned by historical conditions. The understanding of historical truth is realized not through scientific empiricism, but through interpretation (hermeneutics). Heidegger's hermeneutic theory had a huge impact on art and literary theory through the two main scholars of his work, Gadamer and Derrida. Derrida's views are related to structuralist and poststructuralist theories, which place meaning in a chain of formal signifiers, or endlessly slipping chains of signifiers. Even the purely aesthetic event of viewing an abstract painting is not only a sensory event according to Gadamer, because when we begin to ask ourselves what this painting means and how it affects us, we move from purely sensory, silent viewing into the realm of language and history. Every meaning is tied to historicity – what a painting means to us now will differ from what it will mean to its viewers after 100 years, if it means anything at all then.

Each of the listed theories considers only one possible context. According to Ken Wilber's definition, "a work of art is a holon—both a whole and a part of another whole. The holonic nature of reality consists of an infinite number of contexts inside other contexts—concentric circles of interpretations nested within other interpretations."

Niklas Luhmann asks the questions: "(...) which instance actually legitimizes art? Who says art has value? The answer can only be: art itself." (Lüthmann, H. 2019: 119) Contemporary art is legitimized by declaring itself to be art and possessing value, determining its own price, educating its audience and creating the aesthetic prisms through which it can be viewed. and appreciated.

### **6.3. Features of contemporary art**

Features of contemporary art are the absence of a norm, an ideal, transcendental foundations, a striving for universality and eternity. The art works are distinguished by self-referentiality, self-reflexivity, hybridity of genres, postmediality, anti-aestheticism, virtuality, technogenicity. Provocation rather than communication is more often the goal; merge local and global, individual and collective, high and low, elitist and mass. Other characteristics of contemporary art forms are transition from aesthetics of meanings (representation) to aesthetics of presence; the artifact becomes an arteact and an artistic gesture, the process of happening is more important than the result of it. Passive contemplation is replaced by action and participation, the affective is prioritized over the cognitive; signs and symbols are replaced by simulacrums.

#### **6.4. Author, work, audience and the relationship between them**

Gompertz calls contemporary art "incomprehensible art" (Gompertz, U. 2016) It is anti-representational, anti-interpretive, anti-aesthetic, apsychological, wordless, incorporeal, immaterial, excluding identification. The outer form of the works is stripped to the limit - art becomes formless, objectless, abstract, loses any connection with reality. Communication is not intended, only contact and possible provocation. A kind of negative aesthetic of lacks, absences and negations is created. The pathos of absolute objectlessness completely annihilates the human, and with him everything related to sense perception. Then, instead of a situation of aesthetic perception (aesthesia), we arrive at its opposite: an-aesthesia – complete indifference to the work, insensitivity, unawareness.

At the opposite pole is participatory art, in which the interactions evoked by the work become its content. After the death of the Author comes the death of the Spectator. The subject - perceiver becomes the material, author and co-author of the art work. Some critics and curators use the term created by Nicholas Bourriaud "relational aesthetics" - "aesthetics of relations" Sometimes the only aspiration of art is to be show and entertainment. Will Gompertz (Gompertz 2016) calls it *artertainment* - a neologism from art and entertainment.

Authorship is increasingly difficult to define in the practices of appropriating someone else's content as part of a new work, collective authorship and co-authorship, endless collages and remakes, multiplication, distribution and sharing of transformed images and ideas on the Internet.

#### **7. Contemporary aesthetics and theoretical reflection of the art of the XXI century**

The indeterminacy of art and the impossibility of being defined problematize the research field of contemporary aesthetics - what is included in it and why? Contemporary art is not a carrier of the aesthetic, and so traditional and established aesthetic categories of beautiful, sublime, tragic and comic turn out to be inadequate to the new realities of unconventional art - installations, performances, collages, ready-mades, conceptual art, digital art, etc. Kant's detachment is replaced by activity, participation and interactivity. The sublime is replaced by the amazing, the tragic by the paradoxical, the main category becomes the comic in the form of irony. Absurdity, shock, cruelty, chaos, violence, and disgust are given category status. A new generation of specialists called "digital humanitarians" use Big Data - large databases reporting cultural processes on a global scale to achieve new knowledge in aesthetics. They explore digital images and art in Google, Amazon, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Spotify, as well as local databases of cultural institutions and other digital systems. The hierarchical arrangement of works on the web often has nothing to do with their aesthetic qualities, but with how much interest they provoked, determined by the number of views, reads, downloads, shares, likes, reviews, hashtags, etc.

There is no generally accepted term to designate the art of the last two decades of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century. Postmodernism is the last officially recognized movement in art, which according to most theorists was exhausted by the end of the 1980s. Despite disinterest and inertia, a common name is sought to unite the processes in art - post-post-modernism, digi modernism (digital modernism), hypermodernism (Gilles Lipovecki), transmodernism, anti-art, non-art, post-conceptual art (Peter Osborne), entrepreneurialism (Gompertz), sensationalism, metamodernism, and other -isms, but no universally accepted one ever emerged. For example, Baudrillard created his version of a non-classical aesthetic theory, which he called "trans-aesthetics" (Baudrillard, J. 1998).

### **7.1. Visual studies**

The decade of the 70s in the 20th century is often referred to as a "visual turning point", associated with the appearance of a number of studies that interpret image problems in a new way - S. Alpers, M. Baxandall, N. Bryson, J. Clarke, G. Pollock, et al. The Viennese group at the Warburg Institute (E. Gombrich, E. Panofsky) were engaged in reexamining the concept of the ontologically grounded aesthetic value of the object. From this period the direction "New Art History" appeared - interpretation of works of art from the point of view of their social function such as ideology, political engagement, etc. Key authors who influenced the formation of this new direction are R. Barthes, M. Foucault, P. Bourdieu, J. Lacan, G. Debord. The lack of evaluation criteria leads to the development of a new critical theory headed by W. Benjamin.

An interdisciplinary approach is used for the artwork as part of the cultural context of its era. Michael Baxandall (Baxandall, M. 1988) proposes the concept "period eye", expressing the idea of the historical-cultural conditioning of viewing as a mental process. Alpers (Alpers, S. 1983) deals with the opposition image / text - visual and verbal practices. New problems also arise - one of them is that of the *disembodied image*: an image perceived and viewed independently of its material carrier. After realizing the impossibility of visual studies to be structured according to the model of the science of language and sign systems, they acquired a new direction related to turning to the topic of corporeality, including in social interactions. Key authors, as before, remain M. Foucault, J. Lacan, G. Debor, but the names of J. Derrida, J. Deleuze, P. de Man. are added to this list. The emphasis shifts from the expression and interpretation of ideological and cultural meanings to the problem of seeing as such. A characteristic feature of the new wave of visual studies is the realization that the visual cannot be completely reduced to the verbal. The search for new foundations for visual culture is associated with the names of H.-U. Gumbrecht, J. Didi-Uberman, J.-L. Marion, H. Belting, W.J. T. Mitchell, J. Elkins, M. Jay. The problems of vision, experience, presence, phantasm, and fascination become central. In search of a theoretical basis, visual

studies turn to the tradition of hermeneutics of H. Gadamer, the phenomenology of E. Husserl, the existentialism of J.-P. Sartre, to M. Merleau-Ponty, the fundamental ontology of M. Heidegger. As noted by K. Moxey (Moxey, K. 2013), the focus shifts towards making sense of the presence of the visual object, understanding it is a presentation, not a representation. The concept of aura - the immediate given, the presence of the object in time and space - once again becomes important. Criticisms of the dominance of visual experience in the European culture of the New Age - the so-called "criticism of ocularcentrism" - are also characteristic of this period.

After postmodernism, the search for a new theoretical framework and methodology for research, analysis and evaluation of the new realities in the sphere of culture continues. In 1983 Fr. Jamieson, J. Baudrillard, Y. Habermas, and Rosalind Kraus published a collection "Anti-aesthetics", and in 1995 the German philosopher Wolfgang Iser gave a lecture "Aesthetics beyond aesthetics" (Iser, W. 1997).

After the "death of art", announced many times after Hegel, and the "death of the author", announced by R. Barthes, comes the "end of human": "In our time, it is not so much the absence or death of God that is affirmed as the end of man..." (Foucault, M. 1992 : 298). In 1992, the book of Fr. Fukuyama *The End of History and the Last Man*. One of the key characteristics of postmodernism, according to Fredric Jamieson, is the "death of the subject."

Some theorists - for example Eleanor Fuchs ( Fuchs, E. 1996 : 106), declare our time to be a period of post-anthropocentrism. Many philosophers and theorists talk about the dehumanization that began in the modern era. After the crisis of religion and the ideas of the Absolute, the crisis of humanism and the end of the "Grand Narratives" (according to Lyotard), comes the crisis of postmodern identity, which in the 21st century becomes the impossibility of any stable identity.

## **7.2. New philosophical theories**

In his article, Austrian philosopher and theorist Armen Avanessian (Avanessian, A. 2013) argues that the new 21st century needs new philosophical theories because the traditionally dominant philosophies in the 20th century (the Frankfurt School, Marxism, structuralism and deconstruction) are no longer sufficient to conceptualize the new realities. One of these new theories is called "speculative realism" (SR), new realism, new materialism - its representatives are Quentin Meillassoux, Graham Harman, Ray Brassier, Ian Hamilton Grant. The American philosopher Graham Harman calls the concept "speculative realism": an "umbrella term" for different philosophical schools, which have in common the "denial of correlationism" (Harman, Gr. 2003 : vii). One of the leading theorists of this new philosophical theory, Quentin Meillassoux, questions the dualism of thinking and sensory perception that underlies the philosophical and theoretical ideas of art since the eighteenth century, when aesthetics first emerged as a

discipline. The break of the SR philosophers with Kant happened through Leibniz, Whitehead, Descartes, Badiou. Aristotle, Nietzsche, Schelling, Heidegger, and Husserl.

Krasimir Terziev (Terziev, K. 2019) defines "speculative realism" as: "...the first world philosophical trend in the new millennium". The influence of speculative realism from the field of philosophy spread rapidly and widely into art, architecture and design, the humanities and social sciences. This current covers the Object Oriented Ontology (OON) of Graham Harman and Levi Bryant, the nihilism of Ray Brassier, the theory of hyper-chaos of Meillassoux. The authors share a fundamental principle - the rejection of the anthropocentrism of modernity, inherited from Kant, according to which man is the measure of things in the world, since there could be no knowledge of being without consciousness.

Stanimir Panayotov (Panayotov, St. 2018) connects the so far listed speculative realism (SR), object-oriented philosophy (OOP) and object-oriented ontology (OOO) with the non-philosophy of Francois Laruel and accelerationism, which also have an influence on views, theories and practices in contemporary art.

In his article "A Reason for the Destruction of Contemporary Art", Suhail Malik (Malik, S. 2013) attacks the entire aesthetic paradigm and its central category - the aesthetic experience. According to him, contemporary art is a form of correlationism – it can only be perceived by thinking or being aware of it. In the book "The need for an exit from contemporary art" (Malik, S. 2017), Malik offers an "exit" from contemporary art. The problem is that contemporary art accepts and institutionalizes everything that tries to deny it, and so, paradoxically, the denial actually affirms it. The way out of this is in the search for constant and continuous negation. In *The Time Complex and the Post-Modern* (Malik, S., Avanesian, A. 2016), Armen Avanesian and Suhail Malik argue that the future (the post-modern) replaces the present in a speculative time complex. Man is the subject of contemporary art, while in post-modern he loses his privileged role in a non-artistic universe that experiments with relationships between unrelated images and objects.

There are also examples of works of art in the spirit of SR from the Bulgarian art scene - Peter Tsanev, Krasimir Terziev, Rene Beekman.

### **7.3. Virtualism and Postmedia Aesthetics**

Digital technologies are used as a means of production, storage and distribution of media content, and at the same time provide the channels for the perception of the content they produce. The result of this, as summarized by Kr. Terziev, is: "that both the traditional distinctions based on the material and the new distinctions based on the models of representation, distribution and valuation are violated" (Terziev, K. 2014). Sometimes a project multiplies in different versions and formats, for different media and

distribution networks, intended for different audiences - the traditional concept of media / means of expression does not work in a post-digital, post-network culture.

Following the inertia, the new technological categories of video art, computer art, online performance and others continue to be defined by the material and the technique of production. Post-media aesthetics is a subject of interest for Lev Manovich, Hans Belting, and Nicholas Bourriaud. According to Belting (Belting, H. 2005), the historicity of images and media functions differently. Images and stories from the classics change their media and acquire new forms through modern technology. Old media go out of use, replaced by new ones, but with images it is the opposite - their obsolescence makes them more valuable. What counts is the antiquity of the image, not whether it was transmitted in manuscript on papyrus or on a computer screen. The history of images cannot be reduced to the evolution of technologies for their transmission.

Lev Manovich's post-media aesthetics (Manovich 2008) is technologically determined and centered around software, which is "...object, metaphor and logic of production and perception of a work" (Terziev, Kr. 2011a : 20)

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE VALUES OF ART IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

### **1. Nature of values**

Aesthetic appreciation is formed by three different components:- the bearer of the value, the value itself and our reaction to it. According to Stolovich, the concept of "value" unites three meanings: characteristics and properties of those involved in the value relationship: material, psychological and social element. (Stolovich, L.N. 1994: 10).

Values are anthropocentric and do not have an independent, ontologically autonomous being, unrelated to people. Outside of the relationship with a perceiving and appreciating consciousness, objects and phenomena are value neutral. The concept of "value of art" denotes different things - value of aesthetic practices and creativity, of works of art and their perception, of art as a social phenomenon,

Values are not goods, ideas, evaluations, opinions, nor are they properties of physical or non-physical objects, their descriptions or characteristics, they are not states of mind or emotions, they are not psychological projections of our minds onto the world. According to tradition, aesthetic value is untainted by personal or political interests, by desires, needs, whims or fancies. Kant's idea is that the maximum distance from subjective interest brings evaluation closer to objective viewing. Irakoze (Irakoze, K. 2016) notes that a complete lack of interest can hardly be achieved in reality, and the common basis of aesthetic and moral evaluation is subjective interest - without it, moral judgment is impossible, and if it is excluded



to the extent of complete disinterest, this would also exclude aesthetic appreciation, turning it into only presence and disinterested "looking from nowhere" according to Nagel's expression (Nagel, Th. 1989).

Aesthetic value may include sensory pleasure, emotional affects, physical responses, states of catharsis, rational pleasure, etc. The value of art is not reduced to the pleasure or satisfaction of the viewer - the works can provoke negative reactions and be perceived as ugly, repulsive, offensive and obscene, but this does not make them aesthetically inferior.

Values exist only in our minds, but their real basis is the relationship between man and the world. They are changeable, because man is also changeable, but at the same time he has some permanent basic human foundation, which rests on unchanging values, which precisely make him a human. Through evaluation, man creates the meaning of everything, but at the same time he also evaluates himself :

## **2. Explicit and implicit value**

Explicit value is a consequence of manifested, sensory perceptible qualities of the object, while in the case of implicit value there is no direct connection between the sensory qualities of the object and its evaluation. Perception and evaluation are constructed and modeled by the two perspectives from which a work is approached - from the point of view of external information about it (authorship, commercial value, popularity) or its internal structure and symbolism. The interpretation and evaluation are also formed by the theoretical framework in which the work is considered - from the point of view of phenomenology, structuralism, feminism, psychoanalysis, intentional theory, critical theory, biography of the author, etc. Certain objects are loaded with symbolic value – they are attributed powers and qualities, and given value because of certain intersubjective consensuses. Implicit values that are projected from the outside are of great importance in perception and evaluation - emotional and sentimental value, fetishization of live contact, originality and innovation, difference in origin and history, difference in intention, difference in context, difference in effort put into making. Apart from those listed so far, Bloom (Bloom, P. 2012: 155) indicates other subjective reasons that give value to a given object.

## **3. Artistic and aesthetic value**

According to Stecker's definition (Stecker, R. 2019), artistic value includes not only aesthetic but also cognitive, ethical, historical, and interpretive values. Artistic value cannot be reduced to aesthetic value alone, which is primarily based on the visual qualities of the picture itself and determines its aesthetic value. The two types of value are not identical and interchangeable. Ideally, they should be balanced and present in the same work, but in different historical periods there is a bias in favor of one of the aspects at the expense of the other.

#### **4. Sensible and rational**

The problems of the philosophy of art are related to the definition of aesthetic value, its legitimization and its possibility of being shared - the latter is related to the problems of language as an adequate means of transforming sensory perception into rational knowledge. According to the philosophy of perception, popular at the beginning of the twentieth century with representatives B. Russell, H. Price, J. Moore, A. Ayer et al., knowledge of the external world is logically constructed from sense-data. We may have immediate knowledge only of ourselves and everything related to us, but we are separate from all objects and subjects in the external world, including other people, The problem with other minds is that we have no way of gaining insight into other people's thoughts and feelings: if I have your experiences, then those experiences are mine, not yours. Language as a means of expression also does not help to share the inner content. The distinction between opinion and fact, information and truth is simultaneously an epistemological and axiological problem. A fact is an objective reality, while an opinion is a subjective statement. According to the phenomenological approach to knowledge, truth is human perception rather than objective reality. The transformation of aesthetic perceptions into rational language constructions, according to Novitz (op. cit. Novitz, D. 1992a: 96-97), is often associated with words and concepts that have both descriptive and normative (evaluative, axiological) character. The interpretation of such utterances faces the problem of confusing or replacing objective facts with subjective opinions. Human consciousness sometimes confuses and replaces representations of facts with the facts themselves, symbols with objects - the famous formulation of Korzybski "the problem of the map and the territory". People are moved by images and fictional stories in art as if they were real, even though they are aware of their fictionality. Tamar Gendler (Szabo Gendler, T. 2008 : 634-663) introduces the concept of "alif" - an automatic, habitual belief-like attitude that is contrary to a person's explicit beliefs, but nevertheless influences his behavior.

#### **5. Epistemological value of art**

Whether works of art have cognitive and other values beyond their inherent and defining aesthetic value is a question of autonomism—whether art is an autonomous domain that has nothing to do with reality and with different domains such as ethics and science. The opposite view of autonomism is that the meaning of a work is not determined by its form, but by its representational content - the so-called "referential problem" (Mouriki-Zervou, A. 2011: 8).. Although art does not provide propositional knowledge that is scientific, measurable and provable, it can provide insight into modalities and possibilities through which we understand the world. Berris Gaut (Gaut 2003) points out that doubt about the accuracy of works of art and non-art works and reference works is equally justified for both. Art is an

education of the feelings, it carries knowledge about the socio-historical time in which it was created, it can provide knowledge about how the universe and nature work, what are the rules in society and relationships between people, it can contain information and instructions about how to make and produce certain things, teaches us how to create worlds, trains and expands our imagination, develops our predictive function, teaches us moral relations, gives us knowledge of good and evil. According to Aristotle's theory, it achieves the purification of our emotions through emotional catharsis. Art and especially literature can provide experiential and emotional stimulation of moral feelings. Even "immoral" art can bring knowledge by expanding existing notions or paving the way for new ones. Contact with the arts helps to develop and cultivate forms of knowledge other than natural or scientific attitudes (Eisner, E. 2001), which allow us to understand that there is an alternative way of living and thinking, another way of being in the world.

The cognitive function of art manifests itself in a different way in non-representational arts - those that are plotless and do not point to anything outside themselves: music, abstract art, etc. They are an occasion for self-reflection and self-knowledge - what we like and what annoys us, what intrigues us, what sensations the perceived creates, how it changes our state and attitude towards the world.

The formalist thesis is that art should be judged with a completely innocent eye, but critical practices are based on an acquired knowledge of genre, style, cultural history, etc. Appreciation of art is not always dependent on prior knowledge - we can enjoy music without understanding the language and words in the song or without having knowledge of notes and solfege, the laws of symphony and counterpoint.

Art is a way we arrange and understand the world into a narrative that makes sense and can not only provoke new beliefs, but even create new knowledge about the world. It also provides oblivion and a temporary escape from reality. It is a means of sublimation (in Freud's sense) - impulses and emotions that could manifest as violence, immoral or criminal action are transformed into socially acceptable experiences and creativity. In this way, art brings forth knowledge of subconscious desires and tensions .

Aesthetic experience increases awareness and trains people's ability to focus attention on the "here" and "now," which is a basic skill for acquiring any knowledge, and self-reflection on our experience gives us self-knowledge.

Literature provides direct access to the affective processes of other human beings and reveals the common human nature hidden behind external differences. The eventual consequence of this is that readers can no longer condemn or dismiss much of humanity as "foreigners" with whom they cannot identify.

Awareness of the difference between reality and representation is necessary for both aesthetic and cognitive appreciation of art. Sometimes the distortion of the truth (for example, in parody, grotesque, caricature, satire, dystopias) acts as a magnifying glass and brings to the consciousness of the recipient with

even greater force and clarity the truths hidden behind the form. Merleau-Ponty (Merleau-Ponty 1993: 121–123) advocates the view that art converges with other cognitive fields and shows us that there are many ways to define our relationship with the world that cannot be defined by positivist and sometimes manipulative formulations of science. Cognitive and aesthetic values reinforce and support each other: the cognitive value of a work of art is enhanced by its aesthetic value, and the cognitive potential facilitates the appreciation of its aesthetic value.

## **6. Interaction between moral and aesthetic values**

Aesthetic-ethical debates in the assessment of art arise from its dual nature - it is both an individual, subjective event, but at the same time a phenomenon of great social importance. This dual nature requires a different value perspective - to judge it only as an aesthetic object-work of art or as a social phenomenon bound to morality. Clavel (Clavel-Vazquez, A. 2020 : 143-156) divides the ethical influences in the work into actual (related to the relationship of art with external factors) and fictional (internal ethical problems contained in the work itself).

Autonomism assumes that art is an independent domain that has nothing to do with morality—that is, a work is neither moral nor immoral. The directions in which the moral judgment of the work develops are the will (the intention of the author), the action (the making of the art) and the consequence (the work and its effect on the audience).

Art is always a reflection to some degree of the society in which it is created, therefore the depiction of immoral characters and events that exist in life is not a moral flaw of the author or the work. Sometimes the reactions of shame, fear, anxiety caused by a work of art are incorrectly used as evidence of immorality. The interaction between aesthetic and ethical value is in two directions:

**Ethical-aesthetic** - the shock and non-acceptance of the moral content of the work block its perception as an aesthetic object in general, and no aesthetic assessment is reached. Thus the moral defect becomes an aesthetic one.

**Aesthetic-ethical** – the aesthetic qualities of the work are so powerful that they inhibit moral judgment about content and meaning. Aesthetic dignity becomes a moral flaw.

## **7. Modern approaches to values**

The traditional dichotomy is between subjective (relative and variable) and objective (absolute and universal) values. In the behavioral sciences, values are subjective phenomena of a psychological nature, while the social sciences provide an opportunity to think of values as objective, non-mental phenomena based on interactions and consensus among people. Values are a mark of identity and difference between subjects, they both create social relations and are the product of social relations of interaction based on

differences. The social sciences can only study behavior that expresses values, but not the experience of values in people's minds. They are ideas, criteria for making a decision, compliance with norms and standards when evaluating oneself, the world and others, a compass of behavior and actions.

In contemporary theory, the essence and nature of aesthetic values is rarely considered, and instead values are subjectivized and relativized, reduced to problems of evaluations and described as derivatives of evaluations, experiences, or attitudes. For centuries, access to the understanding of art was given by the senses, but this changed in the 20th century – the shift of focus from sensibility, pleasure and emotional response to the rational and meaning, raises the question of reaching it - that is, the question of interpretation.

Criticisms of the "turn to affect" point to the limitations of reducing the value and meaning of contemporary art to affective or psychological reaction. At the other pole are practices of interpretation in which the affectivity of the work or the response of the observer is bypassed and its role in the construction of meaning is denied. These two poles Kesner calls "affective formalism" and "affective iconology." Affect and meaning are often seen as a dichotomy: affective response—pre-reflective, primal, and automatic—opposed to meaning arrived at through the deliberate, cognitive operation of the human mind.

#### **8. The paradoxical nature of 21st century art and the problem of indistinguishability**

Contemporary artistic practices include everything that was not previously perceived as art and at the same time exclude everything that resembles, reminds, imitates already existing artistic samples. Džalto ( Džalto, D. 2015 : 652) writes about the process of reductionism - the gradual disappearance of the main elements that characterize the visual arts: mimesis, visual elements, handmade, masterful execution, the disappearance of objects, the disappearance of the author. Jalto calls the history of contemporary art "the history of increasing absence," the end result of which is emptiness. This final stage has been called the "end of art" by various theorists.

In his lecture "What is contemporary art?" (Groys, B. 1997) Boris Groys traces the emergence of the problem of indistinguishability of art from non-art after the appearance of ready-made objects. Before them, art was the result of artificiality, doneness, creation. "Art" in Greek is "*techne*"— it is different from nature, because is made by the hands of man. Ready-made objects override this criterion and thus call into question the division of art from non-art. An artist's authorship boils down to his choice to declare something art, give it a title, sign it with his name, and exhibit it in a gallery. The statement "This is art" turns from descriptive to performative - its utterance changes the nature of the object: it changes the group to which it belongs and gives it new qualities and value. Sensibility and previous experience can't anymore to be tools of knowledge and evaluation - the viewer must not believe his eyes that what is in front of him

is a urinal or a shovel, but must perceive and evaluate artifacts according to how others perceive them. Groys cites Danto's book (Danto, A, 1983) "The Transfiguration of the Common Place: A Philosophy of Art" which asks the question: "To what extent are we able to distinguish art from non-art when we have no material criteria for doing so ?"

The problem of indiscernibility is a problem of indeterminate identity: what is it that we see - is it artificial, natural or technological? Does it represent itself or represent something else by depicting, replacing or imitating it, is it only a sign that refers to something else, or is it a simulacrum without a referent?

In his book *Kant after Duchamp*, the Belgian theorist Thierry De Duve (De Duve, Th:1996) argues that everyone has the right to create his own museum of art in his imagination, and the statement "this is art" begins to function as "this is beautiful." According to Groys De Duve considers this as a new stage in development related to the aestheticization of art in the sense that the transformative intervention of man disappears, and only the subjective choice remains, which is based on taste, and thus aesthetics coincides with art. Groys cites the German philosopher Niklas Luhmann's book "Art in Society" (Luhmann, N 2000) according to whom neither the institution nor the individual subject can decide what is art, but instead the decision depends on an already created, autonomous and independent of our wills and desires, artistic system that imposes its criteria on all. According to Luhmann, the art system has become autonomous, it gives birth to itself, and thus art in a certain sense finds itself in the realm of nature - something not created by us, which we can only observe and describe.

### **8.1. Evaluation without criteria**

Evaluation is the application of universal categories to singular objects. Without a universal ideal, there is no measure and standard for comparison - this blocks the possibility of evaluations that can be recognized as objective. The consequence of the lack of generally accepted aesthetic norms and evaluation criteria gives rise to the indistinguishability and illegitimacy of values - categories and distinctions are erased, all values and evaluations become conditional and relative. This, together with the equal validity of all interpretations leads to incomprehensibility and the impossibility of legitimate evaluation.. Ken Wilber (Wilber, K. 2005 : 248-249) summarizes the situation after postmodernism by calling it "a perspective madness". Modern aesthetic value is anarchic, unsystematic and paradoxical. As Groys writes: "In fact, to be a paradoxical subject is a normative requirement that applies implicitly to every work of contemporary art." (Groys, B. 2012 : 10).

Aesthetic uncertainty has become a canon for the art of the 21st century. A cognitive dissonance occurs between what objects are and what they should be taken for. The viewer cannot, based on his

previous experience, determine where the boundaries of the work end and which of the observed are objects that are outside the context of the art. This uncertainty is cognitive, aesthetic and axiological:

1. The viewer may not recognize what he is looking at and it is difficult for him to connect it with some familiar object from reality. 2. Is this object art or not? What is the right way to be viewed and evaluated? 3. Even if it is art, does it really have value, what exactly and why?

Distinguishing art from non-art is in its essence, apart from a cognitive act, at the same time an axiological act. Carroll, in his essay 'Understanding Art' (Carroll, N. 2021 : 60) notes that implying quality because something is recognized as art collides with the problem of bad art, which can both be art and despite that has no qualities.

### **8.2. The question of taste**

Contemporary art has left the area of aesthetics, and contemporary artists are not concerned with matters of taste. Professional art has abdicated its role of educating taste and aesthetic attitude, and has lost its privileged position as a source of aesthetic experience - any object can be viewed in an aesthetic perspective and become a source of aesthetic experience. Modern art depends on the audience's appreciation - its disapproval deprives it of value, because it has no intrinsic value of its own, unlike science and technology, which have a necessary application, independent of the audience's mood.

Nowadays, the media and social networks often play the role of tastemakers. The concept of taste is realized in contemporary mass art through fan culture. Philosopher John Armstrong believed that the most important role of the arts and humanities was to guide and educate taste, but instead fake art was pushed, propagated by curators and the media. He notes that the works of Andy Warhol, Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst have achieved incredible commercial success, but at the same time they are indicative of the loss of the purpose of the arts to educate taste - that is, the sense of what is beautiful, graceful or attractive.

### **8.3. High, low, popular and mainstream art**

"Good" and "successful" art is measured by box office success. Commercial interests require art to be marketable to any target groups, therefore modern culture homogenizes societies and it is difficult to speak of a clear division and opposition of social classes, as in the past. The ruling elites are business-oriented, pragmatic and technically minded, money-making, not devoted to self-education, contemplation and aesthetic experience, unlike the ruling classes of previous eras.

The democratization of cultural institutions and social mobility also erase conventional distinctions between high and popular arts. Becker (Becker, N. 1982) divides artists from a sociological point of view into "professionals integrated into the art world" and "independent". In the contemporary art world, transfers or collaborations of commercial artists with "serious" art, or vice versa, are common. "Now,

crossing the line into either popular or 'serious' is becoming so frequent that it's increasingly difficult to tell the difference between high and low." As a result of these trends, the carefully erected barriers between high and low art, art and politics, art and religious rite, art and emotional expression, art and therapy, art and life itself are broken. (Zolberg, V. 2007).

The realm of 'high art' excludes anything that would disturb the established status quo: Novitz (op.cit. Novitz, D. 1992a : 44) analyzes the distinction between high and popular art as functional, socially determined. He distinguishes between two different meanings of the term "mass" - in a quantitative sense: mass is art that is produced, reproduced, delivered with the help of technology, simultaneously in different places, while in an aesthetic (qualitative) sense its "mass" is in its purpose to be understood or appreciated by a large number of people. Both meanings do not always coincide.

Novitz and Carroll debate the categories of popular and high art According to Novitz (Novitz, D. 1992b). The difference between popular and high art can only be explained in terms of social considerations. What was once considered popular art may later be considered high art, popular art is not always popular, and popular art is not invariably popular. There are high arts spread among the mass populace with help of mass technology - for example, recordings of opera performances. Carroll's definition of a mass work of art includes, in addition to mass technological production and distribution, a deliberate gravitation around aesthetic choices that ensure accessibility with minimal effort to the greatest number of relatively unprepared audiences.

#### **8.4. Kitsch and art**

It is not only the classification of high and low art that is problematic, but also the clear distinction between art and kitsch. In his book *Kitsch and Art*, Tomasz Kulka (Kulka, T 1996: 10) defines kitsch as one of the most confused and elusive categories of modern aesthetics. What is depicted in kitsch is always easy to identify and decipher both as an object and as an emotion that evokes that object. Its comprehensibility, orderliness, literalness and emotional charge appeal to mass audiences in all kinds of arts. It is a flexible, context- and culture-dependent concept in which the historical element is often crucial – stylistic features initially perceived as innovations can, over time, become clichés and banalities. The essential difference between kitsch and contemporary art is that it does not strive to be beautiful, nor is it emotionally charged, its content is not easily recognizable and needs interpretation, it is often cynical and deliberately violates social norms and the status quo. Kitsch never questions anything, does not inhabit any art-historical space and lives outside the context of the art of its time, it has no social commentary, wit, irony and ambiguity, it does not need interpretation - it is always unambiguous, serious, pathetic. It is a separate question whether



it is not difficult even at times for experts such as art critics to see the difference and draw the dividing line between kitsch itself and the use of kitsch as criticism, irony and parody.

### **8.5. "Bad Painting - Good Art"**

How can we tell the difference between bad paintings that are good works of art and bad paintings that are just bad works of art? Until the beginning of the avant-garde, the understanding of art excluded the association of bad painting with good art. The assessment "bad painting" may include poor composition, careless handling of materials, unclear conceptual ideas, lack of imagination or morality, etc., the definition of which depends on specific cultural horizons and historical contexts. Successfully avoiding some or all of the listed errors is still no guarantee that the final painting will be accepted as good art. Some works are valuable for their form, while others for their content, and the quality of these two components does not always coincide. The two borderline cases of the relationship between sensory form and inner content are: "beauty without meaning" (kitsch) and "meaning without beauty" (conceptual art).

According to some, we are beyond the age of value judgments and all definitions, including "bad painting" and "good art", are relative and inappropriate to the current state of art. Some shared characteristics of all paintings that have been considered bad painting can be identified. For example, Badura-Triska (Triska 2008: 48) draws attention to their 'referentialism'. Bad painting can be naïve, reworked or unfinished, sloppy in execution and defined by many more characteristics, but none that can be specified as necessary and sufficient to define something as 'bad painting'. In some cases, bad drawing is not the result of the artist's incompetence, but his deliberate strategy - for example, the distortion of proportions in caricature, exaggeration in grotesque and ironic parody.

Bad art is sometimes declared to be that which is outmoded in medium or approach and outside the dominant or modern currents. Good painting is associated with the old genres and classical art, and this makes it "unmodern", thus excluding it as a means of expression in the new forms, in which the idea and content are more important than form and materiality of the work. The rejection of mimesis, narrativity, and realism make good painting unnecessary and unusable, tied to old art forms and irrelevant to new media and ways of making art. This gives rise to the paradox that much contemporary art can be good art without being good painting.

### **8.6. Conceptual art and contextual value**

The Belgian theorist Thierry de Duve in his book "Kant after Duchamp" (De Duve, Thierry, 1996: 91) outlines two theories of art that define the conditions under which something can be called art: "something is art because the artist decided so " and "something is art because the context defines it as such". De Duve calls the first theory appropriative and the second contextual. He cites a quote from George

Dickie: "A work of art in a classificatory sense is (1) an artefact and (2) a set of aspects which have given it the status of a candidate for evaluation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a particular social institution (the art world)." ( De Duve, Thierry , 1996: 94).

The spirit of early conceptualism from the 1960s and 1970s continues even in works from the late 20th and early 21st centuries. At the forefront of conceptual art is the verbalization and documentation of the idea. The materialization of the idea in a work is not mandatory

The context, also seen as the "framework" of contemporary art, is often the main criterion that distinguishes art from non-art, high art from low art. People perceive art more easily when it is "artificial" - framed and separated from life, because when it merges with life it creates uncertainty about how to perceive it. Many of the works of today's artists confirm the view that the value of the "frame" exceeds that of what it frames, and with the appropriate context and advertising, literally anything can be declared art and sold at auction for millions, especially if it is made by a famous artist.

### **8.7. The relationship between original and copy**

Distinguishing an original from a copy is made difficult by the radical eclecticism of contemporary art, which appropriates, deconstructs, and comments on images, techniques, and meanings from the entire cultural archive thus far. After repeated borrowings and copying in different genres and media, it is difficult to determine where an art work is positioned on the axis original-adaptation-borrowing-quotation-plagiarism-copy-remake-parody-collage-creation. Current technology allow images to move from one medium to another, simultaneously changing their context. As Groys writes: "The status of the copy becomes a contemporary cultural convention" (Groys, B. 2012: 74-75). The art world equates the status of copies with originals. Appropriation art has its origins in Cubism and Dadaism, but is also a common practice in contemporary art, for example in the works of Richard Prince, Sherry Levine and Jeff Koons.

Appropriating popular images is an aesthetic strategy to attract attention by recognizing them and associating them with the name of a famous creator. "Younger contemporary authors who use appropriation describe themselves as 'archaeologists of the moment', others refer to 'post-production', which is the re-editing of the 'script of culture' based on pre-existing compositions. The appropriation of other people's works or existing cultural objects is justified with the idea of utility by so-called "prosumers" - people who consume and produce at the same time. They borrow from the available pictures, phrases and sounds on the Internet to "remix" them. This new "remix generation" is taking over not only the visual arts, but also music, books, dance and cinema, and has sparked heated controversy. Lawrence Lessing, a media researcher, coined the phrase 'remix culture' in the early 21st century" (Lessing, L. 2008)

Despite plagiarism lawsuits against famous contemporary artists, their works continue to have the status of originals. The acceptance of reproductions of other`s people reproductions as original works in the art world shows that the distinction "original - copy - reproduction" loses its meaning, as well as the concepts of "authorship, originality, uniqueness", and the old concepts of "theft" and "plagiarism" turn into "borrowing", "recontextualization" and "appropriation art". This also shakes the status of the museum.

## **9. The art of "interaction with art"**

### **9.1. "Looking without seeing"**

Conceptual art accustoms the viewer to neglecting sensory perception and replacing it with the rational and verbal. Special instructions on how to look at contemporary art are emerging – for example Ossian Word's *Ways of Looking: How to Experience Contemporary Art* (Ossian, W. 2014) and Michael Findlay's *Seeing Slowly: Looking at Modern Art* (Findlay, M 2017). According to Findlay, the perception of contemporary art can be summed up in the paradoxical 'looking without seeing', by 'looking' he means naming and by 'seeing' the viewer's engagement with perception. Deeply rooted in human culture is the belief that knowledge of something is impossible unless it is given a name and can be explained in words. Many artists today work in ways that defy naming. Entertainment, which is fundamentally a social event, has become an alternative to individual contemplation and thought activity. Art is expected to be fun, provide stimulation for the senses, social interaction with other people, and not require contemplation and thought activity. In order to be able to truly engage with the aesthetic perception of art, it is necessary to temporarily "silence" and suppress the rational part of the brain associated with information and words, and the modern viewer does not have time for such an experience, and therefore the situation of "seeing without seeing" occurs.

### **9.2. Art as a field of resonance**

The German sociologist and philosopher Hartmut Rosa in his book "Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World" turns the physical acoustic phenomenon of resonance into a sociological category. He divides resonant relationships into horizontal (social relationships - friendly, family, romantic and even political); diagonal (objects, work, school, sports) and vertical (religion, nature, history, art, etc., perceived as existing above or beyond the individual). Resonant experiences merge in the same moment "what I want", "what it should be" and "what is". Art in the modern world is replacing religion as the great synchronizer that can unite large masses of people around an intense, shared experience - for example, during a rock concert, a theater performance, etc.

A work of art establishes a connection between the external world and the internal world of the person who perceives it. Resonance is a way of relating, not an emotional state – so 'negative' emotions

such as sadness or feeling alone can lead to a positive resonant experience. The separation of resonance and emotion is a characteristic feature of aesthetic experiences – what is experienced as pleasant is not the sadness itself, but the resonance it establishes with the recipient. Resonant relationships can occur not only between the work and the perceiver, but also between the performer and the work. The creation of a collectively resonant event occurs when a "spark" flashes between the artists themselves, as well as between them and the audience.

Rosa cites the French sociologist Emile Durkheim, who speaks of "collective effervescence" in his book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Durkheim, E. 1964: 157): those moments of collective boiling or ecstasy in which attention and emotions of participants unite and mutually reinforce each other. Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence, associated with Aboriginal religious rites, Rosa applies to contemporary social 'oases of resonance' such as sporting events, World Cup matches, big rock concerts and other cultural events being broadcasted live around the world - their popularity stems from the fact that they are able, in a fragmented and individualized world, to command and direct the attention and emotions of hundreds, even thousands of people at once, creating as well as intensifying moments of collective effervescence. These events bring the awareness that someone is connected with people all over the world experiencing the same thing synchronously and simultaneously. Moments of resonance make a person part of something greater than himself.

#### **10. Negative values and ethical debates in the art of the 21st century**

Contemporary art is defined and evaluated according to the degree of negation of the old aesthetic norms - deviation from them is a criterion for quality and innovation. The normal, the beautiful, the symmetrical, the aesthetic are evaluated as an aesthetic defect - something familiar and irrelevant. It is as if the study of values has already been exhausted, and therefore art turns to anti-values - destruction is easier to achieve than perfection and beauty, which require mastery and effort. Unlike notions of beauty, which are subjective and different for each individual, disgust turns out to be a much more universal response and is guaranteed to elicit the same sharp response from everyone, everywhere. The transgression of all taboos is presented as innovation and freedom, but at the same time it legalizes extremes and breaking of norms. The expansion of the limits of the permissible in its final stage destroys the limits themselves, flattens everything and makes evaluation impossible. The justification of many artists is that the modern world is abnormal, perverted and inhuman, and therefore art is so because it takes place in it and reflects it. Some shocking works are presented as a criticism of society, but the question is, is this really so, or, is there cynicism, greed and thirst for fame behind this pretense? The connection between art and values is broken - art is no longer a carrier of values, but is only a testimony to their absence.

Sometimes it is difficult to make a difference between the provocation, which is only a PR action with a short-term effect, and the serious artistic gesture, because it shows things that society does not want to see or for which it is not yet mature enough. In some cases, moral outrage can be a reaction that has nothing moral at its core, but is censorship and a means of eliminating and discrediting someone who exposes problems inconvenient to the status quo or thinks differently from the "right way."

Money determines the content of contemporary collectible art, which receives the most visibility and media coverage – it is apolitical and asocial. His affiliation with large corporations, collectors and investors does not imply criticizing the status quo of which they are a part, and which brings fame, money and prestige to artists. Andy Warhol's motto quoted by Gompertz (Gompertz 2016: 423) applies to them: "The best art is business."

Attention is the currency of today, and contemporary art competes with the media and mass culture to attract a stimulus- and variety-overwhelmed audience. In this competition for attention, all means are used - aestheticization and banalization of violence and moral violations, sensationalism and shock news about perversions, pornography and cruelty. Aesthetic pleasure is a social institution today. Digital communities are in the role of a Super Ego that appropriates to itself the right to judge and censor art.

Freedom of expression and religious tolerance often come into conflict in modern multicultural societies and lead to debates about the morality of art. Two of the loudest scandals related to religion and art are those of the cartoons of Muhammad in the French magazine Charlie Hebdo, and the publication of Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses*.

The erasure of the boundaries between art and reality occurs when the representation of reality is replaced by reality itself, which becomes the main material of the work. German anatomist Gunther von Hagens held traveling art exhibitions that represented embalmed human and animal bodies with skin removed and organs exposed. Another artifact that problematizes the boundaries of art / non-art is the series "Dau", which is both a film project and a social experiment of the Russian director Ilya Khrzhanovsky: much of what happens on screen is not staged, but reality - violence, sex, excrement. The purpose of this experiment with real people is forcing them to really experience the period of repression and to show how human nature changes under the pressure of a totalitarian regime. "Dau" merges art and life into one, turning the personal space and experiences of living people into art material. The question is can what is shown on the screen be called art at all? If this is acceptable, then every documented crime and perversion can be declared art.

Another direction in contemporary art that problematizes the real-fictional border is the practice of bio art, which merges science, nature and art into one. The works of this direction are related to

technological transformations of the human body through plastic surgery, prosthetics, robotics, gene experiments and the cloning of plants and animals.

## **CHAPTER THREE: XXI CENTURY ART AND MONEY**

### **1. Features of the post-discursive society**

As Jacques Rancière says: “There is no art without eyes that see it as art” (cited in Deranty, JP (ed) 2010 : 119). Rancière's "regimes of art" are modes of visibility that indicate what is permissible to be visible and spoken in a particular socio-political system. The question of taste and aesthetic standards is a matter of politics and ideology. Symbols have political power because new kinds of artwork create new communities and ways for people to connect with each other.

The art of the 21st century is bound to the context of the globalized society, which fails to build generally accepted social conventions. In multicultural societies, human identity becomes something fluid and changeable – old narratives that legitimize national and historical identities are replaced by new ones adapted to a globalized society that is beyond previous geographical, identity and political boundaries. This creates fundamental issues regarding social justice, the development of critical race theory and identity politics, and the elimination of identity-based inequalities and injustices.

Boris Groys calls modern society "post-discursive". The interweaving of radically different but equal paradigms makes it impossible to establish universal axiology. According to Groys (Groys 2012: 382) “...the way to achieve a universal perspective is now not through transcendence but through the 'death of the subject': a reduction that produces subjectivities without identity – universal, anonymous, neutral, without a worldview of their own, not producing specific personal meanings and messages, without own goals and ideas. Integration takes place at the cost of the depersonalization of the integrated'.

Epistemological, ethical and aesthetic uncertainty become the norm – there are no universal criteria against which to define and legitimize assessments and classifications. The lack of consensus on the criteria for selection and recognition of aesthetic qualities leads to the equality of all works of art. In this situation of fundamental aesthetic equality, any value judgment can come only from the external to the aesthetic sphere influences from politics and economics.

### **2. Mass production of art and media influence**

The beginning of the 21st century is an era of both mass consumption and mass production of art. The World Wide Web is a place for the mass production and reproduction of images and signs. Groys speaks of the collapse of mass culture as described by various theorists of the 20th century: "kitsch

(according to Greenberg), culture industry (according to Adorno) or as a 'society of the spectacle' (according to Guy Debord)" (Groys, B. 2012: 48).

Aesthetic norms are defined and imposed by the mass media - the general public gets an idea of contemporary art from the news, advertisements, video games, Hollywood blockbusters. Dossi (Dossi, P. 2011 : 190) states that "the economic construction of the brand replaced the romantic Renaissance idea of the artist as a genius and turned him into a pop star within the global capitalist system," and Groys adds that self-design and self-branding, which are an essential part of achieving success in the art world, "transform the role of the artist from image producer to image and artwork himself" (Groys 2012:290).

### **3. Vita activa**

Sociologists Arlie Hochschild (Hochschild A. 1979 : 551–575) and Gerhard Schulze (Schulze G. 2011) study the "society of experiences" or the "economy of impressions" (experience economy), which are related to the commercialization of emotions. Eva Illouz (Illouz, E. 2007) introduced the concept of "emotional capitalism". In the "Society of Experiences" Schulze (Schulze G. 2005 : 39) notes that modern man changes his orientation from external (impact on the world, consumption of goods and services) to internal (aware the world through experiences).

Art meets the demand for experiences in the new life mode of *vita activa*, turning the encounter with art into entertainment, social event and active participation. In contemporary post-media art, interactivity becomes a key feature that removes the strict boundaries between the artwork, the artist and the audience.

According to Georg Franck (Franck, G 1998), attention is the new currency in a media society that is overloaded with information coming through various channels: media, social networks, advertisements, billboards, TV spots, online banners, etc., which try to engage people's minds.

Attracting attention is among the main factors that allow a work of art to become recognizable and valuable in the art market system. The strategy of accumulation and increasing of this attention eventually turns the artist's name into a trademark - a brand.

### **4. Self-design and commodification of the Self**

Davis (Davis, J. 2 003). identifies two processes related to the commodification of the Self: "self-determination depends on appropriating the characteristics of goods and identifying with the things we buy" and "reorganization of personal life and relationships on the model of market relations." Ralph Turner calls these processes "change of the locus of the Self": people in modern times place less emphasis on their institutional roles in society (external motivation, artificial limitations and overlays that suppress the true

self) and put more emphasis on their internal criteria or 'impulses' (non-socialized, internal impulses, which are waiting to be discovered and expressed)' (cited in Davis, J.2003).

## **5. The social essence of people and things - the distinction between commodity and non-commodity**

Igor Kopytoff (1930-2013) sees commoditization and singularization as two opposite processes. Singularization, also called "sacralization" is the endowment of something with special qualities that make it irreplaceable and exclude it from the circle of any exchange. Commoditization - turning something into a commodity, is de-singularizing through comparison and interchangeability with many other things. Sacredness and commoditization are culturally constructed and have nothing to do with the inherent qualities of the specific objects that undergo identity transformation - respectively as a commodity (a concrete part of a set) or a sacred object (unrepeatable singularity, embodiment of an absolute). (Kopytoff, I 1986)

### **5.1. Cultural and individual singularization**

According to Durkheim (Durkheim 1915), societies need to set aside a part of their surroundings, marking it as sacred through singularization. The qualities of singularity that make a thing non-commodity are: rarity, inaccessibility, uniqueness, and a highly narrowed circle in which exchange is possible. Limitation in scope and volume creates exclusivity, which, depending on the hierarchy, turns into elitism or marginality. The constitutive quality of the singularity is to create a social diversification of society and establish a hierarchy between individual groups.

The process of civilization is a series of singularizations - people individuate things by projecting onto them qualities that separate them from everything else. When culture singularizes certain areas and entities, commoditization homogenizes everything through exchange value. The equalizing of values as a result from commoditization makes sacred and profane interchangeable, commodity and non-commodity indistinguishable.

### **6. Value fetishism and art fetishization**

Each object has a substantial, perceptible essence and, at the same time, a social essence - non-sensory properties that people associate with it. By circulating, money disguises its origin (collective belief) and is mistaken for natural objectivity. Its social role is based on collective intentionality and intersubjective consensus, which unites sensory material and supersensible social meaning in a symbol that is both real and ideal, sensible and supersensible.

Marx defines money as the intermediary that exercises its power over everything it mediates: objects separated from it lose their value and have such value only insofar as they represent it (Marx, K.



1844 : 212). The result of it is exchange of places: instead of money having value as representatives of different commodities, commodities have value because they are represented by money. Quasi-religious practices of fetishization are seen in contemporary art, on which socially constructed qualities are projected by the same mechanism by which goods are alienated from their true value – the labor invested in them. This allows art to be socially endowed with a fetish 'power' unrelated to its aesthetic value.

The lack of legitimate criteria for the evaluation of art allows the artificial creation of "quality" through the price. In a situation of indistinguishability of good and bad art, the price creates the value and objectifies a quality inaccessible to the senses, legitimizes it and determines how to perceive the object as a carrier of this quality. Money measures the value of everything without itself being measured as value. The relationship between price and value should be contained in some logic, equivalence, reciprocity or causality, but in practice the price has no relation to the qualities of the object-commodity, but denotes its desire, evaluation, demand and supply.

### **7. The work of art as a commodity**

The contradictory nature of art is that it is a spiritual phenomenon embodied in material forms that are associated with production and commerce. Equating objects to money makes them part of an order in which only quantitative differences are valid when comparing them. Money is a number, a ratio and a comparison with something else, a unit of measurement that objectifies the object being valued, while the quality of art is subjective and unmeasurable by units of measurement and proportions. When the artwork is converted into a commodity then quality is replaced by a quantitative expression - "good" and "expensive" become synonyms, and "bad" and "cheap" express the same thing. In this way, the price becomes a sign of quality without taking into account the specifics of the valued objects. "The monetary economy will increasingly obscure the fact that the monetary value of things does not fully replace what we ourselves possess in them, that they have qualities that can't be expressed in money." (Simmel, G. 2004: 407).

The logic of the art market is related to the monetization of symbolic capital, which is generated through visibility and recognition, building name-brands with methodical PR actions, marketing, advertising and activity in traditional media and social networks. In the modern world, the most salable and profitable is not the best art, but the most famous. Art without created visibility is excluded and non-existent as an object of evaluation.

### **8. Types of capital, art field and symbolic exchange**

In "The Forms of Capital" (Bourdieu, P. 1983/1986), Bourdieu, influenced by Marxist theory, spoke of three forms of capital - social, cultural and economic, as well as the economy of the sign. According to

him, the different forms of capital can be converted into each other, and each of them creates a sphere of social influence - a "field". Each field is a relational sphere in which agents struggle for recognition and influence, for the accumulation of value - economic resources (money), political power, academic prestige or artistic recognition.

The creation of value is related to the 'rules of art' that operate in the cultural field, also called the 'art world', which consists of 'artists, museums, galleries, fairs, auction houses, exhibition spaces, dealers, curators, historians of art, activists, independent spaces, art magazines, art publishers, press agents, academic and non-academic art schools, research institutes, departments of philosophy, economics and management, art, cultural and curatorial studies in various faculties. Its boundaries are unclear and unstable. "It is difficult to say what is 'in' and what is 'out' and why, but the consequences of inclusion or exclusion are palpable." (Curioni,S., Pierazzini, M., Forti,L.2020).

### **8.1. Belief Production and the "Circle of Belief"**

Bourdieu explores the mechanism of belief production in the "Field of Cultural Production" (Bourdieu P. 1993 : 74): the legitimization of agents in the field of art (author, critic, publisher, art dealer, etc.,) consists in creating symbolic capital - visibility, recognition and reputation that give power and authority to the relevant agent to dedicate objects or persons, thereby giving them value and profiting from this operation. Anyone who admits a new creator into the cycle of initiation plays the role of a gate keeper, vouching for his qualities with his accumulated personal symbolic capital. In the art field, everyone is connected to each other in a "circle of faith" according to Bourdieu's expression (Bourdieu, R. 1993 : 77), exchanging their symbolic capital against that of the other agents in the field.

The value of a work is not related to the value of its carrier - a material object, but derives from the reputation of everyone associated with it: gallerist, critic, publisher, recording studio, biennale, museum, exhibition, specialized publication, etc.

Value creation is a magical act that is fueled by social energy. All attempts to break the "circle of faith" through, as Bourdieu calls them, "ritual sacrileges" - blatant ridicule and profanation of art, fail because the field quickly sacralizes them and creates a new belief. The commodity is the author's name, not that on which it is placed - the works of Hirst, Koons and others are made by hired workers, but what makes them expensive is the signature of the star author.

### **8.2. The market for symbolic goods**

The specificity of symbolic goods according to Bourdieu (Bourdieu, P. 1993: 113) consists in their dual nature of both a commodity and a symbolic object. They are distinguished from substantial goods due to that they are being purchased for their symbolic meaning related to prestige and identity, rather than for

their utilitarian and functional advantages and purposeness. Works of elitist collectible art belong to the so-called "Veblen goods" named after the American economist and theorist Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929). Such goods indicate status and class and are associated with luxury and leisure time – their value and worth are instrumental and associative. They are not generally accessible and are bought for image and display of wealth, both as a means of distinguishing themselves from people of lower income and education, and as a consumption pattern to demonstrate belonging to an upper class.

### **9. Economy of culture**

The economy of culture is a field of alchemical transformation of social and spiritual phenomena into material and market ones. Cultural goods and services fall under the category of mixed goods that have characteristics of both private and public good. A public good is one whose benefits are available to all and are non-rivalrous – one person's consumption does not reduce the amount available to others. “The benefits of public goods are non-market: existence value (people value the arts simply because they exist); opportunity value (people wish to retain the possibility of wanting to consume the art at some point in the future); and legacy value (people believe it is important to pass the arts on to future generations). All of these sources of value must be considered when assessing the economic value of a cultural good or service. They can be measured by finding out how much people are willing to pay for them, for example by donating to some fund or raising taxes.” (Throsby, D. 2010 : 19).

When studying the value of a cultural product, two narratives always collide – economic (money, trade, technology, industry, production and consumption, workers and consumers) and aesthetic (culture, art, genius, creativity, appreciation, connoisseurs). Cultural value can be represented as assessments of the aesthetic, spiritual, social, symbolic, historical, and authentic qualities of a work, aggregated across a group of observers to reach some consensus judgment of each criterion. Holden (Holden, J. 2006) in his study of cultural policies and financing mechanisms divides cultural value into intrinsic, instrumental and institutional. His conclusion is that often funded projects respond to the desires, goals and focus of sponsors rather than public needs. The conversation about cultural policies has become a closed conversation between experts and institutions, but they lack public participation and its voice.

### **10. Economics of mass production of art**

Depending on the predominance of economic or symbolic considerations, the field of cultural production is divided into two sectors: a field of limited production and a field of large-scale, mass production. The field of mass production depends on external demands and its results are hardly appreciated as symbolic values, their motivation is above all commercial. The products of this field have a short life and are intended for people who are not producers of cultural goods. Evaluation and success

depend on the collective taste, reception and perception of large, heterogeneous masses of people. Therefore, it should be as accessible, inclusive and neutral as possible. The view of Horkheimer and Adorno (Adorno, Th. and Horkheimer, M. 1972) in "The Culture Industry", as well as Baudrillard (Baudrillard, J. 2000: 10-11) that the demand and consumption of mass products are formed and imposed from above, is evidenced by the marketing strategies of modern companies that target consumers and create needs for them to satisfy.

The art market is characterized by information asymmetry – producers and dealers have information about products that consumers and buyers haven't. Works of mass art, as well as various types of entertainment, are classified as so-called "experience goods" and the "experience economy". The value of a product is determined by its marketability, and it is a consequence of visibility, which provides legitimacy and profit, as well as recognition by institutions, because it brings visibility to them too.

The minimization of financial risks in mass art is done by producing products that have been well received or similar - this is expressed in endless repetitions, remakes, sequels and spin-offs of successful plots. The profits of producers in the culture industry are not generated from ticket sales alone. They use the wave of attention to multiply their profits through various media and products - turning literary works into films, video games, TV series, merchandise goods and souvenirs with characters and heroes and more. The fusion of art, advertising and business is an inalienable part of the cultural situation in today's commercially oriented society. Fashion, art, design, pop culture – everything is tied up in a huge web for profit.

In his study of the star system, the American economist Sherwin Rosen (Rosen, S. 1981) points out that those with greater talent receive only slightly higher royalties than others, but their products are sold in much larger quantities. In every art sector, profits are unevenly distributed - a small group of authors earn a large share of the total income in it, while the average income of the rest is low. There is always more supply than demand, but there are intangible, non-monetary benefits of creative work.

Institutional recognition, marketability, and the transformation of a particular artifact into a significant cultural phenomenon rarely coincide about one piece of art. Winners of Pulitzer, Oscar, Turner, Booker, and Grammy prizes are not the most famous in the public consciousness, their works are not the best sellers, nor do they leave a lasting mark in the public memory. In all areas of the creative industries, the richest and most famous are not the most talented, but those promoted through PR and marketing campaigns in the public space, which turn their names into a brand. An announcement of something like new and its presence in all media channels ensure recognition and distinctiveness through the repetition effect - the more the audience is exposed to one type of content, the more they get used to it and come to

like it over time, simply because it is already familiar and common. There is also the effect of copying and herd feeling – people like what others have liked in order to gain self-affirmation, acceptance and a sense of belonging.

### **10.1. Digital glory**

Digital fame collected through social media profiles and platforms is an increasingly powerful force in the art world. It is demonstrated by the example of Dwayne Johnson - The Rock, a former wrestler who, through his profiles gathering millions of followers, managed to become the highest paid actor of 2018 according to the Forbes ranking. He monetizes his muscles and physique by starring in popular, easily digestible movies for all audiences – action, sports, adventure and comedy. After a career in sports and cinema, he is preparing to enter politics, following the path of Arnold Schwarzenegger. Success in one area easily translates into success in another. Fame and symbolic capital based on public opinion supersede the talent, education, and expertise needed in the new field. Movie studios now track actors' follower counts and social media engagement to make casting decisions.

### **11. Sector of limited cultural production**

In the field of limited cultural production, economic profit is secondary to the symbolic value of the product and to the long-term accumulation of symbolic capital. Its products are cultural goods distinguished by authenticity and uniqueness, intended for manufacturers and competitors in the respective field. The public cannot influence the field of limited cultural production. It is more alienated and distant from the forces of external demand and is therefore maximally exclusionary, limited, closed and autonomous - it develops its own criteria for the production and evaluation of its products.

The value and price of its products is socially constructed in the process of exchange and consumption through which they achieve cultural recognition. This process is dominated by agents and institutions of initiation such as criticism and the educational system. Members of these institutions compete for power by assigning properties to works and classifying them as legitimate, and the institutions provide reproduction for producers, agents of sanctification, and consumers who possess the appropriate social and aesthetic disposition and means necessary to appropriate these legitimized symbolic goods. The symbolic goods owe their cultural rarity to the amount of money required for their purchase.

The relationship is two-directional: any good and any tangible formal representation can be considered a work of art if it is placed in the right context of narrative and institutions. “Symmetrically, anthropologists tell us that any work of art, even the most sacred and representative, can potentially acquire the status of a mere commodity, whether temporary or permanent. (Appadurai 1986).” (op. cit. Curioni, S., Pierazzini, M., Forti, L. 2020)

The most impressive features of the contemporary art system are its quantitative growth and market dimension. The global exchange recorded in 2018 was \$67.4 billion, with an increased sales value of 9% over 10 years and 40 million transactions. “An impressive 310,000 businesses are thought to operate in the art market, employing nearly 3 million people, with a turnover of 20 billion and 375,000 additional jobs in external support (McAndrews 2019), but this expansion is not just happening in the market infrastructure.” (Curioni,S., Pierazzini, M., Forti,L.2020)

### **11.1. Geographical scope of the contemporary art market - center and periphery**

Despite globalization, the global art market for collectible art has an unequal geographic distribution. For decades - since the Second World War, when the modern art market was formed, the hegemony was in two centers (London and New York), where are found the largest galleries, auctions, the most influential curators, dealers, critics and artists. “New York is hegemon because aesthetic/art market value is created by the attention of key critics, curators, dealers and collectors. Art not shown in New York loses value for that reason alone, regardless of the characteristics of the work itself.” (Plattner, S. 1998).

The elite art market does not represent world art, but only that which receives visibility and recognition in the Western cultural context. By the late 1990s, the market was dominated by artists and works from the United States and Europe. In the 21st century, its geographical boundaries expanded in the direction of the large emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China. Between 2004 and 2009, the number of buyers from the Middle East at Christie's increased by 400 percent. “Nowadays, the proportion of high net worth individuals from Latin America and Asia who buy art is higher than that of their American counterparts.” (Velthuis, O. 2012).

This geographical expansion led to the opening of branches of the world's two largest auction houses, Sotheby's and Christie's, in the Middle East and Hong Kong, and organizing sales of art from India, Russia, China and Latin America. Art fairs enable a juxtaposition of global demand and supply as new authors appear at their editions in America and Europe, while at the same time many fairs are established in emerging art capitals such as Shanghai, New Delhi, Sao Paulo, Moscow or Abu Dhabi. In 2010, the Chinese market surpassed the American market in terms of revenue, and in the list of the 100 best contemporary artists in 2010, half of the top ten were Chinese. (ibid Velthuis, O. 2012)

Evidence of the Western-centricity of the global art market is the Kunstkompass ranking of the most important artists in 2022. This ranking has been published in the Capital Art Compass for 50 years and identifies the 100 most important contemporary artists worldwide by measuring their resonance on the international art scene. In this 2022 ranking, among the nations with the most important contemporary artists are Germany (29), the USA (24) and the UK (12), making a total of 65 artists from only 3 countries,

which is a testament to the hegemony of the developed Western countries and America on the World Art Market. In the Capital Art Compass ranking of the 25 most significant deceased contemporary artists, 15 are from the United States and 4 from Germany, making 19 out of 25. The inequalities in this ranking reflect inequalities in material resources, institutional and cultural conditions for the development of art. Artists, dealers and collectors from Europe and the United States continue to dominate the global art market, which operates through a small number of auction houses and powerful galleries such as Gagosian, Pace, David Zwirner or Hauser & Wirth.

### **11.2. Art as an investment and financial instrument**

In the first decade of the 21st century, collectible art increasingly became a financial and investment asset - just like currencies, stocks, bonds, investment gold, etc. Works of art are used as collateral for multi-million bank loans, they are part of the portfolios of pension and investment funds, banks and corporations. Art is a risky asset, but at the same time it has a much greater speculative potential in the future to provide multiple returns and profit on the invested money. The aesthetic nature of the works does not matter at all - works are bought on the advice of financial consultants and appraisers without the future owners having seen them. Sometimes after their acquisition, the works remain closed and undisplayed in luxurious and well-guarded depots until their price rises and a profit can be made from them. During this time they practically have no existence as aesthetic objects because they are not in contact with any audience.

### **11.3. Structure and features of the contemporary market of collectible art**

The collector art market is characterized by information opacity - the buyer has no way to determine how fair the asking price is without using the expertise of a consultant who monitors market trends, the development of the specific author, contemporary trends in art, etc. Art of the highest financial class is intended for a limited circle of buyers - billionaires, tycoons, oil sheikhs, oligarchs. Prices in this part of the art market are linked to the incomes of the ultra-rich – with that 0.1% of the 1% highest segment of the financial elite (Wuggenig U., Rudolph S. 2013). Recognized serious collectors in the world number no more than 200 people. Their list, which is published by Art-news magazine every year, is almost like a repeat of the Forbes ranking of the richest people in the world.

Depending on the degree of financial risk, elite art is divided into the so-called **blue** and **red** chips. Blue chips are works whose price is guaranteed to grow over time - they are by artists who have passed the test of time, have very high prices, high demand and limited supply. Red chips are works by contemporary artists whose future development is not clear - their purchase is associated with the risk that they cannot be resold at the same or higher price. In this category, supply is greater than demand, and their prices depend on the reputation of art agents and art institutions who have engaged with them.

#### 11.4. Pricing logic – opacity, criteria and speculation

Pricing has three components – social, artistic and financial. The social component takes into account the social capital of the work - for the buyer, it is the social status that he receives or strengthens with the possession of the work, and for the author and gallerist, it ensures the strengthening or elevation of their position in the field of art. The artistic value of a work is the result of comparing it to other contemporary works in an attempt to predict its importance to future generations. The financial aspect of the valuation includes the price history of this or similar works, which the buyer considers as a basis for a future price at which he can resell the item, bearing in mind the scope-limited market structure in which such resale is possible. Three types of economic agents are involved in determining prices – gallerists or museum directors are guided by social value, historians and art critics consider artistic value, buyers perceive the work in a financial aspect as an investment and an opportunity for future profit. The determination of the price is guided by **physical factors** (size, year of creation, material, condition) and **associative factors** – symbolic capital of an author, gallerist, and auction. Designed and associative qualities are much more important than physical ones. Buyers are actually paying a higher price for their faith in someone's reputation rather than for the actual item.

Sales history (or lack of such) is what dictates prices. Markets fluctuate over time, so valuations are based on data obtained from sales of comparable items that occurred closest to the valuation date. By "comparable" items are meant those with similar levels of popularity of the style, school or country of origin, popularity of the artist; critical reception of the work evidenced by exhibitions and publications; the subject itself; its dimensions, date of creation, origin and condition. The relative importance of these factors varies. The popularity of a certain style is a consequence of the significance of its critical reception and coverage through exhibitions, scholarships, awards, publications, inclusion in academic teaching, etc.

The first step of evaluation is to determine the rank of a particular artist in the hierarchy of style or direction, and the next is to evaluate the work as a place in his creative biography. This second step of evaluation sometimes makes the date of creation of a particular work decisive for its price. "Among those artists who are closely associated with the beginning of a dominant trend, for example, the exact date of a work can cause its value to rise many times over his or her works created a decade earlier or later" (McNulty, T. 2018).

Prices are determined by many factors that have nothing to do with the qualities of the works - for example, the origin or who owned the work. Authenticity, rarity and inaccessibility are both mechanisms for creating value and distinctiveness. The paradox of rarity manifests itself through the difference in price of something produced in limited numbers or in large quantities.



### **11.5. The changed role of experts and the cult of new**

The modern critic has no theory of good and bad in contemporary art, no accepted set of aesthetic values to which he can refer. After the market success of the Impressionists, which followed their rejection by the academic community and the official art critics of their time, expert evaluation lost its authority. If a respected critic fails to appreciate new art and it later becomes successful through the efforts of other critics, curators, dealers, and collectors, he risks his authority. This fear encourages the (un)critical rush of every expert to be the first to recognize the merits of the latest trend. "The result of this process of unconditional acceptance of everything new is the common complaint that much contemporary art is aesthetically empty and has no merits other than its 'newness'" (Hughes, R. 1991).

Distrust of the authority of critics and experts makes market success the only short-term measure of artistic significance. Collectors are concerned with legitimizing their own tastes through sponsorship, donations and patronage of foundations, museums, art schools, grant programs, etc. Experts no longer serve public taste and impose the taste of a limited group of ultra-rich, for whom art is not important as an aesthetic object, but only as symbolic capital and an investment instrument.

In 2015, The Art Newspaper openly questioned the relative independence of museums from the seduction of markets by doing research that found that nearly a third of major solo shows held in American museums between 2007 and 2013 featured artists represented by just five galleries, and 30% of solo shows featured artists represented by Gagosian Gallery, Pace, Marian Goodman Gallery, David Zwirner and Hauser & Wirth (Halperin, J. 2015).

### **11.6. Primary market**

The primary market is for local, non-investment art. Plattner (Plattner 1998) defines this market by two criteria: the motives of producers and the knowledge of consumers. According to him, the primary art market is a paradox: "A market in which people spend considerable sums of money to buy objects of whose value they cannot be sure, and where people spend considerable amounts of time to produce goods that few people are ready to buy." (Plattner 1998)

### **11.7. Secondary market**

A secondary market is one where works that have already been bought are resold. Buyers of art sold on the secondary market by elite auction houses such as Sotheby's and Christie's have full information on price trends and past sales. The closer one gets to the blue-chip sector, the more extensive public auction sales data is available to buyers.

Plattner (Plattner 1998) cites empirical research by Halle (Halle, D. 1993) that does not support the thesis of Bourdieu and his followers about the use of the difference in cultural capital by elites as a means

of limiting the access of the masses to high status. According to Halle's research: "most members of the elite class are as uneducated and uninterested in the fine arts as the masses." (Plattner 1998).

The success of the Young British Artists in the 1990s changed the dynamics of the art market and made contemporary conceptual art the most sought after. The works of young contemporary artists achieve record prices at auctions - the demand exceeds their physical ability to satisfy this interest with their own efforts, and then they organize their studios like art factories: they hire assistants to make the works for them, and they only put their signature on the finished products articles. Illustrating this trend towards commercialization are Jeff Koons, Takashi Murakami, Richard Prince, Maurizio Cattelan, and Damien Hirst, who are on the list of the 10 best-selling contemporary artists according to their auction revenues for the period 2010-2011 (Artprice, 2011, 64)

According to data from 2022, Hirst is the second richest living artist with a fortune of one billion and was declared the richest person in Great Britain and Ireland (The Sunday Times Rich List). At the peak of his career, he had more than 120 assistants working for him. His signature is enough to place a value in the millions on something he didn't touch, but if one of his assistants tried to sell the same work without his signature it would be worth little or nothing.

The commercial motivation of the artists is reflected in their works: "...easily recognizable and digestible, iconic or provocative images, often borrowed from popular culture dominate the art market after 2000." (Velthuis, Olav 2012). Participants in art fairs make works that are directly called "art for the art fair" where they considered the market trends. usually made in sizes convenient for transport and display, and created according to the tastes of the leading curators of these fairs.

Auction houses have shifted to aggressively pursuing works created in recent years because there is demand for them, the supply is endless, and prices are rising faster and steeper than those of the old masters. Traditional collectors, despite their commercial interest, still chose works with their eyes and followed favorite authors throughout their careers. Now they are being pushed out by new collectors who do not have an in-depth knowledge of art and use the services of paid art consultants to navigate the market. Their motives for buying art are entirely commercial and business oriented - investment and status acquisition.

In 2008, Hirst directly offered his works for auction at the Sotheby's auction house without the mediation of a dealer and a gallery, which removed the boundary between the primary and secondary market and changed the previous relationship of author - dealer - auction. Turning the internet into a place to sell art, which has evolved as a practice especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, whether directly from

a gallery website or a platform like artnet.com, weakens the importance of social connections and increases anonymous exchange.

But it is an illusion that the digitization of the art market is related to its democratization – a report on the art market in 2021 shows that the most transactions are carried out by 13 established galleries and only 3 new ones have been added to this list. A new speculative niche was formed around the NFT, buying art with cryptocurrencies and selling artwork made with AI.

One of the unspoken rules of the art market is to never publicly reduce price. If demand and sales of one author decline, his paintings are hidden, moved to another gallery, or sold secretly. A downward correction of prices would shake the collective faith that makes the art market exist in its current form. In practice, various mechanisms are used to keep prices high and protect the investments of the rich.

Public attention is a basic condition for the emergence of financial pyramids, both in the stock market and in the art market. Despite all the mechanisms to keep prices high, the contemporary art market experienced two financial collapses - in 1990 and during 2007-2008. The close connection between the world economy, the income of the rich and art has been proven. Big dealers, auction houses and collectors define taste in art: "What changed was that the market, fueled by glittering new wealth, became more powerful than the connoisseurs, museum curators and art academics whose consensus decided what was good art. Hedge fund managers and Russian oligarchs are not necessarily known for their sophisticated good taste," says Turner Prize-winning artist Grayson Perry (Thorpe, V. 2008)

The paradoxes of pricing confuse even the experts. The same painting by the same author under the same other circumstances - format, technique, period of the artist's career - will be priced differently on the primary market, at an international exhibition in Basel or at a Sotheby`s auction. A viewer or collector cannot independently certify the quality of what he sees or buys - evaluation is a hermetic process and at the same time a power mechanism available only to a certain number of those empowered to give these evaluations and legitimize the discourse of values.

### **11.8. Commodification of art**

Commercialization regulates the creative directions and decisions of art makers. Authors become businessmen who subordinate their creativity to the demands of the market. Discourse is not legitimized by its truth, but by whether or not it can be sold, and on what scale. Instead of searching for new art, institutions are searching for new audiences for what already exists in their collections of art. The focus shifts from the work itself to the way it is presented.

Commodification is about collaborations between art, fashion, business and advertising. For example, Takashi Murakami and Jeff Koons collaborate with fashion brands and representatives of pop

culture and the entertainment industry. Murakami presents his art as a business strategy and produces it in his personal factory, which employs hundreds of people. He collaborated with the Louis Vuitton fashion house, made album covers for the famous rapper Kanye West and the pop singer Billie Eilish, participated in advertising campaigns and other commercial collaborations. Jeff Koons collaborated with H&M, a brand known for its mass production as well as its contribution to the consumer culture of disposables.

The often-asked question is: Does current art have future value and worth? Collectors largely determine artists' careers and prices, guided by the managers' slogan: "The best way to predict the future is to create it." (Dossi, P. 2007 : 86) Thompson sums it up: "Warhol, Koons and Emin are magnificent examples of being nobody in contemporary art until someone makes you a brand. Or until you make a brand of yourself..." (Thompson 2009: 58).

Political, media, cultural and business elites are closely connected through art and use their influence in one social area to guide processes in another.

## **12. The price of freedom - the business model of Christo and Jean-Claude**

Working for decades on a project that lasts two weeks and doesn't make a penny of profit is so unusual in today's commercial world that in April 2006 Christo and Jean-Claude were invited to talk about their unique financial model to the business school at Harvard for entrepreneurs (Harvard Business School). They fund their projects entirely themselves - they don't accept donations, commissions, funding or volunteer work. Their projects are large-scale and at the same time ephemeral, they are always free to the public - no entrance, tickets, fees, souvenirs, T-shirts, etc.

The main capital of C.V.J. (the initials of his corporation) is the artistic talent of Christo himself, which is transformed into money, each drawing sold being both as a work of art and as a share in the corporation, which is used as collateral for and repayment of bank loans. Christo collaborates with Jeffrey Deitch of Citibank. Deitch sets up an art lending business by providing Christo with a loan secured by Christo's personal collection of artwork. In this way, the artist can sell the drawings and other products not before, but after the project is completed, when they have a much greater value, allowing him to repay the loan and interest (Sussman, Anna 2017). This is an unusual business model in a sector which depends on grants, public procurement and galleries, but guarantees both Christo's artistic freedom and the opportunity for millions of viewers to "experience" his works completely free of charge. The physical installation provides the audience and the artist himself with an experience that will never be repeated. For Christo and Jean-Claude, their art is not only a creative activity but also a social practice that extends beyond the closed studio to the "real world" with its individuals, structures and mechanisms of society and the environment.

Through their work, they not only change elements of the physical environment, but also question the understanding of what is normal and what is possible.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

Globalization, the impossibility of shared collective values, the disintegration of the social fabric, the influence of technology and the acceleration of development lead to a loss of connection with reality, a crisis of identities and the impossibility of establishing intersubjective consensus. The missing norms are replaced by the measure of money as a universal evaluation criterion. The result is total axiological relativism.

Contemporary Western art is more a social than an aesthetic phenomenon – its value and price have nothing to do with its aesthetic qualities. The production of value takes place through price, media and institutional discourse. There is no connection between the price and the work - it is market-constructed depending on the symbolic capital of the agents from the field of art related to the work: author, critics, curators, gallerists, institutions, museums, etc. The connection between the value and the work is also broken - the absence and destruction of the work become legitimate forms of art. The only connection of the annihilated work to reality is the price.

### **IV. SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DISSERTATION**

1. Investigating the question of the indistinguishability of art from non-art as an epistemic and axiological problem.
- 2- Analysis of the evaluative function of price, discourse and symbolic capital.
3. Conceptualizing the disconnection between art, value and price..

### **V. PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION**

**Scientific publications of articles and reports in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes**

1. Deleva, N. 2022: The remake - between imitation and creativity// Studia Literaria Serdicensia, year 1, 2021, book 1 "Repetition, renewal - practices of remake" pp. 39-50, ISSN 2738-7631 (Print ) ISSN 2815-2999 (Online)
2. Deleva, N. 2021: Storytelling as a therapeutic method during a pandemic// Art in psychology", 2021 no. 1(3) ISSN 2683-0159

3. Deleva, N. 2021: The phenomenon of "contemporary art": definition, legitimation and features// Philosophical alternatives, 2021/2, 136-152 ISSN 0861-7899 (print) ISSN 2815-4568 (online) (indexed by: The Philosopher's Index, EBSCO host, Central and Eastern European On-line Library; Google Scholar)

4. Deleva, N. 2020: The arts of the body: author, work, audience// Philosophical alternatives 2020/4, 126-137 ISSN 0861-7899 (print) ISSN 2815-4568 (online) (indexed by: The Philosopher's Index , EBSCO host, Central and Eastern European On-line Library; Google Scholar)

5. Deleva, N. 2020: Aesthetic evolution of the author in the theater// Philosophical alternatives 2020/1, 121-129, ISSN 0861-7899 (print) ISSN 2815-4568 (online) (indexed by: The Philosopher's Index, EBSCO host , Central and Eastern European On-line Library; Google Scholar)

**Scientific publications of articles and reports in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information**

6. Deleva, N., 2023, "XXI century`s art as an axiological and cognitive problem of indistinguishability", // Philosophical alternatives, 2023/1, 45-55 ISSN 0861-7899 (indexed in The Philosopher's Index, EBSCOhost, Central and Eastern European On-line Library; Google Scholar, ERIH PLUS)

7. Deleva, N., 2022, "Art and knowledge - theories and perspectives", // Philosophical alternatives 2022/2, 52-77 ISSN 0861-7899, issue 2, pp. 136-152 (indexed in The Philosopher's Index, EBSCOhost, Central and Eastern European On-line Library; Google Scholar, .ERIH PLUS)

8. Deleva, N. 2021 "Contemporary art and morality-problems of evaluation", // Philosophical alternatives no. 5/2021 p. 87-105 ISSN 0861-7899, (indexed in The Philosopher's Index, EBSCOhost, Central and Eastern European On -line Library; Google Scholar, ERIH PLUS)

9. Deleva, N. 2021 "Art and pandemic - the crisis as an opportunity" Nota Bene, no. 52 (2021) ISSN 1313-7859 Referred in ERIH PLUS