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## CONTEMPORARY ART AS A SPACE FOR EDUCATION

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*This article is focused on educational aspect of the contemporary art. The author analyzes the art as an educational space based on the idea of education through art, proposed by Herbert Read, and the modern theory of aesthetic education by Irena Wojnar. The author presents contemporary art as an important component of education, which is aimed at forming integrated personality of man, stimulating his artistic activity, aesthetic experience and critical consciousness.*

**Keywords:** *art, aesthetic education, critical understanding.*

### 1. Introduction

The place of art in human life is very specific today. For the first time in history of mankind, access to works of art is very common and easy. Almost all of the persons who are interested in art, can reach works of art in different parts of the world and from different historical periods. Before, people generally used to deal with the works of their contemporaries, coming from their regions. Only a few privileged had the opportunity to become acquainted with the achievements of artists from distant lands or from past times. Today, with the participation of high technology, thanks to the possibility of displaying art collections in thousands of virtual galleries, due to sales of art on line and increasingly fast ways of transport, access to artistic projects is much easier. Contraction of time and space, as Bauman stressed, is the possibility to commune with the rich world of art, regardless of place and time in which we exist.

Nowadays we discuss a lot about crisis of education. The role of a teacher today is performed to a smaller extent by family, school, community or church. Media have taken over this role, and their force of impact (not just on children and teenagers, but also on adults) is really huge. Therefore, it is worth considering the other educational space, namely art. Mankind discovered educational role of art centuries ago. The idea of education through art, proposed by Herbert Read, focuses on the identification of art with life, the need to organize an agreement between people (dialogue), and

the need to express their feelings [4]. The modern theory of aesthetic education stressed, that art develops humanistic values, revives traditions, deepen sensitivity and triggers the expression and imagination. Education through art, by Irena Wojnar, constituting recognized educational orientation, is aimed at forming integrated personality of man, stimulating his artistic activity and aesthetic experience. Life among art confirms richness of human imagination, develops acuity of look, sensitizes to new things, unknown, unexpectedly close. Life among art becomes an ally of an idea of open – minded education [5, s. 251]. At the same time, art provides information about people of today and life in the past time, about the development of the world, customs, needs and anxieties in human history. What educational values does contemp or art art bring, if it brings any? Can art, in today's world of media and the ubiquitous consumption, create a specific space, which is not contaminated by the need of eternal satisfaction of artificially generated purposes? The space, which is real, although created in the imagination. The space, which is human, although often created by using new technology. And what perhaps the most important, will this art be able to stop the twenty-first century man in his rush towards his constant desire, just for the desire itself? Will art be able to offer him something in return, which, at least at times, act tracts his attention and encourages him to turn his head in the direction of which he had long time forgotten? Or won't this space of art, in the contrary, be dominated by a colorful, lively, ever-stimulated advertising space and itself loose its educational values.

## **2. Educational values of contemporary art**

The topics under taken by contemporary art, related to social problems, often indicate are as in convenient for us, asking for the identity of modern man. Art has lost the possibility of portraying the universal picture of the world, has become a vague area, approving variety of interpretations. Consequently possibilities of art, related to impact on man, have widened. The modern theory of education through art stresses the importance of individual interpretation. However, it is difficult to fully assess educational opportunities of contemporary art, taking into consideration the fact that contemporary art is too difficult and, unfortunately, confusing to an average consumer. Incompetence to enter in the interaction with work of art has resulted from insufficient art education level of which unfortunately is still not satisfying in schools. Insufficient art education disables an average consumer from proper recognition of a work of art from a joke, or a pathetic

imitation. Besides, easily available artistic experiments (which previously were reserved for audiences related to the world of art only) made the viewer, unfamiliar with the space of art, encounter an insurmountable barrier to enter in the interaction with an innovative work of art. Artists notice a problem with uneducated recipient of art, who acquires his knowledge about art from mass media. Unfortunately, the mass media treat contemporary art specifically and represent artists less objectively, still using the category of scandal, and above all resign from their educational mission. Education through art happens very often unintentionally because man lives in the world where art is everywhere: in the radio, on television, in the cinema, on posters on the streets and in internet. Regrettably, very often an unprepared recipient wrongly understands the intentions of an artist. We can't forget about insufficient knowledge and missing aesthetic refinement in our reality. Confusing and complex contemporary art requires from the recipient artistic preparation and familiarity with new forms of expression. Otherwise, educational opportunities of art decrease, moreover, misunderstanding of artist's intentions, may lead to a negative impact.

Modern man lives in the world, which provides countless impressions and almost unlimited possibilities. It is hard not to get lost in excessive information, diversity of attitudes and opinions. Education is realized not only by concrete institutions, but also (and perhaps primarily) by the influence of reality, relations with other people and with the world around us. It is worth to ask the question: what kind of education can offer our modern world, overflowed by consumption? A man in a consumer society is shaped to play a primary role, namely the role of an ideal consumer. "In a ideal situation a consumer shouldn't use anything being strongly convinced he should do so, nobody and nothing should put forward the commitment of "till death do us part", no needs should be considered fulfilled, no desires definitive and final. The stipulation "till the next time" should accompany each vows of fidelity and each commitment." [1, s.97] He lives – consuming everything that the world offers: still unsatisfied, seeking new experiences, more and more selfish, bizarre, giving him a sense of something different, individual, wild, unreal, inaccessible to others. At the same time, this quest for impressions can not be too strenuous or time-consuming. Something "just for himself" a consumer can find on the internet, newspaper, advertisement – not allowing the thought that the offer "just for him" is also a proposal for any other consumer who desires to emphasize his "individual

style". The ideal consumer constantly follows his desires, but never saturates. He suspends his eye on various pleasures only for a moment, not getting used to anything, quickly moving to something new. His instinct seems to say that behind the corner there may be waiting an even better offer. The most important is the transitoriness, exchange, eternal agitation, excitability and other strong feelings. In liquid modernity, consumption is conjugated to desire [2]. If something (or someone) is not able to maintain the great fire of passion, they must be rejected. There is no time to correct anything, look for something new in well known areas. There is only "now", "immediately" and "today." If the value has become an immediate pleasure, it is not worth to look for this pleasure in places where it is hidden and requires a difficult search. You have to take it where it is visible to your naked eye. As soon as possible. Satisfaction guaranteed! "Transience has replaced durability at the top of the value table. What is valued today (by choice as much as by unchosen necessity) is the ability to be on the move, to travel light and at short notice. Power is measured by the speed with which responsibilities can be escaped. Who accelerates, wins; who stays put, loses." [3, s 95]

Contemporary art as an educational space, is trying to respond to the expansion of world consumption. Its educational influence begins when we ask questions about the meaning of art, the possibility of its impact, and its tasks in the public and educational space. Young artists are trying to inspire, create, but also to help, support and serve other people. They are trying to break the commercial wall in order to show a different kind of happiness (different from the kind of happiness which is presented by mass culture). The artists urge for dialogue, understanding and respect for different points of view, they help us open to multiculturalism. They resist against the utilitarian and consumerist tendencies in contemporary culture. They are trying to open people's eyes to the world, so that they can (and want to!) look at the beauty and the dangers in the contemporary reality.

The civilization of consumption and conformism wreaks havoc on human consciousness. Our society is seen as a collection of free, autonomous and creative individuals for whom nothing is impossible – the possibilities are at your fingertips, you need only the incentive: "just do it". In fact, a modern man is in stagnation of unconscious subordination and apparent choice. Many of his decisions about clothing, body, work, leisure or desire are in the hands of corporations. It is up to them to decide what we

eat, how we dress, which phone we use, what car we drive, what we do at work, how much we sleep, what we see looking out the window. Educational role of art lies precisely in tearing out a man from such state. Art can create conditions for a wakening critical consciousness and awareness that people are not passive recipients of culture, but they can creatively shape both reality and life. Contemporary art enables us to abandon the corporate way of thinking. It allows for free action, expression, restores imagination, as required in the conscious and creative participation in the surrounding reality. Art requires from the recipient to think, requires his active participation in the creative process, not only of art, but also of the world. It shows that living space can be shaped by each person, not be just blindly accepted, as a sphere no longer changeable, imposed, granted. Today, space is extremely costly. Art has fought for a space, which is taken up by the corporate world. Ubiquitous billboards inhabit our living space by forever but artificially smiling faces. They radiate light 24 hours a day. They draw attention by pleasant and easy to obtain recipes for happiness.

The primary educational task of contemporary art is awakening people from their lethargy and showing them they can think for themselves: they can ask questions, criticize facts about which the world has already given the only right opinion. The space of art enables us to stop, to discuss, to confront extremely different views, values and norms. Here nothing is equally nice, good and appealing to everyone. This is an open area, with places which are vague, created and developed over and over again by interaction among a work of art, an artist and another recipient. "Hit of the season" and "the number one product in its class" does not exist. We cannot read the instruction, take a last minute offer and wait until the appropriate authority takes care of our entertainment, provides unforgettable experiences, sensations and emotions. In art space, not everything comes easily. Not everything is pleasant, beautiful, instantly comprehensible and simple. There is no pill for happiness, eternal youth, beauty and health. There are no instructions such as: how to think and what to say in order to achieve success. There is no miracle diet, neither cosmetics stopping the flow of time. In the art space time is running, but the course is not crazy. At the same time, it is not a curse. You can stop without a feeling that by slowing down your speed you risk "to fall out of circulation". You do not need to grab the opportunity, or to countdown to the end of the promotion. Space of art is an enclave, in which people decide about themselves. In the world, in

which a man has almost reached the end of possible speed, where the determinant of satisfying his need has become “immediately” – artists change the speed – do not run blindly, think!

Thanks to contemporary art a man realizes, that not everything in the world is as it seems at first glance. It shows art official notions, unfounded stereo types, invisible, instilled ways of thinking, which shape the perception of reality. Art teaches how to cast a doubt on seemingly indiscriminate facts. Contemporary art teaches to question, consider, deny, explain, and to be wary of the most banal meanings. People today are increasingly manipulated by the media and unfortunately they are not aware of it. The most important value we should seek, is critical consciousness: undermining the obvious. That is the point where arts and pedagogy come together.

### **3. Conclusion**

For most people contemporary art is not understandable. It is teetering on the edge of genius and lack of good taste. The boundaries between art, anti-art and the lack of art have become almost invisible. It is necessary to prepare the recipient for him to distinguish cliché (based on the existence of scandal and life in the world of media) from the true innovations, containing artistic aspects, in order to help him apprehend the subject. Today, people almost indiscriminately believe in the truth coming from the world of media. It is something like the truth of the television screen – if something has been shown, it is valuable, and worthy of attention. In the art space, man is able to commune with something completely different: unexplained, ambiguous, creative. Independent, critical thinking is a skill available to everyone, and the contemporary art is endowed with a great potential to awaken this ability.

Contemporary art constitutes an important component of education. This kind of education aims not so much at instructing but rather “opening” man, at inspiring our spiritual forces and developing personality. Educational processes inspired by art trigger deepening of man’s experience, and ability of creating both spiritual and material values, as well as self-creating, enriching and enlarging our spiritual and moral development.

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*Основна мета статті полягає в представленні сучасного мистецтва з педагогічної перспективи. Авторка розглядає сучасне мистецтво як освітній простір, беручи за основу ідею виховання за допомогою мистецтва Герберта Ріда, а також сучасну теорію естетичного виховання Ірени Войнар. Авторка представляє сучасну мистецьку особистості людини, стимулює її художню діяльність, естетичні переживання та розвиток критичного розуміння.*

**Ключові слова:** мистецтво, естетичне виховання, критичне розуміння.

*Основная цель статьи заключается в представлении современного искусства в педагогической перспективе. Автор рассматривает современное искусство как образовательное пространство, беря за основу идею Герберта Риды воспитания с помощью искусства, а также современную теорию эстетического воспитания Ирэны Войнар. Автор представляет современную художественную личности человека, стимулирует ее художественную деятельности, эстетические переживания и развитие критическое мышление.*

**Ключевые слова:** искусство, эстетическое воспитание, критическое понимание.

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