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# AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE IN THE TIMES OF THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION. INTRODUCTION

The articles presented in this volume are the result of a series of seminar meetings of the Polish Society for Aesthetics under the common title "Aesthetic experience in the times of the Fourth Industrial Revolution", held in five academic centers: Lublin, Warsaw, Łódź, Szczecin and Gniezno in the academic year 2023/2024. The inspiration for this undertaking is the participation of PSA researchers in the international project "Communities and Artistic Participation in Hybrid Environments" (2022–2026), bringing together both practitioners and theoreticians of art. Its aim is to research, implement and develop an improved model of interaction and somatic participation in hybrid environments.

Aesthetics, as a field exploring the area of the senses, is an appropriate space for undertaking theoretical reflection on the transformation of man and culture in the context of technological development. Thus, the series of seminars became an excellent opportunity to exchange reflections on the subject of aesthetic experience in the perspective of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The presented

issue covered such topics as the direction of changes in the experience of art, aesthetic aspects of artificial intelligence, creativity and mimesis, philosophical reflection on street art, and studies on critical infrastructure and various dimensions of technological anxiety. At the same time, the examples of phenomena from the area of visual arts and contemporary culture cited by the authors take into account their unique cultural, social and geographical context.

We open the issue with an analysis of a phenomenon directly observed in urban space, which, however, intertwines with virtual reality. Aleksandra Łukaszewicz focuses on the process of virtualization of public art in its various forms and technological mediations, such as qr graffiti, AR and VR, drawing our attention to the "materiality" of the image that appears for a short moment on the screens of our devices. Contemporary aesthetic experience increasingly goes beyond traditional exhibition spaces, moving to the virtual world. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is redefining the concept of public art, which today exists simultaneously in the physical and digital realms, creating a complex, hybrid environment. Street art, once a form of subversion and independence, has been subjected to medialization and has gained "immortality" on the web. Has it lost its original aura because of this? The researcher also reflects on the social dimension of the hybridization of space and art. She cites both projects from African countries, whose authors use VR to tell their own stories without a colonial filter, as well as global initiatives redefining the concept of the artist's "visibility". In this context, technology ceases to be just a means of expression, and becomes a tool of inclusiveness and agency. However, the virtualization of public art is not only about "transferring" it to the web, but also about transforming the entire aesthetic experience. Art becomes more performative, oriented towards presence and relationship – according to Hans Belting, the human body remains its main medium and location.

Next, we focus on theory and practice from a historical perspective, presenting the "genealogy" of technology-based aesthetics and the evolution of aesthetic experience in the context of the development of genetics and bioart. Sylwia Szykowna explores the issue of the collision of machine and human in the era of artificial intelligence. In doing so, she opens up the question of the nature of art and the limits of human creativity. The Author points out that although visions of technological singularity are fueled by large technology corporations, it is humans who program it and give it shape. Although computer art aroused more interest at the beginning as a field of theoretical speculation than as an artistic medium, reflections on it contributed to the transformation of art from a material object into a process. Dematerialized information replaced the traditional work, the act of creation itself became a process of data exchange between systems – creativity entered the sphere of cooperation with algorithms. Nevertheless, as the researcher emphasizes, AI mechanisms still operate in a hidden way, which is why their influence on culture and aesthetic perception

remains partially invisible. The key issue, however, remains the human being. Understanding the human-computer relationship in art is not only a matter of technology, but also of deep reflection on who we are as creatures creating and receiving meaning.

A slightly different perspective of aesthetic experience is emphasized by Lilianna Kozak, who points to its radical transformation in the digital era – from static reception to interactive, individualized participation. The researcher points out that already in the 1950s, the development of a scientific and technical revolution began, which led to the transformation of culture into interactive software that not only provides content but also enables its co-creation. Gradually, the user gained independence in decision-making in the matter of navigating the work, the online platform transformed into a framework for art, and aesthetics began to redefine the way of contact with the work. According to the Author, aesthetic experience retains its authenticity regardless of the environment – digital or material. Technology, especially in fields such as bioart or robotic art, is becoming a tool of transgression – a medium for transmitting the process of experiencing the world from a perspective other than human.

The post-seminar issue ends with two texts that are reflections on potential or imagined threats resulting from the development of technology. Ewa Wój- towicz explores the issue of cloud computing, which is a symbol and real infrastructure of the modern world, and at the same time a significant subject of artistic reflection. Its aesthetics, built on apparent immateriality, mask the real, physical background: data centers, fiber optic cables, cooled server rooms – all of this is part of the new extractivism, exploiting the earth, energy and human attention. "Art has a long tradition of dealing with the invisible, the elusive and the imagined," writes the Author, indicating that it is becoming one of the main tools for demystifying digital infrastructure. The projects operating at the interface from the border of art and critical research cited in the article show how artistic imagination can reveal the political and ecological consequences of technology. Aesthetic experience in this context is a deeply cognitive immersion in processes that usually remain invisible. Through critical cartography, technological metaphors and performances, artists allow us to "see the cloud". In this way, art not only comments on reality, but actively participates in its reconfiguration, offering alternative ways of seeing and understanding the world hidden behind the interface.

Joanna Szczepanik, on the other hand, proposes a reflection on one of the key phenomena of modernity: the fear of technology. The Author combines philosophical, sociological and cultural perspectives to examine the growing fears accompanying the development of modern technologies – from artificial intelligence to the automation of everyday life. The figure of HAL 9000 – the famous computer from the film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, symbolizing the crossing of the boundary between man and machine, is at the center of

the considerations. This figure becomes the starting point for a broader analysis, encompassing both the contemporary movement of neo-Luddism and earlier visions of technological threats present in literary texts and ideological manifestos. The article tries to understand the sources of technological anxieties, by taking into consideration various modes of experience: a sense of loss of control, exclusion, alienation, indicating that technological anxiety is not only a technical problem, but also a cultural and existential one.