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Aesthetic Leadership and Organizational Symbolism Experienced at the Paintbrush Factory in Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Abstract: The study of organizational symbolism in the 1980s brought into discussion aspects referring to the image, the sentiments, and the representative values of an organization, pointing to an *aesthetic sensibility* that can generate meaning. This paper is part of a larger endeavor that examines the latest developments of the methodological models pertaining to organizational aesthetics. Starting from the categories of research in the field of organizational aesthetics proposed by Taylor and Hansen in 2005, I attempt to analyze an art space phenomenon, the Paintbrush Factory in Cluj-Napoca, Romania (2009–22). I focused on aspects of aesthetic leadership and the day-to-day experience of those involved in Paintbrush Factory, especially at the peak of its existence (2009–13), with the aim of finding an appropriate methodological model for research such a complex enterprise as well as to discover lessons that can be learned in terms of its impact and legacy.

The Paintbrush Factory brought a memory of the past to light (through the conversion of a communist space), acquiring an exemplary role in contemporary art (through the type of network developed by this spontaneous, contextual space). The presence of individuals (involved in the management of this art space, artists, or participants in events) was observed in light of the “intelligence of the feeling” and of various symbolic effects. Thus, the Paintbrush Factory is an example of the transformations undergone by an industrial space, which became a creative model of cultural management, a cultural brand with a unique mode of organization: a federation.

Keywords: organizational symbolism; organizational aesthetics; the Paintbrush Factory; aesthetic leadership.

Aesthetics and Organizations: Leadership and Symbolism

Building on critical theory, Adrian Carr believes that art and aesthetics are “a way of knowing an organization”¹. Attempting to answer the question “what is organizational aesthetics?”, Steven S. Taylor approaches the subject gradually, starting from “arts-based methods within organizations”, reaching “an aesthetic perspective on organizations and organizational phenomena” and eventually outlining a general

¹ Adrian Carr and Philip Hancock, eds., *Work and Organization: The Aesthetic Dimension, Ideas in Critical Postmodernism* (USA: ISCE Publishing, 2009), 13–57.

perspective that involves “discussion about epistemology, art, and the meaning of life”². Berthoin Antal considers that this area is destined to *not-knowing*.³

Trying to decipher myself some of the layers of aesthetics leadership and symbolism comprised in an organization that was both creating and managing culture I came to the realization that it is indeed a vast realm of functional and symbolic interlinked constituents and the attempt to find suitable methodology to research this myriad is a difficult endeavor.

In the opinion of Alvesson and Berg, organizational symbolism offers a good means of conceptualizing and operationalizing the sensitive experience of organizations, starting from individuals, rather than from the organization as a whole.⁴ “Symbolism expresses the underlying character, ideology, or value system of an organization.”⁵ Once ethnologists and anthropologists began exploring corporate culture and social psychology studies started focusing on this subject, theoretical developments related to organizational culture acquired new dimensions. The illustrated paradox⁶ is that the very society that highlighted the importance of the interest in culture/symbolism is a society in which these symbolic activities (rituals, ceremonies, myths) are on a decline, due to the emphasis that is laid on functionality and technologization. Barry Turner considers that an approach to institutions solely from the perspective of functionality is a partial perspective, but that an exclusively symbolic perspective would be just as restrictive.⁷

The analysis proposed in this study attempts to combine the two perspectives, focusing on a unique space in Romania: the Paintbrush Factory in Cluj-Napoca at its peak of existence 2009–13. The investigations are related to categories of cultural management and to the day-to-day experience of those involved in the Paintbrush Factory as well as the external perception of the public.

² Steven S. Taylor, “What is Organizational Aesthetics,” *Organizational Aesthetics* 2, 1 (2013): 30–32.

³ Ariane Berthoin Antal, “Art-based research for engaging not-knowing in organizations,” in *Art as a Research: Opportunities and Challenges*, ed. by Shaun McNiff (UK/ Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

⁴ Matts Alvesson and Per-Olof Berg, *Corporate Culture and Organizational Symbolism* (Germany: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), 6–9.

⁵ Thomas C. Dandridge, “Organizational Symbolism, A Topic to Expand Organizational Analysis,” *Academy of Management Review* 5, 1 (1960): 77–82.

⁶ Matts Alvesson and Per-Olof Berg, *Corporate Culture and Organizational Symbolism* (Germany: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), 40.

⁷ Barry Turner, “The Symbolic Understanding of Organizations,” in *Rethinking Organization: New Directions in Organization Theory and Analysis*, ed. by Michael Reed and Michael Hughes (London: Sage, 1991), 53.

The Paintbrush Factory in Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Similar spaces to the Paintbrush Factory also exist abroad, but in Romania this was the first undertaking of this kind, launched in 2009. The Artists' Federation emerged out of the need for space because rising rent prices were driving cultural organizations out of the city (Interview with Rarița Zbranca, October 28, 2014).⁸ This joint project included over 40 entities, comprising six organizations, seven galleries and over thirty artists. These entities were gathered under a common roof, but they had their own vision of art and were united by the idea of shared space and promotion.⁹ The operation of the Paintbrush Factory was unitary until the beginning of 2016, when a split took place within the federation: three artists/ galleries registered the brand "Paintbrush Factory" at the State Office for Inventions and Trademarks Romania (OSIM) and the European Union Intellectual Property Office (OHIM), without the consent of the other partners. This rupture occurred as a realization of the cleavage between the visual arts and the performing arts and some dissatisfaction regarding the management. Also, as of 2019, after some years of struggles, the Paintbrush Factory tried to redefine itself outside the space that consecrated it, but unfortunately in March 2022 it dissolved. Nevertheless, for many years, the cultural environment was hugely marked by the Paintbrush Factory leadership and influence in the cultural developments in Romania and the present paper reflects the research dedicated to its contribution during this period. Further inquiries regarding the identity and continuation of Paintbrush Factory outside the actual factory location (the last three years of its existence) and the role that played in its actual disintegration and failure to adapt to the current challenges of culture and society need to be addressed in the future.

The aim of this study is to apply a research method that is consistent with the research categories in the field of organizational aesthetics proposed by Taylor and Hansen in 2005,¹⁰ configuring an appropriate methodological model for investigating aspects of the organizational aesthetics of the Paintbrush Factory.¹¹

⁸ A representative of Sabot Gallery discovered an abandoned factory outside the eastern city limits and initiated collaborations to create a shared art space with other artists city wide. Discussions were held at the German Cultural Center in downtown Cluj-Napoca.

⁹ The Paintbrush Factory hosted photographic art and percussion studios, painting and sculpture exhibitions, and a wide array of film screenings and theater performances, produced by Romanian and foreign artists. The result of this unitary vision is visible. During the first five years of operation (2009–13), the Paintbrush Factory hosted more than 70 performances, 60 exhibitions, 30 workshops, 10 festivals and 15 conferences. The factory attracted hundreds of visitors each month. A novelty for the year 2012 was the organization of a summer school in cultural management, where more than 20 young people learned how to manage resources for cultural events.

¹⁰ Steven S. Taylor and Hans Hansen, "Finding Form: Looking at the Field of Organizational Aesthetics," *Journal of Management Studies* 42, 6 (2005): 1211–31.

¹¹ Samantha Warren considers that the instruments proposed by Taylor and Hansen have laid the foundations for charting this emergent field. Samantha Warren, "Empirical Challenges in Organizational Aesthetics Research: Towards a Sensual Methodology," *Organizational Studies* 29, 4 (2008): 560.

Figure 1: Categories of organizational aesthetics research¹²

	Instrumental content	Aesthetic content
Intellectual method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artistic forms as metaphors for organizations • Lessons for management from the arts • Arguments for the importance of organizational aesthetics • Using aesthetics to deepen our understanding of traditional organizational topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industries and products that are fundamentally aesthetic in nature • Aesthetic forms within organizations • The direct sensory experience of day-to-day reality in organizations
Artistic method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artistic forms used to work with individual issues • Artistic forms used to work with organizational issues • Aesthetic forms used to illustrate/ present intellectual arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artistic forms used to present the direct sensory day-to-day experience in organizations

Research Instruments: Arts Management

Research question: What are the “lessons for management from the arts” emerging from the analysis conducted at the Paintbrush Factory?

Research hypothesis: The Paintbrush Factory in Cluj-Napoca is an example of aesthetic leadership in the community, a platform for launching outstanding artists, a brand, as well as a major actor in the creation of cultural policies and initiatives.

Research methods: media content analysis, interviews.

We approach the research from the three major spheres of existence, as they were decanted by the philosophy of the Enlightenment period: instrumental, moral, and aesthetic. With reference to the instrumental questions, Taylor and Hansen speak first about concerns with efficiency and effectiveness, then about the enhanced importance of the moral sphere (ethics). Due to the developments of the twentieth century; however, studies that emphasized aesthetics in organizational theories prevailed in the last decade.¹³ Aesthetics appears in organizational studies amid a crisis of representation, taking the place of epistemology: “Broadly, aesthetics is concerned with the knowledge that is created from our sensory experiences. It also includes how our thoughts and feelings and reasoning around them inform our cognitions.”¹⁴ My first questions would be: What are the consequences of this transfer from axiology to epistemology (beauty/ aesthetics from a value/ judgement to a way of knowing)? How are the aesthetic values used to transfer meaning and knowledge?

¹² Taylor and Hans, “Finding Form: Looking at the Field of Organizational Aesthetics,” 1217.

¹³ Ibid., 1211–31.

¹⁴ Ibid., 1211–31.

With these starting points in mind, I will analyze the content of several articles that refer to the type of management used at the Paintbrush Factory. I will emphasize the characteristics of this phenomenon, focusing on the topics that have aroused the interest of the media, seeing if these topics are reiterated, highlighting the temporal and event-space context in which these articles were published, presenting the references that are made to the management of the Paintbrush Factory, and showing whether it was perceived as a unitary entity or whether these references concerned individual artists who belong to the Paintbrush Factory.

An External Perspective: Analyzing Press Articles

Most of the articles¹⁵ refer to the beginnings of the Paintbrush Factory, showing how this phenomenon came into being, after the initial negotiations of the Sabot Gallery representatives and the plans developed by Rarița Zbranca (AltArt) and Mihai Pop (Plan B Gallery).¹⁶ In this period, Cluj-Napoca became the reference point for Romania and for the outer world; there are two notable art centers in Romania: in Cluj and in Bucharest.¹⁷

The Paintbrush Factory is difficult to define. Attempts have been made by the press to provide explanations, definitions, and characterizations of both its organizational efficiency and its aesthetic coordinates as well as the relationship between these two facets. It is a “cultural entity, a spontaneous aggregation of energies (and the people encapsulating them), without an initial joint project.”¹⁸ This idea of spontaneity, of an ongoing construction, of dynamism also emerges in relation to the vision of the project or the various segments of the assembly that the Paintbrush Factory represents: the premises accommodating the project, the structuring of this space, its financing, organization and identity, the entities that have become part of the project, the collaborators, the types of events it has hosted, advertising and promotion, etc.

The Paintbrush Factory has two important segments: visual art and performative art. In all the articles I examined, references are made to the seven participating galleries (Plan B, Sabot, Bazis, Intact, Baril, Peles Empire and Lateral Art Space) and their specificities. The different approaches of the galleries answer different needs: the need for a local network, for bringing artists together and offering support to the youth, but also the need for ensuring the external visibility of the project outside the country. Moreover, the resounding international success of the artists from the Paintbrush Factory has

¹⁵ These articles that reflect the initial stage of the Paintbrush Factory are also the most illustrative for the novelty of the organizational model and its contribution in the cultural landscape. The main protagonists who helped launch the Paintbrush Factory have been interviewed in order to find out the story of these beginnings. István Szakáts and Rarița Zbranca, “Fabrica de Pensule. Space for Arts, Community of Trust,” *Kulturfuhrer Mitteleuropa* (2013): 10–15.

¹⁶ Zeke Turner, “Art Matters. A Medieval Romanian City with Major Art Talent,” *T-Magazine – The New-York Times Style Magazine*, 2013, <https://archive.nytimes.com/tmagazine.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/11/12/art-matters-a-medieval-romanian-city-with-major-art-talent/>, acc. on July 18, 2022.

¹⁷ Jane Neal, “The Two Art Centers of Romania: Cluj and Bucharest,” *Res Magazine* 5 (March 2010): 52–69.

¹⁸ Ciprian Mureșan, “Fabrica de pensule: Fotografie la minut. Diapozitive dintr-un an de excelență,” *IDEA magazine* 36–37 (2010), 51.

triggered an astounding interest in this enterprise, which is referred to as the “Cluj Phenomenon”. Discussions focus mainly on the following artists: Adrian Ghenie, Ciprian Mureșan, Mircea Cantor and Șerban Savu, who are living and working in Cluj-Napoca, Berlin and London; reference is made to the international prizes they have won, which have brought them high levels of visibility abroad. They have placed Cluj-Napoca on the international map of contemporary art.¹⁹ The individuals in this case feed into the brand of the organization, but at the same time use the label of the organization as a reference point. They are using each other’s image as a magnifier.

The descriptions in the press coagulate the multiple forces and entities involved in the Paintbrush Factory: it is “the most important independent cultural initiative in Romania.” The spirit of the Paintbrush Factory is predicated on a day-to-day renegotiation of identity.

Although it performs a set of cultural production or economic functions, [...] Paintbrush Factory is still first of all a collective of human beings, with rhizomatic, overlapping, sometimes contradictory and even self-contradictory networks of social relations and this is what it really makes it work. Instead of canonizing functional relationships, of which we have just enough too, there is a sweet mesh of organic and micro-social production, accumulation and exchange patterns, *producing* and *trading* resources such as friendship, care, or information.²⁰

The symbolism is built on different metaphors of the organization as well as on the projection of this micro society into the macro society. These collections of narratives²¹ depict an alternative approach of cultural management, a trend setter, a leader of influence at different levels: artistic/cultural, management, community. The management of the Paintbrush Factory, the effort to unite its entities and provide a framework for them amount to fragments of daily routine, which presupposes “a constant adaptation to change, whether it comes from the inconsistencies of the political and economic grounds, or our inner drives and dynamic relations. It is a “fragile routine.”²² The organizations inside the Paintbrush Factory “share the belief that through culture and creativity communities can be built and social relations positively transformed”. AltArt Foundation supports the urban generation through art projects developed in the public space, provoking “the boundaries between arts and any other fields, between being an artist and being, by sharing and participation, a non-artist, yet a (co)creator.”²³

¹⁹ Turner, “Art Matters. A Medieval Romanian City with Major Art Talent.”

²⁰ Szakáts and Zbranca, “Fabrica de Pensule. Space for Arts, Community of Trust,” 10–15.

²¹ Andrew D. Brown, “A narrative approach to collective identities,” *Journal of Management Studies* 43, 4 (2006): 731–53; Christine Coupland and Andrew D. Brown, “Constructing organizational identities on the Web: A case study of Royal Dutch Shell,” *Journal of Management Studies* 41, 8 (2008): 1323–47.

²² Szakáts and Zbranca, “Fabrica de Pensule. Space for Arts, Community of Trust,” 10–15.

²³ *Ibid.*, 10–15.

The Paintbrush Factory had an educational role in the community. Colectiv A, GroundFloor Group, Balla & Vajna Projects and Art-Hoc encouraged the development of visual arts, cultural education, and interdisciplinary approaches. Two board members have been delegated to participate in the Association “Cluj – European Capital of Culture 2021”, contributing to developing the application for this title. References are also made in these articles to the development of a project of Participatory Budgeting for Cluj, the first of this kind in Romania. The Paintbrush Factory is a major player on the local scene, regarding both cultural productions and involvement in the development of cultural policies. The social relevance of the Factory is underscored: it shaped public opinion and molded the social imagination; it continues to be recorded as a public actor and a political actor. The Factory has acquired recognition as “the Cluj School”²⁴. Most of the publications highlight the uniqueness of such a project²⁵.

The Paintbrush Factory was involved in social campaigns, such as the fundraising drive for the Pediatric Oncology Department of the Prof. Dr. Ion Chiricuță Oncology Institute in Cluj-Napoca²⁶. Even at the management level, artists can become opinion leaders, in terms of their commitment to social causes, which fosters a process of overcoming the boundaries between different types of art and the promotion of artistic ideas as a compact, unified message.²⁷ The Paintbrush Factory was also featured in the brochure for Tarom, Romania’s national airline, and it had become an emblem of Cluj-Napoca and Romania – a national brand. “Artistic thrill is the basic product of the Factory.”²⁸ Including the Paintbrush Factory as a main trademark of the city, Cluj-Napoca is considered the third city “that will shake up the art world in the 21st century”²⁹. Surprisingly, the Paintbrush Factory is paired with the National Museum of Art, the very iconic image of mainstream art.

Attention is paid by the press to the public at the Factory as well. There were 800–1000 visitors to the exhibitions, which took place concurrently. “Culture is not only exhibited, but also produced, which explains the enormous fascination and the energy of the audience, whose members sense their involvement in all these processes.”³⁰

²⁴ Marie Maertens, “The School of Cluj/ L’ecole de Cluj,” *Art Press* 365 (March 2010): 58–64. <https://mariemaertens.com/CLUJ.pdf>, acc. on July 18, 2022.

²⁵ Andrea Iacob, “Ceci n est pas une Fabrique de Pinceaux,” *Alternatives théâtrales* 106–7 (2011): 30–31. <https://www.alternativestheatrales.be/pdf/at106-107-la-scene-en-roumanie.pdf>, acc. on July 18, 2022.

²⁶ “Give me the Future,” social campaigns, <http://vimeo.com/53067074>, acc. July 18, 2022.

²⁷ “Aesthetic leadership concerns the manner in which artists, and other aesthetic workers, perform leadership functions within groups, communities and culture, often outside established positions of authority... Aesthetic leadership implies expanding the notion of leadership to include aesthetic endeavor. In this sense, aesthetic leadership also connotes attainment beyond the insularity of particular aesthetic fields, such as art or literature, by gaining attention within a broader cultural or political arena.” Jonathan Gosling and Antonio Marturano, eds., *Leadership, the Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2008), 5–7.

²⁸ The description focuses on the building, the industrial atmosphere, various events, the diversity of artists, “artistic production”, but also the history of this unique project (Tarom Insight 2013). This project is a genuine “image capital” Luminița Klara Veer, “Fabrica de Pensule,” *Arhitectura* 86 (July/August 2010), 96–103.

²⁹ “Here are the Twelve Cities that will Shake Up the Art World in the 21st Century” (based on the book *Art Cities of the Future*), December 6, 2017, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/art-cities-of-the-future_n_3949998, acc. on July 18, 2022.

³⁰ Veer, “Fabrica de Pensule,” 96–103.

In 2013, the Paintbrush Factory became one of the 12 priority projects financed by the municipality, giving the writers of these articles reason to also cover its methods of financing.

An Internal Perspective: Interviewing those Involved Directly

Rarița Zbranca, is a founding member of the Paintbrush Factory with experience in cultural management since she also helped found the ArtArt Foundation in 1998. She states that there was no model that was followed in the development of this project, that everything was “very contextual”, that it was “an open project”, a “support platform also from a material viewpoint, because it had an infrastructure, being very strongly connected to the idea of space; it was also a mental space for people who were interested in working in contemporary art and were independent.” In addition to this, the events were conceived in such a way as to contribute to the development of the audience: Zbranca explains there were “types of activities that invested in the way the artistic process was decoded.” Finding workable solutions for this context may create frustration. The financial challenges were huge at first (Interview, Rarița Zbranca, October 28, 2014).

Mihai Pop, another founding member of the Paintbrush Factory and also a founder of Plan B Gallery, considers that the Paintbrush Factory was “an extraordinary pole of power”, a socially involved actor that provided a space for debates on current culture-related issues. The force of this project derived from this network of people who had the same interest, voicing their ideals in unison. He believes that interest in the Paintbrush Factory came from abroad and that when the artists involved became very well known outside the country, local echoes began to appear. The management challenges were related to the staff and the finances for their compensation, and the need to have people with permanent positions representing the federation. The same need in the sphere of human resources was underlined by Simina Corlat, who was the administrator of the Paintbrush Factory and one of its two employees. Mihai Pop believed that if each entity did its job, the overall ensemble could work (interview with Mihai Pop, 19 December 2014). Horea Avram had a similar opinion: “Everyone contributed to the renown of the Factory and the Factory was actually a conglomerate. It was not an entity floating somewhere above everyone: the Factory consisted of all these people taken together” (interview with Horea Avram, curator of Intact Gallery, November 4, 2014). Administrator Corlat confirmed that events were successful when they rallied everyone’s efforts, when several artists organized events at the same time, or when they collaborated (interview with Simina Corlat, October 27, 2014). The interdisciplinary of such a “cultural co-working space” is seductive and provides “good vibes” and “inspiration” (Antonia Rusu, artist, 2017).

Miki Braniște is another founding member of the Paintbrush Factory, a member of its board of directors since 2009, and director of the Festival *Temps d’Images*. She believes that the Paintbrush Factory was a “living organism, in motion”, which exerted

a national and international impact. However, after five years since the Paintbrush Factory was launched, an analysis of its activity and a new approach were required, as “its goal must be redefined”³¹. Miki Braniște does not think the Paintbrush Factory has an innovative type of management, but rather that efforts were being made to increase its efficiency. The Paintbrush Factory was subject to the same “financial insecurity that is specific to the cultural sector” (interview with Miki Braniște, January 7, 2015). The artists appreciated the fact that they could apply for funding under the umbrella of the Paintbrush Factory and considered that for both parties this was a win-win situation: the Factory enjoyed the prestige of renowned artists, while the artists benefited from the strength of the Federation (interview with the artist Radu Cioca, October 27, 2014, interview with Horea Avram, curator of Intact Gallery, November 4, 2014). At the same time, some of those involved in the Paintbrush Factory felt that there should have been more transparency in the decisions that concerned all its members (interview with the PR representative of Intact Gallery, Georgiana Buș, November 6, 2014), but that all these challenges were considered normal in a community (interview with Horea Avram, November 4, 2014). Cristian Rusu is an artist and a founding member of the Paintbrush Factory; he was also a member of the Board of Directors in 2010–2012. Rusu believed that at least another space similar to the Paintbrush Factory should have existed in Cluj. This would have increased “cultural health and diversity”, but people misunderstood this idea of community and thought that it could be created artificially. The model cannot be exported: “this phenomenon must come into being naturally and out of necessity, if the artistic community feels this need (interview with Cristian Rusu, January 5, 2015).

The perception of space from the vantage point of the past, of the industrial plant, was more noticeable at first, for all three categories (artists, management, public), but subsequently this perspective outlined a kind of framework within which contemporary events take place, the perception of the content being more intense. The members of the management experienced the space through the lenses of decisions that impact its compartmentalization, the establishment of rules, successive renovations and arrangements, the needs of the artists who were working there daily and of the public that visited the Factory. The daily experience of the artists highlighted the advantages of such a generous space, both in physical terms and from the perspective of the community of artists who were amalgamated within that network. There were also disadvantages related to the permanent process of renovation of the space. This renovation process, which entailed finding a balance between the aesthetic and the functional, was seen differently by those who worked there every day and who would have liked more comfort and an atmosphere of professionalism. On the other hand, the visiting public – especially the younger public – had a nostalgia of the non-institutionalized unconventional, alternative space, with more visible traces of the old factory, a kind of “unfinished”, transitional space, arrested in time. The public

³¹ There are several “levels of management, from the relations with tenants to the relations with the owner, the relation with space, the public etc. I believe we are at different levels for each type of relationship and do not have a unitary management.” Interview with Miki Braniște, 2015.

from another age category (over 30 years) appreciated the efficiency and coherence of the space and considered that more time should have been allotted to the shared spaces.

General Conclusions

In conclusion, these two approaches concerning the image of the Paintbrush Factory – external and internal, in the press and in from those involved directly – lead us to “critical reflection”, in Carr’s terms.³²

My research proposal consisted in applying a research method consistent with the research categories of organizational aesthetics proposed by Taylor and Hansen in 2005, with a view to finding an appropriate methodological model for investigating aspects pertaining to the organizational aesthetics of the Paintbrush Factory.³³ The research questions for this specific paper focused on artistic/cultural management and on the experience in the space of the Paintbrush Factory (both from those who are involved directly, but also from the audience). Through the analysis of press articles and through interviews, I attempted to create a “set of symbolic accounts, which contain each other”³⁴. Starting from the “central imaginary” defined by Castoriadis as the totality of the symbolic elements that make up an institution or an organization³⁵, in the case of the Paintbrush Factory I brought into discussion the space of the past contrasted with contemporary art and the network created in this spontaneous and contextual space. Aesthetic management takes place in a transitional area between management and art, structure and chaos, work, and play.³⁶

The press (outside perspective) tends to furnish the symbolic seducing attraction and fascination of this new phenomenon, the benefited for the cultural scene and for community. The perspective of those within the organization adds to the media image information related to various difficulties that must be surmounted, but it confirms a very positive overall image, endorsing the success of the Paintbrush Factory and the role it has had in the country and abroad. It is a perspective that borders on “cultural multiplicity”³⁷, in the sense that the diversity of the Factory’s components and the different levels of management were more visible among those who dealt directly with them. Both perspectives largely confirm the working hypothesis, bringing nuances related to the challenges of this type of leadership.

The Paintbrush Factory continues to be a successful model of artist management, configured as an important public actor. The conglomerate of entities incorporated

³² Carr and Hancock, eds., *Work and Organization: The Aesthetic Dimension*, 13–57.

³³ Taylor and Hans, “Finding Form: Looking at the Field of Organizational Aesthetics,” 1211–31.

³⁴ Barry Turner, “The Symbolic Understanding of Organizations,” in *Rethinking Organization: New Directions in Organization Theory and Analysis*, ed. by Michael Reed and Michael Hughes (London: Sage, 1991), 53.

³⁵ Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (USA: MIT Press, 1987), 137.

³⁶ Pierre Guillet De Monthoux, *The Art Firm: Aesthetic Management and Metaphysical Marketing* (USA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 49.

³⁷ Alvesson and Berg, *Corporate Culture and Organizational Symbolism*, 72–73.

and shaped a unique symbolism, forging directions of contemporary art within the context of a converted space. The inventory of these “non-rational elements”³⁸ foregrounds a “sensitive knowledge”³⁹ of the phenomenon condensed in the Paintbrush Factory, both as a whole (federation) and in terms of the individuals it comprises, forming a vulnerable network, functioning like “a sounding board for the background noise of society as a whole”⁴⁰. The functional and the symbolical perspectives collided in one entity that bounded together the management and the artists and the converted space, using aesthetic values to transfer meaning and knowledge. Responsibility for artistic success belongs not only to artists, but also to organizations.⁴¹

Appendix 1: Persons interviewed

Management and administration: Rarița Maria Zbranca, Miki Braniște, Mihai Pop, Cristian Rusu, Simina Corlat

Gallerists/artists: Horea Avram, Georgiana Buț, Radu Cioca, Cristian Rusu, Mihai Pop

Participants in the events: Agănenței Ștefan, Edith Lazăr, Sabin Borș, Diana Oțet

Guiding questions for the interview:

1. What is your role / involvement / participation / interest / relationship in the Paintbrush Factory? Which entities are you acquainted with / are familiar with / prefer at the Paintbrush Factory?
2. How much time do you spend at the Paintbrush Factory? How often?
3. What is the goal of the Paintbrush Factory in your opinion? Do you think it is accomplished? What does the Paintbrush Factory represent for Cluj? For Romania?
4. What is your perception on this industrial space used for artistic / cultural purposes?
5. In your interactions with this space, what has a greater impact on you: the past or the present (the communist factory vs. the space for contemporary art)? Both? How do you perceive the two dimensions? (the memory of space)
6. Do you have a favorite space / room / corner in the factory? Or do you perceive the space in terms of the content (the objects / artistic events taking place in it – do you have any preferences?).
7. Which, in your opinion, are the successful events that take place at the Factory? Does the space contribute – and if it does, in what way does it contribute – to enhancing their success?
8. Can you describe a cognitive and sensory experience you had at the Paintbrush Factory?

³⁸ Warren, “Empirical Challenges in Organizational Aesthetics Research,” 559–80.

³⁹ Antonio Strati, *Organization and Aesthetics* (London: Sage, 1999), 74.

⁴⁰ Mureșan, “Fabrica de pensule: Fotografie la minut. Diapozitive dintr-un an de excelență,” 51–69.

⁴¹ Ariane Berthoin Antal and Anke Strass, “Narrating bridges between unusual experiences with art and organizational identity,” *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 30, 1 (2014): 114–23.

9. How do you think the rapport between the *efficient* and the *aesthetic* has been addressed in this space? Is the space well used? (According to what criteria?) What, in your opinion, could be improved?
10. What do you know about the organization of the Paintbrush Factory (from the standpoint of cultural management)? Do you consider it to be effective / innovative / feasible?
11. What do you know about the funding of the Paintbrush Factory?

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