



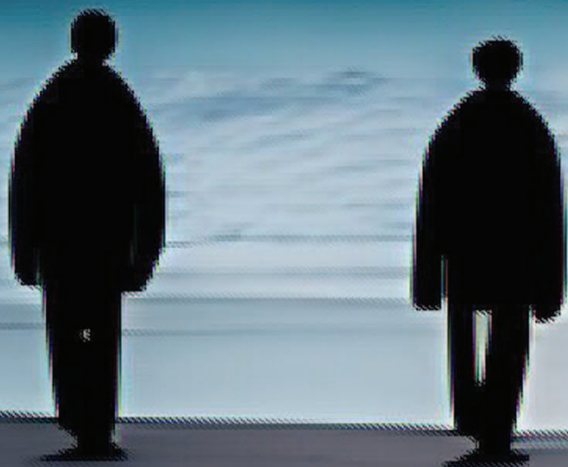
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Collaborating Across Borders



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Editor' Note

The concept of cross-border collaboration has long been key to the development of both modern and contemporary art. From early 20th-century transnational avant-gardes to today's digital cultural exchanges, artistic creation has consistently revolved around flows of ideas, practices, and bodies that go beyond national borders. The essays in this issue revisit this phenomenon from various perspectives, illustrating that collaboration is not only historically constant but also a vital lens for understanding current artistic and media practices.

Several articles revisit the avant-garde legacy, emphasizing how artistic forms enabled transnational circulation. Elena Colzi analyzes Fluxus event scores as exchange media that facilitated works to travel beyond individual artists, thus redefining authorship, collaboration, and dissemination. In a related historical context, Jelena Drobac discusses Dušan Janković's transnational work between Paris and Belgrade, revealing how visual languages emerge through local traditions intersecting with international avant-garde frameworks.

Other contributions shift toward contemporary conditions shaped by digital technologies and global infrastructures. Hadjer Ben Salem investigates vlogging in the Global South, showing how creators navigate and challenge platform-driven cultural hierarchies. Meanwhile, Jelisaveta Blagojević reexamines responsibility in algorithmic governance, drawing on Hannah Arendt to argue that thinking becomes crucial to cross-border political and cultural collaboration.

The issue also highlights embodied, performative, and practice-based approaches to transnationality. Monica Toledo Silva offers a cartography of the body through migration, where language, image, and affect intersect in artistic practice. Marija Simojlović explores Ukrainian ballet's presence in Belgrade as a form of transnational cultural cooperation that transcends displacement narratives and fosters new professional and cultural networks.

Finally, the institutional and policy aspects of collaboration are explored through an analysis of Creative Europe projects, which show how music functions within transnational cultural frameworks—not only as art but also as a social, political, and networked activity.

Together, these contributions demonstrate that cross-border collaboration is more than mobility or exchange; it is a complex process involving translation,

mediation, negotiation, and responsibility. Whether through avant-garde devices, digital platforms, embodied practices, or institutional structures, these studies reveal how artistic and cultural production influences, and is influenced by, the transnational realities of the contemporary world.

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MAIN TOPIC

COLLABORATING ACROSS BORDERS



ART+MEDIA

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The Event Score as a Transnational device. Fluxus Practices and the Case of Giuseppe Chiari (1926–2007)

Abstract: The contribution examines the Event score as a key artistic device for the development and expansion of Fluxus avant-garde as a transnational, non-hierarchical movement. Originating in the experiments of George Brecht and informed by John Cage's ideas on Indeterminacy, the Event score is understood as a transcultural language capable of circulating beyond national, disciplinary, and authorial borders. Through an analysis of artists' collaboration, mail correspondence, and Dick Higgins's concept of exemplativism, the study focuses in particular on the work of the Italian composer and Fluxus artist Giuseppe Chiari (1926–2007). His practice demonstrates how the score functioned simultaneously as a compositional method, performative instruction, and a medium of exchange, allowing Fluxus works to travel internationally without requiring the artist's physical mobility.

Keywords: Fluxus; Event score; Transnationalism; Indeterminacy; Giuseppe Chiari.

Introduction

Fluxus was an Avant-garde movement focused on the principle of *total art*, common to musicians, chemists, visual artists, performers, writers, and dancers. Even though those involved were officially grouped under the name *Fluxus* only in 1962 by the Lithuanian artist George Maciunas, the seeds of Avant-garde experimentation had already been developing worldwide since the late 1950s. From the very beginning, Fluxus disregarded disciplinary borders and categories, favoring process, action, and exchange over fixed artistic identities. Strategies of collaboration and the international circulation of information became the means by which Fluxus fashioned an approach to both art and life in a radically critical manner. In doing so, Fluxus anticipated and helped shape many of the ideologies that today define the twenty-first century interdisciplinary artistic life.

Hannah Higgins, scholar and daughter of Fluxus artists Dick Higgins and Allison Knowles, provides terminology to understand the long-distance collaboration of Fluxus avant-garde artists, defining their border crossings as a transnational process.¹ As Higgins argues, while certain modern movements can be understood through their

¹Hannah Higgins, "Border Crossings. Three Transnationalisms of Fluxus," in *Not the other avant-garde. The Transnational Foundations of Avant-Garde Performance*, ed. James M. Harding and John Rouse (University of Michigan Press, 2006), 265.

ability to articulate a distinctly national *gestalt*, as in the case of phenomena such as American painting or Italian Futurism, we can recognize another modern trajectory that arises precisely in opposition to this logic. According to her, the Avant-garde defines itself as consciously transnational, seeking to transgress and ultimately disregard national borders, as well as the centrist political and economic formations that came to define the modern era. The term *transnationalism* in her argument, drawing in part on Ken Friedman's writings, is explicitly positioned against the notion of the *internationalism*, a term frequently employed by Fluxus artists to denote the consolidation of American hegemonic power in the postwar period. It is therefore unsurprising that Abstract Expressionism, elevated to the status of an American triumph in the 1950s, was strongly rejected by the Avant-garde. From this perspective, the primary characteristic that distinguishes Fluxus as a transnational movement lies in its fundamentally non-hierarchical nature.

Building on this premise, this contribution seeks to foreground the fundamental role embodied by the Event score format, one of the main artistic devices developed within Fluxus. In particular, it argues that the Event score functioned as a key device that enabled the international dissemination of Fluxus practices, facilitating their circulation across geographic and cultural boundaries. Most notably, it is a format that began with George Brecht and played a crucial role in enabling the emergence of an art practice that could operate transnationally, thanks to the combination of conceptual form and concrete materiality. Due to the simplicity and essential nature of the format, often consisting of single sentences on paper describing elementary actions such as walking, listening, drinking, or eating, Event scores possessed both a universal potential and a deeply individual dimension, as even the most ordinary action is performed differently according to individual, cultural, and contextual conditions. The Event score is here intended as a transcultural language, capable of traveling much further than those who produced it, whose creation is specifically aimed at its activation by thirds. Within the context of Fluxus formats such as Fluxkits, Fluxfilms series, the production of ready-mades, and the many other artistic formats documented to date, the Event score in its performative dimension, stands out for its particular ease of transmission, as scores were often sent through regular mail; for the dissolution of hierarchical distinctions between author and performer, thus enabling a radically open interpretative field; and for its frequently immediate intelligibility, largely independent of the cultural and social context of its origin, which significantly contributed to its wide and transnational circulation. Particular attention will be given to composer and artist Giuseppe Chiari's scores (1926–2007), as the only Italian Fluxus artist whose works have been performed beyond Italian borders, from Florence to the United States. By examining the Event score as both a conceptual and operative framework, the contributor argues that Fluxus articulated modes of artistic production that deliberately resisted hierarchical structures and national frameworks.

Origins of the Event score

From the late 1950s to the early 1960s, experiments in sound art and performance art were taking place simultaneously in Japan, Germany, Eastern Europe, and the United States. As for the origins of the Event score genre, it is important to note that it revolves around John Cage's 1957–59 Experimental Composition Course at the New School for Social Research in New York, which Brecht attended during the summers of 1958 and 1959.² Here, he observed how scores could operate in an indeterminate or ambiguous relationship to their realization. In this context, Event scores were developed to outline performance works without relying on traditional musical notation, while also integrating perceptual phenomena that extend beyond sound. Following Cage's example, whose ideas on the indeterminacy of the arts (and life) were at that point well known, many of the artists and musicians who attended his course became interested in the use of musical instruments as symbols, rather than as sources of sound. By doing so, they were moving away from the idea of musical gestures toward the pure, plain action.³ Cage described his approach to the class as a teaching situation that didn't involve a body of material to be transmitted by him to them. It was important that students conduct musical and non-musical experiments using chance operations adapted to a variety of formats, from poetry to installation and performance.⁴ European Fluxus cell of activity developed around composer Karlheinz Stockhausen in Germany. His course in Darmstadt was the center of European Avant-garde music. Stockhausen also worked in the electronic music studio of West German Radio in Cologne, as well as in the performance atelier of his wife, the painter Mary Bauermeister, also in Cologne. Even though European Fluxus developed an independent aesthetic, it is significant that Events written by Cage's students in New York were presented in Cologne in 1960. Both Cage's class and Stockhausen's atelier are described by Higgins as comparatively non-hierarchical exchanges of information across national, disciplinary, and age boundaries, since both the class and the atelier were free exchanges among artists.⁵

Many of the Fluxus artists met one another in contexts related to experiments in the field of musical education. This is no coincidence: among all artistic languages, music was the point of departure from which these avant-garde ideas first emerged, before extending beyond it. If we think about a musical score or a melody, and about the elements that traditionally constitute music, we realize that they belong to a universal language. Music does not depend on complex verbal grammar, spoken language, or cultural barriers; whether melodic or non-melodic, it represents a form of expression that is more immediate than artistic forms that involve verbal language,

² Natilee Harren, *Fluxus Forms. Scores, Multiples, and the Eternal Network* (The University of Chicago Press, 2020), 7.

³ Walter Rovero and Patrizio Peterlini, *Sense Sound/Sound Sense* (Danilo Montanari Editore, 2019), 36.

⁴ Hannah Higgins, *Fluxus Experience* (University of California Press, 2002), 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

such as poetry or literature. For this reason, it can also be more easily grasped and absorbed, allowing experimentation and radical innovation to emerge more naturally.⁶ This is already evidence of an avant-garde movement, Fluxus, that, even in its earliest and most embryonic form, was inherently transnational.

The Event score is the main support for a performance technique in which everyday actions are framed as minimalist performances or, occasionally, as imaginary and impossible experiments in everyday situations. The instruction is typically brief and written in colloquial language, composed to be performable by anyone. As Adrian Heathfield wrote in 2004, in performance art, the artwork is reimagined as a temporal act, blurring the very distinction between “real” time and “fictional” time, thereby transforming the work into an artistic experience rooted in space and embodied in the artist’s physical presence, becoming a different piece each time it is performed.⁷ As Higgins rightly says: “These call for the performance of everyday rituals or routine (or absurd versions of these) in such a way that the informational structure of the routine -its experiential character, possible contradictions, or normally ignored elements are thrown into high relief for the performer or viewer.”⁸ Alison Knowles’ piece “Proposition” of 1962 reads simply “Make a salad”. Many of these events, like the latter, evoke unusual sounds, according to the Cagean notion of “non-instrumental sound”. One of the first Event scores analyzed by Fluxus scholar Natilee Harren is George Brecht’s *Drip Music (Drip Event)*:

For single or multiple performances. A source of dripping water and an empty vessel are arranged so that the water falls into the vessel. Second version: Dripping.⁹

Brecht’s score became part of the standard repertoire in Fluxus concerts, first performed throughout the first European Fluxus Concert tour between September 1962 and the summer of 1963. Over the tour, as far as we know, *Drip Music* was performed at least ten times, never by the author himself. The performance was performed by Dick Higgins, George Maciunas, and the Fluxus collective, coordinated by Maciunas. Each performance differed, despite being based on the same score. The notation is a simple, uncomplicated text that describes the transfer of water from one container to another. Still, we could agree with Harren when she says that *Drip Music*’s wording is “precisely imprecise, as ambiguous as possible, a condensation of text designed to open out meaning to the widest range of interpretation.”¹⁰ Its inherent ambiguity ensures that the score remains open-ended. Brecht ultimately performed his own work

⁶ Ibid., 55–58.

⁷ Paolo Martore and Chiara Mu, *Performance Art: traiettorie ed esperienze internazionali* (Castelvecchi, 2018), 254–56.

⁸ Higgins, “Border Crossings. Three Transnationalisms of Fluxus,” 269.

⁹ Harren, *Fluxus Forms. Scores, Multiples, and the Eternal Network*, 1.

¹⁰ Ibid., 1–2.

only in 1963, enacting gestures that were not grandiose but natural, in contrast to the approach adopted by the other artists in Europe. Throughout this period, Brecht maintained a favorable stance toward interpretative variability, asserting that any realization is feasible and that he would not reject any particular performance.¹¹ This way of activating scores in a personal manner, even beyond the original author's intention, was central to the Fluxus project and was conceptualized and named by Dick Higgins as "exemplativism". It was explained in his *Exemplativist manifesto* in 1976:

Any realization...will necessarily be to some extent arbitrary, and is therefore an example rather than a fixity. [...] The emphasis rests on precisely what the work is an example of, and not on the precise structure or realization of the work...Since this process stresses not the single realization as the work, but the dialectic between any single realization and its alternates [...].¹²

Certainly, the dialectical relationship between the performances also underpins the transnationalism of the Fluxus avant-garde. The result of this was that scores, which appeared as simple linear instructions, could be sent from one performer to another without any form of explanation, without visual support that in any way explained the execution of the Event. Within this context, the score's primordial nature endows the work with a certain generative potential: it does not require adherence, thanks to the author's depersonalization, who simply becomes the first element in a chain aimed at producing a series. In some sense, there is also a transhistorical dimension to it; the format does not belong to a specific art-historical context but exists only as long as there is someone to receive it. It is, in fact, conceived to be misinterpreted: not to produce uniformity, but to reveal difference. This conceptual position also reveals its practical advantage from a logistical point of view, serving as a concrete strategy for allowing scores to travel much farther than those who produced them. The Event score, with its characteristic openness, serves as the prototype for many of the works produced by Fluxus. While it is true that there is no consistency in the choice of formats for the works, it can be said that the works in different materials (readymades, performances, concerts, statements, etc.) share qualities of transitivity and variability and, above all, question the identity of the subject and object, and therefore also the hierarchy of author, performer, and viewer.

It is precisely the concept of 'ambiguity' in Event scores that constitutes the crucial theoretical node for understanding their function: an ambiguity that is not mere semantic indeterminacy, but an operative space in which a continuous dialectical exchange between author and performer takes place. In this sense, the score does not prescribe a closed action; rather, it opens up a field of possibilities, inviting the

¹¹ Michael Nyman, "A Conversation about Something Else: An Interview with George Brecht," in *An Introduction to George Brecht's Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, ed. Henry Martin (Multiphla Edizioni, 1978), 108.

¹² Dick Higgins, "Exemplativist Manifesto," in *Intermedia, Fluxus and the Something Else Press: Selected Writings by Dick Higgins*, ed. Steve Clay and Ken Friedman (Siglio Press, 2018), 156.

performer to complete it, transform it, or even betray it. The work thus comes into being within a dynamic tension between writing and enactment.

Drawing on Mario Perniola's analysis, ambiguity should be understood as a form of polyvalent action: not a lack of meaning, but an excess of it, capable of generating multiple performative outcomes.¹³ Perniola interprets ambiguity as a condition that suspends the rigidity of meaning and opens onto experience, making possible a mode of action that does not resolve into a single interpretation but instead proliferates through practice.

It is this operative ambiguity that functions within Event scores: an ambiguity that leads to action, always individual, because each performer actualizes it according to their own context and sensibility, yet at the same time universal, because it is grounded in minimal, elementary, almost anonymous instructions. On the one hand, as argued in American histories and surveys of performance art from the 1960s to the 1990s, performative action activates the subjective identity of the one who performs it;¹⁴ on the other hand, the Fluxus substrate from which these scores emerge is so primary and depersonalized that it resists any local or identity-based rooting.

Social dimension of scores

By 1961, George Brecht had begun to copy his scores into different formats, on various sizes of paper and started sending them to artist friends through the mail. The practice was rapidly adopted by Fluxus artists residing near one another, and it proved especially widespread among artists whose correspondence was required to traverse national boundaries. Dedications across Europe were definitely common: for example, George Brecht (American then living in Nice) wrote *For a Drummer* (for Eric), to Danish Fluxus artist Eric Andersen. As Higgins points out, a great number of these dedications involve Fluxus artist Nam June Paik,¹⁵ probably because he was one of the artists in the core group that would travel all the way through the European tours. George Maciunas wrote *Twelve Piano Compositions for Nam June Paik* (1962), Emmett Williams wrote *Piano Concert for Paik No.2* (1965), and Japanese Fluxus artist Takehisha Kosugi wrote *South No.2 (to Nam June Paik)*.

Giuseppe Chiari

Mail correspondence also offered a particularly practical means of dissemination for artists who were unwilling or unable to travel. This is especially evident in the case of the Italian Fluxus artist Giuseppe Chiari, whose work circulated widely at both national and international levels through correspondence, supported by the

¹³ Mario Perniola, "Silence, the Utmost in Ambiguity," *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 12, no. 4 (2010): <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1670>.

¹⁴ Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

¹⁵ Higgins, "Border Crossings. Three Transnationalisms of Fluxus," 279.

use of the score as a dispositive in its various typologies. Giuseppe Chiari was born and lived his life in Florence. He started as a composer, devoting the early part of his career to writing traditional music in traditional notation (notes on a pentagram). From the late 1950s onward, he developed a strong interest in Avant-garde music and founded an association in Florence dedicated to its promotion, which was frequented by artists and musicians, including Sylvano Bussotti. Following his encounter with the composer Heinz Klaus Metzger, he was introduced to the Fluxus Avant-garde, and his work ‘*Gestures on Piano*’ (*Gesti sul piano*) was performed by composer Frederic Rzewski at the first Fluxus Festival (*Fluxus Internationale Festspiele Neuester Musik*) organized by George Maciunas in Wiesbaden in 1962. Over the course of his career, Chiari produced numerous works in a wide range of formats; however, it can be argued that all the forms his work assumed over the years were grounded in the same underlying concept of the score as devised by George Brecht in New York, understood as both Event score and musical score.

Beginning with one of his earliest minimalist works, *Intervalli*, composed in the 1950s and written in a conventional musical notation, his scores gradually became more performative. The shift from notes on the staff to verbal instructions occurred through intermediate phases, including handwritten interventions in pen or ink, erasures, and graphic insertions on the staff. These successive modifications increasingly questioned the status of the score itself, moving it from a fixed notational device toward a more open, conceptual, and performative framework centered on gestures. An example of an Event score closer to the Fluxus model could be represented by *Piece for Thermometer Case* (1966):

Take a thermometer case. Divide it into two pieces. Place and move the two pieces in various ways. Divide, place, move, stop, touch, contemplate, touch, place, contemplate, join, divide, place, touch, contemplate.¹⁶

The first element to emerge is the object itself: a thermometer case, domestic, modest, and yet not entirely trivial. It is typically perceived as secondary, an accessory to the “main” object (the thermometer), and precisely for this reason, it tends to be overlooked. By foregrounding such an object, the score subtly shifts attention toward what is usually marginal, inviting a reconsideration of its material and perceptual presence.

The initial gesture, dividing the case into two parts, is presented in an essential, almost neutral manner. Yet this simplicity opens up a wide range of possibilities: each performer may enact the division differently, according to their own sensibility, tools, or context, showing the score’s suitability for travel around the globe. From this point onward, the score unfolds through an accumulation of verbs and actions such as placing, moving, touching, and contemplating, without any prescribed temporal structure. The sequence includes repetitions and slight variations, generating a continuous flow of gestures that resist closure or fixed interpretation.

¹⁶ Giuseppe Chiari, “Pezzo per custodia di termometro,” in *Musica Senza Contrappunto*, ed. Giuseppe Chiari (Lerici Editore, 1969).

While the piece may partially produce a non-musical sonic outcome through the manipulation of the object, its primary focus clearly lies in the gestural dimension. It is the unfolding of action itself, its repetition, that becomes central. In this sense, the thermometer case functions less as an object of representation and more as an instrument, carefully chosen yet ultimately subordinate to the activation of performativity in its most immediate and essential form. This emphasis on gesture reflects a broader tendency in Giuseppe Chiari's scores, in which objects serve as catalysts for action, directing attention to the experiential and processual nature of the work rather than to any fixed aesthetic result. The main tool you need to perform Chiari's pieces is your physical body.

The artist also presents events related to spatial context, still expressed in a very linear and simple manner. This is the case of *Colour* (1966):

Indicate a color actually in the room, talk about this color¹⁷

or *Untitled* (1972):

Cross a bridge.¹⁸

Chiari's work is deeply rooted in the Fluxus ethos, particularly through his engagement with the Event score that, in his practice, maintains a simple grammatical structure yet frequently accumulates verbs and actions that are both coherent and, at times, deliberately contradictory. Chiari's involvement with Fluxus can be explained by the shared vision that united the Avant-garde and the artists and was also supported by the creation of his personal network. He often produced editions of his works himself and distributed them to composers and friends, most notably to the composer Giancarlo Cardini.

This proactive, self-driven approach brought him into direct contact with Charlotte Moorman, a renowned American cellist and performer, for whom he composed a piece that, through her international tours, reached audiences worldwide. Between 1963 and 1980, she organized the Annual New York Avant-Garde Festival on 15 occasions. From 1966, this legendary festival brought together the world's Avant-garde artists in public spaces in New York, including Central Park (1966), Staten Island Ferry (1967), and Grand Central Terminal (1973). At the same time, Moorman developed her own highly personal repertoire of musical pieces, which she repeatedly performed. These included works by John Cage, Philip Corner, Jim McWilliams, Yoko Ono, and Nam June Paik. In July 1964, Moorman wrote a letter from New York to Chiari in Florence explaining her plans for the Festival of New Music in New York in the summer and, on Stockhausen's recommendation, invited Chiari to share a composition for cello that she could perform in the next edition. A few days later, in early August 1964, Chiari replied, informing her that he had sent three scores via air mail that he could propose for the Festival: *Per Arco*, *Qualche oggetto*, *La strada*. Chiari originally composed *Per Arco* in 1963 and dedicated it to musician Italo Gomez, who gave its premiere in Palermo. From a technical standpoint, the performance of *Per*

¹⁷ Giuseppe Chiari, *Musica Madre* (Giampaolo Prearo Editore, 1973), 82.

¹⁸ Chiari, *Musica Madre*, 105.

Arco unfolds according to an undefined temporal structure that remains conceptually open. It begins with several minutes of prerecorded audio of bombings and gunfire, followed by a pause. The work then proceeds with an extended section in which the performer intervenes gesturally with cello and bow. These interventions encompass a wide range of physical actions: dragging, rubbing, pressing, and striking that push the instrument beyond its sonic and material limits.

Starting from 1964 onwards, Chiari's *Per Arco* was included in Moorman's repertoire. In 1968, Moorman played *Per Arco* at the London Institute of Contemporary Arts. In Moorman's interpretation, this composition consisted of five minutes of the recorded sounds of bombs falling during World War II, one minute and 40 seconds of silence, and six minutes of her reaction to the sounds of war with her cello and bow.

Starting with *Per Arco*, Chiari never stopped corresponding with Charlotte Moorman; he sent her scores and posters from events in Europe, as well as invitations to various initiatives. Chiari was also very close to Nam June Paik, to whom he dedicated several works, together with Charlotte. One example is *Don't Trade Here* to Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik (1965):

Repeat the sentence 122 times: Don't trade here! The owners of this business have surrendered to the race mixers. On a large board visible to the audience, make a mark for each repetition. The marks can be of any shape and differ from one another. [...]19

Once again, the score exemplifies the striking simplicity and immediacy of the Event score as an international format. The core action, repeating a phrase and recording its occurrence through marks, can be enacted anywhere, with minimal means, and translated across languages and situations while preserving its performative logic. At the same time, the openness of the score allows for variation: the tone of the voice, the pacing of the repetition, the visual form of the marks, and the spatial setting all contribute to producing distinct realizations. The accumulation of repetitions generates both temporal and physical intensification, transforming a basic linguistic act into a durational performance. The visual component (the board progressively filled with marks) renders the passage of time and the persistence of the action tangible. In this way, the score operates through a dual register, verbal and visual, reinforcing its clarity and communicative power.

Between 1972 and 1973, Chiari presented his works himself, although he never stopped dedicating them to performers other than himself, in some of the most important European venues for art and culture: Staatstheater in Kassel, Bitef in Belgrade, Galerie 11 in Paris, Galleria Schema in Florence, and Kunstverein in Hannover.

¹⁹ Chiari, *Musica senza contrappunto*, 76–78.

Conclusion

This contribution has proposed that the Event score was more than the application of one among many formats adopted by Fluxus; rather, it was the enabling equipment that facilitated the direction through which the movement could emerge, operate, and expand as a transnational Avant-garde. By combining conceptual clarity with material simplicity, the score enabled a form of artistic production that could circulate independently of stable authorship, institutional frameworks, and national contexts. In this sense, Fluxus did not merely adopt transnational strategies; rather, it embedded them within the very structure of its artistic practices. Indeed, its Indeterminacy, with roots in the teachings of Cage, placed importance on the authority of the composer to the act of realization itself, transforming performance into a site of activation rather than execution.

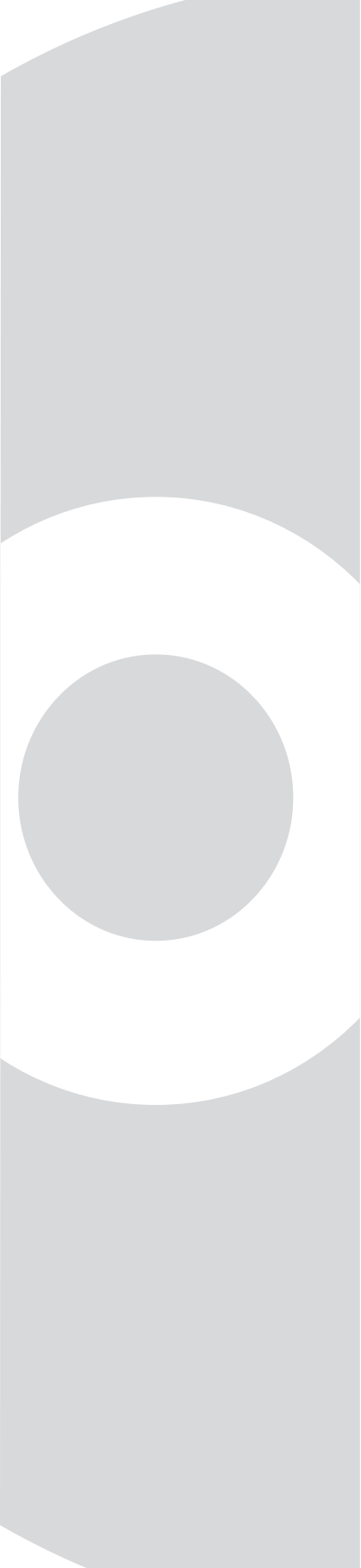
At the core of this argument lies the concept of ‘ambiguity’. As demonstrated, the ambiguity of the Event score is not a limitation but a generative condition: an operative openness that sustains a continuous dialectical exchange between author and performer. Drawing on Mario Perniola’s notion of ambiguity as polyvalent action, the score emerges as a device that produces multiplicity rather than fixed meaning. The case of Giuseppe Chiari has further illustrated how this structure operates in practice. While operating in Florence, but with applications all over Europe as well as the United States, Chiari’s work demonstrates how the score may also serve as a tool for composing, as a performative instruction, and a medium for communication. Therefore, through correspondence, dedications, and collaborations with figures such as Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik, Chiari’s works crossed borders without requiring the artist’s physical mobility. His scores exemplify how Fluxus sustained an international network grounded not in stylistic coherence, but in shared operative principles.

More broadly, this perspective invites a reconsideration of Avant-garde practices beyond narratives centered on objects, movements, or geographically bounded histories. By contextualizing the Event score as a transnational dispositive, this article highlights how artistic exchange can be facilitated through minimal, reproducible, and open-ended structures that privilege activation over authorship and circulation over localization. In doing so, it contributes to a broader understanding of how avant-garde practices anticipate contemporary modes of global artistic production, in which mobility, translation, and reactivation are not secondary effects but foundational conditions.

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Architectures of Influence: Algorithms and the Differential Shaping of Cultural Hybridity in the Global South and West

Abstract: Digital vlogs, disseminated through social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram, serve as an important vehicle for creating global cultural hybridization. However, there is limited research on how vlogging practices in the Global South are shaped by platform dynamics and global digital cultures. A qualitative examination of 30 selected vlogs from Nigeria, India, and Latin America demonstrated that Global South content creators engaged in cultural resistance in their vlogging to challenge platform constraints and Western norms, all while working with local languages, symbols, and narratives.

Keywords: algorithmic culture; platform capitalism; data colonialism; cultural hybridity; creative syncretism; digital visibility.

Introduction

The vlog has developed into a new digital narrative genre that enables people to perform personalized, contextualized identity narratives across borders. Since being born as extended autobiographical videos on YouTube,¹ the vlog has developed into a genre that also includes short-form narratives that are trending on platforms like TikTok and Instagram. The shorter-form videos still retain the necessary performative and self-representational qualities of vlogs, which could provide close narrative composition in a format for people's media consumption. These traits have enabled the evolution of the vlog into shorter-form narratives.

Digital storytelling spaces have led to normalized participation and narratives through platform logics, resulting in hybrid cultural identities. Creators blend various cultural, social, and digital influences in networked media spaces, revealing complex intersections of self and the social world through technology. The history of vlogs reflects broader trends in digital communication, in which narratives are becoming more democratized and increasingly shaped by complex platform logics. McGrady et al. and

¹Rachel McGrady et al., "Dialing for Videos: A Random Sample of YouTube," *Journal of Quantitative Description: Digital Media* 3 (2023): 1–85; Michael Audi, ed., *Performing Digital Networks: Affect, Performativity and Disruption in Social Media Vlogging* (Springer, 2024).

Kennedy have examined how YouTube content provides a democratized space for storytelling, as well as how the platform's logics are entangled in the act of composing digital narratives.² New media, including mobile technology and social media, move us toward tracking the emergence of new possibilities for voices that are less privileged or excluded, to communicate in and resist dominant representations in media, work within regimes of visibility and commodification, and express agency by self-representing in algorithmic contexts. Vlogging, as a digital form, generates hybrid, dynamic subjectivities and identities entangled in processes of globalization, migrancy, and local cultural histories. Such hybrid identities combine vernacular or local traditions with global digital styles, while simultaneously resisting mainstream discourses and defying media images and stereotypes. Appreciating these hybrid identities on digital platforms is especially important, as hybrid identities link identity, power, and technology. Examining the differences in these behaviors across different geopolitical contexts, especially in the Global South context which is impacted by global platforms; the article will consist of an overview of relevant scholarly literature using appropriate research and theoretical frameworks; a qualitative analysis of vlogs produced in various regions of the Global South; recommendations on algorithmic equity as an important factor in achieving equal opportunities for all. These two categories of analysis are used as the basis for analyzing those behaviors, but should not be considered homogeneous or fixed. They should be considered historical constructs, composed of different groups and shaped by the various transnational influences within the Global South and West.

Literature review

Vlogging research has tracked the growth of the medium from a democratizing audiovisual diary to a personal branding, activism, and cultural discourse platform.³ Initial research highlighted vlogs' potential to democratize through bypassing the traditional media gatekeepers.⁴ However, recent scholarship emphasizes the significant role algorithmic platforms play in influencing visibility and creator impact and demonstrates that platforms' infrastructures are not neutral nor necessarily accessible to all audiences at all times.⁵

Along with Bhabha's conceptualization of cultural negotiation,⁶ the study of digital hybridity is also concerned with how digital subjects negotiate countless, intersecting

² McGrady et al., "Dialing for Videos"; Ümit Kennedy, "Arriving on YouTube: Vlogs, Automedia and Autoethnography," *Life Writing* 18, no. 4 (2021): 457–75.

³ Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*, 2nd ed. (Polity, 2018); Patricia G. Lange, "Video Blogging as Performance," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 51, no. 1 (2007): 84–101.

⁴ Andrew Tolson, "A New Authenticity? Communicating the Self on YouTube," *Media International Australia* 137 (2010): 72–82.

⁵ Sophie Bishop, "Algorithmic Marginalization and Digital Labor," *Journal of Digital Media & Policy* 11, no. 2 (2020): 147–163; Stuart Cunningham and David Craig, *Social Media Entertainment: The New Intersection of Hollywood and Silicon Valley* (New York University Press, 2019).

⁶ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 1994).

identities situated within multi-dimensional relations of power. Critics from the Global South argue that platform capitalism and data colonialism bind creators from these regions within culturally limiting infrastructures and limited algorithmic bias.⁷

Cultural globalization operates through indirect mechanisms of cross-cultural influence that contribute to the transformation of people's identities and social structures.⁸ These processes are largely mediated by digital media and the transnational movement of cultural goods, facilitated by digital technologies, which help globalize dominant cultural narratives across diverse cultural contexts. This means that local cultures will not necessarily disappear but rather be transformed over time via continuously evolving negotiations between global influences and local cultural identity.

This study uses postcolonial theory and platform studies to reflect on digital hybridity as a socio-technical and culturally embedded process. Bhabha⁹ defines hybridity as a dialogic negotiation of self at contact zones of intersection of colonial inheritance in the past and contemporary cultural exchange. Hybridity removes essentializing knowledge of culture and identity, producing multiplicity and innovation through creative syncretism and subversion.

The latest research in algorithmic culture celebrates the way platforms re-centralize content that supports Anglo-Western aesthetic dominance and colonial situated hierarchies of visibility. Influencer culture commodifies diversity and authenticity, with commercial entities exerting pressure on marginalized identity content producers to perform their identities in marketable ways.¹⁰ An analysis of vlogs created in non-Western contexts demonstrates that unique or idiosyncratic video-making practices are developed in response to the constraints and limitations of the environment. For example, YouTubers from India and South Africa have created content by blending local languages with global styles to navigate the many cultures and policies of their respective countries. However, they face structural constraints, including access to the Internet, the digital infrastructure, local regulations as well as not having access to platform algorithms that promote Anglo-Western content. This demonstrates the uneven access and mediated representation of digital hybridity and supports the importance of examining geopolitical and infrastructural contexts.¹¹

⁷ Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias, *The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism* (Stanford University Press, 2019); Mark Graham, "Time Machines and Virtual Portals: The Spatialities of the Digital Divide," *Progress in Development Studies* 11, no. 3 (2011): 211–27.

⁸ Ali Madouni, "The Cultural Invasion and Its Impact on Security Breakthroughs of the Nation," *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry* 12, no. 8 (2021): 843–63.

⁹ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.

¹⁰ Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (New York University Press, 2018); Crystal Abidin, *Internet Celebrity: Understanding Fame Online* (Emerald Publishing, 2021); Brooke Erin Duffy, *(Not) Getting Paid to Do What You Love: Gender, Social Media, and Aspirational Work* (Yale University Press, 2017).

¹¹ Tarleton Gillespie, *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*.

Methodology

This study uses qualitative content and discourse analysis of thirty vlogs – ten each from Nigeria, India, and Latin America chosen from TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram between 2022 and 2024. Systematic selections of videos were made using culturally specific hashtags such as #NaijaVlog, #DesiVlog, and #BrasilVlog to capture specifically designed vlogs on hybrid cultural expression, with high audience participation measured by likes, shares, and comments. These specific hashtags were chosen because they represent widely used, culturally specific markers of localized vlogging practices and provide considerable visibility on the platform. The purpose of this study is not to provide a direct comparison between the Global South and the West, but rather to examine how creators from the Global South interact with and move through the global landscape of dominant platforms that are embedded in a Western-centric, algorithmically based rule system. The analysis of coding was based on four dimensions: choice of language (local or global), aesthetics (local symbols or Western symbols), narratives (narratives of resistance and commodification), and the extent to which the platform's constraints were explicit in the audience's viewing experience. A sample of viewer comments was analyzed to identify any patterns of reception among the audience.

All the selected videos met the study's vlog definition: audiovisual material with first-person narration, autobiographical discourse, and identity work performed. In contrast to participant observation or ethnographic techniques, the present study is based on digital text analysis, supplemented by publicly accessible creator interviews where available.

The research explored how language is used, how images look, how stories are told, and how an audience interacts with those stories across different platforms. Hybrid identities were examined to explore how they are shaped across different platforms through algorithmic moderation, implemented through computer code and public metrics. The role of algorithms in content moderation, particularly as it relates to decision-making, bias, and context, was examined. Despite digital platforms' claims that algorithms are used impartially, research suggests that algorithms exhibit systemic biases favoring Western content and language.¹² This research project addresses automated moderation and does not take human judgments regarding content or general social, political, or economic factors into consideration.¹³

¹²Lucas D. Introna and Helen Nissenbaum, "Shaping the Web: Why the Politics of Search Engines Matters," *The Information Society* 16, no. 3 (2000): 169–85.

¹³ Tarleton Gillespie, "The Relevance of Algorithms," in *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*, ed. By Tarleton Gillespie, Pablo J. Boczkowski, and Kirsten A. Foot (MIT Press, 2014), 167–194; José van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

Theoretical framework

In digital culture, hybridity is complicated because it occurs in algorithmically mediated platform spaces. YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok are not transparent conduits for culture; they actively shape users' visibility, meaning, and practices through commercial logic and algorithmic rules.¹⁴ This socio-technical intertwining means that hybrid identities expressed in online vlogs are co-created through user imagination and platform affordances and limited by platform-driven norms and biases.

Platform capitalism also captures these dynamics when platforms, as economic actors, commodify visibility and data, rather than reproducing mainstream power relations and leaving peripheral voices out.¹⁵ Digital hybridity in this arrangement is not an inherent process of culture, but one rather contextualized within asymmetrical data coloniality and algorithmic discrimination relations.¹⁶ Users in Global South contexts are typically faced with representational and infrastructural hindrances.

Algorithmic culture research reveals how technical systems reproduce inequality, often favoring content that aligns with Western aesthetics and commercial viability.¹⁷ This process shapes hybrid cultural production on platforms and trends, affecting creators' agency and their place in mediated economies.

Hybrid cultural practices in the Global South

The Global South's hybrid cultural narratives challenge colonialism, imperialism, and cultural domination, resisting homogenizing identities and Western norms. They advocate for hybrid proposals, emphasizing cultural mixing as a site for resistance, creativity, and negotiation, thereby critiquing fixed binaries and hegemonic practices. In this way, hybrid practices will resist cultural exclusion and marginalization, as well as the monopolization of culture by colonial and global forces, as a strategy for counteracting processes of cultural erasure.

Digital media platforms have become central sites in which marginalized groups in the Global South reappropriate cultural identities and counter-dominant media representations. Producers in Nigeria, India, and Brazil deliberately use their own languages, symbols, music, and rituals in their short vlogs and videos, which stem from shared lived experience and are both culturally resistant and make cultural claims on this visual repertoire. In Nigeria, TikTokers typically use Afrobeats soundtracks, urban Pidgin English subtitles, and contemporary clothing to create their content, thus having a foot in both the present and historical cultural identities. In the appropriation and flexible,

¹⁴ Nick Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Polity, 2016).

¹⁵ Couldry and Mejias, *The Costs of Connection*; Abeba Birhane, "Algorithmic Colonization," *Patterns* 2, no. 3 (2021): 100190.

¹⁶ Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*.

¹⁷ Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Payal Arora, *Digitized Lives: Culture, Power and Social Change in the Internet Era* (Oxford University Press, 2019).

articulated use of social media culture, it is worth noting that it serves not only to resist the homogenizing effects of global media but also to resist the decades-long predominance of Euro-American visual cultures in the digital arena.¹⁸

Regional hybridity occurs within digital processes, with the Global South incorporating local cultural aspects into the visual and aesthetic language of global culture. Dalit activists in India create a spectacle and culture using hip-hop music and the Ambedkarite domain to challenge violence through resistance to caste oppression, and it exemplifies Garcia Canclini's¹⁹ definition of hybrid cultures, which describes hybrids as a tactical way of approaching culture and mobilizing, as a strategy for countering a process of obliteration. Opposing efforts to erase their histories, identities, and experiences of oppression from official sources, Dalit activists assert that the widespread imposition of cultural identity homogenization and Western norms eliminates these elements and forces them into social and hierarchical classifications, thereby serving as forms of cultural resistance and identity negotiation.²⁰

Dalit activists fight against colonial power and social order, while preserving their traditional culture. This leads to varied hybrid outcomes, including agency, visibility, and structural inequality. This type of hybridization from Global South outputs may provide for "creative syncretism", where culture is mixed to create new forms that are contextually appropriate. For instance, Brazilian YouTubers create content that blends hip-hop with Afro-Brazilian spirituality, educating, teaching spirituality, and challenging hegemonic political discourse.²¹ In addition to providing entertainment, these hybridized media formats challenge stereotypes and redefine identity, ultimately enabling digitally enabled decolonial praxis.

Empirical examples of vlogging practices

To reinforce the empirical basis of the study, this part outlines examples from the analyzed data to demonstrate how people construct and negotiate hybrid cultural identities within platform contexts. An example is a Nigerian Vlog published on TikTok (tagged NaijaVlog), showcasing a creator who combines Pidgin and Afrobeats while narrating the daily economic realities of living in an urban center. The creator presented the following quote: "We dey survive, no be small thing", recorded in a very busy market in Lagos, Nigeria. When viewing the video, the sight and sound use handheld camera techniques, informal Street Aesthetics, and distinct sounds of the surrounding market to convey immediacy and realism. In addition, the use of local language and music, mostly released by Nigerian artists, creates a reference point for the story to be told and for the experience to be interpreted through lived experiences,

¹⁸ Bishop, "Algorithmic Marginalization"; Arora, *Digitized Lives*.

¹⁹ García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*.

²⁰ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*; Marwan M. Kraidy, *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization* (Temple University Press, 2005).

²¹ Couldry and Mejias, *The Costs of Connection*; Birhane, "Algorithmic Colonization."

while also attempting to resist access to the usually English-language-based content by the platforms' algorithms.²² The image and sound of this example show that a hybrid identity has been created by mixing a local cultural style with an international video-creation style (Vlog).

Another example is an Indian Vlog published on YouTube (tagged DesiVlog) in which the creator discusses caste discrimination, combining hip-hop and video editing styles understood globally through digital culture. The creator uses both Hindi and English in their discussion of the subject matter to include local and transnational audiences; the visual presentation consists of stylized cuts in the video editor, with English subtitles and visual symbols that speak to Ambedkarite Activism.

García Canclini (2005) proposes that “hybrid cultures” are created when local representations of politics are expressed through aesthetic forms that have entered the public domain.²³ The strategic incorporation of English indicates a level of awareness of how the interaction between different platforms impacts their visibility and ultimately their range.²⁴

Another Brazilian example of hybridization can be seen in a vlog (YouTube, #BrasilVlog) that combines elements of Afro-Brazilian religious symbolism with digital storytelling techniques. The creator incorporates Candomblé ritual practices alongside vlog-style narration and audience-interaction techniques, such as direct engagement and calls to action. Viewer comments frequently engage with the material both culturally and aesthetically, indicating a content engagement that incorporates cultural recognition and platform-related interaction patterns. This supports research demonstrating digital hybridity as a cultural and sociotechnical process produced by platform infrastructures.²⁵

Across all examples, creators use what can be called “algorithmic negotiation” to adjust their content to meet perceived platform rules and visibility limitations.²⁶ While this illustrates the creator’s creative agency, it also shows that structural differences in digital visibility exist. According to research findings, hybridized cultural expressions from the Global South exhibit both a creative culture and a way to address platform features that favor certain aesthetic styles, formats, and languages.²⁷

However, it is important to note that the data derive from an examination of the creator’s content and resulting audience engagement, rather than from collecting data through observed direct measures of an algorithmic platform’s performance. In other words, the data contain examples of creators’ perceptions of visibility and the platform’s constraining structures, which are fundamentally different from providing evidence about the form of algorithms used by the platform. This difference is critical for interpreting the study’s findings through a qualitative lens.

²² Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*; Bishop, “Algorithmic Marginalization.”

²³ García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*.

Cunningham and Craig, *Social Media Entertainment*.

²⁵ Couldry and Mejias, *The Costs of Connection*; Birhane, “Algorithmic Colonization.”

²⁶ Cunningham and Craig, *Social Media Entertainment*.

²⁷ Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*; Gillespie, *Custodians of the Internet*.

Western platform norms and the structuring of visibility

On the other hand, the landscape in Western digital spaces is fragmented and hyper-individualized, with hybrid cultural expression commodities. Multicultural content is abundant but is frequently mediated through a beauty rationale rather than cultural richness. For example, many Western influencers adopt East Asian style or indigenous imagery as fashion options, divorced from histories or cultural contexts—an articulation of what is²⁸ identified as “commodified multiculturalism”, with culture as an accessory and not a critical praxis. Thus, while the Global South and the West alike are generating hybrid cultural products, what drives them and the outcomes differ comprehensively: cultural resistance and assertion prevail in the South, whereas performative inclusion integrated with consumer culture defines the West.

In the West, hybrid content is driven by visibility, marketability, and trend confluence, recombining culture for enjoyment or branding. The widespread adoption of English- and Western-allocated hashtags highlights the divergence in social and historical contexts shaping hybridization agendas in the North and the South.²⁹

Western hybridity is more susceptible to assimilationist pressures and market-driven cultural mixing. Hybrid culture in these contexts tends to manifest as dispersed niches—i.e., ethnic food, global style, or spiritual wellness—that exoticize difference but fail to subvert the underlying dominant hegemonies, recalling Nederveen Pieterse’s (2001)³⁰ thesis that surface-level cultural *mélange* masks and camouflages deeper injustices. Further, platform regulation and algorithmic design favor Western producers, widening visibility gaps and limiting the global popularity of Southern content.³¹

Algorithmic mediation and structural inequalities

Digital technologies shape hybrid cultural processes by shaping online culture through platform algorithms, economic incentives, and user interfaces, and dimensions of platform hybrids. In this case study, we demonstrate, among other things, that non-Western producers are algorithmically marginalized, especially in India and Kenya, while local languages are arguably suppressed by their inability to cut through all the visual and digital clutter of language and global topics that more readily gain visibility,³² by virtue of these platforms’ inherent bias toward the English language and Western editing, pacing, and aesthetic choices.³³

²⁸ Sarah Banet-Weiser, *Authentic: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Branded World* (New York University Press, 2018).

²⁹ Cunningham and Craig, *Social Media Entertainment*; Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*.

³⁰ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

³¹ Sophie Bishop, “Algorithmic Marginalization”; Gillespie, “Relevance of Algorithms.”

³² Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*; Bishop, “Algorithmic Marginalization.”

³³ Bishop, “Algorithmic Marginalization”; Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*.

Due to the limitations of their infrastructure and digital literacy, the algorithmic bias inherent in Western-based programming resulted in many Global South producers being forced to accept a ‘refined’ (and typically lower) quality of visual performance than their counterparts in Western countries—in part because of their use of low-tech means of expressing creativity given the limitations placed upon them by having limited access to technology.³⁴ In addition, even if a Global South producer has extensive experience making films, they are treated as a second-class citizen within platform economies, which exploit their labor but rarely offer them a fair share of compensation or exposure for their efforts.³⁵

Together, these infrastructural and algorithmic dynamics recapitulate global inequalities and demonstrate that digital hybridity does not occur on a level playing field. Instead, it is informed by an intersecting pattern of algorithmic bias, infrastructural disproportion, and capitalist platform logics that variously empower or constrain cultural events.

Western vlogs: algorithmic commodification and brandable diversity

In comparison, French, American, and British vlogs express algorithmic commodification of hybridity.³⁶ French vlogger @LaCuisineGlobal, for instance, blends Asian, African, and French cuisines for ‘viral fusion’ food content, foregrounding diversity to drive sponsorships and trend value. Sessions include quick cuts, English subtitles, and branded hashtags such as #GlobalFoodHack. Viewers’ comments constantly highlight novelty and newness (“Sushi with brie-genius!”), less frequently referencing cultural origin or context. Western creatives demonstrate exceptionally heightened sensitivity to market and algorithmic incentives.³⁷ Language, appearance, and cut decisions are made with a knowledge of what ‘works’ within platform feeds.

Some TikTok creators strategically blend local humor with global memes, navigating platform moderation by using terms more likely to be accepted by algorithms and sponsors. Indian vlogs labeled with #GlobalDanceChallenge receive local popularity, yet similar US or UK material tagged similarly is far more likely to appear in worldwide trending topics.

Artists from the Global South tend to adapt language, sound, and production to meet presumed algorithmic norms, sometimes at the expense of local authenticity.³⁸ Analysis of interview data and comments suggests a common practice known as “algorithmic negotiation”, with producers intentionally layering representations, changing tags, and experimenting with timing in order to increase addressability by

³⁴ Arora, *Digitized Lives*.

³⁵ Ramesh Srinivasan, “Digital Platforms and Data Colonialism,” *New Media & Society* 22, 7 (2020): 1201–18; Couldry and Mejias, *The Costs of Connection*.

³⁶ Banet-Weiser, *Authentic*; Duffy, *(Not) Getting Paid*.

³⁷ Cunningham and Craig, *Social Media Entertainment*.

³⁸ Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*; Bishop, “Algorithmic Marginalization.”

the platform.³⁹ Yet as Couldry and Mejias suggest, these practices are bounded by larger regimes of data colonialism and platform capitalism, reinforcing asymmetries of recognition and reward.

Power, visibility, and commodification in global digital hybridity

The results demonstrate not simply a difference between theorizing and practice but also expose how a fundamentally asymmetrical digital space has been constructed at the engaged point of intersection among platform construction, relations of power, and market logics. Global South creatives enact intentional hybridity as acts of resistance and to assert themselves, creating digital narratives that challenge both hegemonic Western forms and traditional categories of cultural narratives, such as caste oppression, and thus express their localized selves through layered enactments of multiple cultural forms. Even while exercising their creative agency, these producers also face systemic opacity, whether through uneven infrastructure or algorithmic discrimination, which limits their visibility to larger audiences.⁴⁰

Western content producers in hybrid content often work within neoliberal marketplaces, with a focus on visibility and monetization. This approach devalues diversity, promotes new trends, self-promotion by sponsors, and acceptable differences. This reduces the impact of the radical or critical assertiveness of hybrid content, emphasizing performative inclusivity.⁴¹ Commodification of diversity thus serves to reproduce existing cultural hierarchies in the guise of multicultural celebration, closely replicating what critics call the “aestheticization of diversity” of contemporary media environments.⁴²

Through this study of vlogging cultures globally, we understand the impulses towards hybrid cultural production that run through them, but we also emphasize the inequalities embedded in the digital architecture that mediates global cultural visibility and valorization. Platform algorithms, informed by commercial rationality and historical asymmetries, determine content presentation and voices, embedding structural inequalities in knowledge production, cultural legitimation, and digital labor returns.⁴³

³⁹ Cunningham and Craig, *Social Media Entertainment*.

⁴⁰ Couldry and Mejias, *The Costs of Connection*; Birhane, “Algorithmic Colonization.”

⁴¹ Banet-Weiser, *Authentic*; Duffy, *(Not) Getting Paid*.

⁴² Rosalind Gill and Shani Orgad, “The Shifting Terrain of Sex and Power: From the ‘Sexualization of Culture’ to #MeToo,” *Sexualities* 21, no. 8 (2018): 1313–24.

⁴³ Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*; Van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity*.

Conclusion

This research challenges the simplistic view of digital hybridity as a fluid cultural blend, focusing on the socio-technical practices embedded in historical inequities and capitalist platform logics. In the Global South, hybridity is a cultural counter-movement and a claim to identity and autonomy under structural invisibility, while Western hybridity emerges as commodified multiculturalism for market viability. A postcolonial and platform studies approach could consider vlogs as sites of cultural agency and as platforms that produce uneven visibility. Recommendations emphasize the need to revise platform algorithms and governing procedures to support cultural pluralism and equitable exposure. Vlogs serve as spaces of narration and contestation for cultural sovereignty and global equity, challenging existing structural biases in global media flows. Future research will focus on reception, resistance, and solidarity among marginalized producers, as well as how new platforms and technologies may reproduce or challenge digital asymmetries.

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Typographic Tale of Two Cities: Lettering Legacy of Dušan Janković

Abstract: Dušan Janković (Niš, 1894 – Belgrade, 1950) was a Serbian-French designer and artist who worked in both Paris and Belgrade during the interwar period, whose practice encompassed a wide range of artistic disciplines, styles, techniques, and materials. This study focuses specifically on the lettering aspect of his work, through which the duality and coexistence of his two geographical and cultural identities can be critically examined. His legacy reveals a cultural reciprocal dynamic: French avant-garde currents offered a structural framework for experimentation and innovation, while Serbian folk, ethnological, and manuscript traditions contributed a distinctive aesthetic flavor. Although deeply formed by avant-garde movements, Janković remained firmly anchored in the expressive potential of the Serbian visual heritage and Cyrillic letterforms.

Through this lens, his work becomes a valuable niche in understanding the broader landscape of transnational artistic interchange between the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and France in the early twentieth century, as well as the avant-garde commitment to collaboration across political and cultural boundaries. Drawing on archival materials, digitization, comparative analysis, contextual examination, and media coverage, this article demonstrates how Janković served as a medium through which Yugoslav and Serbian cultural imprints intersected with and morphed into French aesthetic criteria. Ultimately, it underlines that Janković's typographic practice not only enriched the visual cultures of both countries but also embodied the cross-border dialogues that defined European avant-garde ideals. His significance as a cultural mediator becomes even more pronounced when one considers that, together with his wife Colette, he bequeathed legacies to museums in both Paris and Belgrade.

Keywords: Dušan Janković; typography; graphic design; Cyrillic; lettering.

Introduction

The professional and biographical trajectory of Dušan Janković unfolded between the two World Wars, a period marked by profound global socio-political, cultural, and industrial transformation. His life and work intertwine in a continuous storyline situated between two cities and cultural spheres, through which he developed an authentic artistic language that functioned as a mediating expression between different aesthetics and traditions.

Janković's oeuvre is distinguished by its breadth across artistic and design disciplines and by the diversity of materials, techniques, and stylistic approaches he employed, yet it consistently demonstrates a high level of artistic sensibility and technical proficiency. Although he was formally educated as an *artist-decorator*, such a classification only partially captures the scope of his practice. Rather than signaling a lack of specialization, his multidisciplinary engagement reflects a rare capacity to operate competently and often exceptionally across multiple fields. His work includes fine art and printmaking, ceramics, fashion design, architecture, furniture and interior design, as well as magazine and book design, illustration, and lettering. Across all these realms, Janković displayed notable versatility, maintaining a high degree of conceptual control throughout the process, from initial idea to development and execution. In his article *Discovery or Rehabilitation*, prominent artist and art critic Đorđe Kadijević wrote "Janković's comprehensive work is among the most complex and extensive in the entirety of our modern art."¹ He further elaborated that Janković's work exemplified a synthesis of innate giftedness and cultivated cultural awareness, uniting artistic talent with a high level of refined craftsmanship. Moreover, Kadijević observed that, unlike many of his contemporaries, Janković was able to infuse a poetic sensibility into the technical rigor of his practice, while his inventive approach generated a rich and multilayered field of associations.

The work of Dušan Janković serves as a mirror of the history and condition of Serbian society in the first half of the twentieth century, not only through his artistic production but also through the trajectory of his life. He came to Belgrade to study architecture at the Technical Faculty, but after only two semesters, he was forced to leave the city and return to his native Niš due to the outbreak of the First World War. It was in Niš that he received news that he had been called to join the Serbian army during its Great Retreat across Albania, a period during which he kept a rich, exceptionally detailed travel diary. In this journal, which constitutes a deeply moving factual document written from October 1915 to January 1916,² the author recorded events with remarkable precision and thoroughness.

Subsequently, he found himself in France, where he sought to establish a life for himself. As mentioned in the publication *Dušan Janković—Life and Work 1894–1950*, he initially enrolled at the *Arcueil School of Architecture* (1917–1918) and later studied decorative painting at the *École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs* (1918–1921) in Paris. This famous school set the course for Janković's future, as he became a decorative artist trained in a variety of applied and fine art disciplines. He chose a far from easy journey as an independent artist and a foreigner in France. In the following two decades, he worked across various fields of fine and applied arts and met his life partner, Colette (nee Royer). Despite being active in France, he never cut ties with the Serbian art scene and was involved in the cultural life of Belgrade as both an independent artist and a member of the art group Lada. After nineteen years of life and professional

¹ Đorđe Kadijević, "Otkriće ili rehabilitacija," *NIN* (June 20, 1965): 9.

² Vladimir Rozić, *Dušan Janković—život i delo 1894–1950* (Muzej primenjenih umetnosti, 1987), 8.

activity in Paris, due to economic crisis and nostalgia for Serbia, the Janković family relocated to Belgrade in the mid-1930s, where Dušan became a technical editor at the National Printing House of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1935–1945). From that moment on, publication and graphic design became his principal activities, as he designed many books and magazines, most notably the art magazine *Umetnički pregled* (1937–1941), under the patronage of Prince Paul. After the Second World War, Janković worked at the publishing enterprises *Novo pokolenje* (1945–1948), *Jugoslovenska knjiga* (1948–1950), and as a professor of *Decorative Lettering* at the newly formed Faculty of Applied Arts (1948–1950).

Three decades later, Kadrijević once again turned his attention to Janković's work, noting that his primary specialization was “artistic design” and that, in fact, no one before him had demonstrated such breadth within a narrowly defined artistic field. He further argued that no other Yugoslav artist operated across such an extensive range of media, characterizing him as an “emancipated intellectual and aesthete”³.

Dušan Janković acted as a mediator and a bridge between France and Serbia. On the one hand, he was formed as an artist and lived in Paris, in close alignment with the artistic currents and trends of the period, ranging from *L'affichomanie*, *Art Deco*, *Expressionism*, and *Cubism* to *Futurism* and other avant-garde movements. On the other hand, he remained deeply rooted in the aesthetic traditions of Serbian Cyrillic handwriting and in local traditional visual motifs.

Through both his work and his life route, he interplayed between two cities and two cultures—Belgrade and Paris, Serbian tradition and French experimentalism. His biography itself was marked by this duality, unfolding across these two locations and mindsets.

Artistic overview

Dušan Janković's oeuvre has been systematically best documented and critically examined in the catalog accompanying his posthumous retrospective exhibition *Dušan Janković, Life and Work 1894–1950*, held in 1987 at the Museum of Applied Arts in Belgrade and authored by the art historian Vladimir Rozić. The majority of the established chronology of Janković's career is grounded in Rozić's archival research in the Museum's collections and in conversations with his widow. This exhibition created an echo 37 years after his death and was selected among the top 10 exhibitions of the year in Yugoslavia by art critics of the respected weekly magazine *NIN*.⁴

It is notable that his professional opus forms a coherent and complete cycle—beginning and ending in what is today defined as graphic design. His earliest works are situated in this domain, remarkably, the emblem created for the Association of Yugoslav Students in Paris (1917), as well as the masthead and cover designs for the journal *Misao*, published by Serbian students at the University of Oxford (1918).

³ Đorđe Kadrijević, “Dva vremena,” *NIN*, no. 1932 (January 10, 1988): 34–36.

⁴ “NIN-ovi kritičari biraju—deset ili manje više,” *NIN*, no. 1931 (January 8, 1988): 35.

In 1922, he produced carpet designs for a French interior design firm, and already the following year, upon invitation, he designed for the porcelain factory *Bloch et Fils*. This was soon followed by commissions from the *Manufacture nationale de Sèvres*, the most renowned workshop of its kind in France, which has since grown into a national museum.

By 1925, Janković was successfully engaged in book design and illustration, including bibliophile editions, collaborating with major French publishing houses such as *Flammarion*, *Larousse*, *Monde Moderne*, and *Kharma*. That same year, he won a public competition for the total design of *Tic Tac*,⁵ one of the halls of the famous *Moulin Rouge*. This project encompassed interior design and the creation of graphic materials for this iconic venue. In the mid-1920s until 1932, Janković ran his own fashion atelier, *La mode d'art d'atelier Colette Janković*, which represents an important extension of his multidisciplinary practice. His architectural and interior design portfolio includes the *Villa Philippe de Fages* in Saint-Cloud, which was constructed, furnished, and decorated according to his designs between 1932 and 1934, demonstrating his capacity for all-encompassing and site-tailored designs. Additionally, at the personal request of the renowned Serbian scientist Jovan Cvijić, Janković designed a room in his Belgrade residence, now the Jovan Cvijić Museum, though the project was ultimately not implemented.

He was active in other aspects of fine art and design, and he displayed a vast knowledge of styles, materials, and versatility. As the economic crisis hit France in the mid 1930s and his client list became shorter, Janković displayed a profound interest in returning to Belgrade, where he applied for several teaching positions but without success.

Đorđe Kadrijević concludes one of his articles⁶ raising the question of whether Janković's pronounced eclecticism may have contributed to the systematic neglect of his legacy, in a cultural climate in which any artistic work that departed from a *singular ideational–aesthetic model* was liable to sanctions. He also asks whether Dušan Janković was forgotten over time or he never actually received the affirmation he deserved in his native country, noting that he had a place in the permanent exhibition of the Museum of Applied Arts in Paris but not in its Belgrade counterpart.

Typographic works

With regard to Dušan Janković's typographic work itself, it has been largely neglected, both because of the span of his overall oeuvre and due to insufficient scholarly research and literature. In the volume *Serbian Applied Art from the Twentieth to the Twenty-First Century*,⁷ Janković is referenced exclusively in relation to his ceramic and porcelain design, while other aspects of his practice remained unaddressed.

⁵ Rozić, *Dušan Janković—život i delo*, 9.

⁶ Kadrijević, "Dva vremena," 36.

⁷ Slobodan Maldini, *Srpska primenjena umetnost od XX do XXI veka* (ASA—Asocijacija srpskih arhitekata, 2022), 352–54.

By contrast, Pavle Vasić characterizes him as a French-educated book designer who “introduced an entirely new tone”⁸ into the field. Vasić defines Janković’s stylistic approach through elements of *new linearism*, inventive typographic composition, and virtuosity reminiscent of the great masters of calligraphy, drawing comparisons with Albrecht Dürer and Lucas Cranach. He further emphasizes that Janković should be understood as a designer in the sense articulated by late twentieth-century theoretical conceptions of design. Similarly, Bojana Popović in her book *Applied Art and Belgrade*⁹ has multiple mentions of Dušan Janković and his broad spectrum of design interests, creating a wider image of his opus but still mostly focused on the *applied graphics* where he was most active in his Belgrade days.

Since then, Janković has been included in several exhibitions. The most recent one was *Three Interwar Poster Artists: Janković, Petrov, Babić*,¹⁰ held at the Museum of Applied Art in Belgrade in 2021. While this exhibition addressed an aspect of his graphic design practice – poster art, it notably did not offer a critical examination of his typographic work, but it was spotted by Steve Heller, who wrote an article on it for the *Printed* magazine. Heller, a renowned designer and design writer, notes that Janković’s “early poster works show his interest in Cubism and African art, the futuristic tendency to depict movement and speed, the use of aerial perspective, modernization of folk ornaments, and new typography.”¹¹ Heller concludes that, even after his return to Yugoslavia, Janković remained closely aligned with and on track toward international graphic design standards.

His typographic production, like all other aspects of his work, is extensive and highly diverse in both stylistic and material approaches. However, it has been overshadowed by other facets of his artistic practice and further marginalized by limited visibility and an unjust neglect, both in Serbia and in France. A central methodological challenge of this research lay in the structuring and systematic organization of Janković’s extensive and heterogeneous letter-based body of work. Janković’s typographic and visual language is characterized by a continuous, dynamic oscillation among diverse typographic phrases, ranging from elongated, geometric letterforms associated with Art Deco to forms informed by Serbian Orthodox manuscript traditions, Gothic and decorative styles, and freehand-drawn lettering. These coexist with compositions shaped by Futurist notions of speed and dynamism and, at the same time, with approaches grounded in classical and academically oriented aesthetics. Furthermore, a significant portion of the archival material lacks clear chronological markers, while other items remain unfinished or exist only in preparatory form, without corresponding published versions. Moreover, the scope of his engagement with this discipline

⁸ Pavle Vasić, *Primenjena umetnost u Srbiji 1900–1978* (ULUPUDS, 1981), 29.

⁹ Bojana Popović, *Primenjena umetnost i Beograd 1918–1941* (Muzej primenjenih umetnosti, 2011) 158–161.

¹⁰ Bojana Popović, *Tri međuratna plakatera—Janković, Petrov, Babić* (Beograd: Muzej primenjenih umetnosti, 2021).

¹¹ Steven Heller, “Three Rarely Acknowledged Serbian Design Pioneers,” *Print Magazine*, accessed November 2025, <https://www.printmag.com/daily-heller/the-daily-heller-three-rarely-acknowledged-serbian-design-pioneers/>.

is exceptionally broad, encompassing logos and insignia, monograms, freehand lettering, typographic constructions and experiments, as well as book covers, poster designs, and various forms of ephemera, including correspondence, street signage, musical notation, and catalogs.

First example of his typographic span is a collection of his personal insignias and letter marks. In his early years, he signed his works as a French transcription of his name “Douchan”, but later he created numerous variations of his original name, both in Cyrillic and Latin, as monograms and combinations with his wife’s name. His typographic experimentation within this area perhaps illustrates his playful and skillful side as well as his deep knowledge of letter morphology and styles. Some of these insignias were hand-drawn, others skillfully constructed. Some demonstrate his special affection for Japanese aesthetics, such as the Cyrillic stamp-like monogram he used to sign his 1932 designs for Tamachi’s book *Evocations*. Others are monograms that combine the initials of him and his wife, while others are his signatures, done freehand with various quills, tools, and styles, and a stamp that marked his sketches, asserting design authorship.

His typographic work is fundamentally shaped by the duality of his life and career path. He introduced certain typographic forms from Serbian tradition into French design and language. Notably, he created designs in French and Latin script, derived from handwritten forms of the Serbian Cyrillic tradition. This was not a one-time occurrence but a repeating pattern throughout the decades. For example, in the early 1920s he handwrote on multiple occasion Latin letters in the Orthodox manuscript style as elongated letters with highly ornamental attributes and forms of vowel characters and letter M. Some of those designs were personal ephemeral designs, others were parts of poster designs (such as *Tapis* or *Editions L’Aube*, both poster designs from 1923) or bilingual edition of the book *Monahinja Jefimija—Mohiale Yefimija* from 1936. Those designs represent the Serbian imprint in works produced, in whole or in part, for the French market, articulated in French, revealing the transnational dimensions of their conception and execution.

Equally, he introduced elements of French experimentalism, manifested in a playful manner that was largely uncharacteristic of Serbian design of the period. This approach is evident across a range of works, from a freehand calligraphic monogram created for the cultural institution *Udruženje prijatelja umetnosti Cvijeta Zuzorić*, to the refined execution of the name *Nevenka* in elegant penmanship, and further to the carefully constructed *Lada* logo (1932). All of these examples are accomplished in a then-unconventional form of Cyrillic, one that clearly draws upon Latin letterforms and the contemporary French design ambiance, while simultaneously demonstrating a profound structural understanding of the Cyrillic script. This manner of his was also noted by Stjepan Fileki who wrote that “his letterforms are stylistically impeccable; more often, however, they appear as freely shaped, nontraditional forms whose stylistic character incorporates connoisseur’s references to historical models.”¹²

¹² Stjepan Fileki, “Dušan Janković—kaligraf i tipograf,” *Štampa i papir*, stručno glasilo za unapređenje grafičke industrije i industrije papira Jugoslavije (June–August 1987).

Furthermore, he addressed that some of his “newly invented forms depart from the logic of classical paradigm and do not arise from the functional logic of writing instruments”.¹³ This aspect of his design is prominent in his poster designs for *Tobacco Monopole of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia*. Both poster proposals, created and rejected in 1931, featured vibrant, remarkable typography. Rozić pointed out that one of these proposals, named Vardar, was inspired by A.M Cassandre’s poster for Nord Express (1927).¹⁴ Despite representing dissimilar motives, train and cigarette share a composition, while notions of movement and smoke are present. The typography of Janković’s poster has the linear, upright dynamic of A.M. Cassandre, flipped and at the bottom with a radical perspective. This approach constituted a notably innovative and atypical treatment of letterforms within the Serbian design of the period. As for the Janković’s tobacco poster, the triangular letterforms do not conform to the letter base and bottom lines but instead extend beyond them, forming pronounced peaks that introduce an unconventional sense of rhythm and visual dynamism. The title *Grafička izložba* (1930), designed for the cover of the exhibition catalogue, is rendered entirely in capital letters executed in a freehand, script-like manner. Such an approach departs from the typographic convention due to legibility challenges. Nevertheless, Janković successfully preserves readability through his profound understanding of the letterform morphology and his refined sense of elegance and typographic style. By introducing unconventional dynamics and carefully modulated forms, he achieves a composition that balances expressive freedom with functional clarity.

Finally, Janković did not design typefaces in the conventional sense. His typographic systems were conceived to address specific communicative or functional problems and to be integrated within particular design contexts. Consequently, he rarely developed complete font families, instead producing only those letterforms required for a given application. His typographic practice emerged in a period defined by intense social, political, and industrial transformation. As Eric Gill observes in *An Essay on Typography*,¹⁵ practitioners of letterforms and book design during the interwar years confronted fundamental dilemmas brought about by industrialization and rapidly changing modes of production, at a time when the prospect of another global conflict was not yet fully foreseen. Janković’s work developed within this climate of emerging technology, uncertainty, and redefinitions. A comparable condition can be observed today as contemporary design practice is once again shaped by accelerated change, driven by artificial intelligence and broader social transformations that are reshaping authorship, production, and visual communication. Within his typographic output, Janković articulated a section aligned with Gill’s ideals of letterform simplicity and geometry, creating both Cyrillic and Latin lettering systems using a simple grid and mathematical logic. His two Cyrillic type sets are more elaborate, each containing all small-case characters and both comprising upright (regular) and italic versions.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Rozić, *Dušan Janković, život i delo*, 23.

¹⁵ Erik Gil, *Ogledi o tipografiji* (Bukefal, 2021).

His Latin geometric type designs appear older and more decorative, resembling Art Deco elements and containing the letters necessary for Collette's Paris address.

The Museum of Applied Arts in Belgrade preserves Janković's other design systems, which encompass a wide spectrum of styles and aesthetic approaches, ranging from highly decorative floral initials and Art Deco display types to classical Roman letterforms, as well as from freehand-drawn scripts to Modern serif designs. This stylistic diversity further attests to his artistic vitality, extensive knowledge, and high level of design proficiency. It also substantiates Fileki's assertion that Janković did not align himself with any single dominant typographic style, but instead consistently pursued an individual approach, integrating elements of national visual and typographic heritage with a refined sense of taste and measure.

A significant portion of Janković's typographic work was devoted to the design of logos and magazine mastheads. His earliest commission was for *Misao*, a periodical based at the University of Oxford and published between 1918 and 1922. This logo was conceived as robust, geometric letters characterized by monolinear strokes and the absence of contrast, reflecting a deliberate emphasis on structural clarity and formal restraint. His next major magazine project was *Umetnički pregled*, a magazine on archeology, history, and contemporary art that ran from 1937 until 1941. Within a period of only three months,¹⁶ he developed both the masthead and the overall layout in accordance with the prevailing international standards of art periodicals. The design was characterized by generous margins, high-quality paper stock, and a dynamic page composition incorporating reproductions. As the primary bearer of the magazine's visual identity, the cover featured a carefully structured typographic composition employing custom-designed letterforms and numerals. During the first year of publication, the cover was blue with white lettering and numerals, but Janković later inverted this chromatic scheme, signaling a deliberate refinement of the magazine's visual identity. The logotype, according to Bojana Popović,¹⁷ was inspired by international magazines such as *L'art vivant*, *Cahiers d'art*, and *L'amour d'art*, while the elongated letter forms mostly remind one of *Formes* magazine. Besides these, the Museum of Applied Arts collection includes his sketches for Yugoslavia, an illustrated multilingual magazine logo (1949), the *Ogledalo* youth magazine logo (1930), *Službene novine Kraljevine Jugoslavije*, and *Reportaž*—a mash-up of eclectic hand-drawn typography.

¹⁶ Bojana Popović, "Umetnički pregled i Dušan Janković," *Zbornik Narodnog muzeja Srbije* 26 (2024): 265–78.

¹⁷ Popović, *Umetnički pregled i Dušan Janković*, 269.

Conclusion

The legacy of Dušan Janković has, regrettably, been largely forgotten in both Serbia and France. This neglect in Serbia can be attributed in part to his premature and sudden death, as well as to his limited presence within the new socio-political system of socialist Yugoslavia, where he did not have sufficient time to leave a more substantial mark. Within that system, there was little room for an objective, nuanced analysis of any practices developed during the Kingdom period.

A further issue lies in the systemic lack of scholarly research into graphic design in Yugoslavia and Serbia more broadly. Even Stjepan Fileki, Janković's former student, refers to him in the opening paragraph of *26+30 Alphabet: A History of Script and Typography with Lessons for Artistic and Pedagogical Practice* as “the first among the forgotten”,¹⁸ positioning him immediately after Zaharije Orfelin, an eighteenth-century landmark of Serbian culture and calligraphy. Nevertheless, despite this initial acknowledgment, Janković is not mentioned again in the remaining 330 pages of the book. On another occasion, Fileki wrote that “his scripts possess a strong decorative force, exemplary technical clarity, and elegance, and they endure as a lasting contribution to our calligraphic and typographic heritage.”¹⁹

In the early 2000s, Janković's designs were featured several times in the Yugoslav graphic design magazine *Kvadart* (issues 7, 19, and 20), as well as in the monographic series *Zvakovito*, devoted to Serbian logo design, and, more recently, in *YugoLogo*, volume 1. While these inclusions attest to the quality and enduring relevance of his work, they represent fragments of his opus. As such, Janković has yet to be given the position he merits within the national and regional history of design.

His importance is further assessed by his wife, Colette, a meticulous collector, archivist, and custodian of Dušan Janković's personal and professional legacy. She donated his complete artistic estate to the Museum of Applied Arts in Belgrade, where it is preserved to this day. In addition, Colette and Dušan Janković established a joint legacy at the *Musée de l'Homme* in Paris, to which they contributed more than 6,000 artifacts of Serbian and Yugoslav folk culture.²⁰ The collection comprises a wide range of objects, including domestic items, pottery, jewelry, decorative textiles, traditional costumes, ritual and customary objects, musical instruments, and sound recordings featuring traditional music, among other materials. Most of them collected during their years in Belgrade significantly contributed to the international affirmation and visibility of Serbian culture, ethnography, and national heritage.

Janković's oeuvre and museum legacy deserve a far more prominent position than they currently occupy, particularly in Serbia. His contributions call for a thorough reappraisal, both in the national context, design history, and in relation to the development of Franco–Serbian cultural relations.

¹⁸ Stjepan Fileki, *26+30 Pismo: istorija pisma i tipografije sa poukama za umetničku i pedagošku praksu* (Univerzitet umetnosti, 2012), 5.

¹⁹ Fileki, “Dušan Janković—kaligraf i tipograf?”

²⁰ Rozić, *Dušan Janković, život i delo*, 9.

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Figure #1. Example of Janković's insigne
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Figure #2. Serbian influences in Janković's typographic work in France
Collection of the Museum of Applied Art Belgrade. © Museum of Applied Art, Belgrade.
Reproduced with permission IMAGE#3 Serbian influences



Figure #3. French influences in Janković's typographic work
Collection of the Museum of Applied Art Belgrade. © Museum of Applied Art, Belgrade.
Reproduced with permission IMAGE#3 Serbian influences



Figure #4. Janković's masthead designs
Partially from the Collection of the Museum of Applied Art Belgrade. © Museum of Applied Art, Belgrade. Reproduced with permission

colette
Janković
126 avenue
philippe
auguste

colette
Janković
126 avenue jan
philippe
auguste



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Figure #5. Janković's typographic designs and lettering
Collection of the Museum of Applied Art Belgrade. © Museum of Applied Art, Belgrade.
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DESSINS
ЦРТЕЖИ



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е ж з и и и и ј ј к к л л њ
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с с т т њ у у у ф х ц ч ш



Q P U X B M L R
C F B U V S H G
S H D U E I S U
K N U L G R Z G

Г Р А Ц К Р Е Н О
В Т И Ш У М Б Ј
И Х З Ж

IZABRANE
P E S M E

Figure #6. Janković's typographic systems
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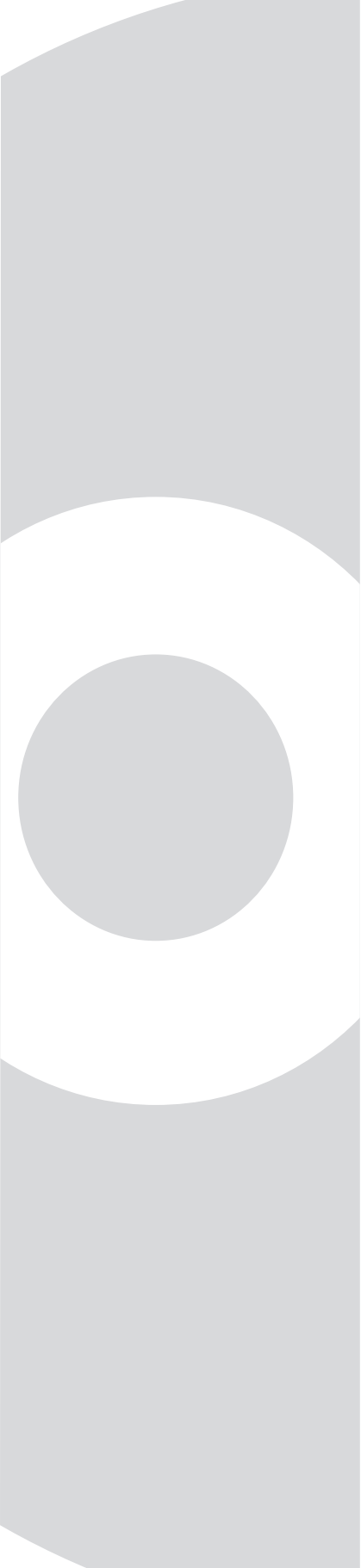
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Incidents of Life as Orientations: On Thought, Experience, and the Banality of Evil

Abstract: This article revisits Hannah Arendt's notion of the banality of evil by situating it within the contemporary digital condition and its transnational infrastructures of governance. In an era shaped by automated systems that operate across political, cultural, and territorial borders, the question of responsibility can no longer be addressed within the framework of bounded communities or national public spheres alone.

Departing from Arendt's understanding of thinking as interruption, judgment, and world-building, the article argues that what is at stake today marks the disappearance of the world itself, rather than merely an erosion of morality—the collapse of the space of appearance in which action, responsibility, and plurality can take place across shared political spaces. Through a dialogue with Arendt, Katerina Kolozova, and Ernst Bloch, the text examines how automation and algorithmic rationality radicalize the logic of thoughtlessness by rendering thinking structurally unnecessary. The continuity between totalitarian administration and contemporary digital governance is traced not through ideology, but through forms of functional coordination that displace judgment and accountability.

Against this background, the article conceptualizes thinking as a fragile political practice capable of reopening a shared world precisely where collaborations, translations, and responsibilities must take place beyond established borders. Thinking, in this sense, becomes the minimal condition for political cooperation, judgment, and *amor mundi* in an age of seamless systems and automated perception.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt; banality of evil; thinking; worldliness; automation; judgment; political philosophy.

Thinking as interruption

To think means to remain faithful to what interrupts. In a world increasingly organized through transnational systems of administration, communication, and automation, political life unfolds across borders that are no longer simply territorial or institutional. Decision-making processes, technical infrastructures, and regimes of visibility operate through forms of coordination that bypass traditional publics while nevertheless producing shared consequences. To think under such conditions means

to confront a political space that is simultaneously global and fragmented, common in its effects yet increasingly deprived of a world in which responsibility could appear. Thought does not begin in clarity but in confusion, in the unease of something that does not fit, that refuses to settle. The gesture of thought is not resolution but endurance. It is not a flight from experience but the act of staying inside it long enough for sense to appear. In this way, thinking is not a movement forward but a suspension, a pause—what Arendt calls the interval between past and future, between what has been and what has not yet come. To think is to preserve that interval against the forces that would abolish it. Bureaucracy, totalitarianism, and now automation all seek to remove the pause, to make life seamless, uninterrupted, smooth. But the world appears only in interruption. Meaning arises only where continuity breaks.

The incidents of life—those unpredictable ruptures that expose our vulnerability—constitute the truth of the world rather than deviations from it. They orient us precisely because they disorient. They are what remains of the world when systems fail, when the grid flickers, when the language of functionality falls silent.

What remains in such moments is not merely a rupture but a trace. Ernst Bloch names this persistence *Spur*—a fragment, a remainder that has escaped incorporation, something not yet reconciled with the logic of the given world. Traces are not promises and not meanings; they are residues of experience that resist closure. They appear where functionality falters, where the world hesitates, leaving behind signs that something other than repetition was once possible. In this sense, incidents of life are not only interruptions but traces of a world that refuses to disappear entirely.

Traces, automation, and the logic of function

In Arendt's writing, the political begins there: in the space opened by appearance, in the encounter with others who also appear. Yet totalitarianism destroys this in-between. It annihilates plurality by converting it into function, by reducing human action to mechanical repetition. It annihilates the very possibility of communication itself. The public sphere, that fragile space of shared visibility, collapses into monologue. In such conditions, speech ceases to be addressed to anyone; it becomes a mere repetition of slogans, empty of relation. What is destroyed, therefore, is not only plurality but the condition for judgment—the very capacity of the self to appear before itself as another. The collapse of the in-between leads to the collapse of the self. The destruction of the public sphere becomes the destruction of personality, of conscience, of the inner dialogue that sustains thought.

Bloch's reflections on traces help articulate this destruction more precisely. Totalitarianism does not only silence speech; it erases the traces through which subjectivity forms itself. Personality, in this sense, is not a fixed interiority but a sedimentation of encounters, gestures, and memories—of traces left by the world within us. When the public sphere collapses, these traces lose their space of articulation. The self becomes empty of residue, reduced to function, deprived of the material that a judgment could emerge from.

Eichmann was, in Arendt words, “terrifyingly normal”. His crimes emerged not from ideology but from his inability to think, to ask what he was doing.

Today, this condition persists, translated into another register. The old bureaucratic chains of command have been replaced by networks, databases, and codes. The command no longer comes from a person but from a system. It does not require belief, only participation. Power has become impersonal, procedural, and distributed. We are no longer ordered to obey; we are optimized to comply. The algorithm does not command—it suggests. It does not punish—it predicts. Yet its suggestions shape our choices more effectively than coercion ever could. The new obedience is voluntary because it is imperceptible. It feels like freedom while producing conformity. In this transformation, the figure of Eichmann returns as a ghost. Not as a historical actor but as a structural principle: the disappearance of responsibility behind the logic of function. “I obeyed orders” becomes “I followed data.” The moral numbness that Arendt once diagnosed has become infrastructural. We do not obey anyone, yet we are governed by everything.

To think in such a world is to commit an error, to reintroduce friction where smoothness is demanded. Thinking slows the process; it interrupts efficiency. It creates what bureaucracy and technology most fear: delay. Arendt once said that thinking has no purpose. It does not serve life; it interrupts it. That uselessness, in our present order, is revolutionary. The automaton—Katerina Kolozova’s name for the subject reduced to function—embodies this predicament. The automaton acts without beginning, moves without direction, repeats without memory. It is not that the automaton has no will, but that will has been replaced by syntax. One executes, and the execution becomes life itself. This repetition does not produce difference; it merely sustains continuity. It is a movement without event, a circulation without encounter, in which nothing truly happens because nothing interrupts the course of function.

In *The Cut of the Real*, Kolozova describes the moment when the automaton breaks: when the real interrupts repetition. This interruption is not simply the return of experience as content, but the disruption of a repetition that had eliminated difference itself. The cut introduces asymmetry into a closed circuit; it fractures the smoothness of execution and forces what was merely functioning to confront what cannot be absorbed. What appears in this moment is not experience as accumulation, but experience as disturbance—as exposure to something that resists integration.

Arendt would call this thinking—not because thinking supplies knowledge, but because it introduces distance. Thinking suspends the automatic flow of action and opens a pause in which judgment becomes possible. This pause is the space where one can ask what one is doing, where execution is no longer self-justifying, and where conscience can emerge as an inner dialogue rather than an external rule. In both Arendt and Kolozova, interruption functions as an ethical event: the moment in which responsibility becomes thinkable.

Without interruption, there is no subject, no responsibility, no world. The automaton without a cut does not merely obey; it persists. It carries totalitarian logic to

completion not through terror, but through seamless functionality. In this sense, the automaton without interruption is totalitarianism realized: the perfect, uninterrupted functioning of meaninglessness.

This is where the digital condition perfects what totalitarianism could only approximate. Automation achieves what ideology could not—it removes the human entirely. It produces a world that functions without anyone in it. The machine does not forget or forgive, it merely processes. What was once a political danger has become a technological ideal: seamless, immediate, and unthinking.

Arendt's phrase *Denken ohne Geländer*—thinking without handrails—speaks directly to this condition. It describes a world in which traditional supports—religion, authority, ideology—have collapsed, and yet thought must go on. To think without handrails is to move through uncertainty without substituting it for false certainty. It is to accept fragility as the condition of freedom. But this exposure, which Arendt calls the courage of thinking, is almost impossible to sustain today. We live in architectures of reassurance: dashboards, metrics, predictions. Everything must be certain, visible, measurable. Thought, by contrast, moves in the dark. It has no proof, only attention.

When Arendt wrote that thinking has a “two-in-one” structure—the dialogue of the self with itself—she did not mean solitude in the psychological sense. She meant the ability to be interrupted by oneself, to become two rather than one, to suspend the immediacy of one's own movement. This inner differentiation is not a retreat from the world but its precondition. In this sense, thinking is the original plural act: it institutes within the self the distance that makes plurality possible.

Thinking is therefore not only the reopening of an interval but the creation of space—a space structured like the public realm. The pause introduced by thought expands into a space of appearance in which positions can be taken, addressed, and judged. What is rehearsed in the two-in-one dialogue is the grammar of the public world: speaking to and before others, holding oneself accountable to perspectives that one cannot fully coincide with.

In this way, thinking becomes the political act par excellence. It does not replace action, but it generates the spatial condition in which action can appear as meaningful and responsible. The totalitarian dream, whether bureaucratic or algorithmic, is the dream of unity—of a single motion, a single process, a single logic without gaps. Thinking opposes this not by confrontation but by differentiation: by producing dissonance, by reintroducing otherness within the self, and thus reopening the world as a shared, public space rather than a closed system.

Worldlessness and the conditions of thought

The loss of the world begins quietly. Not with catastrophe, but with gradual substitution—relations replaced by connections, that is, by forms of linkage that do not presuppose mutual exposure or responsibility. Relations, in Arendt's sense, arise through appearance: they require that individuals risk themselves before others in

speech and action. Connections, by contrast, merely transmit signals. They link without binding, enable contact without encounter, and sustain circulation without creating a shared space of meaning.

Presence is thus replaced by visibility, and appearance by data. What is visible does not necessarily appear; it does not address anyone nor does it call for response. The world, in Arendt's sense, is not nature but the space between us: the fragile field of commonness that arises whenever we speak, act, or think together. It is not given; it must be made and continually maintained. It exists only in the gestures that keep it open.

Totalitarianism destroyed the world by annihilating this in-between, isolating individuals into loneliness and depriving them of the space in which they could appear to one another. Digital systems perfect this isolation by rendering it social. We are constantly connected, yet rarely exposed; permanently addressed by systems, but seldom addressed by others. We exchange information, we signal availability, we upload traces of ourselves—but we rarely appear as speaking and acting beings. The world thus becomes a field of functions, and we become its users rather than its participants.

This is what Arendt feared most: that the earth might remain populated, yet uninhabited—that human beings would survive, but the world would vanish. A world without worldliness is not empty; it is overcrowded with objects and signals that mean nothing. It is not silence, but noise that prevents hearing. The political consequence of this condition is not domination, but desensitization and disorientation. It is not terror but indifference that sustains the machinery. When everything becomes predictable, nothing matters. The imagination shrinks until it can no longer picture another. Judgment disappears because the other disappears from view.

Imagination, for Arendt, is the faculty that allows us to go visiting, to think in the place of another. It concerns displacement rather than empathy or identification: the capacity to suspend one's own standpoint in order to consider how the world appears from elsewhere. In this sense, imagination is the condition of judgment. Judgment does not result from rules or norms; it emerges from the ability to relate particulars to a world shared with others. Without imagination, there can be no such judgment, because there is no standpoint beyond the immediacy of one's own position. And without judgment, responsibility loses its ground, becoming either obedience or arbitrary decision.

In a world increasingly organized by automated perception, this faculty becomes structurally marginalized. Imagination is rendered superfluous not because it disappears, but because it is no longer required. We are not invited to form a view; we are presented with a view already formed. We are not asked to imagine how things might appear to others; we are provided with images optimized for instant recognition. What replaces imagination is not another reflective faculty, but the immediacy of visual capture.

Seeing, under such conditions, is no longer a practice of orientation but a mode of consumption. The faculty of seeing-with-others—of testing one's judgment against

a plurality of perspectives—is replaced by continuous exposure to images that demand no response. Plurality is thus preserved as display, but emptied of its political force. What remains is visibility without appearance, circulation without address, perception without judgment.

It is here that the “banality of evil” reappears—not as repetition of history, but as repetition of structure. Evil becomes banal when there is no world in which it could be judged. It loses its weight because nothing interrupts it. The bureaucratic clerk and the algorithmic process share this innocence: both act without encountering anyone. This is not the evil of intention but the evil of indifference, a structure in which nothing is personal, yet everything is affected. The suffering of others becomes a signal among signals, absorbed into the feed. Tragedy circulates without consequence.

Arendt’s notion of worldliness was never nostalgic. It aimed to sustain the condition of appearing. To love the world, she wrote, is to accept responsibility for it, not because it is good but because it exists. *Amor mundi* is the act of staying in relation when relation becomes unbearable. To think is to practice this love: to hold the world in attention even as it collapses into noise. Thought reintroduces depth where everything is surface, relation where everything is connection, judgment where everything is automatic.

The digital condition radicalizes the question of thinking not because it attacks thought directly, but because it renders it unnecessary. What is negated is not thinking as such, but the need for it. Automation does not forbid reflection; it replaces it with procedures that simulate decision, judgment, and anticipation in advance.

Automation eliminates reflection by absorbing its functions. Prediction stands in for judgment, optimization for deliberation, calculation for responsibility. Decisions are no longer expected from subjects who hesitate and consider, but from systems designed to respond without interruption. In this sense, the digital condition does not simply suppress thinking—it reorganizes the world so that thinking appears redundant.

Algorithms replace judgment with correlation. We are surrounded by systems that act faster than thought, predict before we decide, and optimize before we desire. In such a world, thinking is not just unnecessary—it is an error. Yet it is precisely as error that thinking becomes political. Arendt’s *Denken ohne Geländer* is not a style; it is a stance—a willingness to err, to lose orientation, to think without guarantees. To think without handrails is to renounce the safety of frameworks, to stand in exposure. It is the opposite of optimization. The risk of such thinking is not failure, but solitude. To think means to dwell in the interval where the world is no longer certain and the new one has not yet appeared. Arendt called this interval the space of freedom. Freedom, for her, is not exhausted by the freedom to choose among given options. Choice presupposes a framework already in place; it operates within a horizon that has been defined in advance. What Arendt insists on is a more fragile and more demanding freedom: the freedom to begin, to introduce something into the world that was not already contained within its existing structures.

Beginning names the capacity to interrupt necessity, to suspend what appears inevitable, and to open a space in which alternatives can first become thinkable. It is the freedom not merely to select, but to initiate—to set something into motion without guarantees of outcome. Every act of thinking participates in this freedom insofar as it refuses to accept the given as final. Thinking does not decide in advance what meaning will be, but it asserts, tentatively and precariously, that meaning can still be made.

The bureaucrat could not begin; he could only continue. The algorithm cannot begin; it can only repeat. Thinking, then, is the only beginning left to us. It does not repair the world, but it makes it thinkable again. In *Politics of Unthinkable: Introduction into Nonfascist Life*, I wrote that this is not the limit of thought, but its substance. This claim does not posit the unthinkable as an external darkness opposed to thinking, but as something immanent to it. The unthinkable names the element within thought that resists stabilization, the remainder that cannot be absorbed into concept, rule, or closure. It is not what lies beyond thought, but what interrupts it from within—what prevents thinking from becoming system, doctrine, or identity.

The task of thought is therefore not to overcome the unthinkable, but to remain with it, to endure what cannot be reconciled. What gives the unthinkable its substance is precisely this resistance: the fact that thinking encounters, again and again, something that cannot be resolved without eliminating its own ethical force. The unthinkable persists as the site where thought confronts its own impossibility—not as failure, but as condition.

To think is to touch that impossibility without turning away, without seeking premature reconciliation. It is to allow thought to be affected by what it cannot master, and yet to continue thinking nonetheless. In this sense, the unthinkable is not the negation of meaning, but the fragile ground on which meaning remains exposed, unfinished, and accountable.

Arendt's evil was banal precisely because it lacked this encounter. Eichmann never faced the unthinkable; he merely continued. His obedience was the refusal of difficulty. He replaced conscience with procedure, judgment with efficiency. Today, that refusal has been automated. We live in a world where procedure replaces meaning in advance, where even conscience has been externalized as policy.

In such a landscape, the ethical cannot rely on norms. It must rely on attention. Thinking becomes ethical not because it knows what is right, but because it refuses to look away. It insists on remaining with the incident, the interruption, the trace of the real.

Arendt's "two-in-one" dialogue of thinking implies precisely this: that the self must become plural, must stage within itself the presence of others. In thinking, one speaks to oneself as to another, creating the minimal model of the political. This, too, has been lost in the world of immediacy. We no longer pause to address ourselves; we react, respond, perform. We do not converse; we update.

To think today, therefore, is to reintroduce latency, to slow down the reflex to speak, to restore the possibility of silence as the precondition of sense. Silence, for Arendt, was never emptiness. It was the space in which language could still mean something.

In this sense, thinking becomes a kind of resistance that is neither loud nor militant. It is a resistance of slowness, of listening, of nonparticipation in the acceleration of nothingness. It does not seek to produce truth but to preserve the capacity for truth to appear.

Kolozova's automaton and Arendt's thinker meet in this fragile gesture: the cut of the real that interrupts functioning. The real is not an event or revelation; it is the pain of exposure, the sense that something resists assimilation. Both thinkers defend this resistance as the minimal ethics of the subject. To be real is to be interrupted.

The automaton cannot endure this interruption; it seeks repair, restoration, continuity. Thinking, by contrast, dwells within it. It lingers in disorientation, not because it enjoys suffering, but because it recognizes that meaning appears only through fracture.

Arendt's *Denken ohne Geländer* therefore becomes the emblem of human vulnerability. To think without support is to admit that we have no ground other than ??? we share, and that this world is fragile, contingent, perishable. The task is not to transcend it, but to care for it.

The disappearance of the world—the worldlessness Arendt warned about—is not a metaphysical loss, nor is it primarily an ethical one. It is a political loss. What disappears is not value, but the space in which action can appear before others and thus become meaningful at all. Worldlessness names the destruction of the space of appearance in which words and deeds can be seen, heard, and judged.

When that space collapses, actions no longer take place before anyone. They are no longer exposed to plurality, nor oriented toward a shared world. Responsibility, in such conditions, does not vanish because individuals become immoral, but because the political stage on which responsibility could be enacted has disintegrated. Judgment loses its ground not for ethical reasons, but because the world that would sustain judgment as a public practice has disappeared.

To restore that space is therefore not an ethical task in the narrow sense, but a political one. And it is the task of thinking—not because thinking replaces action, but because thinking alone can reopen the space in which action may once again appear. Thinking preserves and reconstitutes the world by holding open the interval where appearance, plurality, and judgment can take place.

This opening is not grand or heroic. It happens in small gestures: in listening, in hesitation, in the refusal to let the obvious remain obvious. It happens wherever we resist being automated.

To think, then, is to keep the possibility of the world alive. It is to make space again for others to appear. It is to remember that freedom is not an attribute of the self but of the between—the interval that connects and separates us.

What remains of philosophy, after the collapse of metaphysical certainties and the triumph of systems, is this minimal act: to hold the world open. The philosopher, if she still exists, is no longer the guardian of truth but the keeper of space. Her work is not to decide but to maintain the conditions under which decisions could still make sense.

Thinking as political courage means staying with the difficulty of the world

without retreating into cynicism or faith. It means acknowledging that the world may be unworthy of love and yet loving it nonetheless. *Amor mundi* is endurance rather than optimism. It is the fragile joy of continuing to care.

When Arendt wrote that the world is what lies between us, she meant that it is neither mine nor yours—it is the distance that connects. To love the world, then, is to love distance itself, to accept that we are never one, that the space of misunderstanding is what keeps us human.

This love, like thinking, is without guarantees. It does not repair what is broken, but it refuses to abandon it. It is the quiet practice of attention, the faith that the world can still appear if we hold it long enough in thought.

In the age of automation, where thought is unnecessary and feeling is simulated, to think becomes the last form of intimacy. It is the touch that does not consume, the gaze that does not capture, the care that does not claim.

To think means to stay exposed—to remain interruptible, open, unfinished. It is to move without handrails and yet without despair, to walk through the ruins of meaning without seeking shelter in illusion.

Arendt wrote that only thinking can prepare us for judgment, but that it cannot guarantee it. Thinking, she said, does not secure virtue; it only prevents evil from becoming banal. The difference is immense. Thinking does not save; it delays. It interrupts the smooth flow of destruction. It creates time—time in which conscience can return, in which the world can appear again.

This is the political function of thought today: to slow the world down enough that it might be felt again.

The incidents of life—those sudden ruptures that reorient us—remain our only handrails. They are not the guarantees of meaning but its reminders. They call us back to what resists assimilation, to the fragility of experience.

To think is to respond to those incidents with fidelity, to stay inside their unease, to let them teach us orientation again. It is to remember that the task of thought is not to conquer but to accompany—to hold open what would otherwise close, to keep alive the world's interval of meaning.

The banality of evil persists wherever this interval collapses, wherever function replaces reflection, wherever thought becomes unnecessary. Against that collapse, there is no program, no system, no method. There is only the fragile practice of thinking itself.

It is slow practice, often invisible, almost private, and yet it is what prevents disappearance. Thinking is resistance as presence rather than rebellion, as remaining. It is the refusal to vanish with the world.

To think is to continue appearing—to stand in the fragile space between self and world, between solitude and plurality, between despair and endurance. It is to love the world enough to stay with it even when it cannot be loved.

And perhaps that is all that remains of politics: to think so that the world, for one more moment, does not disappear.

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Scholarly analysis or debate

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To Depart and to Belong: Cartographing a Body in Languages Migration

*I rather don't speak of dreams, but of imaginary, as
dreams end up when we awake.*

Antônio Bispo dos Santos

Abstract: This essay brings a proposition of practice as research, as we cartograph a territory from affections to create images in the aesthetic languages of video and poetry. Places can activate embodied images, as we connect to the environment and create landscapes. This dramaturgy of images (from our experiences and imaginations) meets other forms of body presentation when we displace subject and object, as suggested in examples of creative production. I intend to suggest a content that establishes a dynamic interconnection of praxis and theory inspired by Bergson, Didi-Huberman, Leda Martins and Jean-Luc Nancy writings on image, narrative and visuality. The practice of a self-territoriality and performativity invite aesthetic displacements to take place.

Keywords: migration; language; video; poetry; body.

To depart and to belong: Cartographing a body in languages migration

A living body experiences realities and forms of existence in embodied narratives, as in visual and writing creation. This working procedure explores displacement as a metaphor for image creation in unknown sites in these aesthetic languages, from phenomenology, cognitive studies and semiotics of culture perspectives. A territory is performed, as an appropriation of a place, in a video, a poem, as methods of visibility to a performed cartography.¹

¹ In Monica Toledo Silva, “Migrant Images: Aesthetic Imagination in Experiences of Displacement”, *Journal of Linguistic Frontiers* 4, no. 2 (2021): 38–43, I address migration as an embodied experience of displacement from two video installations, “Tracing mermaids” (Mudhouse Residence, Crete/GR, 2018) and “Body lands” (Galeria Adro, São João del Rei, MG/ BR), 2019.

While walking by Tallinn's port, shooting my steps over the water limits between rocks and seaweeds, a smiley couple dressed in black leather, having a little party nearby, came over to me. The guy said unintelligible words (I do not speak Estonian) and his beautiful girlfriend with red lips came gently after him, saying, with laughing eyes and the situation (they did not speak English), what are you doing? Just come join us! I felt the strangeness of my figure and my action to them. I removed the sad feeling I had imagining how bad it was to live by such a beach (being familiar with abundant and shiny Brazilian ones), or worse, to cross the Baltic Sea for a nowhere land (Image #1).

In parallel visual researches, I visit the Aegean and Mediterranean seas, addressing them as crossing territories where the momentaneous absence of borders allow refugees to dream of a new life. This Baltic port, not tormented and instead an empty surface (although a similar locus of arrivals), seems to foresee and welcome other living beings, as I filmed this shore's small aquatic plants and heard their soft sounds.

A displacement experience as a performative practice of imaging creation "fuses reality in reveries of memory and imagination, at once object and subject, of a self-evolving to a continuing creative practice in a given environment."² Displacements generate new mappings, as we create and cartograph (through imaging creation) territories performed as moving landscapes, and are made visible in singular gestures, as writing and filming. Active perceptions, connected and ressignified, create a trajectory, or rather a cartography, as a mode of being present.

The subjectivity of the concept of territory, as both land and a site created from gestures of a displaced creative body, carries the shifts of deviant languages. Visual and written enunciations operate as living materials from which emerges this nature of connection to the environment based on in-site experience. Aesthetic languages bring possibilities of engagement to realities we feel affected by, and therefore can manifest through works, also related to other beings into new arrangements of body presentation and shared realities.

Creative texts can be engaged with successions of simultaneous body states, in such a way to produce new enunciations in a given context. Paul Klee (2001) suggests that form provides matter: an autonomous expression enabled by its singularity, providing self-narratives through singular gestures. Signs of enunciation give way to singular landscapes, in modes of presence made visible through videoart and prose, as presented here.

Visibility processes, the forms through which we choose to share experiences, include a multitude of inner actions. Practice as research updates knowledge in fields as communication, anthropology, social sciences, in increasing complexities of aesthetic compositions and epistemological insights, attesting inescapable intersections of distinct procedures to both art and body. When displaced in a context of work creation, art production helps us think and share knowledge, as it attests multiple aspects of reality.

² Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonismo* (Editora 34, 2004), 99.

When lost at a bus station in the city center of Tallinn, I asked a young well dressed man sitting nearby for help. Can you guide me in this map to reach this gallery? He was an Ukrainian refugee. I felt embarrassed and didn't know how to thank him when he was the one in need of real help for food or shelter maybe? How to show my grief for his people at war with Russia? Should I ask about his family, manifest my sorrow for his suffering? I said I am sorry instead of thank you, as he seemed unwilling to receive condolences. Perhaps he just kept his good appearance of youth not knowing what to do, while truly lost at the Tallinn's bus terminal?

In *poem I* a sentient being is in a flight of reveries: she screams as an absence, addresses verbs with sensed meanings for loss, and attempts to swim, or to survive, yet from a body distinct to human.

Aesthetic languages are intersected by mediation and subjectivity. A deviant, living sign, invites us to experience ever-new connections to the environment, and to generate new possibilities of enunciations, from a sense of presentness in outer lands. Language would be “merely an articulation of a general expressive function: its conception transcends our lived experience and incites us to search beyond the enunciation. Enunciative subjectivity, a narrative event, consists in situation and environment.”³ For Maurice Blanchot,⁴ language is “in inescapable conflict: it transcends our lived experience and incites us to search beyond enunciation.”

Cognitive sciences offer powerful insights into visual images. Cognition acts on corporeal experience, constituted by biological, psychological, socio and cultural realities, as a unity. For Francisco Varela (1991), our actions are the processes through which configurations emerge in phenomenological, structural and evolutionary contexts. Therefore, body narratives, as moving image creation, perform states of presence and generate visibility of different natures.

Iuri Lotman⁵ points that “mediated corporealities are expressive compositions in signal organizations that build corporeal domains”. Perception promotes an articulation of ideas and actions, in which “occurs a process of reduction, liberating a thematic object from its effectiveness”. Corporeality would be articulated on a multiplicity of levels, as it is “constitutive of all experiences of the object: a bond between me and things is the subject-object of sensitive experience”⁶.

³ Georges Didi-Huberman, *O que vemos, o que nos olha* (Editora 34, 2013), 21.

⁴ Maurice Blanchot, *O espaço literário* (Rocco, 2011), 95.

⁵ Manuel Cáceres, Desiderio Navarro, and Iuri M. Lotman, ed., *La semiosfera 1. Semiótica de la cultura y del texto, de la conducta y del espacio* (Universitat de València, 1996), 67.

⁶ Rosalind Krauss, in Didi-Huberman, *O que vemos, o que nos olha*, 66.

*white walls are never empty
she dared to scream
and not to forget*

*despite it all being nothing
she just felt heavy
pretending not to be an absence
to drift: to remember something you did not come to have
to love
to try: a non-reliable measure*

*misunderstandings: a ground filled with fallen leaves
adorable, ready to die
as a body sweat
a skin you may dry*

*a disturbance: something to dare for
never split never sink
so that when you drown*

you breathe⁷

Living images, displaced words

Before crossing the Finnish border by sea from Helsinki heading to Estonia's capital, in a two-hour trip, I planned to make a performance while on board: I would throw at the Baltic Sea small leaves with tiny texts, as small letters from migrants to their families, about love and loss, but also letters addressed to the Sea itself asking for help regarding their future and their dreams. I would read them aloud from the boat and throw them in the air while in motion, so they would reach the water after being carried by the wind.

The performance didn't happen, because it was a ship full of tourists gambling in a casino, listening to loud electronic music, and local people having pints, as regular as anywhere. I wondered where migrants were and how I could recognize them (by being sad or silent?), remembering not all of them cross the seas in inflatable boats sinking on the way. Also, what was the measure between what we see, what we suppose it is, and what actually is. Imaging creation is real and is only a part of many realities.

⁷ From Chicago to Palma de Mallorca, this poem was released by ABA Art Lab—Let it rain: Illustration Photography Graphic Design Writing, v.2, 2018, as a guest artist.

Moving images offer an involvement of the sight, embracing a singular perception and attention. An imaging creation moves thoughts and emotions through time and space, in forms of visuality related to modes of being present. Landscapes, in turn, are made visible by gestures of enunciation. To make something visible is to give form to a content in a present configuration; movement and duration come to be both body and image intrinsic qualities in ever new ways of expression.

Image is explained by Portuguese neuroscientist António Damasio (1999) as a responsive neuronal and mental action; images would be generated all the time, in relation to a given environment; they would dispose of physical properties, intrinsic spatial-temporal relations, and actions, and a constituted structure, in all sensuous meanings. Image, then, seems to reproduce what it actually is: a dramaturgy of the body, made from gestures and traces (accessed memories). It generates landscapes through a chosen process of visibility in aesthetic language.

This nature of the embodied image takes place as it creates a form related to a body's own subjects and subjectivities. In these aesthetic contexts, a sense of performative language is often present, as here in written and filmed forms, giving imaging production a wider sense of connection to environmental realities.

Paul Virilio⁸ suggests that visuality comes as an embodied and impermanent solution; as a gesture of body presentation, “visuality would amplify performative aspects of aesthetic languages, as performing images usually reject linear narratives in favor of fragmentary ‘open’ texts, and strengthen the slippage between signifier and signified.” In video practices, I put myself in forms of presentation and create connections for each scene or situation, juxtaposing frames, captured or written over the years. Reality becomes an affected subject, addressed as a familiar object of attention. The fiction genre also seems to melt, as if in a no-border of a given sense.

Singular practices of imaging production expand notions of a displaced body (lived and imagined) in a performed environment (Image #2). Taking visuality as an embodied practice and impermanent configuration, we come up with a diverse body at each time and place.

I cross a little bridge that also works for cars in a village filled with weekend tourists running away from city stress. They come in one street only and make noise with no attention to the natural blend of fruity trees and a small river silently running through. I stop to cheer it and stare at my own shadow. How much of us is blended, and how long does a presence endure at a meeting?

Body images become visual through dramaturgy at various levels of the individual. Moving signs relate to the body's awareness, while our images are filled with pauses and silences, levels of attention and forgetfulness, where an action is never repeated. Visible through gestures and traces of novelty, moving images evolve in renewed territories.

An image as a body landscape: singular and displaced. This aesthetic movement evolves from territories of affection and negotiates with the environment as we activate our patterns and affections. An embodied landscape generates a perceptive

⁸ Paul Virilio, *O espaço crítico* (Editora 34, 1994), 36.

image that operates as an ignition for bodily images, in a displacement in which something presents itself as a form of life and gains visibility by establishing a new process with its surroundings.

This quality of image, formulated through active perception, occurs as a form that makes sense to the body in relation to an environment. Body narratives organize a unique repertoire. The body presents itself as a deviant sign, open to the impossible exercise of mapping itself (*poem 2*).

The ways through which we share experiences include impermanence as a multitude of inner actions. Conceiving an aesthetic language as a dramaturgy of images (since they are embodied) opens a connection to other forms of life.

Embodied narratives generate conditions to express a diversity of singular beings, in a practice that consistently addresses textualities as performative gestures. Territory becomes a unique configuration, enabled to connect; a territory made from a living body, through its moving cartography (*poem 2*). This quality of landscape proceeds as a continuously moving trace, generated along one's path while meeting new subjects from other lands. As Marc le Bot suggests,⁹ "there is always a multitude of places in the body because it is unique in itself. One overcomes fissures of the lived space with discourses of emergency".

An animated plant feels out of place when surrounded by circumstances of animosity; she addresses herself as also an animal, as her body spreads into the air and space, as both tentacles and branches. Her dreamed flowers, though, remember her as she is, yet, only a human being.

*I was born as a tree
meanwhile my seeds spread
around gray concrete and deep sands
I asked the wind
where shall my body be*

*as time flew
and I was all but stalks
just as an octopus
only my brain my veins in each every wish of green
wondering
what nature is to blame*

*day came
when I heard a bird
saying not to me
wanna go for a ride?*

⁹ Henri-Pierre Jeudy, *Le corps comme objet d'art* (Armand Colin, 1998), 93.

*sudden sun said no
but my ever-dreamed flowers whispered
you are nothing
but a woman*

Processes of imaging and writing creation become confluent propositions, when past and future navigate in fresh images, activating subjects and objects in new modes of relation.¹⁰ The moving body, within its realities (emotions, gestures, perceptions, affections), is amplified in its very articulations and forms of existence: “Experience attests continuity of processes in time, and not stability. [...] Enunciation presentations of forms of discourse are displaced, as discursive formations are not limited to a language reality, and would correspond to one or many regimes of visibility.”¹¹ When I elaborate a poem, I think with my embodied images and my imagination, which in turn brings me a new word combination as a fresh settlement of my current relational thinking.

Migrant spaces, visible gestures

The word animacy is described by Mel Chen (2012) as a quality of agency, awareness and liveness, as means of conceptual and affective mediation between human and inhuman. In a language, it is a distinction between animate and inanimate. As an adjective it denotes living beings, beyond human and animal, a broad definition of consciousness in recognition of different subjects. Concepts such as locomotion and sentiency can also be incorporated into its cognitive domain. Territories, when perceived as singular trajectories and moving landscapes, engage in a relation enabled by a new quality of interaction.

In sensuous circumstances, space in its dynamics offers the engagement to re-enact our patterns to surrounding living elements. To move through different territories gives us a new sense of belonging, different from identity. In these terms, the way we address otherness can communicate thoughts, feelings and gestures (by filming or writing), and bring us a mode of presence, turning visible an embodied landscape.

¹⁰ Brazilian dancer Maria Basulto, in her work “Susceptible: a talking-dance about crossings and arrangements” (research for her Master degree in Dance, 2024, within the Center of Experimental Practices in Choreography of the Arts Institute of University of Campinas [NPEC, IA], BR), superposes body movement from different previous works in an actual one, and considers that each one brings materials to be manipulated by developing new combination abilities and arrangements. This practice leaks materials from one work to the other (the same way that the dancing body aggregates layers of gestures, memories, and body images). Basulto adds that sensation generates an image that ignites a gesture, activating a specific type of movement, and, from it, suggesting other reflections on new gesture connections and reformulating patterns, reaching a specific kind of movement that changes according to the context. Basulto makes me think that memory is what makes something new: the novelty exists because it is a fresh organization of a previous solution. This juxtaposed creation of different temporalities works for imaging creation, writing practice, and dance experience.

¹¹ Didi-Huberman, *O que vemos, O que nos olha*, 25, 79.

For Merleau-Ponty¹² the living being is not a pure identity, but a field: “The latent being is multiple, as the availability of the being for diverse perspectives.” Corporeality is articulated from a multiplicity of levels: “As a bond between me and things is the subject-object of sensitive experience”, that would reveal an “inadequacy of ordinary descriptive categories—subject and object, one and other”.

A displacement, a powerful quality of creation, stimulates this rather performative form of enunciation and reveals migrant possibilities of presentation of embodied and aesthetic images. Our body expresses singular routes (as we revisit our memories) of self-presentation, and “by the intersection of components of individual identity.”¹³ This nature of otherness beyond identification is the very genesis of enunciation, taken up by the flow of processual creation.

In our landscapes—memories, affections, perception, intentions, gazes—subject and object are blurred in fresh narratives. The concept of animacy, as a “marking that reflects hierarchical orders on kinds of entities, such as species or animate/inanimate things coercivity of language [...], can also have descriptive value such as gender.”¹⁴ Animacies confabulate and cling this proposition of embodied images in aesthetic production, as I address living things (any form of being) in artistic practice.

A performative cartography created by a moving body is the subject of Leda Martins,¹⁵ who thinks from this expanded context, the idea of cartography as performance, related to movement as an enunciative form:

A hieroglyphic body—that is: a poetic synthesis of movement; space and place of writing inscriptions; a body that alternates reinvented identities; a kinetic body of significant condensation; a performative synthesis in all its nature, conduct, lexicon, ideogram. [...] A “dialectic at work” of an embodied experience is writing, as it finds in this performative body its place and space extended to of inscription. From the body comes a rhythmic calligraphy, an embodied knowledge. A performance, even from a painting or a romance, occurs only in interaction and relation. It connects simultaneously a process, a practice, an episteme, a form of transmission and a medium of world intervention.

This Brazilian philosopher also considers corporeal knowledge a wide repertoire, as it “aggregates diverse present actions and events”. As we move, we reenact ourselves to things and to others, generating connections from the actual context. Cartographies recover a sense of belonging, generating territories of enunciation and unveiling signifiers in the act of imaging. Its dynamics update a place into a territory and reinvent the place of art in a moving textuality.

¹² Maurice-Merleau Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible. Suivi de notes de travail* (Gallimard, 2005), 190, 33.

¹³ Felix Guattari, *As três ecologias* (Papyrus, 2011), 97, 123.

¹⁴ From Ph.D. in Linguistics and Professor of Gender & Women Studies Mel Y. Chen, in his speech at the Conference “Hiroshima 80 Years, from Tragedy to States of Creation”, at the Center of Research and Training SESC São Paulo (BR), 2025.

¹⁵ Leda Maria Martins, *Performances do tempo espiralar. Poéticas do corpo-tela* (Cobogó, 2021), 39, 79.

Achile Mbembe comments that African societies are of extraordinary plasticity, since they are mostly nomadic and migrant, and salute what is new and unprecedented with wonder, in the sense of wonder. Reality would come out of fruition and from the body, all inclined to enchantment. To the Cameroonian philosopher, reality “is focused on alterity and therefore will proceed multiplying others in their own alterity, embodied in the crossings of partial components.”¹⁶

A migration experience has always been part of the living condition in a broad sense, giving way to multiple aesthetic possibilities of narrative and content presentations, so that a dramaturgy of an environment invites us to a closer look at the inventive language of embodied presentation. A dramaturgy of the body is presented in migrant languages as body enunciations.

A migration between languages, in this sense, acts as an epistemological invitation for transcending aesthetic territories into embodied enunciations, widening the creative work in relation to other beings. Simultaneous realities from actual and imagined sites provide a practice of displacement that expands territoriality, corporeality, and language. This creative body reenacts migration as the displacement of one aesthetic language to another—and back again.

A landscape would be choreographic, rather than cartographic: a nomadic landscape, as nomadic as the body; a vibrant mapping, unplanned. A landscape can activate a sense of belonging, as when I travel by myself to unfamiliar places and among unfamiliar people. Literature creation—navigating words in length and duration, word choices and rhythm¹⁷— express evolving subjectivity in a performative language, as when cartographing a migrating experience (Images #3 and #4).

Animism has been present in my poems and gaze at things, although animism is a Western concept: in the Far East, as in Korean, Chinese, and Japanese cultures, all things are suitable to host a spirit. A chair, a glass. Tree trunks have written their stories, or rather, I seem to see them as a continuous calligraphy performance, since each tree of the grove tells part of a shared story.

Visible gestures come to sight through poetry and visibility, as dancing procedures: the flow, the pause, repetition, insistence, intensity, as presented in suggestive words and moving images. Performing embodied images and giving them visibility is similar to tracing a choreographic cartography, as living images expand dancing procedures.

Aesthetic research helps us think of reality across diverse fields; subjective aspects refresh established knowledge, as an intermittent and untraceable body, at once singular and diverse, and enable thinking procedures to displace scientific norms and domains. The production of knowledge attests unescapable confluences between theories, as epistemological procedures include bodily phenomena such as movement and dance. In dance studies, duration, weight, and speed determine modes of expression

¹⁶ Achile Mbembe, *Out of the Dark Night* (Columbia University Press, 2021), 73.

¹⁷ Previously I have presented this idea at the speech “Word Dramaturgy in the Dance of the Body” at the Practices of Resistance: Dramaturgy and Creative Processes in Performance Conference, held at the Center of Investigation in Performative Studies [CEHUM, FCT], Universidade do Minho (PT), 2024.

in both visual image and writing works (*poem 2*); how long a scene shall last before being cut, how short a sentence might be, how words are arranged according to their sounds and tones when suggesting solutions for a feeling or emotion.

Our performing presences, our image-making, our embodying landscapes lead to aesthetic processes arising from subjective experience at real and imagined sites. Once artistic practice performs memories and images, a choreographic mode of action permeates reality with new relations to signs. A body also creates meanings based on what is assimilated. Body images are committed to a dance language, a present moment also moved by intuition—narratives as moving imaging creation perform a presence, generating visibilities of different natures—here presented in the two poems and four video frames.

As seen, territories are places where we recreate ourselves, being affected by others' presences and realities. As we move, we reenact ourselves to things, to other living beings, and to images' derivations of other signs and previous patterns. An experience of sensuous migration, a desirable and strategic displacement, moves towards new modes of being present. The principle of migration as an epistemological tool operates to express subjects that share aesthetic experiments, figuring as a metaphor for speaking different vocabularies.

A landscape as an extension of the body connects temporalities and is not tied to a spot. To experience a landscape is to inhabit a created space in the present mode, as embodied images are renewed.

When presenting body narratives, our gestures generate images as provisional solutions. The self comes as a moving character to attend poetry practice, as I propose in this approach to migration studies that expands the physical displacement itself (understood as a language in embodied narratives in relation to different beings, not only humans). Reality perceived in this broader sense overlaps formal language categories, as a performative gesture is extended to all visibility procedures.

Migration, as an aesthetic experience of language, demands a dynamic set of singularities, as body landscapes blur specificities and the very enunciation the body presents. Migration, as an ignition for the creation of images, animates the performative action of displacement. A body image displaces given meanings and takes place, reconfiguring singular subjects in other objects (*poems 1 and 2*), as in a dance flow. Imagination embodies our imaging creation as we get involved by movement.

A relational praxis operates in these convergent concepts—migration and territory, space and place, cartography and choreography, displacement and language. To get involved with embodied textualities enlarges our senses, as a living body celebrates the very experience of aesthetic visibilities. To give body images visibility is to choose a way to perform a trajectory.

For Jean-Luc Nancy, a departure, in the sense of leaving, would be intimately its separation (which makes it distinguished: “The body being itself in departure, insofar as it displaces itself, right here from the there. [...] The by-itself of the subject exists only as the swerve of this a-part-self, which is the moment proper of its presence.

The a-part-self, as departure, is what's exposed.”¹⁸ A moving landscape, a body territory—lived through displacement and imagination—plays performative possibilities of an experience of connected, sensuous trajectories. The language becomes the body: multiple, experienced, and imagined.

This investigation is about what moves from our body: a migrant language promoting visual and visible landscapes, an image-capture procedure, an image dramaturgy, writing as a choreographic cartography through a singular space, a dance aesthetic, when words describe affections beyond subject and object. A creative body of no borders, working through performative practices of displacement. Dance practice displaces the subject, rewrites the object, and migrates images. A body of no borders translates itself while in movement.

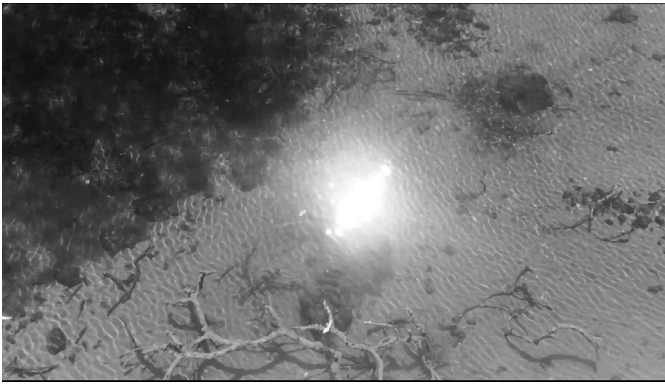


Image 1: A Tallinn shore (EE), 2022. Monica Toledo Silva



Image 2: São Sebastião das Águas Claras (Minas Gerais, BR), 2021. Monica Toledo Silva

¹⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus. Perspectives on Continental Philosophy* (Fordham University Press, 2008), 33–4.



Images 3 and 4: Study for the video series *Living Borders*.
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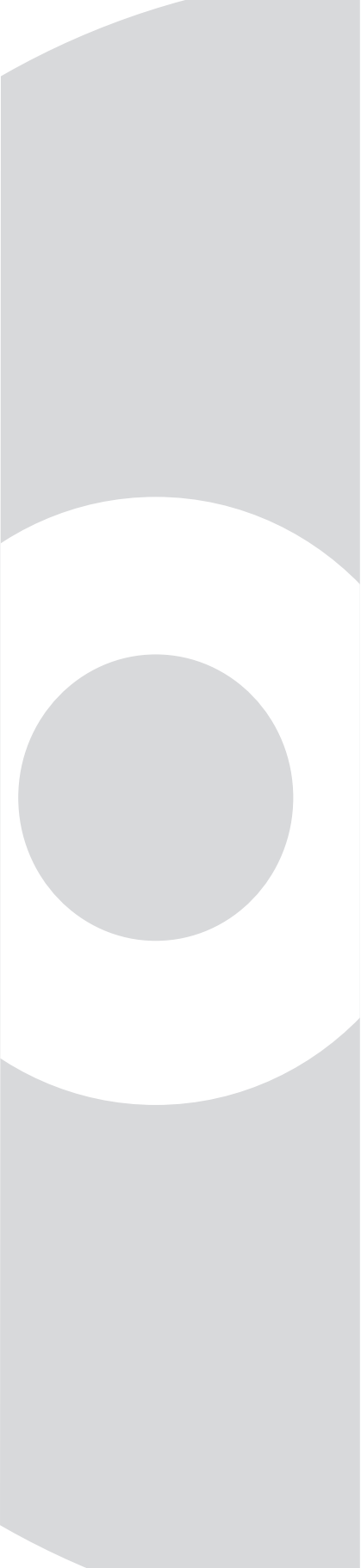
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Dancing Across Borders: Ukrainian Ballet in Belgrade as a Transnational Cultural Practice

Abstract: This paper examines performances by the Ukrainian Classical Ballet in Belgrade in 2024 and 2025 as a case of transnational cultural collaboration. It analyzes how ballet is recontextualized through local venues, organizers, media discourse, and audience-oriented presentation. The aim of the paper is to demonstrate that the presence of the Ukrainian ballet artists in Belgrade should not be understood solely as a consequence of the war-induced migration, but as a complex process of transnational cultural collaboration that generates new forms of professional networks and cultural visibility. The theoretical framework draws on cultural and media studies, with particular emphasis on transnationalism, cultural mobility, and artistic networks. Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative case study approach based on performances of *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake*, venue and promotional materials, and selected Serbian and regional media coverage. Special attention is paid to how media narratives position Ukrainian ballet within the framework of solidarity, professionalism, and cultural value. The analysis shows that canonical repertoire, cooperation with local venues, and media framing centered on professionalism and prestige enable Ukrainian ballet to become visible in Belgrade not only as a displaced art but as a legitimate transnational cultural presence.

Keywords: transnational; collaboration; Ukrainian Classical Ballet; cultural mobility; contemporary performing arts; displacement; symbolic visibility.

Introduction and methodology

Transnational artistic collaboration has long been a defining feature of cultural production, particularly in the fields of performing arts. In recent years, however, transnational collaboration has increasingly been influenced by global crises, including armed conflicts, forced migration, and political instability. These conditions have reshaped the ways in which artists move, collaborate, and sustain their practices beyond national boundaries. At the beginning of 2022, the war in Ukraine profoundly disrupted the country's cultural life and artistic production, forcing many artists to leave their home institutions and seek opportunities elsewhere. Within this context, the mobility of artists is often framed primarily through narratives of displacement, exile, or cultural loss. Even though such perspectives are necessary, they can obscure other dimensions of artistic mobility, particularly the emergence of new artistic

networks and institutional collaborations. These practices cannot be fully understood through the lens of migration but should also be examined as dynamic processes of cultural negotiation and transformation.

Scholarship on migration and the arts has increasingly emphasized that artistic mobility should not be understood only through the lenses of rupture, loss, or exile, but also through changing forms of circulation, mediation, and institutional embedding. Dance studies have begun to engage more directly with migration and mobility, while subsequent work has shown how transnational dancers negotiate mobility through funding structures, touring circuits, venues, and unequal regimes of labor and citizenship.¹ More broadly, recent research on arts-based approaches to migration and violence has highlighted the capacity of artistic practices to render migration legible beyond reductive humanitarian or victimizing frames.² At the same time, studies of displaced artists in international art worlds demonstrate that migrant artists are often interpreted through essentialized geopolitical categories, even when they seek recognition primarily as professionals rather than representatives of crisis or national trauma.³ Research on media images and artistic discourses on refugees and migration has shown that such discourses can both reproduce and unsettle stereotypical identities⁴ while work on cultural peripheries suggests that value in semi-peripheral fields is produced through transnational dependence on external centers, standards, and forms of consecration.⁵ However, far less attention has been paid to ballet as a transnational cultural practice in semi-peripheral urban contexts such as Belgrade, especially in relation to the interdependence of repertoire, institutional support, and media visibility.

Classical ballet, despite its strong institutional transitions and historical ties to national cultures, has long operated within transnational circuits of training, performance, and exchange. In the present moment, ballet companies and dancers increasingly circulate outside established cultural centers, engaging with new audiences and institutional settings. These movements challenge conventional center-periphery models of cultural production and invite closer attention to less than expected sites of transnational collaboration. Belgrade represents one such site. Positioned outside dominant Western European cultural hubs, the city has become a space where international artistic practices are actively received, mediated, and recontextualized.

¹ Paul Scolieri, "Global/Mobile: Re-orienting Dance and Migration Studies," *Dance Research Journal* 40 (2008): 8.

² Cathy McIlwaine and Megan Ryburn, "Introduction: towards migration-violence creative pathways," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 50 (2024), 3230.

³ Cristina Cusenza, "Artists from Syria in the International Artworld: Mediators of a Universal Humanism," *Arts* 8 (2019): 45.

⁴ Ricarda Drücke, Elisabeth Klaus, and Anita Moser, "Spaces of Identity in the Context of Media Images and Artistic Representations of Refugees and Migration in Austria," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 24 (2021): 164.

⁵ Giseline Kuipers, Sylvia Holla, and Elise Van der Laan, "Structure, Strategy and Self in Cultural Peripheries: Theorizing the Periphery in the Polish and Dutch Fashion Fields," *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 63 (2022): 216.

The central research question is: how is the perception of classical ballet practice re-established and transformed through interactions between migrant artists, local cultural institutions, and media discourses, within the broader context of war-induced displacement? The case study focuses on performances by the Ukrainian Classical Ballet in Belgrade during 2024 and 2025, including productions of *The Nutcracker*⁶ and *Swan Lake*,⁷ staged in cooperation with local cultural venues. In this article, the term *Ukrainian Classical Ballet* is not used to denote the entirety of Ukrainian classical ballet as a national tradition, nor a historically unified stylistic formation. Instead, it refers more narrowly to the touring productions, professional performers, and public discursive framing through which the company was presented in Belgrade during 2024 and 2025. The term is therefore employed as a case-specific analytical designation, limited to the concrete transnational performance context examined in this study.⁸ The article does not seek to define Ukrainian ballet exhaustively, but to examine how it becomes legible within a specific host context through repertoire, institutions, and media representation. This article adopts a qualitative case study approach, combining discourse analysis of media and promotional texts with contextual institutional analysis of venues, organizers, and performance settings. It approaches transnational artistic collaboration as a situated cultural process through which professional networks and symbolic visibility are produced. The methodological framework combines three interrelated perspectives: analysis of the artistic practice, examination of the institutional context of performances, and analysis of the media discourse. Artistic practice is considered through repertoire, modes of presentation, and the professional positioning of the ballet company within the local cultural environment. Institutional analysis focuses on the venues, organizers, and cultural infrastructures that enable performances and shape their visibility. Media discourse analysis examines how the presence of the Ukrainian ballet in Belgrade is framed in Serbian and regional media, including online news portals, cultural magazines, promotional texts, and official digital platforms of the troupe and local organizers. The empirical corpus consists of selected publicly available materials related to the performances in Belgrade during 2024 and 2025, especially *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake*. These materials are treated as discursive and institutional texts through which artistic collaboration, mobility, and cultural value are articulated. The aim is not to verify media reports, but to identify dominant narratives, recurring themes, and patterns of symbolic visibility.

⁶ Snežana Rakić, “The Nutcracker at the MTS Dvorana,” *Serbian Monitor*, December 1, 2025, <https://www.serbianmonitor.com/en/the-nutcracker-at-the-mts-dvorana/>.

⁷ Snežana Rakić, “Ukrainian Classical Ballet to Perform Swan Lake in Belgrade,” *Serbian Monitor*, December 27, 2024, <https://www.serbianmonitor.com/en/ukrainian-classical-ballet-to-perform-swan-lake-in-belgrade/>.

⁸ In using the term *Ukrainian Classical Ballet*, this article follows the public designation found in venue and promotional materials related to the touring productions discussed here, while employing it in a narrower analytical sense specific to the case study. See “Ukrainian Classical Ballet,” Thessaloniki Concert Hall, accessed March 22, 2026, <https://www.tch.gr/default.aspx?id=4375&lang=en-GB&page=44>; and Rakić, “Ukrainian Classical Ballet to perform Swan Lake in Belgrade.”

Motion beyond displacement

The artistic practice of the Ukrainian Classical Ballet in Belgrade is characterized by a clear emphasis on continuity, professional stability, and commitment to the classical ballet canon.⁹ Although the Belgrade source base centers on only two titles, *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake*, these repeated productions provide sufficient material for analyzing artistic practice through repertoire, public self-presentation, visual framing, and performer profiling. In announcements for *The Nutcracker*, the production is linked to the choreography of Valeriy Petrovich Kovtun and is described through elaborate stage design, costumes, giant video beams, and, in later announcements, contemporary video projections.¹⁰ Public materials for *Swan Lake* similarly frame the performance as a classical ballet event and describe the troupe as a collective of award-winning soloists from major European theatres such as Teatro di Roma, Magdeburg Opera House, Teatr Wielki, and Opera Narodowa Warszawa.¹¹ In some promotional descriptions, the artistic leadership of the ensemble is also identified through Alessandro Bonavita, while the company is presented as preserving classical ballet tradition while incorporating selected modern choreographic elements.¹² These materials make it possible to analyze artistic practice not only through the titles performed, but through the public construction of style, professionalism, and legitimacy. Rather than foregrounding experimental reinterpretation or explicit political commentary, the Belgrade presentations emphasize continuity, canon, visual spectacle, and the authority of internationally mobile soloists. In that sense, the Ukrainian Classical Ballet appears in Belgrade less as an emergency cultural presence defined solely by war and more as a professionally legible transnational ballet formation.

The transnational character of this practice becomes visible in the mobility of dancers, touring structures, and the adaptation of productions to different performance venues. Although classical ballet is often associated with institutional stability and national traditions, in this case it functions as a mobile cultural form maintained by transnational networks of performers, choreographers, and organizers. Such mobility corresponds with understanding of transnational cultural processes as sustained relations and ongoing connections, rather than as singular acts of displacement.¹³ At the same time, the artistic choices observed in this case resist an interpretative framework based solely on rupture or cultural loss. While the broader context of war and forced migration remains inseparable from the presence of Ukrainian artists abroad, the performances themselves emphasize continuity of artistic identity and professional legitimacy. The decision to present canonical repertoire also shapes the

⁹ Gail Grant, *Technical Manual and Dictionary of Classical Ballet* (Dover Publications, 1982), 45.

¹⁰ Snežana Rakić, “The Glittery Edition of *The Nutcracker* at MTS Dvorana,” *Serbian Monitor*, November 27, 2023, <https://www.serbianmonitor.com/en/the-glittery-edition-of-the-nutcracker-at-mts-dvorana/>.

¹¹ Rakić, “‘Swan Lake’ at MTS Dvorana”.

¹² City Magazine, “Ukrajinski klasični balet ‘Labudovo jezero’ MTS Dvorana,” March 5, 2024, <https://citymagazine.danas.rs/vodic/ukrajinski-klasicni-balet-labudovo-jezero-mts-dvorana/>.

¹³ Ulf Hannerz, *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places* (Routledge, 1996), 10.

power dynamics of transnational collaboration. By working within an internationally recognized artistic canon, the Ukrainian Classical Ballet positions itself as an equal participant in cultural exchange, not as a marginal or dependent actor. In this view, the case challenges simplified center–periphery models of cultural production and enables Belgrade to function as a legitimate site of artistic circulation, not merely as a secondary or receptive space. This dynamic can be read through Immanuel Wallerstein’s distinction between center, semi-periphery, and periphery, understood here as a relational rather than strictly geographic model.¹⁴ In that sense, Belgrade appears as a semi-peripheral site where artistic legitimacy is not simply imported from dominant cultural centers, but negotiated through recognizable repertoire, institutional hosting, and public presentation. The repeated staging of *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake* shows how canonical form can function as a shared professional language through which Ukrainian ballet becomes legible and institutionally validated outside the traditional centers of European cultural authority.

Wallerstein’s model is useful here not because it fixes Belgrade within a static hierarchy, but because it makes visible how cultural value circulates across uneven positions. Artistic practice thus emerges as a key mechanism in stabilizing transnational collaboration: classical ballet functions not only as an aesthetic form, but as a shared professional language that supports cooperation across borders, institutions, and audiences, even under conditions shaped by geopolitical crisis.

Displacement is most theorized as a condition of forced movement accompanied by loss, rupture, and instability. In cultural theory, it is often associated with exile and the disruption of social and professional continuity.¹⁵ While such interpretations remain crucial, they risk framing displacement exclusively as a traumatic state, leaving limited space for analyzing how artistic practices persist and transform under conditions of forced mobility. Recent theoretical approaches have challenged this reduction, conceptualizing displacement not as a singular event, but as a continuous process inherent to modern forms of movement, where mobility precedes stability.¹⁶ From this perspective, displacement does not necessarily signify the suspension of practice, but a reconfiguration of its spatial and institutional conditions. Productive dimensions of displacement, particularly in cultural and artistic fields, include the approach that mobility can generate new forms of connection, negotiation, and creative continuity.¹⁷ Applied to the case of the Ukrainian Classical Ballet in Belgrade, such an approach shifts the focus from interruption alone to the reconfiguration of the spatial and institutional conditions through which artistic practice is sustained.

Classical ballet presents a particularly revealing case in this regard. As a performative art fundamentally structured around disciplined bodily motion, repetition, and circulation, ballet is not disrupted by movement per se. The paradox emerges

¹⁴ Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Duke University Press, 2004), 17–23.

¹⁵ Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Harvard University Press, 2000), 175.

¹⁶ Thomas Nail, *The Figure of the Migrant* (Stanford University Press, 2015), 26.

¹⁷ Nikos Papastergiadis, *Cosmopolitanism and Culture* (Polity Press, 2018), 89–91.

when migratory movement, commonly associated with rupture, intersects with an art form already grounded in mobility. In the case of the Ukrainian Classical Ballet in Belgrade, displacement does not primarily appear as a break in artistic practice, but as a shift in the spatial context of performance. Technique, repertoire, and professional discipline remain stable, while the geography of performance changes. This suggests that displacement, instead of defining artistic identity, operates as a contextual condition within which transnational collaboration takes shape. The motion intrinsic to ballet allows migratory movement to be absorbed into professional practice, transforming forced mobility into a space of continued artistic production and cultural presence.

From mobility to infrastructure

While artistic mobility is a visible and often emphasized dimension of transnational collaboration, mobility alone is insufficient to sustain artistic practice across borders. Transnational artistic practice requires institutional frameworks that stabilize movement, transform temporary presence into structured collaboration, and provide symbolic and material conditions for artistic work. In this sense, institutions play a central role in translating mobility into infrastructure. Following Becker's understanding of art worlds as networks of collective action,¹⁸ artistic production depends on a range of actors, conventions, and organizational arrangements that extend beyond individual artists. Public materials allow this institutional layer to be specified more precisely. In Belgrade, performances were hosted at MTS Dvorana, specifically in its multifunctional Great Hall (Sala 1), whose stage configuration, technical equipment, and dressing rooms make it suitable for touring ballet productions, while promotional materials identify external organizing partners rather than a resident ballet institution.¹⁹ These institutional arrangements anchor transnational collaboration within a specific cultural space and allow artistic practice to function beyond the temporality of touring. From a transnational perspective, institutions also operate as mediators between global artistic networks and local cultural fields. Hannerz conceptualizes transnational connections as sustained relationships, not just episodic movements.²⁰ Applied to this case, the recurring presence of Ukrainian ballet performances in Belgrade indicates not a singular event of cultural import, but an ongoing relationship supported by institutional continuity. The repetition of performances, stable venues, and recognizable formats contributes to the normalization of transnational artistic presence within the local cultural landscape.

The role of institutions becomes even clearer when examined through Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the cultural field. In Bourdieu's framework, artistic practices gain

¹⁸ Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 1–9.

¹⁹ MTS Dvorana, "Sala 1," accessed March 22, 2026, <https://www.mtsdvorana.rs/sala/sala-1>; *ARTPARTNER*, "The Nutcracker—Belgrade," accessed March 22, 2026, <https://artpartner.hr/show-item/the-nutcracker/>.

²⁰ Hannerz, *Transnational Connections*, 8.

legitimacy through their position within institutionalized fields of cultural production.²¹ By hosting canonical ballet productions in established venues, local institutions in Belgrade confer symbolic capital upon the Ukrainian Classical Ballet, positioning it as a legitimate cultural actor, not as a temporary or marginal presence. Institutional recognition thus transforms mobility into cultural legitimacy.

Importantly, this process also reconfigures the position of the host city. While Belgrade does not occupy a dominant position within the global cultural system, its institutions function as active gatekeepers that facilitate transnational collaboration. In doing so, they enable the city to operate as a semi-peripheral yet meaningful site of cultural circulation, where transnational artistic practices are not merely received but institutionally embedded. This shift from mobility to infrastructure highlights a key dimension of transnational artistic practice. Instead of being defined solely by movement across borders, such practices are sustained by institutional conditions that stabilize collaboration, mediate legitimacy, and enable continuity. The case of Ukrainian ballet in Belgrade thus demonstrates how institutions play a decisive role in transforming transnational mobility into an enduring cultural practice.

The activities of the Ukrainian Classical Ballet in Belgrade form part of a broader regional circuit of performances in cities such as Zagreb, Ljubljana, Budapest, Graz, and Trieste. This circulation reveals a shared institutional logic that supports transnational artistic collaboration beyond major global cultural centers. Across these locations, several structural similarities can be observed. First, performances are predominantly hosted by large multifunctional cultural venues, more than permanent ballet institutions (such as national theaters). Concert halls and cultural centers such as MTS Dvorana (Belgrade), Lisinski Hall (Zagreb) or Cankarjev Dom (Ljubljana) function as flexible infrastructures capable of accommodating touring ballet productions. Their accessibility, audience capacity, and technical adaptability make them suitable platforms for transnational performances. Second, regional institutions tend to collaborate with external producers and touring companies more than maintaining resident ensembles. This model aligns with Becker's concept of art worlds as networks of cooperation, where artistic production relies on coordination between multiple actors more than on centralized institutional control. In all observed cases, the Ukrainian Classical Ballet enters the local cultural field as a professional partner, not as a guest requiring exceptional accommodation. Third, media promotion and audience engagement follow similar patterns across the region. Performances are framed as major cultural events, often linked to canonical repertoire and seasonal programming, but also marketed as spectacle. This emphasis on classical legitimacy contributes to institutional trust and facilitates repeated collaborations, with modern marketing campaigns that promote classical elements of trusted choreography and well-known Tchaikovsky music compositions.

Despite these similarities, important differences emerge in the institutional positioning of transnational collaboration. In cities such as Zagreb and Ljubljana,

²¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Columbia University Press, 1993), 32.

ballet performances are more directly integrated into established national cultural narratives, often associated with strong state-supported cultural institutions. This integration reinforces continuity with existing ballet traditions and positions touring companies within a stable national framework. In contrast, Belgrade occupies a more hybrid institutional position. In Serbia, this context is shaped by long-standing challenges affecting major state cultural institutions, including periods of organizational instability, limited resources, and disrupted programming, thus such conditions form part of the structural background against which alternative venues gain prominence. While lacking the same level of centralized ballet infrastructure, the city compensates through institutional flexibility and openness to transnational programming. Venues such as the MTS Dvorana operate at the intersection of cultural, commercial, and international circuits, enabling a pragmatic approach to collaboration. This flexibility allows transnational artistic practices to be embedded without full institutional assimilation. Another difference concerns symbolic positioning. In some regional contexts, Ukrainian ballet is framed primarily as part of a broader European classical tradition. In Belgrade, institutional framing often emphasizes both professional excellence and the contemporary context of mobility, creating a narrative that combines artistic legitimacy with the reputation of the Ukrainian Classical Ballet troupe, but without raising much awareness of displacement. In this regard, the fact that performances by the Ukrainian Classical Ballet took place in the MTS Dvorana, and not at the National Theatre in Belgrade, is analytically significant. Rather than interpreting this choice as a consequence of a single institutional decision, it can be understood as indicative of a broader shift toward flexible, multifunctional cultural venues capable of accommodating international touring productions. A more precise conclusion is that Belgrade functions as one regional node within a recurring circuit of externally organized ballet events rather than as an autonomous hub. This is supported by comparable institutional arrangements in Zagreb, where performances are staged in the Great Hall of the Vatroslav Lisinski Concert Hall and listed under the hall's own organization; in Ljubljana, where *Swan Lake* appears at the Cankarjev dom as a lease event organized by Art Partner d.o.o.; and in Trieste, where *The Nutcracker* is programmed at the Politeama Rossetti in Sala Assicurazioni Generali as an ArtPartner production.²² The comparison with neighboring cities demonstrates that transnational artistic collaboration in the region relies less on centralized cultural authority and more on adaptable institutional infrastructures. Within this framework, Belgrade's role is distinctive but structurally comparable, highlighting how regional institutions collectively enable the circulation of artistic practice beyond traditional centers.

²² Vatroslav Lisinski Concert Hall, "Due to Great Interest, the Third Performance of Swan Lake," January 14, 2025, <https://www.lisinski.hr/en/news/zbog-velikog-interesa-i-treca-izvedba-labudeg-jeze/>; Cankarjev dom, "Labodje jezero," accessed March 22, 2026, <https://www.cd-cc.si/kultura/prireditiv-drugega-organizatorja/labodje-jezero>; *Teatro Stabile del Friuli Venezia Giulia, Stagione 2025–2026* (Trieste: Teatro Stabile del Friuli Venezia Giulia, 2025), section "Lo Schiaccianoci."

Media and symbolic visibility

Media representation plays a crucial role in shaping the public visibility and cultural meaning of transnational artistic collaboration. In the case of the Ukrainian Classical Ballet in Belgrade, media coverage does not merely document performances but actively participates in positioning the artists within the local cultural field. Through selection of narratives, emphasis, and framing, media discourse contributes to the production of symbolic legitimacy. The media corpus examined here consists primarily of Serbian online news and event portals, culture sections, and venue-linked promotional materials rather than extended critical reviews. It includes texts published by *Serbian Monitor*, *City Magazine*, *N1 Beograd (Kultura)*, and *Dan u Beogradu*, alongside promotional materials linked to the MTS Dvorana performances.²³ Across these outlets, the Ukrainian Classical Ballet is repeatedly framed through a vocabulary of canon, prestige, spectacle, and audience demand. *Serbian Monitor* presents *Swan Lake* as a “classic performance” by a troupe of prize-winning soloists from major European theatres, while *City Magazine* describes *Swan Lake* as an “artistic spectacle” staged on the Great Stage of the MTS Dvorana and emphasizes international awards, classical tradition, and selected modern choreographic elements.²⁴ *N1 Beograd* announces the March 2025 performances as a major cultural event and identifies named soloists, while *Dan u Beogradu* reports sold-out audiences, ovations, and the troupe’s repeated returns to Belgrade.²⁵ Taken together, these materials show that symbolic visibility is produced less through political contextualization than through recurring markers of professional excellence, canonical repertoire, visual spectacle, and public demand.

Bourdieu’s theory of the cultural field provides a useful perspective for understanding this process. Within the field of cultural production, media function as key intermediaries in the distribution of symbolic capital.²⁶ By emphasizing professionalism, institutional recognition, and audience approval, media discourse reinforces the ballet’s legitimate position within the local cultural hierarchy. Visibility thus becomes a form of symbolic capital that stabilizes transnational artistic presence. Importantly, this process also reflects the structural position of the host environment. In a cultural context marked by institutional fragmentation and limited state support, media visibility compensates for the absence of centralized cultural authority. Media platforms assume an amplifying role, extending the reach and legitimacy of transnational collaboration beyond the performance space itself. Media do not simply reflect institutional collaboration, they actively contribute to its consolidation by shaping how artistic mobility is understood, evaluated, and normalized within the public sphere.

²³ Dan u Beogradu, “Labudovo jezero u rasprodatoj MTS Dvorani,” March 10, 2025, <https://www.danubeogradu.rs/2025/03/labudovo-jezero-u-rasprodatoj-mts-dvorani/>.

²⁴ B.G.T., “Balet Krcko Oraščić ponovo u Beogradu,” *Politika*, November 3, 2025, <https://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/707957/balet-krcko-orascic-ponovo-u-beogradu>.

²⁵ N1 Beograd, “Balet Labudovo jezero 9. i 10. marta u Beogradu,” February 28, 2025, <https://n1info.rs/kultura/balet-labudovo-jezero-9-i-10-marta-u-beogradu/>.

²⁶ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 39.

In this case, symbolic visibility refers to the form of public recognition produced through media representation that positions the ballet as a legitimate, professional, and culturally valued artistic practice. Visibility is not generated by sensationalism or political framing, but by alignment with established markers of high culture, such as canonical repertoire, technical excellence, institutional presentation, and audience reception. Within Pierre Bourdieu's framework, such visibility functions as a form of symbolic capital, accumulated when cultural practices are publicly recognized as legitimate within the field of cultural production.²⁷

A defining feature of this symbolic visibility is the deliberate distancing of artistic representation from the political sphere. Media texts largely refrain from explicit references to war, geopolitics, or displacement when reporting on ballet performances. This absence should not be interpreted as a lack of contextual awareness, but rather as a field-specific strategy. By maintaining the separation between artistic value and external political and economic pressures, media discourse contributes to the preservation of artistic autonomy and allows the ballet to circulate as a professional and aesthetic practice, not as a political statement. This form of symbolic visibility can also be understood as a mechanism of concealment through display, in which intensified representation does not expose structural conditions but instead redirects attention toward aesthetic value and professional legitimacy, thereby neutralizing political context.²⁸ This strategy produces clear advantages. Symbolic visibility grounded in professionalism enables the normalization of transnational artistic presence and facilitates institutional acceptance. Artists are evaluated primarily based on their technique and performance, which strengthens their position within the cultural field and supports sustained collaboration. At the same time, this form of visibility carries inherent limitations. By neutralizing political context, media representation risks obscuring the structural conditions that shape artistic mobility and collaboration. As Bourdieu notes, the autonomy of the cultural field is always partial and historically conditioned, sustained by exclusions as much as by recognition.²⁹

Symbolic visibility thus operates as an ambivalent mechanism. It stabilizes the transnational artistic practice by embedding it within legitimate cultural frameworks, while simultaneously narrowing the range of meanings available for public interpretation. This tension reflects a broader dynamic of the cultural field, in which artistic autonomy is secured through selective disengagement from political discourse.

Conclusion

Based on analyses of artistic practice, institutional infrastructures, and media representation, it is argued that transnational artistic practice cannot be reduced to mobility across borders or interpreted solely within frameworks of displacement.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁸ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Zone Books, 1994), 12–13.

²⁹ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 38.

More specifically, the case points to new forms of professional networks built through cooperation among mobile soloists, external organizers, venue-based hosts, and recurring regional touring circuits. It also reveals new forms of cultural visibility produced through online event portals, promotional journalism, and post-event media coverage that frame Ukrainian ballet through canon, prestige, audience demand, and professional excellence rather than through displacement alone.

At the same time, the analysis has drawn attention to the role of institutions and media in shaping the conditions of transnational collaboration. While institutional flexibility and media visibility contribute to the normalization and legitimization of artistic mobility, they also tend to neutralize political context by foregrounding artistic autonomy and professionalism. This tension clarifies the structural conditions under which transnational artistic practices become intelligible and sustainable within the cultural field. By situating Belgrade as an active node within a regional network of cultural circulation, the article offers insight into how transnational artistic practices are maintained in semi-peripheral contexts marked by both instability and opportunity.

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Scholarly analysis or debate

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Collaborating across Borders: Music within the Creative Europe Transnational Projects

Abstract: This paper examines how music features in projects funded by the Creative Europe program (2014–2020, subprogram Culture). It takes into account 29 music-including projects, aiming to identify the functions of project-framed musical practices. The methodology involves qualitative analysis of project descriptions and outcomes from the Creative Europe Project Results platform, employing a comparative interpretive approach that links the aesthetic and functional aspects of music. The findings reveal six overlapping types of musical practices within project framing: music as a core cultural activity; as a tool for social emancipation and civil-sector intervention; as an element of cultural networks; as part of an interdisciplinary cultural space; and as cultural heritage. The paper pays particular attention to the concept of the de-articulation of music, which pertains to its relational and participatory potential within the broader cultural domain. A tension between promoting music as an independent creative sector and acknowledging its broader social functions has been spotted as a defining aspect of the European Union cultural policy toward music.

Keywords: Creative Europe program (2014–2020); culture and creative sectors; project-framed music practices; de-articulation of music.

Theoretical background

The Creative Europe program is a major European Union (EU) initiative that supports the cultural and creative sectors. It was officially launched in 2014 and has been running in two cycles: 2014–2020 and 2021–2027. The program works alongside national policies to promote European cultural values through cross-border cooperation.¹ It is based on Article 167 (culture) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, as well as Articles 173 (industry) and 166 (vocational training), which connect culture with industrial policy and skills development.² The program was established by merging the former Culture and MEDIA initiatives to strengthen

¹ The first cycle of Creative Europe (2014–2020) accounted for about 0.15% of the total EU budget. Cf. Giuliana Ciancio, “The Creative Europe Programme – a Conversation with Karel Bartak,” in *Be SpectACTIVE! Challenging Participation in Performing Arts*, ed. Lluís Bonet, Giada Calvano, Luisella Carnelli, Félix Dupin-Meynard, and Emmanuel Négrier (Editoria Spettacolo, 2018), 34.

² Anna Kandyla, “The Creative Europe Programme: Policy-Making Dynamics and Outcomes,” in *Cultural Governance and the European Union. Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics*, ed. Evangelia Psychogiopoulou (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 49–50.

transnational collaboration and enhance the sectors' global competitiveness.³ These sectors include activities rooted in cultural or artistic expressions, which, as of 2021, have been acknowledged as “one of the EU’s 14 key industrial ecosystems.”⁴

Projects within the Creative Europe program can offer valuable insights into contemporary cross-border collaboration, enabling us to understand how specific creative practices and their aesthetic outcomes are transnationally coordinated under EU policy. Certain scholars emphasize transnational cooperation as one of the program’s most important aspects. Claske Vos notes that EU cultural policy has shifted from the representative model of the “staging of Europe”—which is based on shared heritage and identity—to a participatory model in which European belonging is constructed through project participation, transnational cooperation, and cultural exchange.⁵ Creative Europe exemplifies this second approach. While Bestvina Bukvić, Bjelić, and Šain argue that “European added value is ensured by the transnational nature of actions and activities” rather than solely by staging local creative potential, Borrione, Friel, and Miglietta focus on process innovations—such as new working methods, learning approaches, knowledge sharing, and collaboration—as well as the development of long-term partnerships, especially among micro and small cultural organizations.⁶ These are considered the program’s most impactful effects and key mechanisms. Previous policy studies have pointed to a shift away from institution-centered approaches toward network-based structures and greater professional connectivity.⁷ Transnationality is, therefore, viewed not only in logistical terms but also as a value in itself, as a means of European integration, and as a way to shape the European cultural added value.

Recent research highlights a shift in the European Union cultural policy from identity-focused to a creativity-driven growth strategy with the Creative Europe program.⁸ In this “creativity frame”, cultural and creative industries are seen as vital players

³ “Previous Programmes,” Culture and Creativity, European Commission, last updated November 4, 2021, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/resources/creative-europe-previous-programmes>; “Cultural and Creative Sectors,” Culture and Creativity, European Commission, last updated September 2, 2024, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-and-creative-sectors/cultural-and-creative-sectors>.

⁴ IDEA Consult, imec-SMIT-VUB, KUL-CiTIP, Amann Sylvia, and Heinsius Joost, *Research for CULT Committee – EU Culture and Creative Sectors Policy – Overview and Future Perspectives* (Brussels, 2024), 16.

⁵ Claske Vos, “Moving in and out of the European Cultural Space. Southeast European Encounters with the Creative Europe Programme,” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 25, no. 2 (2022): 743–44.

⁶ Paola Borrione, Martha Friel, and Angelo Miglietta, “Unlocking Innovative Potential: Examining the Contributions of Creative Europe to the Italian Cultural and Audio-visual Sectors,” *Il Capitale Culturale. Studies on the Value of Cultural Heritage* 30 (2024): 465, 474.

⁷ Andreas Wiesand in co-operation with Michael Söndermann, “The “Creative Sector” – an Engine for Diversity, Growth and Jobs in Europe. An overview of Research Findings and Debates Prepared for the European Cultural Foundation,” European Cultural Foundation, 2005, <https://culturalfoundation.eu/stories/the-creative-sector-an-engine-for-diversity-growth-and-jobs-in-europe/>.

⁸ Annabelle Littoz-Monnet, “Encapsulating EU Cultural Policy into the EU’s Growth and Competitiveness Agenda: Explaining the Success of a Paradigmatic Shift in Brussels,” in *Cultural Governance and the European Union*, ed. Evangelia Psychogiopoulou (Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks, 2015), 25–36; Evangelia Psychogiopoulou, “Introduction,” in *Cultural Governance and the European Union*, ed. Evangelia Psychogiopoulou (Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks, 2015), 1–4.

in tackling key European societal issues such as social cohesion and economic resilience.⁹ Creativity is viewed as a catalyst for innovation, experimentation, and smart growth. Therefore, approaching culture in its instrumental role has been emphasized as another key feature of the program. Dâmaso and Murray note that the EU deliberately refrains from explicitly defining culture in its strategic documents, thereby maintaining an open conceptual framework. This allows culture to be utilized across various political spheres.¹⁰ Primorac, Obuljen Koržinek, and Uzelac observe that over the past 30 years, the role of culture in EU politics has shifted from symbolic and identity-related aspects to an instrumental, economic focus, in which culture increasingly serves the objectives of growth, competitiveness, and employment.¹¹ “Creative Europe thus represents a new phase in the ongoing process of the instrumentalization of culture.”¹² Bruell describes this as the “economic style” of the program, where “culture is clearly framed as not existing apart from the orientation towards markets.”¹³ Economic considerations and competitiveness overshadow other aspects, particularly by disregarding the cultural sector’s intricate ecosystem.¹⁴ Behr, Brennan, and Cloonan assert that intrinsic value pertains to the inherent worth of artistic practices, while instrumental value pertains to the social, economic, or political benefits that cultural activities confer. The key question in arts funding is not just whether culture has measurable external impacts, but also why it holds value and merits public support in the first place.¹⁵

In this context, creative sectors, such as music, are adapting to address broader social challenges related to competitiveness, networking, the digital transition, and sustainability. Recent EU policy reviews emphasize that culture within the EU governance increasingly functions as a cross-cutting tool for social cohesion, innovation, and transformation, rather than as a purely independent artistic domain.¹⁶

⁹ Christer Gustafsson, and Elisabetta Lazzaro, “The Innovative Response of Cultural and Creative Industries to Major European Societal Challenges: Toward a Knowledge and Competence Base,” *Sustainability* 13, 23, 13267 (2021): 1–20.

¹⁰ Mafalda Dâmaso and Andrew Murray, “The EU’s Dualistic Regime of Cultural Diversity Management. The Concept of Culture in the Creative Europe Program (2014–2019; 2021–2027) and in the Strategy for International Cultural Relations (2016–),” *Journal of Cultural Management and Cultural Policy* 1 (2021): 180–83.

¹¹ Jaka Primorac, Nina Obuljen Koržinek, and Aleksandra Uzelac, “The Place and Role of Culture in the EU Agenda. Policy Implications of the Culture Sub-programme of the Creative Europe Programme,” *Medijska istraživanja: znanstveno-stručni časopis za novinarstvo i medije* 23m no. 1 (2017): 6.

¹² Sonja Hamhuis, “Contemplating a Sector-specific Approach to Music,” in “Music Moves Europe: Perspectives on the EU’s New Strategic Initiative for Music,” (Master thesis, Utrecht University, 2020), 25, <https://studenttheses.uu.nl/handle/20.500.12932/37663>.

¹³ Cornelia Bruell, *Creative Europe 2014–2020: A New Programme – A New Cultural Policy as Well?*, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e. V. (ifa, Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations, 2013), 7, 22, <https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/54757>.

¹⁴ Primorac, Obuljen Koržinek, and Uzelac, “The Place and Role of Culture in the EU Agenda,” 12–14; Bruell, *Creative Europe 2014–2020*.

¹⁵ Adam Behr, Matt Brennan, and Martin Cloonan, “Cultural Value and Cultural Policy: Some Evidence from the World of Live Music,” *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 22, 3 (2014): 405.

¹⁶ IDEA Consult, imec-SMIT-VUB, KUL-CiTIP, Sylvia, and Joost, “Research for CULT Committee – EU Culture and Creative Sectors Policy – Overview and Future Perspectives,” 26–27, 88–90.

Bruell highlights that a key change from the previous Culture program (2007–2013) is the shift in terminology from “cultural sector” to “cultural and creative sectors”, reflecting a focus on quantification, measurability, and market-based evaluation of cultural value.¹⁷ Nonetheless, creative sectors also produce “non-economic values”, such as “social cohesion, the inclusion of marginalized groups, and the development of diverse cultural identities.”¹⁸ Regarding the initial cycle of the program and the Culture sub-program, some scholars note that these sectors operated within an implicit cultural policy framework, lacked a clearly defined sectoral strategy,¹⁹ and served as platforms for experimenting with new forms of cultural cooperation, social relations, and coexistence.²⁰

Within the Creative Europe program, music was recognized as “an important pillar of European culture” because it “probably reaches the largest audience among the cultural and creative sectors” and “has the power to promote cultural diversity, inclusion and creativity. [...] More than 130 music projects received EU funding during the programming period 2014–2020 [...] addressing a wide variety of music genres (opera, jazz, classical, pop & rock, electronic, traditional, contemporary music, music for youth, etc.) and a number of common cross-cutting themes (for example gender balance, environmental sustainability or cultural heritage).”²¹ However, the literature suggests that the program did not address the sector’s specific structural needs, particularly regarding digital distribution, visibility, and fair pay for creators and performers.²² In this context, the Music Moves Europe framework emerged as an effort to better integrate music into the 2021–2027 cycle of Creative Europe as a distinct sector of cultural and creative industries. Music Moves Europe is a comprehensive initiative designed to support the green transition and environmental sustainability in the EU’s music sector, while also aiming to develop a cohesive EU music policy.²³ From 2014 to 2020, the Creative Europe program primarily treated music as a flexible cultural

¹⁷ Bruell, *Creative Europe 2014–2020*, 22.

¹⁸ Ivana Bestvina Bukvić, Kristina Bjelić and Marija Šain, “Uspješnost programa Europske unije u poticanju i financiranju kulturnog i kreativnog sektora u Republici Hrvatskoj,” *Pravni vjesnik* 36, no. 3–4 (2020): 211. Primorac, Obuljen Koržinek, and Uzelac, “The Place and Role of Culture in the EU Agenda,” 7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁰ See more on this in: Giuliana Ciancio, “Between Cultural Participation, Trust and Policy Perspectives: the Case of the Creative Europe Programme. Experimenting Success and Failures of Co-imaginative Politics,” In *Cultural Policies in Europe: A Participatory Turn?*, ed. Félix Dupin-Meynard & Emmanuel Négrier (Éditions de l’Attribut, 2020), 55–68.

²¹ European Education and Culture Executive Agency, *Creative Europe Culture 2014–2020, Music Projects* (Publications Office of the European Union, 2021), 6.

²² Hamhuis, “Contemplating a Sector-specific Approach to Music,” in “Music Moves Europe: Perspectives on the EU’s New Strategic Initiative for Music,” 2020, 28–30.

²³ “Creative Europe: New Call for the Greening of the Music Sector,” Culture and Creativity, European Commission, published December 3, 2024, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/news/creative-europe-new-call-for-the-greening-of-the-music-sector>; “Music Moves Europe,” Culture and Creativity, European Commission, published June 23, 2022, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-and-creative-sectors/music/music-moves-europe>.

resource. In the current cycle, however, the Music Moves Europe treats music as a distinct sector with tailored regulations for market distribution. Although this is the first dedicated EU music policy, it overlooks the sector's internal diversity, perceiving music as a uniform industry with shared interests.²⁴ This approach also reflects a culture-instrumentalization strategy intended to balance artistic, social, and economic values, though economic considerations often predominate.

Within this policy environment, music is increasingly viewed as a versatile element within larger cultural, social, and economic strategies. Among other creative industries, music holds a unique position due to its high mobility, broad audience appeal, and ability to serve as an aesthetic practice, a social tool, and an economic asset simultaneously. Consequently, its disciplinary boundaries become more fluid when involved in project-based formats. Instead of being defined mainly by aesthetic standards, music is often characterized by its functions, usage contexts, and relational impacts. This raises the question of whether, within the Creative Europe, music remains a unified creative sector or shifts into a collection of functional practices aligned with policy goals.

Aim

This research builds on the idea that, within the EU cultural policies, music is seen as one of the creative practices within a broader cultural sector. The goal is to categorize the musical practices in the Creative Europe projects, especially in the Culture subprogram (2014–2020). Studying music here is important because it shows how music operates when linked to the EU policy aims. The focus on music stems mainly from my background as a teacher in higher music education. Unlike previous studies that examined policy documents, this research mainly analyzes the project's discursive outputs, which serve as the main objects of study. While the paper primarily develops an analytical mapping of project-based musical practices, it also aims to critically reflect on the broader implications of these practices—particularly the shift from music as an autonomous practice toward music as a functional cultural resource within the EU policy frameworks. Therefore, the term 'de-articulation' is introduced to describe the reconfiguration of music within policy-driven frameworks. It can be understood as a specific mechanism through which this policy orientation operates: music becomes less defined by its internal aesthetic criteria and more by its capacity to fulfill external social, political, and economic functions.

²⁴ Hamhuis, "Contemplating a Sector-specific Approach to Music," in "Music Moves Europe: Perspectives on the EU's New Strategic Initiative for Music," 2020, 92.

Method

The research involves a qualitative comparative analysis of projects funded by the Creative Europe program (2014–2020). The sample includes project descriptions and outcomes accessible via the official Creative Europe Project Results platform.²⁵ Projects were selected based on criteria requiring music to be part of the activities and ensuring that descriptions of actions and objectives were available, thereby facilitating consistent comparison. A total of 67 music-related projects were identified, with funding starting in 2015, 2016, and 2017. Of these, 29 projects, all funded in 2017, were chosen. The year 2017 was selected not only because it contained the highest concentration of music-related projects, but also because it represented a mature phase of the program, in which its operational and policy logic had already stabilized. Focusing on a single funding year thus ensures analytical consistency and comparability across projects. All selected projects fall under the sub-program Culture, comprising 25 cooperation projects and 4 network projects.

The analytical framework is divided into key categories to facilitate a comparative analysis of all 29 projects and their music, despite their varied content and organizational structures. These categories include: roles assigned to music within the projects (such as central creative practice, interdisciplinary element, or social function), musical genres (classical, contemporary, popular, traditional, experimental), media and formats used for music production and circulation (festivals, live performances, digital platforms, workshops, educational programs), target audiences (youth, children, professionals, marginalized groups, general public), transnational components (artists' mobility, cross-border cooperation and circulation of musical content and knowledge), and the aesthetic regimes of music that the projects endorse (relational, participatory, interdisciplinary aesthetics). Each project is first outlined both descriptively and analytically within these six categories. Subsequently, a comparative analysis is developed iteratively, with continuous mutual comparison of project descriptions within the sample. This process reveals repetitions, differences, and particularities in the projects' musical practices. In the final phase, observations are summarized, thematic patterns are identified, and projects are grouped by the types of musical practices they exemplify. The typology of functions identified does not aim to be a normative classification but rather a practical analytical framework that helps understand how music functions as a phenomenon within the specific contemporary cultural policy of the EU and project-based modes of cooperation.

²⁵ "Creative Europe Project Results," Culture and Creativity, European Commission, accessed January 8, 2026, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/projects>.

Results

An examination of the research sample reveals that music in transnational cultural projects funded by the Creative Europe program is a heterogeneous cultural phenomenon whose characteristics and functions vary greatly based on project aims and partnership arrangements. Transnational cooperation in the projects studied follows established institutional patterns. Consortia comprise diverse actors from various national backgrounds, reflecting differences in institutional capacity and their positions within the European cultural landscape. Cooperation is mainly centered around cultural hubs in Western and Northern Europe. The consortium's geographic structure, therefore, mirrors the hierarchical nature of transnational collaboration. Institutions from Western and Northern Europe—particularly Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Nordic countries—are often the project leaders and coordinators. Meanwhile, partners from Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe, including countries in the Western Balkans, typically focus on implementing and adapting project activities locally. Additionally, including institutions from outside the EU broadens transnational collaboration, positioning music as a tool for cultural dialogue. Here, cross-border cooperation takes on a political dimension, emphasizing music as a medium for portraying Europe as a shared cultural space beyond its formal borders. Alongside prominent actors such as orchestras, opera houses, universities, festivals, and networks, which already have substantial international visibility, independent cultural organizations, associations, and foundations also play important roles, especially in projects addressing social inclusion, gender equality, and community engagement. Their involvement enhances the diversity of transnational cooperation and introduces work models rooted in local contexts and social responsibility.

This geographical and institutional diversity also reflects the diversification of the musical genres represented, revealing a notable variety. The landscape of musical activities includes classical, contemporary, popular, traditional, experimental, and participatory music, varying in terms of disciplinary autonomy and symbolic meaning. Classical music, in its historical and contemporary forms, remains a stable genre, represented through opera (YOUNG@OPERA, Opera Vision), orchestral music (EU. TERPE), and early music (The Hanseatic Way). Here, music is valued for artistic excellence and a well-defined curatorial approach, yet it is also transformed through digital media, educational programs, participatory models, and social narratives, expanding artistic genres from exclusive concert spaces to broader social and transnational contexts. The second genre group includes jazz and related improvisational and creative practices, seen in educational and participatory projects (KIDS CAN) and within professional networks (Europe Jazz Network). Jazz is used flexibly, often for community work with children, youth, marginalized groups, and audience development. The third group encompasses pop, rock, and electronic music, linked to artist mobility and market development efforts (EXCITE, INES, Keychange, Live Style

Europe). In these projects, genres are fluid, emerging from live scenes and industry ecosystems, aiding transnational circulation and market adaptation while promoting diversity and inclusion, especially regarding gender. Music folklore is less common, exemplified by the Polyphony project. Experimental, digital, and intermedial practices connect music with digital technology and contemporary arts (EASTN-DC, EuroNoize), where genre becomes less about tradition and more about sound, visual art, digital processes, and interactive systems. Some projects do not assign music a fixed genre but use it contextually in socially engaged, participatory efforts (Wom@rts, Voices of Solidarity). Here, genre is intentionally vague, allowing more creative and social freedom, with music manifesting as sound, rhythm, voice, community singing, or improvisation. Lastly, some network and meta-projects (EFA RISE 2, EN-CATC, Live Style Europe) avoid genre labels altogether, viewing music structurally as part of the wider cultural ecosystem, professional practices, and policies. Overall, the Creative Europe's initiatives do not adhere to a single genre map but operate through multiple regimes. This diversity shows that these transnational projects aim not to standardize the musical landscape but to reconfigure its functions within the contemporary European cultural landscape. A typology of project-framed musical functions can therefore be derived as follows: music as a core cultural activity; as a tool for social emancipation and civil-sector intervention; as an element of cultural networks; as part of an interdisciplinary cultural space; and as cultural heritage. These six functions are often interconnected and frequently overlap across projects. Typically, one or more dominant types of music utilization can be observed in most projects.

Type 1: Music as a core cultural activity

This category includes projects in which music forms the foundation of the structure, guiding goal-setting, shaping activities, defining audiences, and engaging transnational collaborators. Examples include YOUNG@OPERA, Opera Vision, EuroNoize, KIDS CAN, EXCITE – Exchange of International Talent in Europe, Key-change, Swinging Europe, Eu.TERPE – A debut opera for an inclusive Europe, and Polyphony – Collection of the Disappearing European Heritage. Although these projects vary in genre, institutional context, and target audiences, they all share the common feature that music acts as both an organizing principle and a main outcome.

The aim of these projects is to enhance and make existing musical genres such as opera, contemporary popular music, jazz, and the DIY scene more accessible within the shared European context. For instance, the Opera Vision project centers its framework on the digital dissemination of opera as an art form, with partnerships, technology infrastructure, and audiences structured around opera itself. Similarly, KIDS CAN starts with jazz and develops an innovative educational and performance model in which children are not merely spectators but active performers and mediators of musical experience. Most activities focus directly on music creation, performance, and distribution. These include commissioning and producing new works (such as contemporary opera in YOUNG@OPERA), organizing tours and international

performances (Swinging Europe, EuroNoize), developing digital music distribution platforms (Opera Vision), and conducting research, archiving, and presenting musical heritage (Polyphony). The projects produce compositions, operas, concerts, albums, archives, and digital music recordings as primary outputs. Here, music is the primary material and core project outcome.

Projects like these are defined by specific musical genres or practices, such as opera (YOUNG@OPERA, Opera Vision), jazz (KIDS CAN), swing (Swinging Europe), alternative and DIY scenes (EuroNoize), and traditional folklore (Polyphony). In these initiatives, professionals, institutions, and audiences form transnational connections centered on the genre. Nonetheless, the genre is dynamic. There is ongoing tension between adherence to traditional aesthetic norms and their adaptation to contemporary presentation and circulation formats. For instance, the Polyphony project documents traditional Ukrainian vocal expression as an endangered heritage while also showcasing it through current concerts and digital formats. Similarly, opera in YOUNG@OPERA and Opera Vision extends beyond national theaters, incorporating young performers, new narratives, and digital media.

In this project type, transnationality is primarily achieved through the mobility of musical practices, including musicians' travel, international tours, co-productions, joint performances, and cross-border content distribution. For instance, initiatives such as Swinging Europe and EuroNoize emphasize the European music scene as a space of ongoing exchange, while Opera Vision exemplifies transnationality through digital distribution, blurring the line between local performances and a global audience. Consequently, this redefines music as a key medium through which Europe's cultural space expresses itself as a shared, transnational entity.

Several projects in this group, such as EXCITE, INES, Keychange, and Live Style Europe, clearly exemplify the view that music is a creative industry sector that needs infrastructure and a market foundation. These projects aim to strengthen the sector's capacity, professionalize participants, and boost international visibility. They emphasize work, mobility, sustainability, and the need to address structural inequalities within the industry. Music is seen as circulating through showcases, festivals, platforms, databases, mentoring, and professional networks. The genre-neutral approach of these projects serves an important purpose: it promotes broad inclusion within the European music ecosystem and supports transnational mobility for performers and professionals. EXCITE and INES particularly demonstrate this through their showcase festivals and talent exchanges, viewing musical performance as a form of professional presentation and a gateway to international markets. Keychange extends this idea further by explicitly framing music as a tool for political action. It focuses on gender equality and inclusion, using musical practice to challenge and alter structural issues in the music industry. Live Style Europe shifts attention even more toward the infrastructure of live music, moving away from an individual artistic work towards a performative practice connected to urban spaces, audiences, and local cultural policies. Consequently, these projects explore the conditions necessary for music to be a

sustainable profession, reaffirming its role as a public good and economic sector. In these initiatives, aesthetics and new creative outputs are secondary to organizational and market considerations.

All projects within this group exemplify the successful blending of musical-professional and cultural-political goals. Music serves as a core cultural practice and as a vehicle for transnational cooperation and sector professionalization. Type 1, therefore, provides a reference point for understanding the other types, in which music's role shifts from a central position to more relational, instrumental, or interdisciplinary ones.

Normatively, this type largely preserves music's status as an autonomous practice, serving both as the main material and the key outcome of the projects. Nevertheless, this independence is subtly reshaped by external pressures for accessibility, dissemination, and sectoral sustainability, which add functional criteria alongside aesthetic considerations. Consequently, the core aspects of music—such as genres, repertoires, and professional practices—remain largely unchanged, reinforcing the discipline's structure, while also being broadened and somewhat redirected toward infrastructural and policy goals. This results in a stable yet internally conflicted state, in which music maintains its disciplinary coherence while increasingly aligning with external cultural, social, and market demands.

Type 2: Music as a tool for cultural emancipation

Another type of musical practice involves using music to engage children, youth, and non-professional participants as new audiences, with the aim of enhancing individual and collective cultural capacities within the civil sector. These initiatives prioritize learning, collaborative creation, and cultural empowerment over final musical outcome and sector enhancement. Examples include projects like KIDS CAN, *The Hanseatic Way: A Musical Journey Through a Shared Past*, and *Sing Outside the Box*, along with parts of *I Will Be Everything...* and *Brave Kids Artistic Instructor Training and Practical Dissemination* project, where music functions as a means for participation, education, and engaging non-professional participants in music performance.

A key feature of this approach is to foster social emancipation through music, build audiences, and empower civil society, with an emphasis on participatory formats. In projects such as KIDS CAN and *Sing Outside the Box*, music develops through workshops, group performance, and innovative teaching methods. Here, the emphasis is on the experience of participation rather than on performance excellence. In this configuration, music operates as a space for learning, confidence-building, and creative expression, offering inclusive opportunities for those who lack access to formal music education. For instance, in *Sing Outside the Box*, collective singing and choir work explore new relationships among performers, audiences, and spaces. Participants are encouraged to actively shape musical performances, blurring traditional lines between professionals and amateurs, performers and listeners. This approach shifts hierarchies typical of professional music practice, transforming conductors and

musicians into facilitators, mentors, and collaborators who foster cultural empowerment. It redefines musical expertise not just as a professional skill but as the capacity to foster shared music experiences, dialogue, and creative risk-taking. This is particularly evident in projects for children and youth, which use music to nurture expression and a sense of belonging. Aesthetically, these projects favor flexible formats and participatory experiments that blend movement, musicking, space, and technology. Music becomes a dynamic process, adaptable to participants, locations, and social settings—opening pathways for new audience models, professional roles, and cultural emancipation.

These projects demonstrate how the Creative Europe program leverages music to bolster cultural capacities at both individual and collective levels. Unlike Type 1, which primarily showcases the excellence of music professionals in a transnational context, this group of projects demonstrates music practices that serve as platforms for cultural emancipation.

In this configuration, autonomy is redefined through prioritizing participatory, educational, and social goals. Consequently, the discipline undergoes partial deconstruction: traditional hierarchies, standards of excellence, and distinctions between professionals and amateurs are intentionally destabilized. While this promotes greater inclusivity and social significance, it also weakens music's internal coherence as a distinct practice, shifting its focus from aesthetic creation to a social process.

Type 3: Music as a tool for civil-sector intervention

Within this category of projects, music is approached both as a public and a relational activity that enhances the visibility of marginalized groups, particularly in contexts related to migration, refugees, and gender inequality. The examples are *Meet the Neighbors*, *Keychange*, *Our Lives*, *Eu.TERPE* – a debut opera for an inclusive Europe, *Living Realities – Changing Perceptions (LRCP)*, *Voices of Solidarity*, *Women Equal Share Presence in the Arts and Creative Industries (Wom@rts)*, and the *DIS-OTHERING* project.

Musical activities here are aligned with specific political goals, aiming to evoke participants' experiential and emotional responses from direct engagement with music. Projects such as *Eu.TERPE* and *Voices of Solidarity* exemplify this approach. For instance, *Eu.TERPE* features music for the members of the Syrian Expat Philharmonic Orchestra, symbolizing cultural continuity amidst forced migration. Music acts as a medium through which dispersed Syrian musicians are reconnected, transforming their refugee experiences into a shared European cultural narrative. Creating and performing together carries political significance by affirming refugee musicians as active cultural contributors. Likewise, the *Voices of Solidarity* project incorporates music into street performances, parades, and participatory events that address issues such as freedom, borders, integration, and hospitality. Here, music functions as a shared emotional catalyst for collective gathering, enabling the formation of temporary communities in public spaces.

A key aspect of this category is a focus on marginalized groups. The Keychange initiative, for example, uses music as a tool to combat gender inequality in the music industry. While maintaining a strong professional dimension—concerts, showcases, and creative labs—the main purpose is political intervention. Public pledges for gender equality transform musical events into spaces of collective responsibility, with music acting as a vehicle for sectoral reform and gender correction. The Living Realities project broadens this approach by integrating music into a multidisciplinary framework to support refugees through participatory formats such as children’s choirs and orchestras, thereby fostering social integration. In segments of the Wom@rts project, music highlights female authorship and acts as a tool for career empowerment and international outreach, connecting musical practices with broader themes of cultural politics, gender issues, and representation.

Through these projects, music frequently collaborates with other media and expressive forms. Voices of Solidarity and Living Realities combine music with dance, theater, visual arts, photography, and documentary techniques. This interdisciplinary approach makes complex political issues more accessible and understandable, while transforming music into a relational practice. Participation remains a core aesthetic aspect—for example, in Voices of Solidarity, the audience actively engages in parades, workshops, and public events rather than passively observing. Music is again, like in the case of Type 2, positioned as a community practice rather than solely a professional vocation. An especially notable feature of these projects is the use of public spaces for musical performances—on streets, in squares, in parades, or in flash mobs—rather than in conventional concert halls. This situates music as a public practice embedded within urban and social contexts, serving as a meeting point for diverse groups and a symbolic negotiation of belonging, borders, and solidarity. In this way, music serves as a ‘trigger’ for shared experiences, making political themes such as migration, refugees, and social equality tangible at both physical and emotional levels. Consequently, this type is important for understanding the EU policies, indicating that culture and its diverse expressions are tools for managing social relations and shaping community values.

Here, music’s autonomy becomes subordinated to political and social goals, framing it as a tool for social intervention. Autonomy is thus reinterpreted as being responsive to social issues and capable of functioning within public and civic contexts, rather than focusing solely on aesthetic self-regulation. As a result, the field of music becomes more unstable. Its traditional boundaries extend into interdisciplinary, participatory, and activist practices, with standard evaluation criteria losing their dominance. While this increases music’s social relevance and ethical involvement, it also risks eroding its distinctiveness as a professional creative domain.

Type 4: Music within cultural networks

These initiatives generally do not focus on producing new music or showcasing its aesthetic qualities. Instead, their goal is to connect musicians, enhance skills, and strengthen transnational cultural networks as new, sustainable institutional structures. Examples include EXCITE – Exchange of International Talent in Europe, Swinging Europe, EJN Europe Jazz Network, Live Style Europe, Innovation Network of European Showcases (INES), and EFA RISE 2. These are network- or semi-network-based projects in which music is approached as a professional practice that needs sector enhancement through new forms of transnational institutional structures.

For instance, in the EJN Europe Jazz Network, jazz serves as the common professional language, with a focus on developing the sector by strengthening transnational cooperation, exchanging best practices, developing digital tools, and shaping cultural policies, such as a gender-equality manifesto in jazz. Similarly, the Live Style Europe approaches music through the lens of live-event spaces such as clubs, concert halls, and festivals, emphasizing their social responsibility, local community roles, and the need for new models of public representation. These initiatives do not impose a single aesthetic standard but rather support the coexistence of music within a shared transnational institutional and professional framework. The media and formats used to circulate music—such as conferences, seminars, working groups, digital platforms, databases, communication tools, publications, reports, and policy documents—further illustrate the infrastructural focus and institutional orientation of these projects. For example, the ENCATC project features music within the broader context of cultural management through educational programs, research, and publications, but does not produce direct creative outputs.

This category clearly marks a shift from audience-focused projects to those centered on professional communities. The primary target groups are cultural professionals, managers, decision-makers, researchers, network coordinators, and organizations. In this view, music functions as a specific sector within the professional cultural field, shifting the focus from aesthetics to the organizational and discursive dimensions of musical practices. The activities are organized around networking, sector legitimacy, cultural advocacy, and the development of professional standards.

While transnationality is strongly emphasized in this category, its form is specific. It is characterized less by musicians' mobility and more by the exchange of knowledge, practices, and management models. Projects such as EJN and ENCATC connect numerous countries and hundreds of organizations, establishing stable, long-term transnational networks that extend beyond the duration of individual projects. Thus, Type 4 exemplifies the EU's transnational cultural approach, confirming models of cooperation, management, and professionalization aimed at ensuring the sector's sustainability across borders.

At this level, autonomy shifts from aesthetic pursuit to music as a sector to be managed, optimized, and maintained through networks, policies, and infrastructure. Although this enhances the sector's structural stability and sustainability over the long

term, it also risks diminishing music's identity as a unique creative practice by integrating it into broader cultural governance structures.

Type 5: Music within the interdisciplinary field of culture

The fifth category of projects involves cases in which music serves as an element of interdisciplinary creative endeavors, integrating with other spatial, performative, and digital practices. Its role is relational, contributing to the overall experience but rarely leading as the main medium. Projects such as *Poetic Invasion of the Cities*, the European Art-Science-Technology Network for Digital Creativity (EASTN-DC), Q.THEATRE, DIS-OTHERING (beyond labels such as *Afropolitan*), and *Mind Your Step* exemplify this view. Here, the music is set among many expressive elements—alongside theater, dance, visual arts, new media, performances, and urban interventions. For instance, in Q.THEATRE, music functions as a dramaturgical and staging element within adaptations of *Don Quixote*, shaping the narrative, linking text, body, and space, and reflecting on European cultural heritage. In all cases, the aesthetic value of music is judged by its contribution to the interdisciplinary experience, rather than by notions of autonomous musical excellence.

Music manifests in public spaces, digital environments, or combined with visual and bodily practices, depending on the context, space, or technological setup. For example, in *Poetic Invasion of the Cities*, music features in street performances, flash mobs, and site-specific events—activating urban space and engaging passersby with sound and rhythm, regardless of genre. Similarly, in DIS-OTHERING, music and sound contribute to a broader festival and discourse on identity, race, and cultural hegemony; musical segments function as expressive and symbolic layers that support socio-political themes rather than as standalone works. In the EASTN-DC project, music is part of hybrid digital practices—encompassing electronic sounds, interactive interfaces, and audiovisual acts—closely linked to software and research tools. In these contexts, music is classified more by contextual and media features than by conventional genres.

From a European cultural policy perspective, this group exemplifies the Creative Europe program's post-disciplinary approach. Music is viewed as context-dependent and can be flexibly integrated into diverse creative and social settings, aligned with project aims. This promotes innovative practices but also leads to the de-articulation of music, which loses its specific disciplinary identity and becomes embedded within broader expressive, spatial, or technologically mediated cultural frameworks.

This type most radically challenges the notion of autonomy by integrating music into broader interdisciplinary and context-dependent frameworks. Autonomy is no longer based on the internal logic of musical form or genre, but on music's ability to function relationally within hybrid artistic setups. As a result, the discipline of music is significantly deconstructed: its boundaries become more fluid while evaluation criteria shift towards contextual contribution. This fosters innovative and cross-disciplinary collaboration, but also hastens the erosion of music's coherence as a discipline, transforming it into an adaptable element within a larger cultural ecosystem.

Type 6: Music as cultural heritage

The sixth type highlights projects in which music primarily serves as a means of documenting, archiving, and preserving cultural heritage. Examples like *Polyphony – Collection of the Disappearing European Heritage* and *The Hanseatic Way: A Musical Journey Through a Shared Past* exemplify this approach.

Here, music is seen not only through its contemporary creative forms but also as a remnant of past social structures, rituals, and communal life. For instance, the *Polyphony* project documents traditional vocal expressions of rural Eastern European communities via field research, audiovisual recordings, and digital archiving. The performers—often elderly women from rural areas—are regarded as carriers of living knowledge rather than just interpreters of musical material. Similarly, *The Hanseatic Way* reconstructs early music practices, connecting them with contemporary educational and participatory formats. Music serves both as a means of narrating history and as an educational tool that connects younger generations to a shared European cultural heritage. The educational and intergenerational aspects are the key features of this type. In both projects, music facilitates knowledge transfer across generations—from elder tradition-bearers to younger performers, students, and audiences. This positions music as a means of cultural continuity and as a space for learning, reflection, and reinterpretation.

Importantly, archiving in these projects goes beyond passive storage. It involves active selection, interpretation, and presentation. This type often combines archival and contemporary presentation formats, using digital platforms, storytelling, online databases, video documentation, and concert formats to reach transnational audiences. This aligns with one of the main aims of the Creative Europe—circulating local cultural practices beyond their original contexts without fully transforming their aesthetic value. Moreover, transnationality in such projects is both organizational and epistemological, bringing together diverse knowledge, disciplines, media (ethnomusicology, history, new technologies), and cultural perspectives.

Within the broader Creative Europe framework, this type of project aligns with efforts to protect and promote intangible cultural heritage and diversity. Music is funded not primarily for innovation or market potential, but for its capacity to reflect the historical layers of European culture and to make them accessible today. This affirms that the Creative Europe program regards music as both a contemporary creative industry and a tradition with enduring cultural value. Music is thus neither a fully autonomous art nor merely a social tool but a medium that documents history and fosters new understandings of shared European cultural space.

In this case, autonomy is reframed through the perspective of historical continuity and cultural memory, rather than modern creative self-determination. Consequently, the discipline is both stabilized and redefined: it is bolstered by its foundation in tradition and ethnomusicology, while also expanding into archival, educational, and interpretative fields. This results in a hybrid form where music preserves disciplinary coherence, yet its autonomy is shaped by its role as cultural heritage.

Discussion

While the preceding analysis maps different types of project-based musical practices, this section shifts toward a more explicitly normative reflection on their implications for music as a discipline. These implications can be understood in relation to a broader shift in the EU cultural policy from supporting culture as a set of autonomous artistic disciplines toward promoting creativity as a cross-sectoral driver of innovation. In this framework, music is no longer primarily valued as a discipline with its own aesthetic criteria, but as capable of generating social, economic, and institutional innovation. As a result, disciplinary coherence is secondary to music's functional adaptability, which directly contributes to its de-articulation. The implications can be further broken down into three interconnected dimensions: what is lost, what is gained, and where the main tensions arise.

Initially, the analysis shows a gradual decline in music's aesthetic independence. Genre distinctions become more flexible, aesthetic hierarchies are relativized, and the standards of artistic value shift from internal, discipline-specific criteria to external, functional ones. This leads to a form of de-specialization in which musical expertise is partly reinterpreted as the ability to promote participation, collaboration, or social engagement. In this context, what is truly 'lost' is not music itself, but its autonomy as a self-contained field governed by its own aesthetic principles.

The analysis also highlights notable improvements. Music broadens its significance, serving as a versatile context-dependent practice that can tackle various societal, institutional, and political issues. Its inclusion in transnational collaborations, audience development efforts, digital platforms, and socially conscious practices enhances its visibility, accessibility, and functional adaptability. The policy framework positions music as more open to diverse audiences, more attuned to current social concerns, and more integrated into daily cultural life. This transformation fosters new participatory methods, interdisciplinary experiments, and institutional innovation, expanding music's reach beyond traditional concert venues and elite groups. In essence, the 'gain' is the enhanced societal relevance and operational flexibility of musical practices within a larger cultural framework.

These processes create a series of structural tensions shaping the state of music within the Creative Europe program. The primary tension is between aesthetic independence and practical instrumentalization. While projects broaden music's social impact and usability, they also risk placing aesthetic standards below external policy objectives. A second tension involves professional focus versus de-specialization: the push for new skills such as mobility, communication, and social engagement boosts adaptability but may weaken discipline-specific expertise. The third tension is between inclusion and hierarchy. Although many projects aim to democratize access and involvement, transnational partnerships can reproduce inequalities between central and peripheral players, as well as between big institutions and smaller groups. Lastly, there is a tension between stability and adaptability: project-based approaches

foster innovation and experimentation but can also threaten long-term sustainability, institutional memory, and ongoing creative growth.

Overall, these dynamics indicate that the transformation of music within the Creative Europe is not just about the decline or enrichment of the creative field. Instead, it involves a reconfiguration of the conditions that shape music, in which losses and gains are deeply connected, and tensions are fundamental to contemporary musical practices under European cultural policy.

Returning to the initial claim regarding the dissociation of music disciplinary coherence, the analysis demonstrates that this process is not merely a side effect of project-based collaboration, but a structurally embedded feature of the EU cultural policy. As outlined in the theoretical background, within the Creative Europe program, culture is viewed through an instrumental lens, aligning creative activities with political goals. Analyzing music-related projects reveals how this policy approach manifests in practice, notably through the de-articulation of music. This concept refers to the EU's redefinition of culture as a multifunctional sector rather than a standalone creative domain. Therefore, de-articulation is not merely a side effect but a necessary condition for transnational collaboration that allows music to flow across disciplinary boundaries. Even when music is a central cultural activity, it is heavily shaped by aims like audience development, digital distribution, professional mobility, inclusion, and visibility in the European music market. In other projects, music's role is further de-articulated and it serves as a tool for education, social intervention, political advocacy, or interdisciplinary experimentation. Therefore, its value lies less in aesthetic criteria and more in its social effects—fostering cooperation and building communities. This de-articulation is especially evident when the genre is intentionally left undefined or secondary. The lack of specific genre or disciplinary boundaries is not accidental but a strategic choice that facilitates integration into interdisciplinary, participatory, and politically motivated projects. In such contexts, music shifts from being a 'goal' to a 'trigger'—promoting social interaction, emotional bonds, public visibility, or symbolizing European values. This shift can be understood as a consequence of broader transformations in the EU cultural governance, where culture is increasingly positioned as a cross-sectoral resource aligned with objectives such as social cohesion, innovation, and competitiveness. The consequences of this shift are threefold: a redefinition of music's disciplinary status, a transformation of music professionalism into project-based operability, and a displacement of aesthetic evaluation by criteria of social relevance.

This can be further interpreted in light of the ongoing debate over intrinsic versus instrumental cultural value.²⁶ This distinction offers a useful theoretical perspective on how music functions within the Creative Europe framework. According to Behr et al., instrumental effects are not external to music but stem from qualities intrinsic to musical practice—its emotional power, embodied participation, and

²⁶ Behr, Brennan, and Cloonan, "Cultural Value and Cultural Policy: Some Evidence from the World of Live Music."

ability to create shared meaning.²⁷ Thus, the de-articulation of music within the Creative Europe does not mean that the intrinsic value disappears; instead, it shifts and is redistributed across different social contexts. Here, music's aesthetic independence becomes less central than its role in activating social ties and transnational collaboration. De-articulation, therefore, signifies not a loss of value but a transformation in how value is expressed, measured, and legitimized within the EU cultural policies. This shift also risks dismantling music as a distinct disciplinary field. Genre boundaries become flexible, aesthetic hierarchies are relativized, and music is frequently embedded in interdisciplinary and participatory settings.

De-articulation of music in the Creative Europe can be seen too through the paradigm of audience development. As highlighted in the European Commission's report reviewed by Hadley, cultural organizations are urged to adopt an audience-focused approach, with audiences central to their strategy. Audience development now extends beyond marketing and communication to include democratization, access, participation, co-creation, and organizational innovation. In this model, audiences are considered equal partners with artists and institutions.²⁸ This change is evident across various projects. Participatory and emancipatory initiatives see audiences act as co-creators, while in professional network projects audience strategies are integrated into infrastructure and policy planning. Even in projects where music remains a key artistic focus, digital dissemination and expanding audiences influence organizational goals. Audience-centered governance, therefore, redefines music's place within institutions, linking aesthetic independence with relational accountability. Thus, de-articulation involves not just embedding music into policies but shifting its focus toward audience relations as a key principle of practice organization.

Conclusion

The analysis indicates that de-articulation does not lead to the marginalization of music. Instead, music continues to be widely used and adaptable across aesthetic, social, political, and economic dimensions simultaneously. This versatility, however, blurs the boundaries between art, the culture industry, and social practice. Here, music is established as a cultural resource that links various actors and objectives at the European level. The findings support the initial research thesis that, within Creative Europe, music is treated as part of the cultural and creative sectors, with multifaceted roles. De-articulation occurs precisely where the intrinsic dimension of music is structurally subordinated to its socioeconomic mobilization. Music is framed less as a finished artwork and more as an innovation process embedded in experimentation and transnational prototyping. The de-articulation of music is, therefore, a fundamental feature of the program as it relates to music. A tension remains between

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 410.

²⁸ Steven Hadley, "European Commission Final Report: Study on Audience Development – How to place Audiences at the Centre of Cultural Organizations," *Cultural Trends* 26, 3 (2017): 1–2.

promoting music as an independent creative sector and acknowledging its broader social functions, which is a defining aspect of the EU cultural policy toward music.

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BEYOND THE MAIN TOPIC



ART+MEDIA

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Listening to the City: Artistic Articulation of Unwanted Sounds in Open Public Spaces

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Translating Tradition: The *New Acropolis Museum* by Bernard Tschumi Architects

Tatiana Patrone

Against Biographical Essentialism: Re-evaluating Class and National Identity in the Early Reception of Brancusi

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Listening to the City: Artistic Articulation of Unwanted Sounds in Open Public Spaces

Abstract: In modern cities, noise caused by human activity increasingly shapes the individual's daily experience, being recognized as a factor that can seriously jeopardize the health, quality of life, and general well-being of the population. Starting from the observation that the city's soundscape has drastically changed and that excessive noise exposure has long-term consequences, this paper explores the possibility of manipulating noise through artistic practices. The central assumption is that noise is not merely an acoustic surplus to be eliminated, but a complex phenomenon which, through carefully targeted interventions, can be artistically articulated. To explore this, the paper employs a methodology that combines theoretical and qualitative analysis. The first part of the paper examines the nature and perception of sound through the theoretical approaches of phenomenology and affect theory. The second part analyses artistic practices in open public spaces that use "undesirable" sounds as the basis for artistic expression. Key findings indicate that noise need not be treated solely as a communal problem. Through artistic articulation, it can serve as a resource for defining and shaping the identity of space. By doing so, undesirable sounds become building blocks of meaning and a means of spatial articulation in the contemporary urban environment.

Keywords: perception of sound; noise; public space; sound art; soundscape.

Noise in urban environment: A century-long problem

Noise in urban environments is recognized as one of the most pressing problems of modern society. As early as 1972, the World Health Organization officially declared it one of the main sources of environmental pollution,¹ and today, noise is considered the third most harmful form of pollution, right after air and water pollution.²

¹ World Health Organization, *World Health Report: Prevention of Noise-Induced Hearing Loss* (World Health Organization, 1997), 55; Noise Control Act of 1972, Pub. L. No. 92-574, "Identification of Major Noise Sources: Noise Criteria and Control Technology" (1972).

² Sunday Olayinka Oyedepo, "Noise Pollution in Urban Areas: The Neglected Dimensions," *Environmental Research Journal* 6, no. 4 (2012): 259–71; Karina Mary de Paiva Vianna, Maria Regina Alves Cardoso, and Rui Manuel Calejo Rodrigues, "Noise Pollution and Annoyance: An Urban Soundscapes Study," *Noise & Health* 17 (2015): 125–33; Wafullah Shirzad, Mohammad Mukhlis Behsoodi, Samiullah Samir, and Samsoor Pasarlay, "A Comprehensive Review of Noise Pollution and Its Impact on the Urban Environment," *Kardan Journal of Engineering and Technology* (2022).

Furthermore, contemporary research indicates that chronic exposure to environmental noise can seriously endanger hearing and result in irreversible physiological damage.³

The first mention of noise as a social problem dates back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when urbanization and industrialization significantly changed the soundscape of cities. According to Karin Bijsterveld, it was during this period that the first anti-noise campaigns and citizens' associations emerged against urban noise.⁴ The first such association was founded in New York in 1908, named the "Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noise". Similar movements soon developed in European cities such as London and Paris, where campaigns, exhibitions, and conferences aimed to raise awareness of noise as a socially unacceptable phenomenon. Noise is then defined as a public health problem affecting the mental state and overall quality of life of citizens, after which the idea emerges that noise control is a necessity and a civilizational need. In this context, the problem of urban noise is predominantly discussed in European intellectual circles, which interpret noise as a "brutal assault on mental well-being".⁵ Although members of the social elite were often the most vocal critics of the noise, they did not leave the city; instead, they sought their own oasis of peace within it. Some authors link these views to the then-dominant idea that "the bourgeois home should be a refuge from the outside world".⁶ Foundational studies in soundscape ecology once estimated that natural sounds account for only about 6% of the total soundscape of cities, while almost three-quarters are made up of sounds produced by people, machines, and technology.⁷ Historical forecasts indicated that this relationship would worsen, as the average noise level in cities was projected to increase by about one decibel each year due to constant technological development.⁸ Not long after, this projection largely materialized in contemporary urban settings.⁹

Recent scientific research confirms that man-made sounds now overwhelmingly dominate the urban environment, effectively masking natural sound sources.¹⁰ This

³ World Health Organization, *Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region* (Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2018).

⁴ Karin Bijsterveld, *Mechanical Sound: Technology, Culture, and Public Problems of Noise in the Twentieth Century* (MIT Press, 2008), 93–125.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Michael Cowan, "Imagining Modernity through the Ear," *Arcadia* 41, no. 1 (2006): 124–46, as cited in Karin Bijsterveld, *Mechanical Sound: Technology, Culture, and Public Problems of Noise in the Twentieth Century* (MIT Press, 2008).

⁷ Raymond Murray Schafer, *The New Soundscape* (Berandol Music, 1969), 6, as cited in Raymond Murray Schafer, *The Book of Noise* (Price Milburn and Co., 1970), 15.

⁸ Raymond Murray Schafer, *The Book of Noise* (Price Milburn and Co., 1970), 3.

⁹ Bryan C. Pijanowski et al., "Soundscape Ecology: The Science of Sound in the Landscape," *BioScience* 61, no. 3 (2011): 203–16; Elie Grinfeder et al., "What Do We Mean by 'Soundscape'? A Functional Description," *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution* 10 (2022): 894232.

¹⁰ Francesco Aletta and Jian Kang, "Promoting Healthy Sonic Environments," *Lancet Planetary Health* 2, no. 2 (2018); Karmele Herranz-Pascual et al., "Going Beyond Quietness: Determining the Emotionally Restorative Effect of Acoustic Environments in Urban Open Public Spaces," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 16, no. 7 (2019): 1284; Andrew Mitchell et al., "Effects of Soundscape Complexity on Urban Noise Annoyance Ratings: A Large-Scale Online Listening Experiment," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 22 (2022): 14872.

growing concern over noise has led to an increased focus on quiet areas, particularly after the adoption of the EU Environmental Noise Directive in 2002,¹¹ which obliges member states to identify, map, and develop strategies for the protection and preservation of these areas. Quiet zones defined that way play a significant role in mitigating the effects of urbanization by ensuring access to relative quietness and promoting associated health benefits.¹²

However, while noise mitigation strategies remain central, the question arises: Is regulating noise levels always the only solution to addressing the issue of unwanted sound in public space? As a response to this problem, the manipulation of everyday sound material is developed through artistic practices that transform noise into an aesthetic and experiential phenomenon.

Since the period of industrialization, noise has been recognized as a social problem, but contemporary art responds to it in different ways, transforming it into artistic material. In the broadest sense, noise is defined as unwanted or disturbing sound that disrupts the acoustic balance of an environment and can have harmful consequences for human and animal health.¹³ While noise arises as a by-product of urban life, *sound art* emerges as an intervention in the existing soundscape. Unlike sound design, which has a functional role within media, film, or exhibition spaces, *sound art* does not aim to aestheticize sound. By focusing on understanding the sonic environment through listening, *sound art* is shaped as a spatially oriented artistic practice that treats sound as a tool for reflecting on the relationship between humans and their environment.

Building on these interpretations, the following section analyses the theoretical approaches that shape the contemporary understanding of sound (ranging from the phenomenology of perception to affect theory). It also explores artistic practices that use unwanted sounds as the basis for expression. Through this framework, listening is elevated beyond mere perception, becoming a means of understanding the city. In doing so, sound art offers a new perspective on how we engage with our urban environments, inviting us to reconsider the role of noise not just as a problem to be regulated, but as a medium for artistic exploration and reflection.

¹¹ European Parliament and Council, Directive 2002/49/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council Relating to the Assessment and Management of Environmental Noise, 2002.

¹² Gunnar Cerwén and Frans Mossberg, "Implementation of Quiet Areas in Sweden," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 16, no. 1 (2019): 134.; Henk Booij and Frits Van Den Berg, "Quiet Areas and the Need for Quietness in Amsterdam," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 9, no. 4 (2012): 1030.

¹³ Pervez Alam, Tarique Ahmad, Lubna Maqbool, Raisul Islam, Shadab Ahmad, and Mufeed Sharholly, "Noise Pollution Mitigation and Control in Urban Areas near International Borders through 2D Noise Mapping," *Scientific Reports* 14 (2024): 30582.

Sound art—establishing the official terminology

The term *sound art* first appeared in the 1970s and gained wider recognition following the 1979 Sound Art exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA). Although the term is not definitively defined, it is commonly used to refer to artistic practices that use sound as a primary material for expression, such as sound installations, sound sculptures, public space interventions, and site-specific projects that explore the relationship between sound, space, and the listener.¹⁴

The roots of the discipline lie in the avant-garde experiments of the early 20th century. The Futurist Luigi Russolo, in a manifesto published in 1913 entitled “The Art of Noise” (it. *L'arte dei rumori*), calls for the artistic articulation of noise and the introduction of “the noises of machines, explosions and urban bustle” into music. He believed that music, confined to its own language and cut off from the sounds of the real world, had become self-sufficient and static, while the contemporary life around it advanced to the rhythm of the modern age. His *intonarumori* instruments produced the sounds of the industrial age, laying the foundation for the idea that noise could become artistic material.¹⁵

During the same period, Erik Satie developed a series of pieces titled *musique d'ameublement*, conceived as background music for spaces that integrate into everyday life by rejecting the traditional framework. His conception of music as an ambient element of space was in line with the ideas of Jean Cocteau, who articulated the need for a simple, immediate “music for every day”, freed from excessive elitism and pretentiousness. These ideas anticipated later explorations of the relationship between sound and space and paved the way for the development of contemporary artistic practices focused on the manipulation of sound material. They were subsequently taken up by the Dadaists and Surrealists and, after the Second World War, further developed within the Fluxus movement and experimental music. At the same time, John Cage radically redefined the boundaries between music and silence, while Pierre Schaeffer developed *musique concrète*: compositions created by manipulating recorded, everyday sounds. Satie's ideas of music as part of the environment and Cage's conceptual approach converge in a new understanding of sound as a spatial experience, which, during the second half of the twentieth century, became the foundation for the development of *ambient music*, where sound functions as a constitutive element of atmosphere and a carrier of the overall spatial experience.

The term *sound art* has been imprecise since its inception and is the subject of constant debate among researchers, artists, and audiences.¹⁶ As there is no universally accepted term to encompass all practices of sound art, a wide range of terms emerged

¹⁴ Leigh Landy, *Understanding the Art of Sound Organization* (The MIT Press, 2007), 9–21.

¹⁵ Michael Clarke, *The Concise Dictionary of Art Terms* (Oxford University Press, 2010); Douglas Kahn, “The Latest: Fluxus and Music [1993],” in *Documents of Contemporary Art: Sound*, ed. Caleb Kelly (Whitechapel Gallery, MIT Press, 2011).

¹⁶ Sanne Krogh Groth and Holger Schulze, eds., *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Sound Art* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 10–11.

in the second half of the 20th century to cover the various approaches to working with sound. The most significant of these are:

1. **Organized sound**—term introduced by composer **Edgard Varèse** as early as the 1930s to denote music based on an expanded spectrum of sounds—from new percussion to electronically generated tones and recorded ambiance.
2. **Sonic art**—term denotes artistic forms in which sound is the basic unit of expression; in a broader interpretation, it is considered a subset of music, that is, of works of organized sound. In German, the term *Klangkunst* (Motte-Haber) is a rough equivalent, whereas in the Romance languages, the less common translations *art sonore* and *arte sonora* are not used consistently.
3. **Audio art**—a term that is occasionally used as a synonym for *sonic art*, but in certain countries, such as the Netherlands, is most commonly associated with radio art and radioplay (*radiophonic work*).
4. **Musique concrète**—a concept developed by Pierre Schaeffer, based on compositions of recorded and processed everyday sounds.
5. **Elektroakustische Musik**—term introduced by Meyer-Eppeler and Eimert for music that combines acoustic and electronic sources of sound.
6. **Ars acustica**—term used by Klaus Schöning for works at the boundary between musical composition, sound installation and radio art.
7. **Musique acousmatique**—term introduced by François Bayle for music listened to through speakers, without a visible sound source, emphasizing the experience of pure perception.
8. **Soundscape composition**—term used by R. Murray Schafer and Barry Truax for compositions that interpret sounds from the natural and urban environment.
9. **Sound-based music**—term proposed by Leigh Landy as a common framework for all practices that are based on real sound materials instead of written notation.
10. **Non-cochlear art**—term introduced by Seth Kim-Cohen, which describes the art of sound that transcends the physiological act of listening and includes conceptual, social, and theoretical aspects.
11. **Aural architecture**—term developed by Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter to explore the acoustic properties of space and the way architecture shapes the perception of sound.

Each of these terms highlights a different aesthetic, technological, or methodological aspect, but none fully encompasses the diversity of practices that today fall within the field of sound art.¹⁷ Despite this terminological fluidity, *sound art* functions as an umbrella category that allows artists to experiment with sound and explore it through spatial, social, and affective dimensions, transcending the boundaries of traditional

¹⁷ Landy, *Understanding the Art of Sound Organization*, 9–21.

music.¹⁸ This diversity reflects a plurality of approaches, as well as the fundamental fact that sound art eludes rigid classification, remaining an interdisciplinary field in constant theoretical expansion.

Theoretical framework

Sound as an ecological component

Given that noise pollution is a current global problem, two dominant schools of thought can be distinguished.

The first theoretical approach is rooted in concerns for public health and highlights the lack of social efficacy and responsiveness to acoustic environments. In this sense, authors such as Raymond Murray Schafer point out that the key problem for the absence of human action is the fact that “noise is a sound we have learnt to ignore”.¹⁹ Schafer warns that many noise abatement programs are based solely on a negative approach that needs to be adapted to a more positive tone. Instead of asking how to get rid of noise, he asks: “Which sounds do we want to preserve, encourage, and multiply? Once we know that, the tedious or destructive sounds will become obvious enough on their own, and we will understand why we must remove them.”²⁰ In this way, R.M. Schafer calls for a paradigm shift: from combating noise to enhancing exclusively desirable sounds. Schafer’s approach, which is based on “organizing, limiting, mapping and preserving sounds to re-establish harmony”, has been adopted by artists in various ways.²¹ However, recent discourse introduces an essential oppositional perspective that challenges this idea. Sophie Arkette, for instance, criticizes Schafer’s “urbanist prejudice”, pointing out that the noise he speaks of in a negative context is precisely what “makes a city a city”, and that “it cannot sound any different”. Arkette provides an essential counter-perspective to the view of noise as mere environmental degradation, advocating instead an approach that demonstrates how city residents develop specific listening techniques and the ability to recognize sounds in their everyday environment.²² This shift moves the discourse from a passive model of exposure toward an active model of sonic agency. The second theoretical approach views noise as a complex phenomenon that, precisely because of its chaotic nature and polysemy, becomes an inspiring subject for research. This is the position of Michel Serres, who understands noise as “the background of all communication”: the fundamental layer from which all possibility of expression and meaning arises. For him, noise is not a disturbance but a vital principle of the world.²³ Thus, in the contemporary under-

¹⁸ Groth and Schulze, eds., *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Sound Art*, 10–11.

¹⁹ R. Murray Schafer, extract from *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Alfred Knopf, Inc., 1977); revised edition (Destiny Books, 1993) 3–4, 7–8.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ari Y. Kelman, “Rethinking the Soundscape: A Critical Genealogy of a Key Term in Sound Studies,” *The Senses and Society* 5, br. 2 (2010): 16–17.

²² Ibid. Sophie Arkette, “Sounds Like City,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 21, no. 1 (2004): 159.

²³ Caleb Kelly, ed., *Documents of Contemporary Art: Sound* (Whitechapel Gallery, MIT Press, 2011).

standing of sound, two paradigms clash: one that strives for acoustic order and regulation, and another that accepts noise as a reality of city life.

Sound as spatial experience

Contemporary artists are re-examining the way we perceive the world through listening. This approach is based on the very physical nature and manifestation of sound, best described as “sound as a phenomenon”.²⁴ This heightened awareness is a direct response to the overwhelming saturation of mechanical noise by reclaiming the concept of „embodied hearing”. This shift toward the physical resonance of sound finds its theoretical foundation in the phenomenology of perception. Rejecting the subject-object dualism, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that perception is not a mental representation of reality, but an existential relationship between the body and the world, in which meaning is born from their mutual interaction. In this context, sound becomes an extension of the body into space, a bridge between the sensory and the spatial, between the listener and the listened-to.²⁵

For decades, many composers and theorists have similarly focused attention on the very act of listening. Among them, Pierre Schaeffer occupies a special place, who in “*Traité des objets musicaux*” (1966) writes: “For years we have been practicing phenomenology without knowing it, which is much better than talking about it without applying it.” With this statement, Schaeffer points to the practical and experiential origin of his methodology, which, although it does not rest on an explicit philosophical program, is fundamentally phenomenological in character. Many authors engage in the interpretation of Schaeffer’s text, and some relate it to Merleau-Ponty, for example, Makis Solomos,²⁶ while others, such as Brian Kane, find more similarities with Husserl.²⁷ As a key work that enables a poetic understanding of Schaeffer’s theoretical framework, Solomos cites *Phenomenology of Perception*, in which Merleau-Ponty elaborates on the idea that listening is not a reflective activity.

Brian Kane, whilst acknowledging the strong influence of Merleau-Ponty on Schaeffer, argues that the structure of his phenomenological approach can be understood within the Husserlian tradition of thought. According to Kane, Husserl’s analysis of consciousness and perception provides a conceptual framework that illuminates how Schaeffer formulates concepts such as the sound object, reduced listening, and the acousmatic field. Although Schaeffer does not directly reference Husserl, his approach to sound shows similarities with Husserl’s analysis of perception. According to Husserl, the meaning of a phenomenon does not arise from the sensory datum itself, but from an act of consciousness that synthesizes it and connects it into a whole

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (Routledge, 2012).

²⁶ Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 18–19.

²⁷ Ibid.

experience.²⁸ Husserl defines this process through the concept of ‘shadings’ (Ger. *Ab-schattungen*), referring to the continuous series of unique and partial perspectives through which an object is revealed to the subject. As consciousness links each new perception with the previous ones and encompasses them into a single whole, an object is formed before us which is recognized through the various acts of consciousness. If we were to remain at the level of individual perceptions, we would have only a series of transient qualities, but thanks to synthesis, consciousness constitutes an object that transcends the very flow of perception. Husserl calls this act of mental synthesis *noesis*, while its intentional correlate is the *noema*—an object of consciousness that does not exist independently of it, but is constantly formed within it. It is in this sense that Schaeffer’s *sound object* is not a thing in itself, but a phenomenon that arises in the relationship between sound and the consciousness that perceives it: the result of a process in which perception organizes auditory impressions into a meaningful, aesthetic, and experiential unity.²⁹

According to Brandon LaBelle, sound art emerges as a link between the real and the imaginary world, the intuitive and the transient. In this way, sound demonstrates its ability to establish dynamic interactions among different fields of experience and perception, while simultaneously exploring the relationships among the sensory, emotional, and spatial layers of perception.³⁰ Listening is understood as a reflexive practice through which the subject enters into an immediate dialogue with their surroundings. Through this dialogue, sound becomes a form of spatial thinking and is usable for formulating “spatial research insights, proposals and spatial constructions.”³¹

Sound as affect

While the phenomenological framework allows for an understanding of sound as an experience shaped in the listener’s consciousness, affect theory shifts the focus to what precedes that experience—to the bodily processes, intensities, and energetic dynamics that produce the affective experience of sound. In this sense, “sound as affect” becomes a field of research that connects perception, the body, and energy, revealing how sound acts before it is interpreted, named, or translated into meaning. This perspective aligns with the James-Lange tradition, which posits that physiological arousal precedes emotional recognition, suggesting that sound triggers a bodily resonance before a cognitive label is applied.³² While other models, such as Lazarus’ appraisal theory, argue that even immediate affective responses require a degree of

²⁸ See: Edmund Husserl, *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (Collier Macmillan, 1983), 104–110; and *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorion Cairns (Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), 34–37.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Brandon LaBelle, *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art*, 2nd ed. (Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 319.

³¹ LaBelle, *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art*, Appendix.

³² William James, “What is an Emotion?” *Mind* 9, no. 34 (1884): 188–205; Carle Lange, *The Emotions* (Williams & Wilkins, 1922, first published in 1885).

cognitive evaluation, the focus here remains on the autonomy of affect as a pre-discursive intensity.³³

In the anthology *The Affect Theory Reader*, Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth position affect as a central concept of contemporary humanities. In their introductory essay, “An Inventory of Shimmers”, they write that affect arises in an *in-between-ness*, in the capacities of bodies to act and be affected, as a *force of encounter* which takes place between human, non-human, and material entities. They interpret affect as a “gradient of bodily capacity” and the constant changing of the body’s capacities through the rhythms and modalities of encounter. Citing Spinoza’s famous maxim that “no one has yet determined what the body can do”, the authors emphasize that the body’s capacity is never defined by the body itself, but always within the framework of the relations and contexts of the forces that surround it. Gregg and Seigworth emphasize that there is no single, general theory of affect, nor, in their view, should one be established. Their methodological stance is based on a deliberate refusal of universalizing definitions, and they propose a plurality of approaches, defending the fluidity and elusiveness of affect. It is precisely this position that Eugenie Brinkema interrogates, arguing that the concept of affect has become too amorphous and abstract and needs to be re-tied to form and structure as the concrete conditions of affective experience. In *The Forms of the Affects*, Brinkema re-examines the dominant currents of contemporary affect theory and their tendency to equate affect with formless energy. By returning attention to form, detail, and materiality, Brinkema restores affect’s conceptual precision and aesthetic power, transforming it from an elusive force into a specific way in which text and art produce meaning and experience. In this way, a phenomenological and affective understanding of sound together allows noise to be understood as a dynamic event in which body, space, and meaning constantly interact.

Artistic practices and the transformation of noise into aesthetic material

One of the earliest and most influential approaches in contemporary sound art is based on field recording and the interpretation of sounds from the real-world environment. Artists use authentic recordings from their immediate environment as a basis for creating complex soundscapes in which the boundary between documenting an existing state and artistic composition is erased. The pioneer of this approach, Max Neuhaus, was the first to use sound in *site-specific* installations, believing that the perception of space also depends on what we hear.³⁴ His installation *Times Square* (1977–1992, reactivated in 2002) was a constant, harmonic tone placed beneath a ventilation grille, blending imperceptibly with the city’s noise. A similar approach is evident in the work of Jacob Kirkegaard, who, in *Hypogeum*, leads the listener on a sonic

³³ Richard S. Lazarus, *Emotion and Adaptation* (Oxford University Press, 1991); Richard S. Lazarus, *Psychological Stress and the Coping Process* (McGraw-Hill, 1966).

³⁴ Kelly, ed., *Documents of Contemporary Art: Sound*.

journey through Copenhagen's network of sewer pipes, tunnels, and reservoirs.³⁵ The composition is based on authentic recordings of these spaces and reveals the complex infrastructure of the invisible city—a system of crucial importance for its daily life and health. Kirkegaard thus makes audible that which is usually hidden, transforming the technical functionality of the urban fabric into a meditative, almost sacral experience of space. Another similar example is the work of Emeka Ogboh, who uses field recordings of everyday life in Lagos (e.g., sirens, traffic noise, generator hum, the voices of street vendors, and fragments of music) to create a realistic portrait of the city.³⁶ In the *Lagos Soundscapes* project (2008–), he does not attempt to eliminate noise, but rather embraces it as the primary material from which he builds an image of the city. In his work, noise becomes a document of the urban experience, an indicator of the place's rhythm, chaos, and vitality. Ogboh views the city as a “composer” that creates its own music and uses listening to recognize social changes and community identity.

An alternative approach within sound art shifts the focus to listening as an active, communal, and reflective practice. In this context, artists do not create new sounds; they enable the audience to hear what is present in their everyday lives, which usually goes unnoticed. The pioneer of this approach, Hildegard Westerkamp, also the most influential woman working with sound, defines and begins working in the genre of acoustic ecology, composing with sounds from the immediate environment.³⁷ In fact, in the 1960s, she established herself as a pioneer in the given field, specializing in guided walks called *soundwalks*, in which she invited participants to listen to the sounds of their surroundings as part of a shared ecosystem, connecting art, ecology, and bodily sensibility. Similarly, since 1996, Akio Suzuki has been developing the *oto-date* project, based on the simple yet highly poetic concept of listening.³⁸ In various cities and landscapes, he marks “listening points” on the ground and invites passers-by to pause and listen to their surroundings. With this gesture, Suzuki shows that art need not create new sounds but can reveal those that already exist, yet are usually overlooked. In a related manner, Janet Cardiff and her husband, George Bures Miller, share a very similar approach; their contribution to this field is reflected in the so-called *audio walks* they have been doing since 1995.³⁹ Their installations connect sound, theatre, and narrative into spatial compositions that expand our perception of reality. Additionally, Stijn Demeulenaere, in collaboration with the duo *The Third*

³⁵ Jacob Kirkegaard, “Hypogeum,” Fonik—Official Website, accessed October 4, 2025, <https://fonik.dk/works/Hypogeum.html>.

³⁶ The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)—Artists, “Emeka Ogboh,” accessed October 4, 2025, <https://www.moma.org/artists/134122-emeka-ogboh>.

³⁷ Hildegard Westerkamp, Hildegard Westerkamp Official Website, accessed October 4, 2025, <https://www.hildegardwesterkamp.ca/>; Landy *Understanding the Art of Sound Organization*, 41, 112; Kelly, ed., *Documents of Contemporary Art: Sound*, 17.

³⁸ Akio Suzuki, “Biography,” Akio Suzuki Official Website, accessed October 4, 2025, <https://www.akiosuzuki.com/en/bio/>.

³⁹ Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller: Official Website, Cardiff Miller, accessed October 4, 2025, <https://cardiffmiller.com/>.

Guy, is realizing the project *Everybody Lives Here*, which explores the relationship between the listener, space, and its sonic environment. Drawing on the idea of attentive listening—“stop for a moment, listen, observe”—the artists invite the audience to recognize sounds that often pass below the threshold of conscious perception.⁴⁰ For instance, in his work *Metro (untitled)*, created during a workshop led by Guy De Bièvre, Stijn Demeulenaere explores the soundscape of underground urban flows.⁴¹ The project began as a conceptual connection between Brussels and São Paulo through an exchange of recordings of their metro systems, but as it evolved, the focus shifted to the rhythms, vibrations, and acoustic echoes of the spaces. This shift reflects the essence of Demeulenaere’s approach, where everyday environments become places of listening and attention, thereby revealing a complex, often unnoticed dimension of the city.

A third type of artistic approach views sound as a means of conceptual and temporal articulation of reality. Within this framework, artists examine how sound intertwines with perception, emotion, and meaning. One such example is Peter Cusack’s *Favourite Sounds Project*, where he seeks to uncover through interviews what people consider to be positive sounds in their environment, in order to explore the emotional and ecological values of sound.⁴² In a somewhat different vein, Christian Marclay’s *The Clock* uses a 24-hour video collage to combine thousands of film scenes showing clocks in real time, turning the rhythm of everyday life into an audiovisual phenomenon. Every moment in the video corresponds to real time, so the work simultaneously functions as both an artwork and a clock, playing with perceptions of time and rhythm.

In more recent practices, artists are expanding the boundaries of the audible and the material. A prime example is Chiara Luzzana, who critics describe as one of the most innovative and visionary sound designers on the contemporary scene.⁴³ Her work explores sound as both aesthetic material and a means of communication, through which emotions, perception, and the identity of space are shaped. For instance, in her *The Sound of City*, cities are “performed” using their own sounds (e.g., traffic, mechanical rhythms, and ambient tones) which are transformed into musical compositions and multimedia installations. In addition to her artistic endeavors, Luzzana also uses everyday sounds in the context of *sound branding*, creating distinctive acoustic identities for companies and events. This duality of purpose blurs the line between artistic and commercial expression, turning sound into a means of shaping the sensory experience and the collective memory of a place.

⁴⁰ Stijn Demeulenaere, “Everybody Lives Here,” Stijn Demeulenaere Official Website, accessed October 4, 2025, <https://stijndemeulenaere.be/elh.html>.

⁴¹ Stijn Demeulenaere, “Metro (Untitled),” Stijn Demeulenaere Official Website, accessed October 4, 2025, <https://stijndemeulenaere.be/metro-untitled.html>.

⁴² Peter Cusack, Bandcamp Page, accessed October 4, 2025, <https://petercusack2.bandcamp.com/>.

⁴³ Chiara Luzzana: Sound Designer and Composer, Chiara Luzzana Official Website, accessed October 4, 2025, <https://www.chiaraluzzana.com/>.

While these diverse approaches differ in their methods and objectives, they all share a fundamental belief in the power of sound as a medium for deepening our connection to the world around us. Whether it's uncovering hidden urban soundscapes, encouraging active and communal listening, or using sound to explore time and space, each of these artistic practices demonstrates how sound can transform our perception, shape our experience, and redefine the way we engage with the environment. In doing so, these works reveal the potential of sound art to expand our understanding of the sensory world.

Conclusion

From the industrial noise of the Futurist to contemporary ecological and participatory installations, *sound art* shows how noise has transformed from an unwanted phenomenon into a means of aesthetic and social exploration. Artists no longer eliminate noise: instead, they listen to, transform, and contextualize it, recognizing it as an integral part of the acoustic landscape. In this process, listening becomes an active and reflective practice: a way of understanding the city, its rhythms, and the tensions that drive it.

Urban environments are fundamental to this argument because the contemporary city represents the most concentrated intersection of social, technological, and spatial dynamics. Unlike other environments, the urban context is a site of permanent acoustic negotiation, where noise serves as a physical manifestation of the city's metabolism. In cities, the soundscape is shaped by a multitude of factors, from the constant hum of traffic and industry to the subtle, often unnoticed sounds of nature. The dense concentration of people, buildings, and activities creates a dynamic, ever-evolving acoustic environment, where noise is both an inevitable byproduct and a reflection of the pulse of urban life. Centering the analysis on the city allows exploration of how these 'unwanted' sounds serve as essential records of human presence within a shared, high-density fabric. This affirms the idea that listening is an active exploration of the relationship between humans and their environment. Contemporary *sound art* thus becomes a model for reflecting on urban reality and a means of aesthetic articulation, critical reflection, and dialogue with the world. This work presents an initial framework for further research into how artistic practices of listening can contribute to shaping urban space and to understanding noise as an unavoidable component of our everyday lives.

When we learn how to listen to the city, we recognize that noise is a product of life unfolding within it. In the city's soundscape, its distinctive identity is shaped: a layered configuration of tones and rhythms through which the city reveals its spatial, social, and affective layers. This identity is not fixed but constantly changes in response to everyday life, the atmosphere of the place, and how people use and experience space. Artists who work with unwanted sound in open public spaces show that the boundary between cacophony and harmony is revealed only when we learn to

listen carefully. Through the artistic articulation of noise, what is perceived as undesirable becomes material for a deeper understanding of space and the coexistence of urban areas with nature. In this way, open public spaces, often characterized by a high density of overlapping unwanted sounds, are transformed into places of attention, learning, and dialogue. By listening to the city, we realize that it is constantly speaking to us; we just need to learn *how* to hear it.

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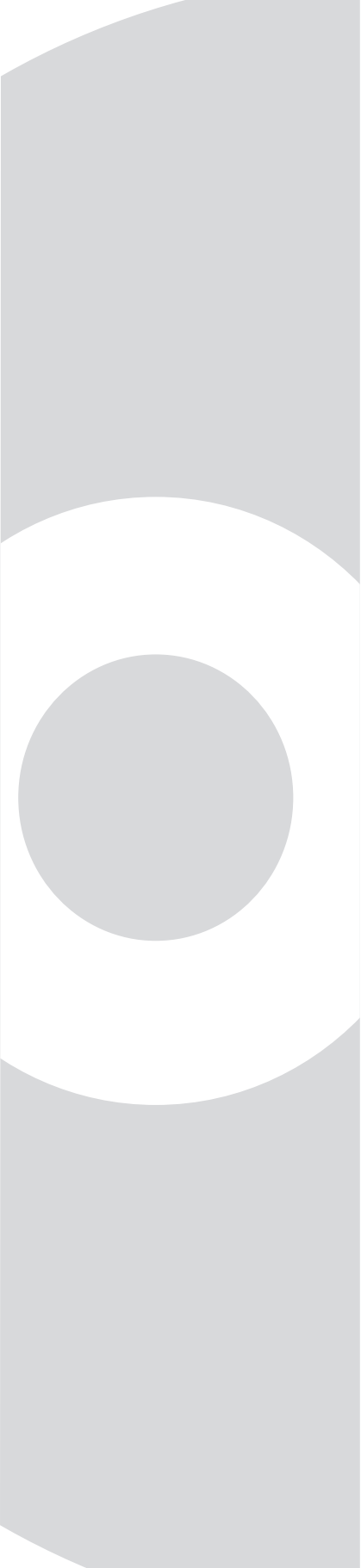
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Translating Tradition: The *New Acropolis Museum* by Bernard Tschumi Architects¹

Abstract: The study explores the conceptual approach to architectural design of the *New Acropolis Museum* in Athens, designed by Bernard Tschumi Architects. The main hypothesis of the study is that the team of architects led by Bernard Tschumi bases the architecture of the *New Acropolis Museum* on the concept of translation of several key elements of the traditional architecture of the Athenian Acropolis (the classical canon of architecture, the spatial arrangement of the Acropolis objects, and the idea of the Acropolis architecture as processual architecture) using the language of modern architecture. Furthermore, through the procedures of de- and recomposition, fragmentation, superimposition, juxtaposition, and, finally, montage of the elements of the Acropolis architecture, Tschumi departs from the classical language of architecture, building a type of postmodern and, further, performative architecture. This is not a question of a logocentric form of translation based on mimesis, a second-hand copy in which the “original” is lost, nor a form of transgressive act, but of translation as an enfolding process of transformation during the act of transportation. In the theoretical context, the study draws on the work of Mieke Bal, Walter Benjamin, Gilles Deleuze, and Charles Jencks.

Keywords: the Athenian Acropolis architecture; classical canon of architecture; the *New Acropolis Museum*; translation; performative.

The *New Acropolis Museum* by Bernard Tschumi Architects

An architectural competition for the new museum of the Athenian Acropolis at the *Makriyianni* site² was announced in 2000, following a series of debates over its location and three unsuccessful competitions.³ The requirements of the new competition referred to: (i) an innovative approach for incorporating then the recently discovered on-site archeological excavation of the *Makriyianni* site into the Museum so that

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the ARCHTHEO’24 Theory and History of Architecture Conference (Istanbul, Turkey, 15 November 2024) and has since been considerably expanded and revised.

² This site was named after the general of the Greek Revolution, Yannis Makriyannis, who lived and owned land there. See: Myto Veikou, “Bonds and Affinities among Successional Spaces: Spatial Performativity in the New Museum of the Acropolis in Athens,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 49, 1 (2025): 99.

³ See: Dimitrios Pandermalis, “The Museum and Its Content,” in *The New Acropolis Museum*, ed. Bernard Tschumi Architects (Skira Rizzoli Publications, 2009).

the archeological remains would become an integral Museum installation; (ii) the use of natural light to create the sense of an outdoor environment keyed to the original outdoor siting of the majority of the Museum's exhibits; (iii) establishing a balanced relationship between the Museum architecture and the urban environment in which it is located and (iv) the ability of visitors to view the Parthenon on the Acropolis and the architectural sculptures in the Museum at the same time.⁴ The teams gave different answers to the competition's set requirements. After extensive analysis and exhaustive discussion, the Committee decided that the first prize would go to the proposal designed by the architectural team of French-Swiss architect Bernard Tschumi, then dean of the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia University in New York along with Michael Photiadis, an Athens-based architect.⁵

Bernard Tschumi and Michael Photiadis offered a conceptual solution for the new museum, which is based not only on establishing a dialogue with the urban environment, the archeological excavations of the *Makriyianni* location, and the Athenian Acropolis (in visual context) but also with the tradition of architecture, culture, and art of the Athenian Acropolis. Namely, the concept of the *New Acropolis Museum*, we could say, is based on translation of several key elements of the Athenian Acropolis architecture tradition: (i) the classical canon of the architecture; (ii) the urban/spatial arrangement of the Acropolis objects, and finally (iii) the traditional idea of the Acropolis as a processual architecture, using the language of modern architecture. Translation here is not seen as mimesis, a second-hand copy in which the original is lost, nor as a form of transgressive act, but as a form of re-expression of what was the past in the language of the architecture of the present. Driving on Mieke Bal's studies of cultural analysis,⁶ we could say that translation is seen here as an elastic, enfolding process of transformation (like *folding of thought* upon which Deleuze insists) during the act of transportation. It is not a question of a logocentric, one-dimensional (from source to destination) form of translation, based on "resembling the meaning of the original"⁷ where "meaning is the endpoint of interpretation – centripetal, transhistorically stable, and transmedial"⁸, but an enfolding form of translation which mediates in both directions, transport/carry over/move the object of translation into new contexts, cross over the gaps of irreducible differences, retains something of the "original" text and enriches it with new sense and meaning.⁹ It is an elastic form of translation, elastic, because it suggests both unbreakable stability and a near-unlimited extendability.

⁴ Ibid., 26.

⁵ Ibid., 28.

⁶ See: Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities. A Rough Guide* (University of Toronto Press, 2002).

⁷ Walter Benjamin, "The Task of Translator," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (Schocken Books, 2007), 78.

⁸ Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities*, 69.

⁹ See: Ibid., 64–65.

Translating the classical canon of the Acropolis architecture

Namely, the architecture of the Athenian Acropolis is based on the classical canon, which, according to Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis, can be summarized through three levels of formal arrangement/devices: (i) *taxis*; (ii) *genera*, and (iii) *symmetry*.¹⁰

Taxis is a prescribed arrangement of parts that produces a coherent work and whose sublevels are the regular grid and the tripartition.¹¹ The regular grid can be rectangular (where straight lines meet at right angles and where the distance between these lines is equal or unequal, in which case the change is regular) or polar (based on concentric or eccentric circles). For example, the arrangement of the columns of the Parthenon architecture is based on a regular rectangular grid, while the arrangement of the Acropolis buildings is based on an eccentric polar grid (See Figure #2). The tripartition further divides the building into three parts, usually two on the sides and one in the middle. The Propylaea, for example, consists of three parts, the central part and the two side parts. The tripartite division also divides the building into, for example, facade, plan, and section, and then each of these parts again into three parts and so on.¹² The facade of the Parthenon, for example, is divided into three parts stylobate, columns and main cornice. Each of these elements (with an exception of the Doric column¹³) is further divided into three parts: the stylobate consists of three levels, and the main cornice of three elements— architrave, frieze and cornice. “In general, *taxis*, whether in its overall grid schema or tripartition, should be seen as applied *hierarchically* from the whole to the part, one grid or tripartition schema is *embedded* in another. In fact, this hierarchical correspondence among divisions in applying *taxis* schemata from the general to the particular, from the total to the last detail, is [...] a means through which the norm of noncontradiction is respected.”¹⁴

Genera—refers to classical orders: Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, etc. Doric columns in the architecture of the Acropolis appear, for example, at the Parthenon, and Ionic columns at the Erechtheum.

Finally, *symmetry*—refers to the principle of arranging the composition of elements based on two schemata: one determined by rhythm, and the other governed by architectural figures¹⁵ ((a) *overt* like: parallelism, contrast, alignment, and analogy; or (b) *subtle* figures like: aposiopesis, *abruptio*, epistrophe, oxymoron, turning the corner, feminine cadenza, *takterstickung*, and ellipse). In the architecture of the

¹⁰ See: Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis, eds., *Classical Architecture: The Poetics of Order* (The MIT Press, 1992), 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹² See: *Ibid.*, 18.

¹³ The Ionic and Corinthian columns consist of three parts: base, shaft and capital, but the Doric column consists of two parts: shaft and capital. However, the capital of the Doric column consists of three parts: abacus, echinus and neck.

¹⁴ Lefaivre and Tzonis, *Classical Architecture: The Poetics of Order*, 18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 117.

Acropolis, all buildings are essentially symmetrical in structure. In the Parthenon, for example, a symmetry based on the uniform rhythm can be found in the arrangement of columns, while a symmetry based on the peripteral logic of partitioning (a-b-a/b-c-b/a-b-a)¹⁶ can be found in the building plan.

However, the basic principle of designing a classic building was as follows: once the architectural composition is defined, when it is arranged with *taxis*, that is, when the division is established, then it is populated with architectural elements, the classical orders, for example, guided by the principle of *symmetry*.¹⁷ Therefore, symmetry spoke to how these elements should be arranged and positioned in relation to one another and to the overall structure of *taxis*.¹⁸ However, in Bernard Tschumi's architecture, we encounter a rather different approach.

Tschumi does not follow this logic in the design process, but breaks down the Acropolis architecture into parts (decomposing, for example, its structure) and then recomposes them through fragmentation, superimposition, juxtaposition, and, finally, (architectural) montage. The elements of classical architecture (tripartite division, grid, columns, and symmetry) are, in a certain sense, retained and present in the architecture of the *New Acropolis Museum*, but they are now expressed in a new way, using the language of modern architecture.

Namely, the New Acropolis Museum has five levels: one underground, the ground floor, and three above ground. The base (*Level -1*)—level below the ground—is constituted by the archeological excavations of the *Makriyianni* site. These are remains of a settlement dating from the late fifth century BC to the late twelfth century AD, whose road layout determined the orientation of the Museum at this level. They are interspersed with pilotis, carefully located to avoid damaging the ruins. The entrance to the building and the lobby (*Level 0*) have voids and, in some places, transparent glass floors (with a texture dot pattern) that reveal these ruins beneath. A glass ramp, which offers a view of these archeological excavations, extends from the entrance and leads us (along a linear path) to the building's middle volume, that is, to the first floor. This glass ramp is also the first exhibition space of the Museum, called *the Gallery of the Slopes*. In this gallery, small finds are exhibited, mainly ceramic vases, reliefs, and inscriptions attached directly to prefabricated concrete wall panels, as well as free-standing sculptures on marble bases.¹⁹ These are finds from houses, sanctuaries, and tombs of people who lived on the slopes of the Acropolis. These finds provide insight into the various activities that occurred on the Acropolis slopes.²⁰ A monumental staircase and elevator located at the end of this ground-floor level take us to the first floor.²¹ The first floor (*Level +1*) of the building is divided into two

¹⁶ See: *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁷ See: *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ See: Pandermalis, "The Museum and Its Content," 34.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

sections by the building core and by its large central atrium: one for the exhibits from the Archaic Period (in the east and south wing) and the other for works from the Propylaea, the Sanctuary of Nike, the Erechtheum and objects dating from the classical period to the end of antiquity (in the west and north wing of this level).²² The hypostyle *Archaic Gallery* is located in the eastern and southern parts of this floor. The visit to this gallery begins in the northeast corner, from which the visitor gradually moves to the south side, where he/she encounters the richness of diverse architectural sculptures, freestanding votives, and minor objects that provide a vibrant picture of the Acropolis of the Archaic Period.²³ In this gallery, the concrete columns arranged in a regular, rectangular grid dominate the space, along with the free-standing figures scattered among the columns without following any rigid logic. From this floor, the visitor can take the stairs, escalator, or elevators to reach the second level (*Level +2*) of the Museum, which affords panoramic views of the *Archaic Gallery* and the *Gallery of the Slopes*, and then, in the same way to the third floor (*Level +3*)—*Parthenon Gallery* located parallel to the existing Parthenon of the Acropolis.²⁴ On this floor, the visitor encounters both sculptures from the Acropolis—from the Parthenon—and panoramic views of the Acropolis—the Parthenon. The installation of the Parthenon sculptures guides the visitor on a circumambulatory walk that enables a comprehensive view of their details and an awareness of the narrative behind their composition. In this gallery, we meet the chryselephantine statue of Athena, which introduces us to this gallery, and then the present and absent elements of the Frieze (located at a height between 1.5 and 2.5m from the floor) and the Parthenon metopes (located at a height of 2.5m from the floor between the stainless-steel columns). The glass facade allows natural light to pass freely between the columns and illuminate both the Frieze and the metopes. This gallery also houses the sculptures from the Parthenon pediment in the east and west wings. Going down the stairs across the second level, the visitor comes back to the first level which offers a complete and close-up view of the Caryatids of the Erechtheum, then the exhibits from the Propylaea (for example, the coffered ceiling and fragments of the Ionic capitals of the Propylaea) in the west wing, and the sculptures from the Temple of Athena Nike²⁵ in the northwest of the gallery. At this level, going from the west toward the north wing, the visitor also encounters figures from the Erechtheum frieze, as well as sculptures of the classical period, copies of classical sculptures from the Roman Imperial Era (in the central part of the north wing), and works from late antiquity and the beginning of the Byzantine Period.²⁶ Finally, the visitor crosses the *Gallery of the Slopes* once again, reaching the exit of the Museum. At this point, the exhibition program ends.

²² Ibid., 31.

²³ Ibid., 34.

²⁴ Ibid., 29.

²⁵ Ibid., 38–42.

²⁶ Ibid., 42.

The tripartite division, therefore, is present on a formal level, in the introduction of the three above-ground floors/levels where the *Gallery of the Slopes*, the *Archaic Gallery*, the *Parthenon Gallery* and the works from the Erechtheum, the Propylaia and the Sanctuary of Athena Nike (as well as objects dating from the classical period to the end of antiquity) are located. The tripartite division is also present in the selection of three different materials for these volumes—marble, concrete, and glass, but also in a play with the structural elements of architecture—points, lines, and surfaces, that is, columns/pilotis, paths/corridors, and floor and walls. This is the play with the well-known language of Tschumi's architecture, inspired by poststructuralist ideas of architecture as a text and dominantly expressed in the *Parc de la Villette* in Paris. A rectangular grid can be seen, for example, in the facades' structure and the arrangement of columns of the Archaic or the Parthenon Gallery, while a polar grid can be noticed in the rotational movement of the third volume of the building relative to the two lower volumes. Elements of *genera*—columns are dominant in the *Archaic* and *Parthenon Gallery* as well as in the level below the ground, while *symmetry* can be seen, for example, in the regular rhythm of the facade's elements, as well as through the figure of parallelism, since the *Parthenon gallery* is positioned parallel to the existing Parthenon of the Acropolis.

In this way, elements of the classical canon (*taxis*, *genera*, and *symmetry*) and the Athenian Acropolis are present in the architecture of the *New Acropolis Museum*, but now they are brought into a new relationship using the language of modern architecture. In other words, de- and recomposition are introduced, for example, through the placing of columns (points), the triangular pediment from the Temple of Athena (surface), and the Frieze and metopes (narrative lines) of the Parthenon through the different levels/floors of the Museum. Juxtaposition is introduced, for example, through the placement of present and absent pieces of the Frieze next to each other. Superimposition is present, for example, through the introduction of a transparent glass floor where the layers of the *Makriyianni* site are superimposed in a visual context with grid forms. Finally, fragmentation and montage²⁷ are present through the introduction of the narrative path of the Museum, filled with fragments of the Acropolis offering, at moments, for example, a close up view of the exhibits, a view from the distance, or from the space in between (in the case of the *Parthenon Gallery*—where visitors are placed in between the exhibits of the Parthenon and the Parthenon itself on the Acropolis. But what is important to note here is how these galleries/levels are connected.

Namely, if we exclude moving by elevators, Tschumi offers a conceptual solution that directs visitors from the east and south wing of the first level—the *Archaic Gallery* to the third level—the *Parthenon Gallery*, and then, from the third to the west and north wing of the first level where the elements from the Erechtheum, the Propylaia and the Temple of Athena Nike are more clearly visible (See Figure #3). What is this all about? At stake here is the evocation of re-expression of the spatial

²⁷ Tschumi was inspired by Sergei Eisenstein's film montage.

arrangement of the Acropolis objects based on the polar grid and terraced terrain on the one hand, and the introduction/re-expression of the traditional idea of the Acropolis as processional architecture on the other.

Translating the spatial arrangement of the Acropolis objects

As Bogdan Nistorović describes climbing the Acropolis: First, we come across the Propylaia, then “leaving the Propylaia, the first sight falls on the statue of Athena Promachos; it is in the foreground, and in the background, right and left are the Parthenon and the Erechtheum. After passing by the statue of Athena, the Parthenon emerges as the dominant element before us. It is not in the entrance shaft, but it is at the culmination point of the Acropolis; its first impression is over the corner, and the appearance over the corner is more vivid. [...] Moving on, the Erechtheum attracts our attention, and we see it around the corner, and our gaze is surprised by new motives: a different style, porch with the Caryatids, a new contribution to the vivid appearance.”²⁸ (Figure #1) However, what Nestorović does not mention, and what Constantinos A. Doxiadis observes, is that these objects are still arranged in a specific order, and that is (as we mentioned earlier) in a polar grid. (Figure #2)

The vivid character is also enhanced by the terraced terrain on which the objects of the Acropolis are located. Inspired by these ideas, Tschumi does not arrange the galleries in a single level, but introduces multiple levels, evoking the idea of climbing the terraced terrain of the Acropolis. This idea of climbing is closely related to the next idea of introducing a “processional path” of the Acropolis.

Translating the idea of the processional architecture of the Acropolis

In pre-Periclean and pre-Persian times, the Acropolis was the home of Athena and the other gods and heroes of Athens, and also the site where the most important festival in Athens, the Grand Panathenaia, culminated.²⁹ Hence, the importance of the architectural direction that enhanced the processional atmosphere inherent in the function of the Archaic Acropolis: its architecture, in concert with the Panathenaic procession, progressed step by step from the west, from the realm of the secular, the human, to the religious experience of divine epiphany at the east side of the *temenos*.³⁰

Similarly, on the classic Acropolis—the Periclean Acropolis—certain changes were made, but the tradition of processional architecture was preserved. For example, changes were introduced in the architecture of the Propylaia, which played a transitional role, leading the procession from lower ground to higher ground, from outside to inside, from profane to sacred. This transition was elegantly expressed in its broken

²⁸ Bogdan Nestorović, *Arhitektura starog veka* (Naučna knjiga, 1974), 309.

²⁹ Francis R. Rhodes, *Architecture and Meaning on the Athenian Acropolis* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 44.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

roofline and double pediments, which step up like a procession from west to east. This solution did not arise from structural requirements, but was rather the unique choice of an architect, Mnesikles, concerned with incorporating a strong visual impression of procession into his gateway, the moment of spiritual transition, that is, the moment of moving from one zone to another and climbing to the holy place of the Acropolis.³¹

This sacred procession is the basis of the design and the spirit of Tschumi's architecture of the *New Acropolis Museum*, but is now expressed in a slightly different way. It marks the transition from the western to the eastern field, from the "secular" (the archeological excavations of the *Makriyianni* site) to the sacred (field of religious elements of the architecture and art of the Acropolis), also from the lower ground to the higher ground, and finally from the outside to the inside. By entering the Museum, visitors enter the "processional/sacred path", getting acquainted with the fragments of the architecture, art, and culture of the Acropolis, but also becoming participants in the procession, implementing the mission of the *New Acropolis Museum* – the mission of preserving, protecting, but also celebrating the heritage, culture, art, and architecture of the Acropolis. This symbolism becomes stronger if we recall the role and symbolism of the pillars of the ancient temples of Athens. Instead of thinking about temple architecture in terms of ratios and measurements, ground plans and elevations, labels and structural origins, the Greeks thought in terms of phalanxes (for example, troops of police officers standing or moving in close formation) and triremes (wooden Greek or Roman galleys with three rows of oars), spears and shields, ropes and pulleys, sails and masts.³² Greek temples, as stated by John Onians, "if they were like anything, they were like phalanxes, that is, rectangular formations of armed warriors"³³. Namely, what Greeks saw in temple columns were people, Greek soldiers, officers, warriors, protectors, and *vice versa*, what they saw in people were "columns", that is, "protectors of their deities".

In this context, the idea of the presence of columns in the *Archaic Gallery* arranged in a regular grid would correspond to the phalanx-like scheme, that is, troops of soldiers, officers, warriors, and the people—museum visitors could be seen as (Greek) heroes, warriors, gods and protectors, or a step further, columns of contemporary culture and democratic, non-hierarchical society (evoked by the idea of the disorderly arrangement of sculptures among the columns and the free movements of visitors of this gallery). In other words, instead of the idea of the (Greek) warrior as a column – the protector of the temple, we now encounter the idea of museum visitors (who come from different parts of the world) as columns—the guardians and protectors of not only the material but also the immaterial, intangible heritage, culture and art of the Acropolis, Athens and, in wider context, the Greek civilization.

³¹ See: *Ibid.*, 54.

³² See: John Onians, "Greek Temple and Greek Brain," in *Body and Building: Essays on the Changing Relation of Body and Architecture*, ed. George Dodds and Robert Tavernor (The MIT press, 2022).

³³ *Ibid.*, 47–48.

Conclusion

Tschumi's work, the *New Acropolis Museum*, is an extraordinary act of preservation and protection of the heritage, culture, architecture, and art of the Acropolis, which goes beyond the concept of a museum purely as a place for preserving fragments of historical architecture and artworks. Using the language of modern architecture (de- and recomposition, fragmentation, juxtaposition, superimposition and montage), Tschumi translates the three key concepts of which the architecture of the Acropolis was based: the concept of the classical canon of architecture, the concept of the polar grid of the spatial arrangement of the object of the Acropolis and, finally, the concept of the Acropolis as a processional architecture, building *double coded* postmodern architectural work. This is not the usual *double coding* of postmodern architecture, which according to Charles Jencks is based on combination of the “language of the elite” and the “language of popular culture”³⁴, that is which speaks at least on two levels at the same time: “To architects and professional minority [on the one hand], who care about specific architectural meanings, and to the general public or local residents [on the other] who pay attention to things related to [...] traditional construction and way of life”³⁵, but about combination of two different syntax of architectural language, the one classic and the other modern. Furthermore, this combination is not based on mere juxtaposition, bricolage, quotation or pastiche, but on de- and reterritorialization, re-expression, that is translation as an elastic, enfolding form of transformation during the act of transportation. This is not a form of translation that relies on the principles of logocentrism, where the meaning is the endpoint of interpretation—centripetal, transhistorically stable and transmedial, but an elastic/enfolding form of translation that dissipates meaning, crosses over irreducible differences, keeps something of the original text and enriches it with new sense and meaning.

By translating the syntax of the classical language of architecture, Tschumi questions not only the classical approach to designing an architectural work but also the classical system of producing meaning. Classical design principles operate by fixing semantic relations before design decisions appear, thereby eliminating the interpretative gap through which meaning could emerge. Design becomes execution, not inquiry. In Tschumi's work, *a priori* semantic relations do not precede action. In other words, Tschumi's work of architecture is not a canonical object, but rather a textual machine in which the classic canon (a “national property” of Greece³⁶) is only one part of its content, that is, the production and construction of the tradition, culture, and national identity of Greece.

³⁴ See: Čarls Dženks, *Jezik postmoderne arhitekture*, trans. Olga Popović (Vuk Karadžić, 1985), 24.

³⁵ See: *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁶ See: Dimitris Plantzos, “Hellas Mon Amour: Revisiting Greece's National ‘Sites of Trauma,’” in *Contested Antiquity. Archaeological Heritage and Social Conflict in Modern Greece and Cyprus*, ed. Esther Solomon (Indiana University Press, 2021), 58.

By translating the polar grid and the idea of processuality of the Athenian Acropolis, the *New Acropolis Museum* becomes a place of preservation not only of material but also immaterial heritage, that is, the event.

By introducing a curvilinear, one-way path (composed of ramps and stairs), which leads us from the entrance, through the *Gallery of the Slopes*, the *Archaic Gallery*, the *Parthenon Gallery*, and then the elements of the Erechtheum, the Propylaea, and the Temple of Athena Nike, this Museum evokes the architectural processuality of the Acropolis. It invites visitors to take part in a new kind of procession, one that is not directly related to a certain festival, but rather to the ideology of the Museum itself. The *New Acropolis Museum* thus becomes a place for events where visitors (by the very act of entering and moving through the Museum) take on an active role in society, becoming protectors and guardians of the culture, art, and architecture of the Acropolis. The engagement of Museum visitors is not only visceral but also intellectual, realized through requests for participation that involve thought and movement. It is up to the visitors of the Museum to connect the exposed fragments of the culture and art of the Acropolis, to create a story, a narrative about the Acropolis, even new spatial practices of the Museum,³⁷ and at the same time to take part in the modern form of the processual act of preserving, protecting and “celebrating” the Acropolis.

The *New Acropolis Museum* is thus positioned as an institution that not only serves a descriptive, representational, or polemical role. In other words, it is not only a purely descriptive, representative museum (a picture of place, a representation of a place/architecture/event outside of time) nor only a discursive museum (one that stimulates debate, criticism, polemic about the exhibited objects using reason or argument),³⁸ but also a performative museum, the one that invites visitors “to create meaning” in the very act of performance, in this case, moving through the Museum. Performativity here is realized by action (movement/presence of the visitors and mental engagement), which physically, sensory, cognitively, and experientially acts by creating an event, which is in the place of telling about “something”. Greek culture thus becomes redefined as a *living culture*, rather than a fossilized essence suitable only for traditional museums,³⁹ reflecting the new strategy of the nation and the mission of the Museum.

³⁷ One of the forms of visitor engagement is expressed through the coin-throwing play enacted in the entrance’s large opening towards the basement excavation. Visitors throw coins upon the exit, after they have visited the Museum filling up the bottoms of the circular construction. (Veikou, “Bonds and affinities among successional spaces,” 108.) As Veikou describes: “These constructions seem to be transformed into ‘reservoirs of treasure’ through which the Museum is being acknowledged and enacted as a symbolic ‘golden’ place.” (Ibid., 110.)

³⁸ The auditorium located at the entrance and lobby area of the Museum, at the “beginning of the processional path”, could correspond to the Agora, located at the slope of the Acropolis where the beginning of the processional ancient path—the Panathenaic Way started, that is to the place of debate and intellectual discussion.

³⁹ Traditional museums, “through careful selection of certain elements of the past and the elimination of others, [...] engage [visitors] in a rather unsophisticated play of historical remembering, as well as forgetting, in order to produce a viable national identity. More than constructing a nation’s sense of itself, [traditional] museums tend to construct their own viewers, be they nationals or tourists, as subjects of a logocentric, elitist, privileged discourse [...]” (Plantzos, “Hellas Mon Amour,” 58.) In their efforts to construct their visitors as subjects of their own rhetoric, museums promote a hegemonic version of national identity, constructing both the nation’s past and the nation itself as the guardian of that past. (Ibid., 58.)

By de- and reterritorialization of material and immaterial traces/elements and syntax of classical language of the Acropolis architecture, Tschumi encourages conflict over *a priori* synthesis, fragmentation over unquestionable unity, “madness” and play over careful management and production. He breaks down meanings, showing that they are never transparent but socially produced. The *New Acropolis Museum* is thus caught in the act of constantly producing meaning. Its meanings are never fixed, but always deferred, context-dependent, and produced by interpretation, or different forms of translation. In other words, it becomes a field of reading/creating meaning in the act of performing the procession, rather than the transmission of the (fixed) meaning.

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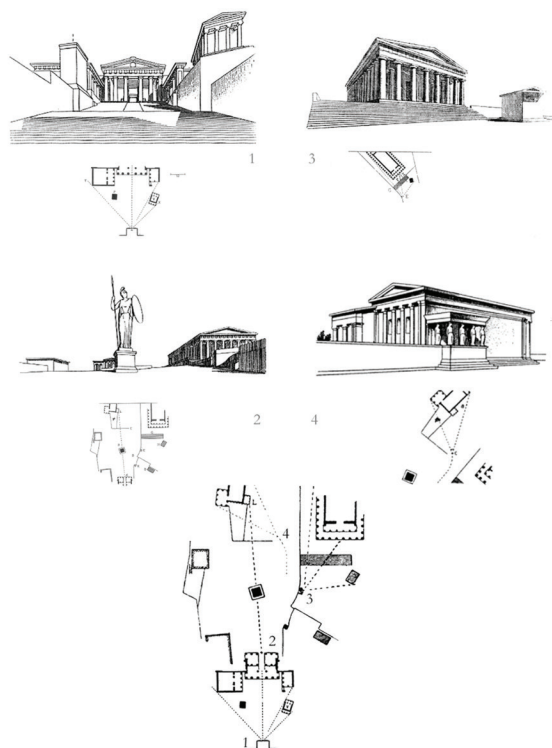
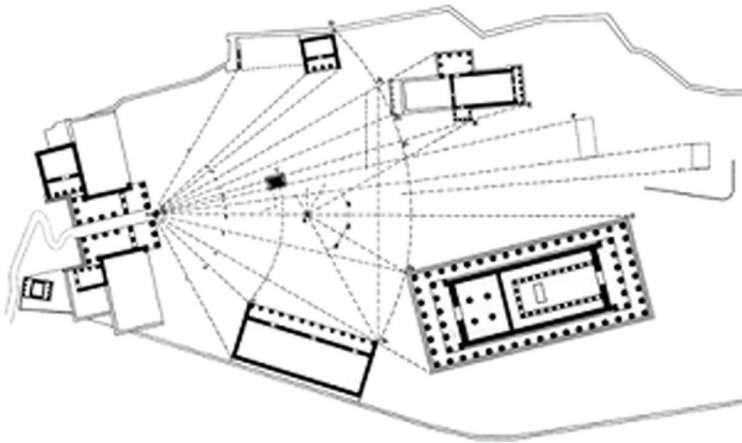
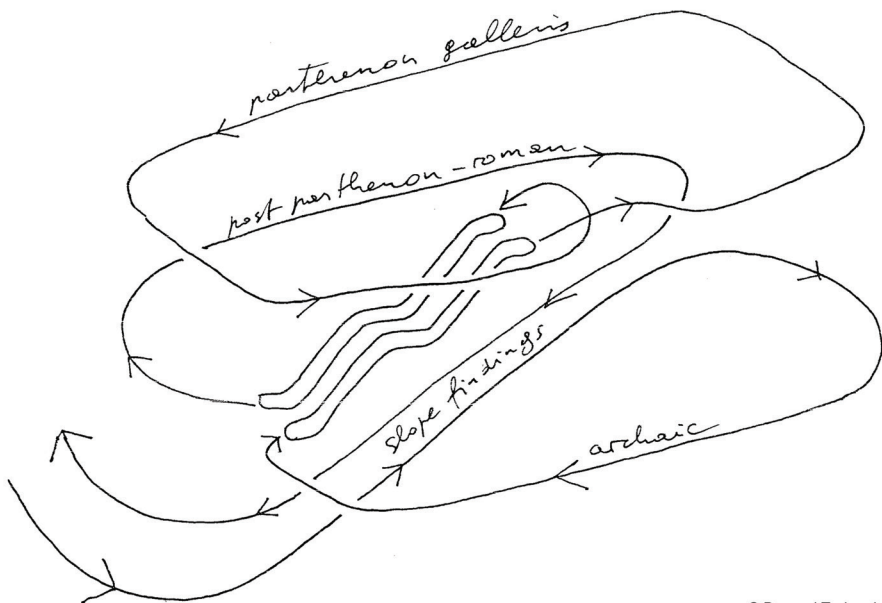


Fig. #1 Drawings of the Acropolis complex. Source of illustration: Auguste Choisy, *Histoire de l'Architecture*, Tome 1 (Gauthier–Villars, 1899), 412–18, <https://archive.org/details/bnf-bpt6k6417116t/page/412/mode/2up>; Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).



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Fig. #2 Polar grid schema applied to the Acropolis by Doxiadis. Source of illustration: Constantinos A. Doxiadis, *Architectural Space in Ancient Greece*, trans. and ed. by Jacqueline Tyrwhitt (The MIT Press, 1972), 37. © Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



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Fig. #3 Circulation diagram of the *New Acropolis Museum* in Athens by Bernard Tschumi. Source of illustration: Bernard Tschumi, "Conceptualizing Context," in *The New Acropolis Museum*, ed. Bernard Tschumi Architects (Skira Rizzoli Publications, 2009), 83.

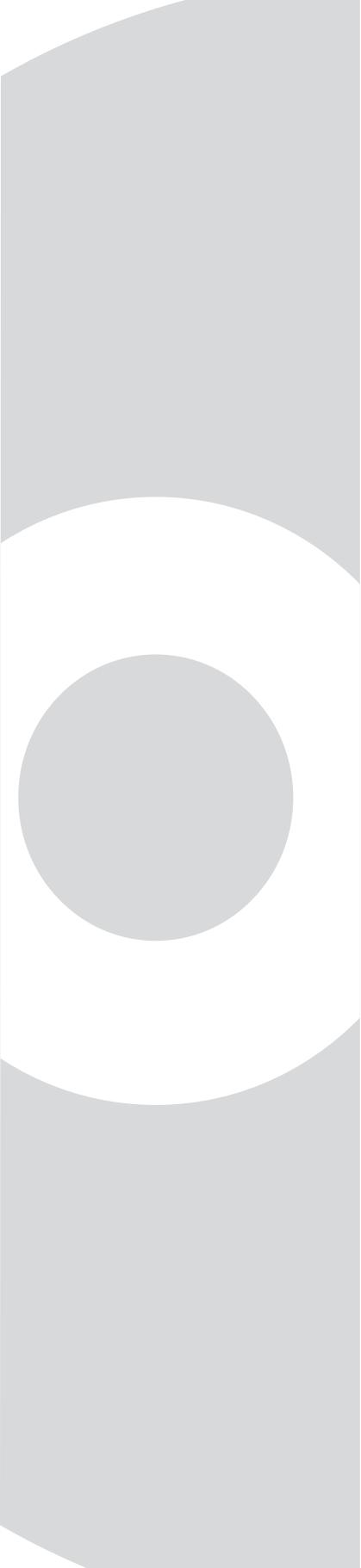
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Against Biographical Essentialism: Re-evaluating Class and National Identity in the Early Reception of Brancusi

Abstract: The paper argues that it is time to rewrite the biography of Constantin Brancusi, moving away from the classic narrative that casts him as a “Romanian-born peasant”. I trace this narrative to the early Brancusi scholarship that saw his national identity and class status as definitive of his aesthetic. Rather than relying on aesthetic categories such as “primitive”, “archaic”, “rural”, “simple”, etc., it is time to come up with a more nuanced and historically accurate account of Brancusi’s early life and to develop a new vocabulary that would allow us to do justice to his life and to his art. A new account is not possible without a critical re-examination of the existing concepts in terms of which his origin story is told.

Keywords: aesthetics; Brancusi; sculpture; nationalism; cosmopolitanism.

Introduction

“Only when I am dead, Petre!” This was Brancusi’s reply to his close friend, Petre Neagoe, in response to the suggestion of writing his biography. Brancusi’s fame, success, and international appeal were such that an eventual need for a biography was apparent even before he grew old, and Neagoe was by no means the only one who was eager to get started. But because Brancusi took “biography” to mean more or less “eulogy”, he insisted that no biography be published during his lifetime. After Brancusi’s death in 1957, however, there was no shortage of biographical narratives. When these did start appearing, a certain origin-story gradually was created, according to which A Romanian-born peasant, Brancusi came from Hobița. He learned the art of woodcarving from local craftsmen, and after receiving his education in Bucharest, he traveled to France on foot in 1904. While in Paris, he studied art at the *École des Beaux-Arts*, and then briefly worked for August Rodin. He left Rodin, however, realizing that ‘Nothing grows under the shadow of a big tree’, and he spent the rest of his life in France developing his own sculptural aesthetic and forging his own artistic path. The cluster of concepts that speak to Brancusi’s roots invariably includes: “peasant” and “Romania”.

The main goal of this paper is to problematize these notions and to reopen the inquiry into Brancusi’s origin story. The narratives that made concepts such as “peasant” and “Romanian-born” so prominent in understanding Brancusi’s life and work

were offered by his critics in the 1960s and 1970s, and so my focus will be on the literature from that time period. It was around that time that many of Brancusi's younger friends and acquaintances (who outlived him by some 30 years) published their recollections, memoirs, and reflections. This was also the time when some of his countrymen and expatriates responded to publications in the West with their own interpretations of Brancusi's early years. Petre Pandrea, Vasile Paleolog, and Petru Comarnescu (to name just a few) argued that Brancusi's life story has been simplified and misinterpreted, and that it ought to be understood in a more complex and historically accurate set of concepts. After this initial dialectic of the 1960s and 1970s, however, these discussions died out, and the Brancusi narrative became what we today know it to be: every biography starts with "born in Hobița, Romania, to a family of peasants", etc.

The focus of my inquiry will be on the accounts of Brancusi's art and life that were offered in the 1960s and 1970s. Of course, some earlier narratives about his life began to appear in the press while he was still alive, but as Brancusi explicitly rejected offers from those who wanted to write his biography, these early accounts were usually short literary vignettes that offered little more than anecdotes about meeting Brancusi at his studio.¹ Brancusi's origin story congealed, as it were, shortly after his death in 1957. Many who knew Brancusi personally and understood both his art and the trajectory of his life were compelled to write biographies of their friend². The preservation of his studio at *11 Impasse Ronsin* and the later relocation of it to *the Center Pompidou* also occasioned reflections and publications dedicated to his body of work and national identity.³ The relatively short period from 1957 to the early 1970s was therefore a significant historical moment when the name "Brancusi" came to mean what it still does today. During the half-century that followed, literature on Brancusi has grown exponentially, but the dominant biographical narrative remains essentially the same, juxtaposing his humble origins in the village of Hobița with his eventual recognition, fame, and financial success in Paris.⁴

¹ See, for instance, Oscar Chelimsky, "A Memoir of Brancusi," *Arts* 32, no. 9 (1958): 18–21; Angus Wilson, "A Visit to Brancusi's," *New York Times*, August 19 (1923); M. M., "Constantin Brancusi: A Summary of Many Conversations," *The Arts*, July (1923): 15–17; Christian Zervos, *Constantin Brancusi: Sculptures, Peintures, Dessins, Témoignages* (Éditions Cahiers d'Art), 1957; Malvina Hoffman, *Sculpture Inside and Out* (Bonanza Books, 1939); Dorothy Adlow, "Brancusi," *Drawing and Design* 2, no. 12 (1927): 37–41.

² See Carola Giedion-Welcker, *Constantin Brancusi* (George Braziller, 1959); Peter Neagoe, *The Saint of Montparnasse* (Chilton Books, 1965), and Christian Zervos, *Constantin Brancusi: Sculptures, Peintures, Dessins, Témoignages*.

³ See Jean Cassou, "Brancusi," *Cahiers d'Art* 31–32 (1957): 11–12; Pierre Guéguen, "Témoignage: L'aventure Brancusi," *Aujourd'hui: Art et Architecture* 28 (1960): 14–21; Ionel Jianou, *Brancusi* (Éditions d'Art, 1963); Michel Seuphor, *La Sculpture de ce siècle: Dictionnaire de la sculpture modern* (Éditions du Griffon, 1959).

⁴ There are some notable exceptions to this narrative that either move away from the 'Brancusi myth' or that put emphasis on Brancusi's rigorous formal training in Romania. See Sidney Geist, "Brancusi," *Artforum* 7, no. 5 (1969): 24–29; Sidney Geist, *Brancusi: The Kiss* (Harper & Row, 1978), and Sidney Geist, *Brancusi: A Study of the Sculpture* (Hacker Art Books, 1983) as examples of moving away from viewing Brancusi as a simple Romanian peasant, and Sanda Miller, *Constantin Brancusi* (Reaktion Books, 2010) for a detailed biographical account that does justice to the Romanian educational system. Still, as I will show, Geist too sees Brancusi as an "intuitive" sculptor, and a large portion of Miller's book is dedicated to the village life of Romania—a life that Brancusi left behind at 11.

In what follows, I argue that it is time to re-examine the significance of Brancusi's national origins and to look at the claims concerning his "peasant Romanian roots" through a critical lens. This re-examination will allow us to better understand Brancusi's aesthetics and reflect on the role that his national identity played in it. In Section (I), I go over the narratives constructed shortly after Brancusi's death and show that they rely on a set of notions that supply the conceptual backbone of Brancusi's life, namely, notions such as "Romanian peasant", "child-like simplicity", and "primitive folk-art". My goal here is to draw explicit attention to how Brancusi's national identity was conceptualized, and how this conceptualization was seen as helpful in understanding his art. In Section (II), I turn to an early rebuttal offered to this conceptualization of Brancusi's life and art, offered by his compatriot Petre Pandrea. In a series of works, Pandrea sought to contextualize the concept of a "peasant" and to show that the West systematically misinterprets it. In Section (III), I turn to another aspect of Brancusi's identity that gets misinterpreted, namely, that he was a "Romanian" sculptor. Here too, following Pandrea's early critical narrative, I argue that it is time we take a more nuanced understanding of Romanian culture seriously and that we look more closely at regional identities (such as "Oltenian") instead. The paper concludes that a critical reflection on how we understand Brancusi's socio-economic status and his national origins shows that the time is ripe for a different narrative that no longer casts him as a humble "Romanian peasant".⁵

(I) Brancusi's "peasant" roots

From as early as the 1960s, in the eyes of the French public and art critics, Brancusi was understood as a "Romanian-born peasant" who left his native country and became a serious sculptor in cosmopolitan Paris. Jean Cassou, a major art critic and the founding director of the *National Museum of Modern Art* in Paris, had this to say about Brancusi:

Brancusi was a Romanian peasant. Although his native country lies close to those from whence our own Mediterranean civilization sprang, his own country preserves an appearance which is anterior to all civilizations. It still maintains an essentially prehistoric appearance. It remains at the stage of the primitive herdsmen, of gods and fables. A man issued from such beginnings must forge his own destiny. Brancusi's is an odyssey of the mountain-dweller who sets out for the town and meets on his way trees, animals, and spirits. He comes at last to the City of Cities,

⁵ This analysis of Brancusi's origin story is meant to be a case study into how national interpretation might influence our aesthetic appreciation of a sculptor's work. In Brancusi's case, this national interpretation was often coupled with assumptions related to his socio-economic origin as well. A full study of 'othering' of Eastern European and Balkan sculptors would go beyond the scope of this paper, but re-opening inquiries into the work and the life of sculptors such as Ivan Meštrović, Geta Brătescu, Dimitri Paciurea, and Boris Schatz is certainly warranted.

the giant Paris. The Wallachian shepherd, the friend of the stars and the flocks, has undergone a gradual metamorphosis.⁶

In his overall positive and in fact appreciative account of Brancusi, Cassou nonetheless refers to him as a “Wallachian shepherd”, “the herdsman from the mountains”, and “the primitive”. Cassou certainly aims—but hardly succeeds—in using these as terms of praise for someone whose sculptural insight was both profound and authentic. Brancusi, Cassou concludes, stands in his studio as “a Vulcan at his forge”, a “Jupiter on Olympus”—he is a creator in the primordial sense of the term, namely, free of all artistic influences and of all worldly trivialities. This “earthly demiurge” creates “essences”, “souls”, and “archetypes” of things because his vision is unpolluted by culture or civilization.⁷

Brancusi was understood in a similar way by art critics and historians in the United Kingdom (Sir Herbert Read), Germany (Carl Einstein), and Switzerland (Carola Gedion-Welcker). Alongside praise for his original, authentic, and pure sculptural vision, there is an origin-story that casts him as a peasant, whose humble beginnings connect him to some primordial aesthetics of the mountains, rivers, fields, and to the folk wisdom of a country untouched by civilization. Herbert Read, one of the leading supporters and promoters of modern art in the UK from the 1930s to the 1960s, held Brancusi in very high esteem. And yet, this is how he expressed the admiration of his new artistic vision:

His strength derives from the opposition of two determining principles: a childlike *naïveté*, which observes the world through innocent eyes, and a studied wisdom, deeply rooted in the past. Brancusi accepts existence as children do; at the same time, however, he penetrates intuitively into the sphere of Essence.⁸

The “studied wisdom” (which accompanies the childlike *naïveté*) is, for Read, the wisdom granted to Brancusi through intuition and not through cognition, reflection, clarity of thought, and concept, and contemplation. Even Brancusi’s most ardent admirer in the US, Sidney Geist—a sculptor himself—echoed this latter sentiment, saying that “*intuition* rather than *intellect* guided his hand”⁹.

Accounts such as these were prevalent in receptions of Brancusi, both early in his career and later, after his death. They position him conceptually closer to “outsider art” than to professional art. Of course, Cassou, Read, and Geist do not use the term “outsider art”, but the tone of their praise of Brancusi is tainted by their emphasis on his (by their accounts) modest background. His training at the leading Romanian art

⁶ Jean Cassou, “Foreword”, in *Brancusi*, ed. by Ionel Jianou (Tudor Publishing Company, 1963), 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Herbert Read, “Homage to Brancusi,” in *Brancusi*, ed. Christian Zervos (Éditions Cahiers d’Art, 1957), 34.

⁹ Geist, *Brancusi: A Study or Sculpture*, 143; emphasis added.

schools is downplayed in favor of his love of woodcarving, which he seems to have inherited from his native culture. He is said to have worked not for profit, but for the sheer love and joy of the activity. He is said to have a “pure”, “raw” vision in his communication of his “inner world”, and to have turned to unconventional (at the time) materials (such as wood) and methods (such as direct carving) to express this inner vision. Concluding his otherwise excellent study of Brancusi’s sculptural oeuvre, Geist says: “His intelligence is sweet, and his sweetness is intelligent.”¹⁰ All these concepts are precisely the ones that today are reserved for “outsider artists”—the children and the elderly, prisoners and the unhoused, in short, the self-taught artists who lack skill and education, but who make up for this by their dedication and enthusiasm.

Even some of Brancusi’s compatriots shared this conceptual approach. Ionel Jianou, one of Brancusi’s most devoted critics and admirers, discussing “The Mystery of Brancusi”, wrote that Brancusi’s “peasant extraction enabled him to express his solidarity with the spiritual universe of the prehistoric Man”¹¹ and that his sculpture is “reminiscent of primitive idols”¹². Jianou took Brancusi’s method of work (his direct carving) to be inherited from his culture in a mystical sort of way: “wood carving came easily to him, for it had been a time-honored tradition in his native region” and “oak was his favorite wood because he knew it well—he had only to recall the huge forests growing along the mountainsides on which he had spent his childhood.”¹³ Perhaps Jianou used these turns of phrase rhetorically only—surely, a craft does not come easily to us merely because we grew up in a particular culture, and it is not enough “to recall the forests” of one’s native land in order to be able to excel in direct carving. But Jianou adds the following reflection: “A man’s deepest and most lasting impressions are those of his first contact with reality. Brancusi was seven years old when he began to work as a shepherd in the Carpathian mountains. At night he looked up at the stars [...]”¹⁴ etc. So, for Jianou, not only does Brancusi appear to be essentially and fundamentally a peasant, but he also had virtually no chance of *not* being one—for the rest of his life—because this was his “first contact with reality”, which supposedly established a “deep and lasting” impression on him. On this account, Brancusi’s life is that of “a primitive” or “a peasant” because this was his destiny.

Today, accounts such as Cassou’s and Jianou’s might appear to be self-undermining.¹⁵ What they say about “peasants”, about the Carpathian region, and about

¹⁰ Geist, *Brancusi: A Study of Sculpture*, 181.

¹¹ Ionel Jianou, *Brancusi*, 12.

¹² Op. cit., 36.

¹³ Op. cit., 47.

¹⁴ Op. cit., 12.

¹⁵ The concept of “primitive” has been largely retired from art criticism today. Although it was historically widely used to describe non-Western art (especially art from African nations, Oceania, and the Americas), it is considered dated and offensive today. The term is not as commonly applicable to the art of the Balkans, but it was used by Brancusi’s early critics during the 1950s and 1960s. The body of scholarly literature both on the original use and connotation of the term “primitive” and on the subsequent critique of this term is quite extensive; see, for instance, Louis Lagana, “The Primitivism Debate and Modern Art,” in *IV Mediterranean Congress of Aesthetics* (2008): 1–10; Susan Hiller, ed., *The Myth of Primitivism* (Routledge, 1991); Colin

Romania is in poor taste, and we therefore may perhaps be tempted to treat them as benign expressions of the prevailing sentiments of their time. But this would be a mistake. It is well worth noting that any biographical sketch of Brancusi (not only in the 1960s but also in contemporary scholarship) typically mentions that he was “a peasant” and then weaves the story of his successes in light of this fact—as though tacitly we still think that “a man’s deepest and most lasting impressions are those of his first contact with reality”. In other words, the insistent labeling of Brancusi as “a Romanian-born peasant” (or saying that “his father was a Romanian peasant” and that Brancusi “came from a peasant stock”) invites the audience to consider these labels as capturing his artistic essence and as permanently attached to his character, whether he himself was aware of this or not.¹⁶

This classism becomes all the more evident if we reflect on the fact that this is not commonly done in biographical notes on Brancusi’s contemporaries. Rodin’s father was a clerk at a police department; Duchamp’s father was a notary public; Maillol’s father was a vintner; and Epstein’s father was a real estate broker. These facts, however, do not profoundly shape our understanding of their art in the way that Brancusi’s origins are supposed to help us understand his sculpture. Jianou’s chapter—“The *Mystery* of Brancusi”—casts Brancusi’s story as a *mystery*, namely, as a journey from “low”, “humble”, and “uncultivated” childhood to an eventual success in a worldly, sophisticated, and cultured Paris. There are no books with titles such as “The Mystery of Rodin”, “The Mystery of Maillol”, or “The Mystery of Epstein”—we do not seem to think that there is anything especially mysterious about a son of a police clerk, a vintner, or a real estate broker becoming a sculptor.

It is no wonder that many of Brancusi’s close friends saw accounts such as these as deeply offensive. Petre Pandrea, for example, dedicated his three-volume discussion of Brancusi’s legacy almost entirely to debunking the myth of his friend being a “Carpathian shepherd” who—at best—channeled folk-wisdom and childlike aesthetic simplicity, and whose work was to be understood as an extension of a “crude”, “primitive”, and “uncivilized” culture. Pandrea saw accounts such as these as offensive to Brancusi (and to his memory), to himself and to other Romanian intellectuals (who often shared similar backgrounds), and to Romanians more generally. His account of Brancusi’s life and artistic legacy spans over a thousand pages, and it includes numerous reflections on the term “peasant” and on the implications this term has for aesthetic categories that critics use in talking about Brancusi’s works.

Rhodes, “Unmasking ‘Others,’ Ourselves (and Others),” *Art History* 15, no. 3 (1992): 383–87; and Fred Myers, “‘Primitivism,’ Anthropology, and the Category of ‘Primitive Art,’” in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Michael Rowlands, and Patricia Spyer (Sage, 2006), 267–84.

¹⁶ To say that all scholarly work on Brancusi is guilty of classism would be a mistake, but there are numerous sources that link his aesthetics to his national (humble) origins. Usually, the conceptual bridge that makes this link possible is the claim that Brancusi’s vision was “intuitive” (see Sidney Geist, *Constantin Brancusi, 1876–1957: A Retrospective Exhibition*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1969) or the claim that he was working essentially in dialogue with other “primitive” cultures. See Katherine Jánoszky Michaelsen, “Brancusi and African Art,” *Artforum* 10, no. 1 (1971): 72–77, and Amelia Miholca, “Brancusi’s Involvement with African Art in New York,” *Critical Interventions: Journal of African Art History and Visual Culture* 9, no. 3 (2015): 179–90.

(II) Early Romanian responses: Petre Pandrea

Romanian intellectuals, who knew Brancusi well and understood Romanian culture, history, and socioeconomic reality, were skeptical of the “peasant” narrative from the start. As early as the 1960s, Brancusi’s friends (such as Pandrea and Vasil Paleolog) fought against classist interpretations of Brancusi in earnest, but they usually engaged the issue from the factual point of view, namely, by pointing out that the term “peasant” (if applicable at all) has connotations of which French or German critics were simply unaware. From as early as the 1960s, Pandrea, specifically, made it his mission to shed light on the social makeup of Romanian society and to put to rest the emerging narrative of a “peasant genius Brancusi”. In its massive undertaking, Pandrea’s three-volume analysis of Brancusi’s life and work stands out in the Romanian intellectual canon: it includes personal memories of a friendship spanning nearly three decades, but it also reflects on Romanian national identity, rich history, and distinct ethos. Brancusi was one of the most famous Romanians in the world, and in Paris he was widely seen as a *Romanian* artist. And yet what “Romanian” meant was poorly understood in the West, or so Pandrea argues. His three-volume answer to the question: “What is a Romanian artist?” was fortuitously occasioned by a long friendship with one of the greatest sculptors of the century.¹⁷

Pandrea begins by noting that the very term “peasant” (*moșnean*) has a complex meaning (let alone connotation). The Romanian term “*moșneni*” (singular, *moșnean*) refers to the class of free hereditary landholders of southern Romania, with origins dating back to the Middle Ages. *Moșneni* owned their land and passed it on from one generation to the next through inheritance, tracing ownership back to the original owner. Importantly, *moșneni*, were not bound to a feudal lord (as *serfs* would have been), and they were essentially free and autonomous. *Moșneni* had a robust set of rights and duties, and they were sharply distinguished from the subjugated peasantry in their social and economic status. According to Pandrea, Brancusi’s family were *moșneni*, not serfs. This means that they were self-employed, relatively well-off, and certainly literate and educated. As they were still living off their land, they were still “peasants” in the more general sense of the term, namely, as people whose primary source of income was agricultural, who were tied to a specific location (*via* ownership of land), and who lived in accordance with the seasons. The latter, however, does not

¹⁷ Pandrea’s work on Brancusi includes: *Brâncuși: Amintiri și exegeze* [Brâncuși: Memories and Exegeses], 1967; *Brâncuși: Pravila de la Craiova: Etica lui Brâncuși* [Brâncuși: The Craiova Rule: Brâncuși’s Ethics], 1976; and *Brâncuși: Amicii și inamicii. Sociologia lui Brâncuși* [Brâncuși: Friends and Enemies. The Sociology of Brâncuși], 2010. It is worth noting that Pandrea’s volumes are rather poorly edited—most of his work was written while he was a political prisoner, and some of his works were published after his untimely death in 1968 without editorial changes, let alone improvements. Still, the body of his work is remarkable in its scholarly ambition: although Brancusi remains the focal point of his discussion, the scope of his inquiry makes his work an intellectual history of Romania rather than a memoir of a friendship. Pandrea’s legacy has been attracting more attention recently, with the publication of the three-volume study of Brancusi and other works; for a brief overview of his philosophy of freedom, see Zamfir Ciceu, “Petre Pandrea și Spiritul Libertății,” *Saeculum* 40, no. 1–2 (2015): 215–21.

entail some mystical communion with the mountains, the forests, and the lakes, let alone believing in spirits and in fairy tales. Rather, living off the land structured family tasks around agricultural pursuits, which, in turn, were seasonal. For a young boy to be born into a family of *moșneni* meant being responsible for a set of regular tasks, one of which was to look after the livestock during the summer. So, if Brancusi had to look after the sheep when he was 7 years old, it did not make him a “Carpathian shepherd” or a “herdsman”.

Of course, we need not stop here—we could go further and ask: What is so lowly about being a “Carpathian shepherd” or a “herdsman”? And is it simply impossible to make a lasting contribution to modern art for someone who comes from a truly disadvantaged social and economic background? For Pandrea, however, it suffices to show that there is a sharp line demarcating *moșneni* from other social strata in Romania. Brancusi’s family certainly met the standards of status and wealth that were compatible with worldly aspirations, including artistic ones. Put differently, it was no more “mysterious” for Brancusi to have risen to his prominence and fame than it was for Rodin, Maillol, or Epstein.

Pandrea, however, goes further—he wants to defend the very notion of a “peasant” and to reclaim it as a term of praise rather than that of (tacit) contempt. To be clear, *contempt* is what he reads in accounts such as Cassou’s, Read’s, Jianou’s, etc. Understood correctly, the notion of a peasant reveals virtue, not vice. In its normative sense, namely, as a synonym to “authenticity”, “integrity”, “diligence”, “unaffectedness”, and “incorruptibility”, the term “peasant” very well could be applied to Brancusi. (In fact, Pandrea proudly calls himself a peasant, because his own origins were similar to Brancusi’s.) So, what is the normative connotation of the term? Pandrea’s narrative spans hundreds of pages, but his answer essentially boils down to two heads.

First, peasants are hardworking, self-reliant, and self-sufficient. As their work is essentially seasonal, after the autumn harvest, they turn to tasks related to the upkeep of the homestead—from carpentry and repair work to various crafts, from making new tools to caring for livestock and preserving food. Brancusi, as it is well known, was essentially self-sufficient in just this way: he made his own furniture, he put together his own stove (that he used both for cooking and for metalwork), he crafted his own tools, he prepared most of his food, he distilled his own plum-brandy, and he made structural repairs to his studio (from doorframes to water drainage). His studio was his “heaven”, and it was somewhat similar to a peasant homestead. Their similarity is not primarily in the “primitive” character, but rather in their self-sufficient and well-maintained functional order. Maintaining a studio space and living quarters constitutes an important part of a working sculptor’s lifestyle, and rather than employing help or delegating these daily tasks to others, Brancusi was the sort of sculptor who did not separate his sculptural work from other, more practical and auxiliary aspects of his life. This certainly would not have been the lifestyle of Mercié or Rodin, but it suited Brancusi. As Pandrea puts it, peasants possess “inventive and inquisitive spirit reaching genius” and “energetic naturalness” with which they work.¹⁸ And

¹⁸ Pandrea, *Brâncuși: Amicii și inamicii. Sociologia lui Brâncuși*, 60.

this is exactly what so many visitors to Brancusi's studio noticed—he was energetic, inventive, and fundamentally self-sufficient. To many, no doubt, there was something quaint and eccentric about “fashioning his own stove, carving benches for sitting”, or “frying his meat” in front of his guests. But arguably, Brancusi's craft and work come close to what we today consider a model of a versatile sculptor.

The second and, perhaps, a more philosophical aspect of “peasantry” consists, for Pandrea, in its connection to the notion of authenticity. Pandrea sees Western European cultures as succumbing to worldly epicureanism and hedonism: he equates Paris with Babylon and sees many trends of his day as signs of spiritual deterioration under the influence of materialism and immorality. Although not without its attractions, Paris came to represent for him urban decline. Brancusi's “peasant” way of living, on the other hand, Pandrea sees as a healthy, authentic alternative to the corruptions of the West. For Pandrea, Brancusi was a living epitome of this lifestyle and a personification of the ideas celebrated in rural identity.

There is little doubt that Pandrea's defense of the concept “peasant” is somewhat idealized. Although his political affiliations varied over the turbulent course of Romanian history, he always leaned toward “peasant populism” (*poporanism*).¹⁹ This tendency is clear in his praise for Oltenian culture—he saw the peasant lifestyle as one of authenticity, stoicism, and integrity, and he hoped that rural Oltenia could become a stronghold against the corrupting modernized West. But Pandrea's idealization of the “peasant” is importantly different from the connotation that the concept acquired in the West and that was associated with Brancusi's lifestyle and art by critics such as Cassou. While for the latter, the term “peasant” signaled simplicity, naïveté, and a lack of sophistication, for “peasant populists” (such as Pandrea), the term connoted ethical opposition to a corrupt culture based on hedonism and superficiality. The types of idealization of “peasantry” that can be traced in early Western receptions of Brancusi can be faulted on epistemic grounds for their *naïveté*. But what makes them truly objectionable is that they betray a classist attitude toward an artist of lower social status; this, in turn, leads to an aesthetic interpretation of his work through a set of concepts aligned with this attitude. Pandrea's account, on the other hand, while being a case of romanticization, is not guilty of this latter mistake.

(III) Brancusi's Oltenian roots

We can now turn to the second aspect of Brancusi's origin story, namely his “Romanian” roots. There is not one biographical note on Brancusi that fails to mention that he was a “*Romanian* sculptor” who “established his reputation in Paris” and who “worked in Paris most of his life”. Upon thought, there is something surprising about Brancusi's life in this light. He left Romania when he was 28 and never really

¹⁹ For a brief history of populism in Romania, see Ovidiu Lungu, “The Populism in Europe: Historical Development, Political Speech and Supporters of the Radical Right,” *Analele Universității din Oradea. Relații Internaționale și Studii Europene* 12, no. 12 (2020): 319–23. For a short note on Pandrea's political affiliations, see Aurel Sasu, “Petre Pandrea,” in *Dicționarul biografic al literaturii române*, vol. 2 (Editura Paralela 45, 2006).

returned. Although he traveled back to Romania on at least four occasions, he never stayed for long periods. He lived in Paris for over 50 years, and he left his studio, with all its contents (over 100 sculptural works, some 2,000 photographs and prints, as well as his tools, furniture, and library) to the state of France. Why do we still call him “a Romanian sculptor who worked in Paris most of his life”? And what does it mean to be a “Romanian sculptor” rather than a “French sculptor” or, simply, “a sculptor”?

Nearly all art critics and art historians from France, England, or Germany emphasize that Brancusi was “Romanian”—a fact that is key to understanding his aesthetics, sculptural methods, and lifestyle in Paris. His *Bird in Space* is said to be the Romanian “firebird *Maiastra*”, his *Endless Column* is said to be reminiscent of Romanian peasant-carved poles or village gates, and his method of direct carving (rather than modeling in clay) is said to be inherited from the traditional woodwork of his native land. Romania itself, on these accounts, is seen as an exotic country, which merits a special mention in the “Brancusi story”—it is a country of carved wood, of embroidered linen, and of altogether rustic charm. The roots of Brancusi’s iconography, then, are traced to a place quite unlike France (or Italy or Germany), to a place that brings different aesthetic and sculpting methodology to what Paris had to offer. While his contemporaries were sketching in clay and plaster, Brancusi was carving shapes out of wood, stone, and marble, and while most French sculptors were still working within the narrative figurative tradition, Brancusi sought after “animal essences” (of birds and fish). Since all of these innovations were foreign to Paris and to French sculptural tradition, they were seen as having been imported to the West from the Balkans, from the rural setting of Hobița.

Seeing Brancusi as a Romanian sculptor, however, tends both to elevate and to degrade Brancusi’s sculptural vision. On the one hand, he appears to be bringing fresh motifs into sculpture—“modern”, “abstract”, “avant-garde” are terms that take us away from the figurative sculptural traditions of France and Italy. In this context, “Romanian” means fresh and new, whereas “French” means stale and old-fashioned. But on the other hand, this artistic originality is seen as “pastoral”, “rustic”, “primitive”, or “folk”. Brancusi’s sculpture is said to be “minimalist”, “unaffected”, and “simple”. (By contrast, no one would call Rodin’s, Maillol’s, or Giacometti’s works “unaffected” or “simple”.) To be sure, critics add that Brancusi’s simplicity is very deep—his simplicity is “complexity resolved”, and so it is elevated to the level of artistic mastery. His works are “simple” in the sense that they get rid of all unnecessary details and reveal what is essential about his subject matter. Still, simplicity is seen as the direct consequence of Brancusi’s *Romanian* roots.

Brancusi’s compatriots, too, have always emphasized his background—in Romania, he is seen as a *Romanian* sculptor. He is celebrated as Romania’s greatest artist, with many educational institutions, streets, boulevards, cultural foundations, and awards named after him. Of course, even to his countrymen, the issue of Brancusi’s “Romanian” roots looked to be rather complicated—the story of his life can be seen through several different lenses in service of several different ideals. He is claimed to

be a quintessential Romanian artist by both Romanian nationalists and Romanian cosmopolitans, as well as by Romanian communists and Romanian democrats. Each of these ideologies sees him as Romanian for their own reasons and purposes. These interpretations are not borne of anything that Brancusi himself said—in the aphorism commonly attributed to him, he simply does not mention Romania. He does not mention France either. He talks about *sculpture*, but never about his origins. It is not that he concealed or denied his past—quite the contrary, all his life he was fond of Romanian food and music, and he went to the Romanian Orthodox Church every Sunday. But when he would speak of his art, he would never mention his roots, except for (on occasion) to compliment Romanian woodcarvers as being masters of their craft.

So, was Brancusi a “Romanian”? And if he was, what does it mean to be a “Romanian”? Pandrea says that a common joke between them ran as follows: “We are *not* Romanians, we are *Oltenians* and Europeans”.²⁰ It would certainly be an anachronism to call Brancusi “Romanian” in the present sense of the term. Romania today consists of three distinct regions, only two of which would have been “Romania” during Brancusi’s youth. Wallachia, Moldova, and Transylvania have distinct cultures, and Brancusi would have identified with only one of them, namely Wallachia. Wallachia lies in the south of the country, but this is still too broad a term—both Brancusi and Pandrea came from “*Little Wallachia*” or “*Oltenia*”, the southwest part of broader Wallachia. Bucharest, on the other hand, is part of “*Greater Wallachia*” and its culture is seen by Oltenians as not at all the same as their own.

These fine geographical and cultural distinctions are lost on most of us who do not come from Romania, but we can all relate to the concentric circles of regional identities we inhabit. In the late 1800s and the early 1900s, these local identities mattered quite a bit more than the national one that became much more prominent in the wake of the First World War. Brancusi, therefore, is likely to have thought of himself as “*Oltenian*” rather than “*Romanian*”, if he thought of his roots as definitive of his identity in the first place.

An Oltenian himself, Pandrea insists on this Oltenian identity of his friend (along with his own)—they both, Pandrea writes, were from “*Little Wallachia*” first and foremost. Brancusi was born in Hobița (Gorj County), and Pandrea in Balș (Olt County), separated by only some 100 kilometers; they both studied in Craiova—the center of Oltenia—and went on to study in Bucharest, although neither identified with the big capital. Craiova remained the city closest to Pandrea’s heart, and he remained convinced that Brancusi shared the sentiment. And so, for Pandrea, neither of them was *Romanian*—they were Oltenians, always. “*Little Wallachia*” is understood by Pandrea to have less French influence than “*Greater Wallachia*” (and, specifically, Bucharest). Romania, although it is very much its own country, had two historical European influences by the 1900s: Germany in the north and France in the south. When Brancusi studied in Bucharest, the city was known as “*Little Paris*”—its architecture and its culture were quite similar to those of France. By contrast, Pandrea argues,

²⁰ Pandrea, *Brâncuși: Amicii și inamicii. Sociologia lui Brâncuși*, 140 (emphasis added).

Oltenia managed to resist French influence and retain its own spirit. (This is debatable from the historical point of view, but this is how Pandrea saw his “Little Wallachia”.)

In his account of Oltenia, Pandrea very much wants to dispel the myth that rural Romania is fundamentally uncultured. Although few would describe Bucharest of the 1800s (let alone of the 1900s) as ‘backwater’ of Europe, when it came to Brancusi’s and Pandrea’s native lands—southwestern counties of Gorj, Dolj, and Olt—they were seen as decidedly less ‘cultured’ both by the Western art-critics and art-historians and by Romanians who came from the capital. Central to Pandrea’s argument is that Oltenian culture was home to a certain set of values, a canon or ethos that deserves recognition and praise rather than being labeled a lifestyle in the ‘backwater of Europe’.

Pandrea writes that he spent several decades developing a full account of the Oltenian system of value, and that he came to credit Brancusi for bringing this issue to his attention. When Pandrea made Brancusi’s acquaintance, he wrote that he first heard Brancusi talk about the “Oltenian Code of Ethics,” and, as a young jurist himself, he became interested in this turn of phrase. Could Oltenia have had a “Code of Ethics”—something that had its origins in historical sources, and that was passed on from one generation to the next? In the end, he came to see that Brancusi used the phrase more or less colloquially rather than in a scholarly way, but their way of thinking about Oltenian values has stuck with Pandrea for the rest of his life. His last work bears the title *Pravila de la Craiova*, where “Pravila” means canon, code, or ancient law. “This Code”, he writes, “was formulated in proverbs, in fairy tales, in legends, and popular verses, as an ethical, stoic, and rural code. The sources of the code are eminently rural, in the primordial sources.”²¹ The values of Craiova (or Oltenia) can be distilled into the following list:

- economy and temperance
- monogamous puritanism
- reverence for natural beauty
- reverence for greenery and wildlife
- good husbandry and resourcefulness
- regard for honest, productive work
- respect for familial and social authority
- commitment to real equality before the law
- understanding the need for sacrifice
- love, as a vital source of community and life more generally.

Pandrea saw Brancusi—both his life and his work—in light of precisely this list of values. He also saw them as uniquely *Oltenian* and, in many ways, as *not Parisian*. But to see these values as “Oltenian” is not to see them as parochial or primitive. There is nothing on the list of the Oltenian values that is not profoundly *human*, and many

²¹ Pandrea, *Brâncuși: Pravila de la Craiova*, 23.

of them—he argues—can be traced conceptually back to Hellenic Stoicism of Seneca or Marcus Aurelius.

Pandrea's account of Oltenian Ethics, no doubt, is one of exalted praise—his native land of “Little Wallachia” is described by him in extraordinarily optimistic terms. Pandrea's friend Peter Comarnescu (who was from Moldavia himself) went as far as to call it “Oltenian chauvinism”—he thought Pandrea's analysis was inflated: for Comarnescu, Pandrea's account read “fantastic”, “phantasmagoric”, “superficial”, and “simplistic”. We would do well, therefore, to treat Pandrea's work with a grain of salt and to treat it, at best, only as a starting point of an inquiry into Oltenian culture. Still, as Pandrea points out, Brancusi shared with him this devotion to their land. In fact, it was from Brancusi that Pandrea first heard a mention of “ethics of Craiova”—a point of view that he made his mission to make into a systematic account. In other words, Pandrea offers an account of what Brancusi's ethos consisted of and of its origins (in Oltenian culture), and he claims that this is how Brancusi himself understood his commitments and national identity. Whether this account is “phantasmagoric” or not and whether it is unduly “chauvinistic”, it certainly sheds light on what national origins, national identity, and national consciousness meant for a Romanian expatriate at the time.

Conclusion

In his reflection of Brancusi's legacy, Pandrea writes: “The most perfect and celebrated international art has the strongest national roots.”²² We enjoy connecting with artists from cultures other than our own, and in virtue of our shared humanity, we can relate to points of view that are quite different from what is familiar to us. No doubt, Brancusi is one of the world's most perfect and celebrated international artists, and it is no wonder that we are drawn to his Oltenian national roots. In order to engage his national roots, however, we would do well to stop using labels such as “Romanian-born peasant”, “Carpathian shepherd”, or “herdsman from the Balkans”—labels such as these should be left behind as unfortunate remnants of an essentially classist way of engaging artists whose social background does not fit into the expected mold. Commitment to ideals of internationalism and cosmopolitanism entails making an earnest effort to understand the meaning of artists' national roots, and looking into Brancusi's origin story should go beyond the stereotypical imagery of a “Romanian village”. Even setting aside the complex question of what degree his Oltenian roots influenced his aesthetics, we need to understand what “Oltenian aesthetics” means in the first place: we need to go beyond the iconography of village gateposts and folktales. A new, richer, and more informed narrative will help us develop aesthetic concepts beyond simple, folk, archaic, intuitive, and instinctual ones, and it will allow us to develop a different way of talking about Brancusi's art. At long last, and “Only after he is dead”, it is time to write Brancusi's biography.

²² Pandrea, *Brâncuși: Pravila de la Craiova*, 49.

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ARTIST PORTFOLIO

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Digital Typoetry: An Asemic Continuation

Abstract: This artist portfolio contextualizes my work with “typoems”—typographical asemic poetry exploring aphasic experience as a source of inspiration that reflects on the contingency of our interpretations. Collaged typographic fragments have a specific lineage within Concrete and Visual poetry made by graphic designers and artists engaged with printing processes. Digital design software extends and expands these earlier possibilities that were constrained by the physical limitations of typography by allowing the fluid conversion between letterforms and vectorized graphics, changes that facilitate an exploration of the boundaries between lettering and imagery. Included in this portfolio are examples of my work with typoems published by RedFox Press, Timglaset Editions, and the Post-Asemic Press; the book *CMYK – 52 Typoems :: 4 typefaces | 4 letters | 4 sections* (Timglaset, 2023) won a 45th STA100, The Society of Typographic Arts, Chicago, IL in 2023.

Keywords: Asemic Poetry; Typoetry; Concrete Poetry; Glitch Art; graphic design; Visual Poetry.

Treating language as a communications medium, or graphically as a visual material defines a tension that runs through the avant-gardes of the twentieth century and their heritage that continues with contemporary poetics. The visual compositions of Concrete poetry¹ link the visual aspects of printing and typography to pictorial concerns separate from the demands for legibility and ease of recognition that typically inform assumptions about both graphic design² and reading.³ My work with fragmentary and collage letterforms develops these concerns by linking them to issues of asemic poetry⁴ and aphasia: specifically the instability of language recognition: I have been exploring an experience I had while driving behind a truck with a big logo painted on the back—large, gothic capitals—that simply refused to resolve into coherent lettering for me. I knew there were letters there, and I could recognize that the curves and uprights were text, but it refused to become coherent as *lettering*.

¹ Nancy Perloff, *Concrete Poetry: A 21st-century Anthology* (Reaktion Books, 2021), 35–39.

² Beatrice Warde, *The Crystal Goblet* (The World Publishing Company, 1956).

³ Herbert Spencer, *The Visible Word* (Lund Humphries, 1968), 18–21.

⁴ Peter Schwenger, *Asemic: The Art of Writing* (University of Minnesota Press, 2019), 66–67.

Transforming this experience into a specifically *poetic* engagement⁵ reveals its semic ordering and perceived *language* content as a product of completely autonomous “bets”⁶ that attempt to resolve ambiguity into meaningful order.⁷ My process of investigation and exploration is guided by semiotics,⁸ decomposing the recognition of “text” into the perceptual encounter; this attention to instability links typoems to my work with glitching via the essential role of human perception as mediator—typoetry and Glitch Art both center the human act of recognition as the foundation of poetic meaning.

This term, “typoem,” is a product of the Concrete poetry movement: it was proposed by the Brazilian Concrete poet Haroldo de Campos to describe the typographic-focused poems by Hansjörg Mayer.⁹ However, Mayer’s work is not merely typography, it includes flaws and errors from the printing processes—incorporating glitches—into his arrangements of letterforms, but his work also included printer’s marks, technical errors, and the interference patterns created by overlapping texts in different colors which allude to color separations. Unlike other Concrete poetry, Mayer’s *typoems* are frequently illegible, fragmentary, unintelligible. And unlike poems that use Letraset transfer lettering,¹⁰ or composed using the fixed size letters of typewriters,¹¹ his engagement with printing and letterforms reflects his professional work in graphic design and printing. This engagement with the materiality of type is not unique to Mayer.¹² American designer and printer Jack Stauffacher worked during the same period,¹³ and produced convergent works that reveal the connections between typographic technology and the emergence of the typoem from concerns with the materiality of printing and the processes employed in creating prints. This commitment to the technologies of production links my contemporary typoetry to their precedents: digital software (*Adobe Illustrator*) extends and expands the possibilities for fragmenting and reconfiguring lettering that were constrained by the physical limitations of printing with metal or wooden type by allowing the fluid conversion between letterforms and vectorized graphics. This transition potentially destabilizes language, recalling the avant-garde’s use of typography as a graphic material parallel to its capacity to communicate meaning.¹⁴ The digital typoems I create exploit the

⁵ Roman Jakobson, *Selected Writings III: Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry* (Mouton Publishers, 1981), 25.

⁶ Roy Harris, “The Integrational Conception of the Sign” *Integrationist Notes and Papers 2006–2008* (Bright Pen, 2009).

⁷ Mark Garrison, “The Poetics of Ambivalence,” *Archetypal Psychiatry* (Spring 1982), 213–32.

⁸ Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Indiana University Press, 1979), 216.

⁹ Stefan Ripplinger, *Typo: Hansjörg Mayer* (Walther König, 2014), 147.

¹⁰ Derek Beaulieu, *Kern* (Les Figues Press, 2014).

¹¹ Marvin and Ruth Sackner, eds., *The Art of Typewriting* (Thames & Hudson, 2015).

¹² Stephen C. Foster, *Lettrisme: Into the Present* (University of Iowa Museum of Art, 1983), 9–11.

¹³ Chuck Byrne, ed., *Only on Saturdays: The Wood Type Prints of Jack Stauffacher* (Letterform Archive, 2023).

¹⁴ Jan Tschichold, *The New Typography* (University of California Press, 1996), xxviii–xxx, 76–78.

potentials for compositing and fragmenting the letterforms in themselves, allowing an exploration of the threshold where mis/recognition becomes an ambivalent, contingent zone of poetic contemplation.

The liminality implicit in Mayer's typoetry becomes explicit in my asemic collages that explore the boundaries between design, typography, and visual art. Typoems exploit how reading and legibility depend on the arrangements of their parts and the relationships imposed on them by their audience. This instability is apparent in the type constructions made by designer Norman Ives in the 1960s and 1970s¹⁵; however, unlike Ives' works which transform the lettering into abstract patterning (the recognition of language often vanishes), for the typoem this language-recognition is crucial to its poetics. It modulates the identification of letters to become contingent, forcing an acknowledgment of language as an artificial construct: legibility is more than just how in/complete the letterforms may be, nor only the recognition of a familiar language, but instead depends on the articulation of elemental parts as discrete units¹⁶ which are organized into recognizable and familiar arrangements.¹⁷ Without this formal order, intelligibility collapses even if the parts remain familiar.¹⁸ This metastability connects my typoems to the instabilities that define Glitch Art—through the typoem's capacity to become an expressive vehicle for semantic order in a multidimensional, nodal "space."¹⁹ [Connecting language identification to the ambivalence of Glitch Art is common in contemporary asemic poetry.²⁰]

These poetics of recognition versus interpretation are extensions of potentials in visual poetry²¹ and continuations of Concrete poetry's concerns with arrangement and composition, drawing attention to how we engage with language depends on a question about order and intention that we typically ignore and reject as irrelevant when confronting language.²² It is a reminder that meaning is not "real" but an imposition, even for the apparently stable physical world we perceive.²³ My typoems exploit how expressiveness depends on the 'intentional function' to assign them an *interpretive status* as-encoded.²⁴ Meaning emerges even if that identification is not matched by

¹⁵ John T. Hill, *Norman Ives: Constructions & Reconstructions* (Powerhouse Books, 2020).

¹⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Pantheon, 1972), 88.

¹⁷ Eero Tarasti, "The semiotics of A. J. Greimas: A European intellectual heritage seen from the inside and the outside" *Sign Systems Studies* 45, 1/2 (2017): 33–53.

¹⁸ Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Indiana University Press, 1979), 232–33.

¹⁹ Michael Betancourt, *The Critique of Digital Capitalism* (Punctum Books, 2016), 153–90.

²⁰ See for example: Marco Giovanale. *Glitch Asemics* (Post-Asemic Press, 2020); or Kristine Snodgrass & Karla Van Vliet, eds. *Glitchy Womyn: An Anthology of Women Glitching in 2022–23* (Van Vliet Gallery, 2024).

²¹ Willard Bohn, *The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry: 1914–1928* (University of Chicago Press, 1993), 4–6.

²² Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Indiana University Press, 1979), 208–217.

²³ David Albert, *Quantum Mechanics and Experience* (Harvard University Press, 1992), 15.

²⁴ Michael Betancourt, "The 'Intentional Function' in Still and Moving Photographic Images" *Semiotica: Journal of the International Association for Semiotic Studies* 253 (2023): <https://doi.org/10.1515/sem-2020-0065>.

a familiar decoding framework²⁵—the absent or unknown language system confronted in asemic poetry becomes the source of expressive modulation; the identification as-language is the subject of these poetics which “disenchant”²⁶ the world by drawing attention to human imagination as the source of wonder.

My engagements with typoetry are coincident with my aesthetic researches into glitching and Glitch Art: I break things and play with the pieces; I realize this act is an historically nihilistic gesture, but that is not my interest: the flash of recognition—faces, words, stories, spaces—is my focus. My work challenges understanding the computer as only an instrument of valorization, seduction, or assault. The reason I began systematically corrupting and damaging media in 1990 was to create a critical expression by rupturing the illusionistic perfection of technical images, but my intentions are irrelevant to my semiotic approach: the audience will see what their hopes and fears, education and desires taught/allow them to see. The immanent give-and-take between those quotations the audience recognizes, what’s called “intertext,” and what’s produced using the medium, the “text,” connects glitches to the visionary tradition by crafting a dramatic art from perception itself—the shapes and patterns of this iconography are performers whose actions can neither be anticipated nor described in advance, but arise directly from digital technology—an unknown adventure in an unknowable space. Yet I’m not interested in technological determinism, formalist exploration, nor anything arbitrary and capricious: I’m interested in articulating basic human emotions—ecstasy, sensuality, fascination—via glitches that encourage viewers to find poetic meaning in their everyday life.

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²⁵ Umberto Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

²⁶ Villem Flusser, *Does Writing Have a Future?* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

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Figure 1. Four double page spreads from the book *CMYK – 52 Typoems :: 4 typefaces | 4 letters | 4 sections* (Timglaset, 2023); was part of the 45th *STA100 award*, The Society of Typographic Arts, Chicago, IL in 2023.

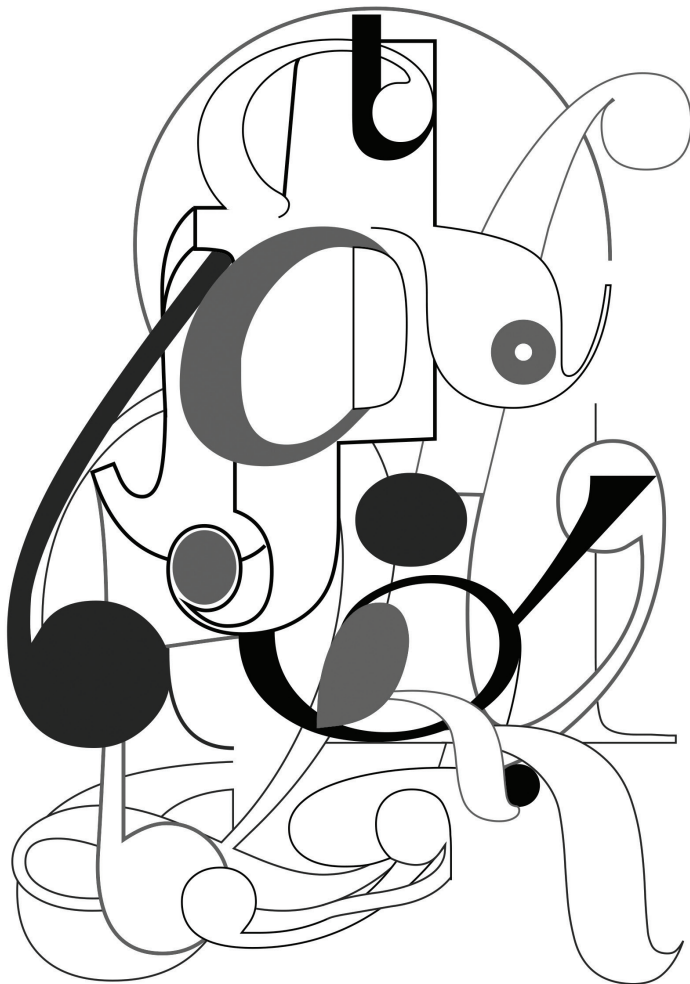


Figure 2. Typoem (2022-037) from *Type Faces* (RedFox Press, 2023).



Figure 4. “Asemic Santa” print, Cinegraphic Media LLC (2024).

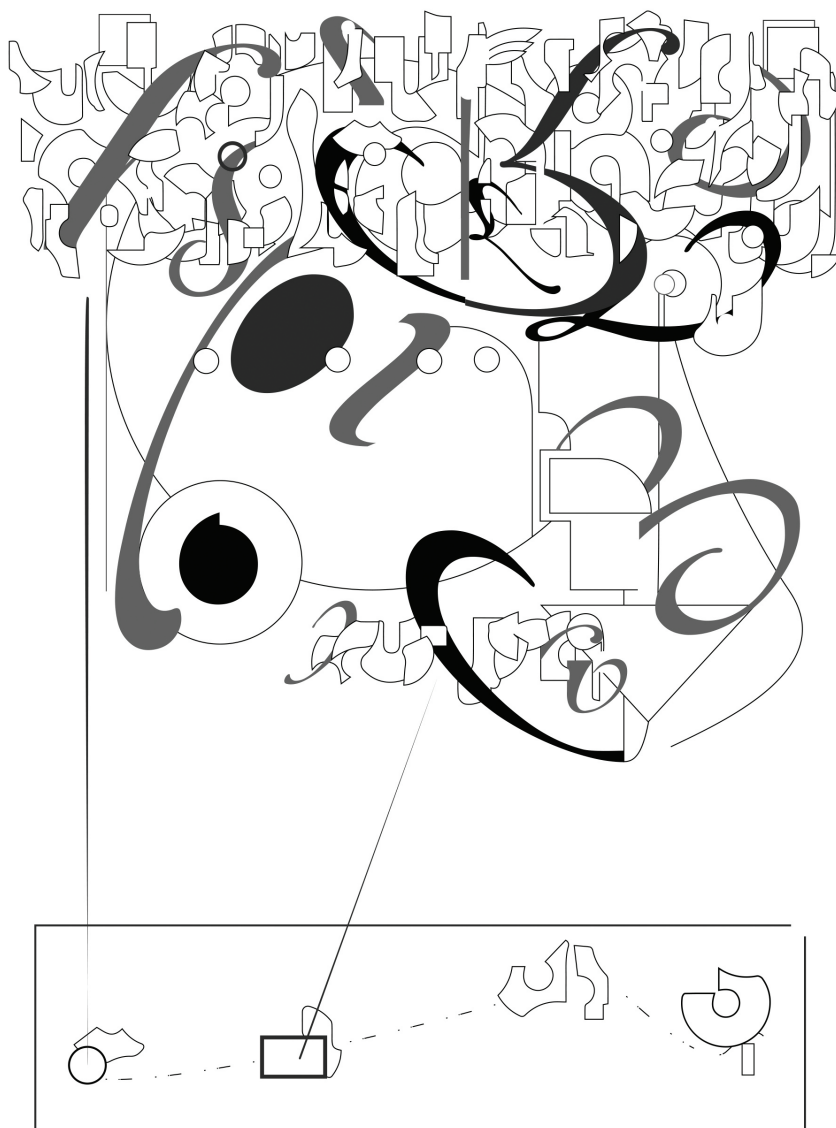


Figure 5. Typoem from the folio *Thoughts Without Words* (nOIRZ, 2022).

The background features a vertical grey bar on the left side. To its right, there are several overlapping grey shapes: a large semi-circle at the top, a smaller semi-circle below it, and a large semi-circle at the bottom right. A white vertical oval is positioned between the top two semi-circles. The text 'BOOK REVIEW' is centered horizontally in the middle of the page.

BOOK REVIEW



ART+MEDIA

Žarko Paić

The Sublime Forms of Contemporary Art

Review of the book by Nadežda Elezović, *Meta-Spiritual Art in Croatia* [*Metaspiritualna umjetnost u Hrvatskoj*], Redak, Split, 2024

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**The Sublime Forms of Contemporary Art
Review of the book by Nadežda Elezović, *Meta-Spiritual
Art in Croatia [Metaspiritualna umjetnost u Hrvatskoj]*,
Redak, Split, 2024**

The book by Nadežda Elezović, PhD, a curator and professor at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Art History, is an exceptionally valuable study of a phenomenon that emerged alongside the historical avant-garde as the latter settled scores with the metaphysical legacy of Western art history. In other words, the book speaks of the problem of abolishing and overcoming the divine and the sacred within the idea of a synthesis of art and life in a new society of modern industrial production, whereby the mythical-religious, metareferential framework of the notion of art loses credibility. In a spiritual sense, the issue of the absolute is crucial for understanding avant-garde art in the cases of both Kazimir Malevich and Marcel Duchamp. Moreover, we should not forget that Wassily Kandinsky was the artist-thinker who genuinely addressed the relation between the spiritual and modern art in his book *On the Spiritual in Art*. Nadežda Elezović's study is based on the research originally presented in her doctoral dissertation titled *Meta-Spiritual Art in Croatia in the Second Half of the 20th Century*. The basic intention, therefore, is to demonstrate the recontextualization of the notion of the spiritual in the post-avant-garde and postmodernism, within a context of Croatian art production in the second half of the 20th century.

The introductory chapter traces the connection between art and religious themes from antiquity and sacral Christian art to modernism and the avant-garde, especially in abstract art and its main protagonists, such as Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, and Malevich. In this matter, the author claims that Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy and congenial mystical teachings possibly provide the key to the emergence of a certain branch of abstract painting, notably with Kandinsky's organic abstraction, Mondrian's neoplasticism, and the suprematism of Malevich. Despite the fact that modern art has shed the referential framework of monotheist religion, the remnant within the structures of Modernism and the Avant-garde, as well as Neo-avant-garde, post-modern, and contemporary art, can be designated as meta-spiritual art. Therefore, the author endeavors to introduce this dynamic realm of diverse approaches to 'the

spiritual in art' as a novel interdisciplinary domain within the humanities, especially within art history and art theory. In this connection, it is always worthwhile recalling an incident that took place in the early 1970s in Bonn. During his lecture to rebellious post-1968 students, the shaman of conceptual-performing art, Joseph Beuys, answered a question posed by an already nervous attendee in the great hall where the 'event' took place. When asked why he keeps talking about God, although the lecture's subject is the essence of contemporary art, Beuys retorted: "Aber Gott und die Welt ist die Kunst!" ["But God and the world is the art!"]

Nadežda Elezović sets out with the premise that understanding the phenomenon of the spiritual and meta-spiritual in 20th-century art importantly requires observing its liminal status in relation to the reigning currents of modernism and postmodernism. It is therefore essential to show how, due to the omnipresent spirit of materialism, deconstruction, and formalist theoretical approaches, art that questions the spiritual and mystical must necessarily manifest as the Other. Nevertheless, the 1980s already saw a shift in artistic practices, exhibition activity, and, to some extent, art theory, along with an intensified interest in spiritual art. Thus, Nadežda Elezović refers to the impossibility of a 'positive' approach to these phenomena and tendencies, as the complexity of the entire range of layers and means used by visual art in exploring the spiritual and meta-spiritual requires a decisive theoretical turn. That is, to grasp the integral picture of art production and the autoreferentiality of artists dedicated to the sacred and mystical 'today', one must cross over from an interdisciplinary to a transdisciplinary consideration of art. In a chapter titled "History of Research" (pp. 26–60), the author presents the initial hypotheses of her scientific research. These are, first and foremost, the reasons that led her to undertake the research, given the heightened interest among international researchers in the interdisciplinary domain of art theory during two research waves, one in the 1970s and the other in the 1980s. Connecting their international experiences in thematizing this problem, Nadežda Elezović demonstrates that, considering the Croatian meta-spiritual art's experience, particularly in the cases of Mirko Zrinščak and Boris Demur, establishing a precise theoretical origin for interpretation is necessary, as it was absent from prior research.

The author adopts a definition of meta-spiritual art from *Pojmovnik teorije umjetnosti [Lexicon of Art Theory]* and *Pojmovnik suvremene umjetnosti [A Glossary of Contemporary Art]* by Miodrag Šuvaković. The subject at hand is the recontextualization of the spiritual in the art practices of the post-avant-garde and postmodernism, as well as the aspiration to situate esoteric, religious, occult, magical, and mythical traditions within a contemporary artist's framework. In this manner, the author's complex insight into the state of things concerning meta-spirituality becomes a historical-artistic account of both genesis and transformation of the notions of spirituality and meta-spirituality in the Croatian art of the second half of the 20th century, hence the artworks of Mirko Zrinščak and Boris Demur become the art case studies. The 'theoretical platform', referred to as such by the author, presumes the above-mentioned theorist Miodrag Šuvaković, along with the studies of Tomaž Brejc, who introduced

the notion of ‘transcendental conceptualism’, and Renato Barilli, who is credited with instituting ‘mystical conceptualism’.

In the chapter titled ‘Theoretical Studies of Meta-spirituality in the Spaces of Former Yugoslavia’ (pp. 61–106), the research of meta-spirituality in art focuses on the cultural space of the state that formerly existed in these territories. The author analyses magazines and other publications such as *Mentalni prostor* No. 3/1986 and No. 4/1987, as well as the translations of essays by international researchers published in 1990 in the Novi Sad-based magazine *Polja* No. 377–378. At the time, the theory began to influence art, while interdisciplinary correlations between myth and religion, as well as between science and philosophy, became important to art production. Exemplifying Miodrag Šuvaković’s analysis of the model of spiritual tendencies, the author argues that meta-spiritual art, in connection with the symbolic systems of philosophical-religious traditions, results from an artist’s autoreferential statement about their views on art. When theory directly affects the deliberation of what conceptual art endeavors to execute within the space of action-image-activity, then the very discipline of art history finds itself under a question mark.



The chapter titled ‘Reception of the Spiritual in Abstract Art in Croatian History and Art Theory’ (pp. 107–145), places the emphasis on the context of the spiritual in abstract painting, while the strategies of statements concerning meta-spirituality get manifested through Zen and visual art, mystical conceptualism, and transcendental conceptualism, all the way to the dematerialization of the artistic object. We

are engaging in a deeper analysis of authorial approaches to interpreting the phenomenon of the spiritual in Croatian art of the second half of the 20th century. The author shows how Rudi Supek's 1953 debate, titled *Konfuzija oko astratizma* [*Confusion Around Abstractionism*], can be regarded as an early statement on the spiritual in modern abstract painting. In this debate, Supek – a renowned sociologist who's otherwise associated with the 1960s Praxis School of the so-called creative Marxism that originated in the former Yugoslavia – polemicalizes with the positions held by the artists of the EXAT'51 Group. It is rather interesting to see how the views of Rudi Supek, not only regarding the origins of contemporary art but also concerning Sartre and French Existentialism, were in fact dogmatic theorizing whose ultimate intention ended up as an utter failure in interpreting both Existentialism and Marx as the crown authority for grasping the social consequences of the art's status in capitalism. Recollecting the text above is called for in any 'present' recontextualization of Supek's views. Krleža's critical liberation from Stalinist dialectical materialism and theory of reflection, as well as socialist realism, is far more important for the sociological comprehension of contemporary art during those crucial years than almost all the, mainly orthodox, contributions of Marxist theorists (Boris Žihelr and Rudi Supek) that were active in the former Yugoslavia in the 1950s, with rare exceptions like those seen in the philosophical opinion of Vanja Sutlić.

This chapter ends with the analyses of treatises by art historians and art theorists such as Zdenko Rus, Marijan Susovski, and Jerko Denegri, in which the spiritual is linked to the origin of the neo-avant-garde group GORGONA. The author endeavors to correlate notions like emptiness, absurdity, and monotony – connoted as aesthetic categories – with the more recent approaches to the painting of Julije Knifer that are exemplified in the texts by Nataša Lah and Žarko Paić, which speak about the recontextualization of spirituality in contemporary art.

Arguably, the most interesting theoretical chapter in the book is 'Postulating the Theoretical Platform of Meta-spirituality' (pp. 146–204), which presents the theoretical platform of meta-spiritual art through the issue of the invisible within aesthetics. In this regard, Nadežda Elezović articulately argues the difference between the historical Avant-garde and the Neo-avant-garde regarding the notion of spirituality, demonstrating her claim through the case of Peter Bürger and, consequently, Aby Warburg. Furthermore, the author deliberates Walter Benjamin's loss of aura with the rise of technical reproduction, attempting to derive a meeting place between the spiritual and meta-spiritual from Benjamin's theory of post-auratic art. This chapter is also the most technically elaborate, as it enriches the discussion with contributions from George Bataille and Jean Baudrillard, the pivotal thinkers of Post-structuralism. Furthermore, the chapter's concluding section initiates a debate on the meta-spiritual in postmodernist art theory by examining the contributions of Arthur Danto and Rosalind Krauss.

The book's final chapter (pp. 205–293) presents the case studies of artwork by Mirko Zrinščak, as well as works by Boris Demur, whose oeuvre ranges from a sublime

form to a metaphysical contextualization of the sign of the spiral as a holographic image of spiral art. In hermeneutic terms, this chapter masterfully reconciles theoretical discursiveness and inductive insight within the meaning horizon of the pivotal artists of Croatian spiritual and meta-spiritual art of the second half of the 20th century.

The Conclusion (pp. 294–311) recapitulates the study's basic arguments. Also, this is where Nadežda Elezović credibly demonstrates how the sculptural oeuvre of Mirko Zrinščak and the spiral cycle of Boris Demur can be read within the paradigm of meta-spiritual art. The author's theoretical innovations include the neologisms of meta-auratic art and neoritual art. Though both are applicable to analyzing this direction of contemporary art, they also demand a deeper critical confrontation, effectively adding to the gravitas of this, first and foremost, a precisely and systematically articulated study.

Drawing on her sovereign knowledge of literature from the sphere that pursues interdisciplinary connections between art history and art theory on one hand, and contributions from the other fields of humanities that thematize the issue of meta-spiritual art on the other hand, Nadežda Elezović inaugurates a new research domain in Croatia and does so in an original manner. Therefore, this study can be considered the initiator for all future research of this kind. Endowed with a clear methodological setup, the study demonstrates that, epistemologically speaking, the Croatian art practice of the second half of the 20th century testifies to the rise of tendencies that, within the framework of postmodern art, possess more than the eclecticism of the main currents of late-20th-century art. Though the notion of meta-spiritual art was frequently part of the liminal discourse on visibility, due to the reigning paradigm of the so-called logocentrism as interpreted by Jacques Derrida, one cannot doubt its importance for understanding the new relation that postmodern and contemporary art manifest regarding the mystical and sacred.

A special value of this book lays with a fact that it unlocks a possibility for a different scientific consideration of a phenomenon which cannot remain liminal, as it is clear that the art history of the 20th century, both in the case of historic Avant-garde and Neo-avant-garde, is in the sign of the autoreferential complex of the idea of art as the synthesis of image and text. The author differentiates between modern notions of spirituality and those of postmodern meta-spirituality. Concerning the latter, she relies on Aby Warburg's anthropological course of thought, while Walter Benjamin remains her crucial authority when analyzing the relation between the ritual and the occurrence of 'artwork's aura'.

It is necessary to emphasize that the author applies the notional complexes of 'meta-auratic art' and 'neoritual function of an artwork' in the art case studies exploring the artworks by Mirko Zrinščak and Boris Demur. I hold this to be an appropriate theoretical means of connecting a referential subject and the autoreferential practice of an artist's activity. The analysis of a link between spiritual and post-avant-garde clearly points to the consequences of confronting the essence of contemporary art with its own origin point, posited within a triad of scientific notions of projects,

research, and experiments concerning the outcome of ‘the epoch of purposeful rationality’. However, that is not the issue. The foremost problem is that the direction of reflecting on this meta-spirituality has become a necessary step in understanding the relation between history as a meaningful development and art as an occurrence that provides the former with a speculative-reflective level, in whose absence life itself has no ‘higher’ meaning.

The author of this book presented a truly adept insight into this thematic transgression. Simultaneously, she reaffirmed whatever remained all but hidden and liminal to the research gaze.



BIOGRAPHIES



ART+MEDIA

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Hadjer Ben Salem (1982) is an Algerian English teacher and researcher specializing in English Literature and Civilization from the University of Biskra. She has research interests in Second Language Acquisition, language policy, and pedagogic innovation in post-colonial, multilingual contexts, and her latest research has examined translanguaging practices in Algerian university classrooms.

Michael Betancourt (1971) is a Cuban-American research artist who has cultivated a conceptual-theoretical studio practice focused on art history, digital technology, and capitalist ideology; evident in his books *Glitch Theory* (2023), *The Critique of Digital Capitalism* (2016), and *Glitch Art in Theory and Practice* (2017). A pioneer of “Glitch Art,” he has been making visually seductive digital art since 1990, which has brought the visionary tradition into the present by glitching still and moving images. By emphasizing their digital origins, his aesthetics express a consistent concern for the poetic potential of the overlooked and neglected products of digital computers. His asemic poetry made from glitched and fragmented typography has been published by RedFox Press, Timglasnet, nOIR:Z, and Post-Asemic Press, and in *Die Lerre Mitte*, *Utsanga.it*, and *aurapoesiavisual*. The Society of Typographic Arts in Chicago selected his typopetry book *CMYK* as a winner in the *45th annual STA100* (2023).

Jelisaveta Blagojević is a professor of philosophy and political theory at the Faculty of Media and Communications, Singidunum University in Belgrade. Her work operates at the intersection of feminist theory, critical philosophy, and political thought, with a particular focus on the relations between intimacy, affect, and contemporary forms of power. She is the author of *Politike nemislivog: uvod u nefašistički život* and has published widely on topics such as burnout, resistance, and the politics of everyday life. Blagojević is also engaged in interdisciplinary projects that connect academic research with activist and cultural practices, particularly in feminist and queer studies in the post-socialist context. Her current work explores how intimate relations function as sites of both political reproduction and transformation.

Elena Colzi is a PhD student in Cultural Heritage Sciences at Rome Tor Vergata University with a Next EU scholarship, in collaboration with Galleria Il Ponte in Florence. Her research investigates the intersection between visual arts, music, and performance, with a particular focus on the legacy of Giuseppe Chiari (1926–2007), composer, visual artist, and performer active in Italy since the 1950s. She holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Philosophy from the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan, Italy, and a Master’s Degree in Theory and History of Arts and Image from the Vita–Salute San Raffaele University in Milan, where she is an active member of ICONE–European Centre for Research in History and Theory of Image. She has conducted research at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz and worked in education and communication at Galleria d’Arte Moderna di Milano, Galleria Campari, and Triennale Milano. She has also collaborated with Mondadori and Rizzoli New York

on the publication of *the Atlas of Performing Culture*, edited by *Cristiano Leone* (2023). She is currently a Visiting Scholar at Northwestern University, Bienen School of Music, Evanston, Chicago (Illinois, USA).

Prof. **Jelena Drobac**, DA, is a graphic designer, researcher, and educator whose work focuses on visual identity, typography, and design history. She holds a degree in Graphic Design from the Faculty of Applied Arts and a Doctorate in Interdisciplinary Studies in Art from the University of Arts in Belgrade. She has been a faculty member at the Academy of Applied Studies Polytechnics in Belgrade since 2007, where she serves as Professor of Vocational Studies. Her research centers on Serbian and regional design history, with particular attention to typography, visual culture, and transnational design exchanges. She has published scholarly papers and delivers lectures on Serbian and regional graphic design and typographic heritage. Prof. Drobac was a member of the working team for Serbia's Smart Specialization Strategy for Creative Industries and has participated in international academic forums, including the 2020 *Challenges of Design Education* conference in Zagreb. She also serves as an accreditation reviewer for Serbia's Ministry of Education and as a foreign expert for Montenegro's Quality Assurance Agency.

Sanela Nikolić, PhD, graduated in Musicology from the Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade, where she also completed her Ph.D. in interdisciplinary studies with a specialization in Theory of Arts and Media. She has been an Assistant Professor of Applied Aesthetics in the same faculty, teaching at the undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels, as well as in PhD programs at the University of Arts. Her research has been published in national and international journals and edited volumes. She is the author of two academic books in Serbian: *Avant-garde Art as a Theoretical Practice* (2015) and *Bauhaus—Applied Aesthetics of Music, Theater, and Dance* (2016). She has participated in projects funded by the Serbian Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development and was a team member of the ERASMUS+ project DEMUSIS, as well as the IN.TUNE University Alliance. Nikolić is a member of several professional associations, including the Musicological Society of Serbia and the International Association for Aesthetics, where she served as Delegate-at-Large (2019–2022). She is the Managing Editor of the *AM Journal of Art and Media Studies* and a member of the editorial board of Brill's *Transcultural Aesthetics* series. Her work focuses on applied aesthetics, interdisciplinarity, and the relationship between art, theory, and digital humanities.

Tatiana Patrone's research interests lie in the history of Western thought (Early Modern philosophy and Kant) and in value theory. Her recent scholarship focuses on Constantin Brancusi: she is the author of *Sculpting Essences, not Forms: A Theosophical Interpretation of Brancusi*. At Ithaca College, NY, she teaches courses in Ancient, Early Modern, and 19th-century philosophy, as well as courses in normative and applied ethics.

Žarko Paić is a retired Professor at the University of Zagreb, where he taught courses in Aesthetics and Visual Studies. His research interests encompass aesthetics, philosophy of art, philosophy of science, political philosophy, and visual/media studies. He is a member of the Croatian Society of Writers, the Croatian PEN Center, the Croatian Philosophical Society, the Forum for Humanities, the International Center of Studies on Contemporary Nihilism, and the Sören Kierkegaard Institute. He is a foreign member of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the field of humanities, and he serves as the editor of the Sociology and Transhumanism Series, published by Trivent Publishing in Budapest. His publications include *Theorizing Images* (edited with Krešimir Purgar, 2016), *Technosphere* Vols. 1–5 (2018–2019), *White Holes and the Visualization of the Body* (2019), *The Return of Totalitarianism—Ideology, Terror, and Total Control* (2022), and *The Superfluity of the Human—Reflections on the Posthuman Condition* (2023).

Željka Pješivac (born in Novi Sad) is an architect and theoretician of architecture and other art forms. She received her M.Arch. degree from the University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Technical Sciences, Department of Architecture and Urbanism, MA degree in Scene Design from the University of Arts in Belgrade, and PhD degree in Theory of Arts and Media from the University of Arts in Belgrade, Serbia. Research interests include architectural design, history and theory of architecture and arts, philosophy of space and time, theory of text, cultural analysis, and cultural heritage studies.

Marija Simojlović is a teaching assistant and a PhD student at the Faculty of Media and Communications in Belgrade. She holds a BA in Communications and Public Relations and an MA in Human Resource Management from the same institution. Her academic work focuses on communication studies, human resource management, agile management, and media and cultural theories. Since 2022, she has been teaching undergraduate courses, including Introduction to Visual Communications, Theories and Practices of Intercultural Communication, Media History, Identity Communication, History of Gender and Family, Media Tools and Immersive Media, and Integrated Marketing Communications. She defended her master's thesis titled "The Application of Communication Skills and Human Resource Management Techniques in Agile Work Methodology" in September 2023.

Jovana Stefanović (born October 10, 1998, Zemun) simultaneously completed both the Ninth Grammar School "Mihailo Petrović Alas" (General Education—Natural Sciences and Mathematics) and the vocal-instrumental performance and music theory department at the Mokranjac Secondary Music School in Belgrade (2017). She then enrolled in the integrated academic studies in architecture (BSc + MSc) at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade (2017), graduating with the title of Master of Architecture in 2022. In 2023, she began her doctoral academic studies

at the same faculty. During her final semester, she was awarded a scholarship by the Austrian Government, which enabled her to conduct research at the Institute of Architecture at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna - Die Universität für angewandte Kunst (2022). She was also the recipient of the Dositeja scholarship for top final-year students from the Fund for Young Talents of the Republic of Serbia (2022). Jovana is currently employed at the University of Belgrade's Faculty of Architecture as a junior researcher (2024), where she teaches in the Department of Urbanism. She is also a member of the editorial board of the *Serbian Architectural Journal* (SAJ). Her professional and artistic work spans architectural design, exhibition architecture, and stage design. She is the author of several theatrical stage designs and also performs as a classical singer.

Monica Toledo Silva is a Brazilian independent professor, artist, and researcher of body images in audiovisual arts. Writer and dancer, with a series of videos and installations, and published essays investigating performative image and notions of presence and displacement, territory and landscape.

Author Guidelines

Please note: Following the journal categorization of the Ministry of Science, Technological Development, and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia, only original scholarly articles that adhere to the highest academic standards are accepted for submission. Upon submission, the Editorial Team performs an initial screening and selection of manuscripts, subsequently forwarding the chosen submissions for double-blind peer review. The ultimate decision regarding the acceptance of a manuscript is contingent upon the outcomes of the peer review process.

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The manuscript should be written in MS Word in .doc or .doc.x format, in Times New Roman font, font size 12 with 1.5 line-spaced texts.

Original scholarly papers should be between 3,000 and 5,000 words (section Main Topic and Beyond the Main Topic). Book review articles should be about 1,000 words. Artist Portfolio should contain 4 to 6 illustrations and 1,500 words of text.

The manuscript (sections Main Topic and Beyond the Main Topic) should contain the title, keywords (5 to 8 words or phrases) and abstract (between 100 and 250 words) and list of references. Do not include citations in the abstract. Keywords should be relevant to the topic and content of the paper. An accurate list of keywords will ensure correct indexing of the paper in referential periodicals and databases.

All manuscripts should be also provided with: authors' names, affiliations (city and state of the workplace) and e-mail addresses of the corresponding author.

The authors should send their short biography (up to 150 words per author) with information about profession, career, workplace and year of birth.

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Footnotes and References

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Kossinets and Watts, “Origins of Homophily,” 439.

Thesis and dissertation:

Mihwa Choi, “Contesting *Imaginaires* in Death Rituals during the Northern Song Dynasty” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2008).

Choi, “Contesting *Imaginaires*.”

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