



ARTICLE

Interactivity as a Vector of the Socialization of Art

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ABSTRACT

The article presents research into the role of interactive practices in the development of contemporary art. By “interactive” is meant a creative work based on a two-way interaction with the viewer. Such a creative work is capable of responding to the recipient’s actions as well as changing under their influence. Interactive work is process-based, variable and open to interpretations. The history of the establishment of interactive contemporary art practices, which may be traced back to the historical avant-garde, punctuated by such important stages for contemporary art as the performative and social turns, is considered alongside ruptured art conventions associated with their advent. It is assumed that the various possibilities for interactivity are correlated with different media types (old/new/post). Interactivity is considered in terms of an important socialization factor in the various modifications of interactive art, including participatory art, as well as collaborative and collective artistic practices.

KEYWORDS

installation, interactivity, interactive art, media, participatory art, performance

Introduction

Accusations of dehumanisation roundly levelled against art of the modernist/avant-garde period during the first decades of the twentieth century nowadays look like an anachronism. No one can accuse contemporary art of autism, of a fixation on solving internal problems or ignoring the interests of the public. On the contrary, it actively demonstrates its interest in the viewer in every possible way. To this end, game- or show-related elements are actively used and creative work often presented in the format of an entertainment attraction. The interactive works of Carsten Höller, for example, may be seen to function in this way. His installation *Test Site* (2006, Tate Modern Gallery) is comprised of slides of dizzying heights and steepness, by which means visitors to the gallery could descend from its upper floors, bypassing the elevator. Or his *Double Carousel with Zöllner Stripes* (2011), consisting of two roundabouts, slowly revolving in opposite directions in a hall whose walls are decorated with optical Zöllner illusions depicted with black and white stripes. While such installations are the subject of mixed critical responses, at the same time, for obvious reasons, they prove very popular with the public. Simultaneously amusing and fascinating, they allow the art-viewing public to undergo a new, unique experience, one that is unlikely to be possible under any other circumstances. At the same time, these works are conceptually much deeper than they might at first glance seem. For example, the primary task Höller set himself was not to facilitate fairground rides, but rather to create a situation that overturns the usual forms of perception, establishing new conditions for the development of his audience's self-knowledge. An additionally attractive aspect to such works is connected to their site-specificity, i.e. the fact that they are created in the context of a particular exhibition area; as a consequence, the same project looks and feels a little different each time. Thus, according to Höller's current plans, a neurobiological project will be undertaken in Florence during the summer of 2018 involving a twenty-metre artificial hill twisted into a double helix of DNA.

Today, art must actively draw potential recipients into its orbit, provoking them to participate in unfamiliar activities and providing them with many new (often nontrivial) opportunities for self-expression. Viewers can become both a part of the creative work as well as its co-artists; they can feel themselves to form an integral part of large-scale art projects that last for years as well as members of the micro-society formed by such projects. Following the initiation of a wide variety of public projects, art then consists in the implementation of such projects with the direct participation of a loyal public.

The loyalty of mass aesthetic consciousness towards contemporary art today is located in the confluence of several intersecting lines of its development. These include where art appears as instigating the emancipation of a particular member of the public, group and/or society as a whole; as a factor in the formation of new social practices; or as a media laboratory (old/new/post-). No less important is the artist's repudiation of monologue in favour of dialogue with the public, which is supported by the interactivity of the creative work.

The interactivity of a work of art today consists in a routing into a mass aesthetic consciousness. Modern art actively deploys interactivity in installation, environmental, in various types of actionism and manifestations of digital/hybrid art.

Interactivity in Contemporary Art

Interactivity is one of the most effective tools for involving audiences in the field of art.

However, in the context of contemporary art, the concept of “interactivity” is characterised by ambiguity. Initially, interactivity was understood in the sense of interacting with someone using various technological devices. The appearance of “interactive art” as such, at around the turn of the 1980s and 90s, is associated with the emergence of the Internet and art projects that started to appear online. In this context, “interactive art” is a digital art form that interacts directly with the user or viewer. However, from the point of view of Lev Manovich, a researcher into “soft culture”, such an interpretation of the concept of “interactive art” is tautological, since “the modern human-computer interface is interactive by definition. As soon as an object is presented on a computer screen, it automatically becomes interactive.” (Manovich, 2017, p. 38).

Reflecting on the problem of producing an adequate description of post-digital culture, Manovich argues for the creation of a new conceptual system, which, in his opinion, can be borrowed from digital culture. From his point of view, they can be used both literally – in the case of computer-mediated communication – and metaphorically – with reference to pre-digital culture (Manovich, 2017, p. 39). In accordance with this logic, interactivity can be interpreted in this context as having an expansive-metaphorical sense. Thus, art can be defined in terms of the active interaction of the viewer with the work and the two-way communication that arises between them. This permits the use of this concept to describe the specific manifestations of both digital and non-digital art. Irrespective of whether it is old or new media that are used by the artist of the work, by “interactive” we refer to a creative work capable of responding to the recipient’s action and changing under her influence. In what follows, the concept will be used precisely in this sense.

Interactivity generates a new type of artistic communication, characterised by a change in the role of the viewer in the process of perceiving a work of art. Here the role of the artist is to provide the viewer with a part of his or her functionality. As a consequence, instead of a passive contemplator, whose participation in the process of perception of a work of art had traditionally been limited to the mental sphere, the viewer becomes an active participant in the creative process, a co-artist, who, by his or her actions supplements the original artist’s intention, giving the latter integrity and completeness.

At the same time, despite the proclaimed emancipation of the recipient, it would be a mistake to believe that the artist gives the audience member absolute freedom of action. His or her powers in this respect are by no means limitless. As a participant in the assembly of the work, the viewer turns out to be intrinsic to the work, although realising the schema of the initiator rather than his or her own intention. The actions

of the viewer in this situation can be compared to those of a character in a computer game: on the one hand, it seems that within the context of the creative work he is free and unrestricted to act at his own discretion. Nevertheless, this or that choice can be realised exactly within the limits envisioned by the game developer (or, in the situation with the creative work of art, its originating artist). By and large, it consists in an upgrade of the viewer's capabilities, rather than necessarily granting her rights commensurate with those of the artist. Nevertheless, it is the viewer who confers completeness on the interactive creative work. Félix González-Torres – the famous representative of the “art of complicity”, some of whose installations the viewer could take away with her (for example, sweets, sheets of paper, etc.) – acknowledged that without its public, his work had no meaning. For him, it is precisely the public, who, in becoming part of the work, allows him to consider it to be complete.

Of course, in this case, the boundaries between the artist and the work, the viewer and the work, cannot be completely removed, but rather become maximally permeable. As a consequence, an interactive work is much more open to interpretation, its meanings less rigidly defined and more subject to variation. In general, works based on the principle of interactivity are characterised by processuality (for the creators of such works, the process is more important than the result), variability, lack of pre-specified meanings and openness to interpretations.

Among the reasons for the wide dissemination of interactive art, it is necessary to mention those purely artistic reasons connected with: the exploration of artistic boundaries by artists, the subsequent democratisation of the creative process as well as the replacement of direct representation with a presentational form that occurs within the framework of a performative turn and entails the active introduction of reality into the creative process. Another set of reasons concerns the development of media: artists were not slow to seize the novel opportunities that appeared in connection with new media. As a result, creativity was subject to a rapidly growing democratisation, ultimately depriving artists of their former monopoly.

From a sociocultural point of view, in a certain sense, interactivity, which has become widespread not only in art, but also in social relations, correlates with the new social phenomena described by Alvin Toffler. Among other reasons given for the popularity of the DIY (Do It Yourself) movement, which arose and became widespread during the 1950–60's, Toffler lists inflation in the cost of manual labour as a side-effect of the automation of production (Toffler, 1999, p. 441). In Toffler's account, this movement contributed to the growth of activity and initiatives across diverse social groups.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the rise of a new social phenomenon – prosumerism. In embodying a shift from a passive consumer to an active producer for herself (Toffler, 1999, p. 441), the prosumer becomes the bearer of a new identity characterised by activity and initiative. Within the concept of prosumerism, Toffler connects the emergence of a multitude of diverse social groups with the common idea of helping people to solve their problems independently.

While generally critical of the penetration of new media into art, Claire Bishop nevertheless acknowledges that contemporary social relations are mediated not by

one-way media images (the principle position of Guy Debord's theory) but rather via an interactive screen. Today, art increasingly uses the same language as the Web 2.0 protocol, introduced in 2002: both speak of platforms, collaboration and the involvement of viewers and prosumers, who not only consume the information provided, but also participate in the creation of content (Bishop, 2015). According to researchers into contemporary digital culture (for example, Oksana Moroz), today's prosumer is primarily an active Internet user, creating and consuming content across different social networks. The contemporary prosumer is thus both a potential co-producer as well as a consumer of interactive art.

The Establishment of Interactive Practices in the Arts

Despite the view of researchers that experiments with the "viewer/creative work interface" only began to take place in the middle of the 20th century, examples of interactive art can be seen as having taken place much earlier.

The origins of interactivity, metaphorically interpreted as an active two-way interaction between the viewer and the creative work, date back to the last few decades of the 19th century, i.e. at the time of the rise of modernism. The consistent democratisation of the creative process, which began with the Paris Salons, inspired the scrapping of many historically established conventions in the field of art, including those relating to the sphere of artistic communication [Thierry de Duve]. The line of demarcation, which previously clearly delineated the roles (and functions) of the artist, the creative work and the recipient, disappears, resulting in their joint involvement in the creative process.

Strictly speaking, it is only the absence of bilateral involvement that prevents many of the earlier works of art, in the course of perception of which the viewer was forced to take certain actions, from being considered as interactive. For example, from the time of the Renaissance onwards, works created using the laws of linear perspective required the viewer to occupy a certain – central – position in front of the plane of the canvas. A similar interactive effect took place with respect to the anamorphosis that had spread in the art of the 16th and 17th centuries, in which a "hidden image" was created by the artist by distorting of the rules of perspective. In order to find anamorphosis in a picturesque work, the viewer had to make an effort to locate the single point in front of the work of art from which it would be possible to see this hidden image and thus obtain a complete picture of the artist's conception. One of the most famous examples of this kind is the painting *The Ambassadors* by Hans Holbein the Younger – only by observing the picture from a certain angle is the distorted object in the foreground transformed into an image of a skull.

In both cases, the works seem to induce the viewer to perform actions by bodily means, e.g. adjustment of vision, etc. However, due to the fact that this activity is one-sided, it does not change anything in the state of the work itself, which is unaltered regardless of whether the viewer achieves the desired result or not. Other examples of the same kind include the paintings of the Impressionists. In this connection it was asserted by Camille Pissarro that an adequate perception of a work of art requires

that the viewer and the work be separated by a distance equal to three diagonals of the work in question. Here again, contemplation of the work could change according to the viewer's level of mentation, but in no way influenced the work itself.

Elements of future interactive art practices, in particular, performance or interactive installation, would start to reveal themselves in the art of the historical avant-garde. Among works of this kind can also be included the optical-kinetic sculptures of Marcel Duchamp, consisting of discs painted by the artist and driven by electric motors, as well as the kinetic sculptures of Naum Gabo and the mobiles of Alexander Calder. Here, however, it would be an exaggeration to talk about the freedom of the viewer since the role played is not significant. It may be thought of in terms of a walk-on-part, a mechanical gesture by which means an art object is brought into motion, but in whose motivating gesture their function is exhausted.

At around the same time, numerous artistic events were taking place, which, in retrospect, can be seen as comprising a kind of proto-performance. Despite the fact that, chronologically, performance art only occurs for the first time during the 1960s, Rube Goldberg traces its origins in futuristic theatre, in which conceptual work involving the public became an indispensable component of artistic communication. For the Italian Futurists, any public appearance – whether in a cafe or a theatre, at a concert, etc. – necessarily involved a negative reaction on the part of the public. In his manifesto *The Pleasure of Being Booed*, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti lists a number of approaches to bringing the public into a state of extreme irritation, including ridiculous suggestions such as 'selling twice as many tickets for the performance as seats in the hall or "covering the seats with glue"' (Goldberg, 2015, p. 20). Frequently, in order to provoke the public into a state of panic, Futurists used plants, who issued loud cries when wrenched from their seats in the midst of the performance.

As regards Russian Futurism, here too proto-performance elements could be seen accompanying futuristic poetry evenings, as well as lectures and debates about contemporary art, which were often accompanied by fights with the public and police arrests. Such phenomena also include Futurists walking along the streets of Moscow with painted faces and wearing extravagant costumes, often accentuated with bizarre accessories such as a red wooden spoon inserted into a buttonhole. In terms of the proto-performative attractions of Russian Futurism, one can also consider the performances of the Budetlyanin Theatre: *Vladimir Mayakovsky: A Tragedy* and the opera *Victory over the Sun*.

Boris Groys interprets this desire of artists to activate the public, to rouse it from its state of 'contemplative passivity', in the context of the utopian project of avant-garde art. For Groys, actions of this kind are conditioned by the desire to involve the broad masses in art practice and "turn the country of victorious communism into a single, total work of art, one in which the process of permanent dissolution of the individual in the collective takes place" (Groys, 2008).

In all cases in which interactivity is considered at this stage in the development of contemporary art, artists also examined the problem of the boundaries of art, gradually shaking them, pushing them aside, facilitating their removal and, thereby, increasing the democratisation of the creative process. However, in the full sense

of the word, interactivity only becomes possible when representational art makes the transition to the presentational form. In this situation, art no longer reflects reality, but becomes it. This process, which spans several decades, begins with the historical avant-garde: from abstract art, Suprematism, Dadaism, etc., in which figurative and narrative elements are progressively discarded. According to Peter Weibel, “the art of the 20th century developed the most radical art of reality, introducing real objects, real bodies, real movement, real actions, real people, real animals, real landscapes into the art system. This break with representation, this transition [...] from picture to action, is also responsible for [...] the new role of the audience in art.” (Weibel, 2011, p. 278). The break with representation not only radically removed the problem of professionalism, but also provided opportunities for artistic self-expression to all comers.

Interactivity in the Context of Old/New Media

The specificities of artistic practices that involve interactivity as a means of creating/ perceiving the work and thus influencing how it functions are directly correlated with the specific media features used by the artist in the creation of the work. Indeed, the degree of interactivity of the work depends largely on the choice of media.

Today, the available media are divided into old (pre-digital) and new (digital). Old media, in turn, are divided into non-technological and technological. When applied to art, old media includes traditional arts – painting, sculpture, drawing, etc. To the class of old technological/analogous media belong pre-digital photography and cinematography, whereas new technological media are those for the production and consumption of which a computer or handheld computing device is required. According to Lev Manovich, the criterion for distinguishing between types of media is simple: “If you want to understand whether there is something new in the media or not, just ask the question: Do you need a computer in order to perceive it? If so, then we are dealing with new media.” (Manovich, 2017, p. 80). The principal novelty of new media relative to old media lies in their digitality.

The specifics of old non-technological media limited the possibilities for active interaction between the viewer and the work. Manovich explains this situation as follows: “The traditional understanding of a medium emphasises the physical properties of a certain material and its representational capabilities, that is, the relationship between sign and referent. Like all traditional aesthetics, this concept assumes a focus on the intent of the artist, as well as the content and form of the work, but not on the user.” (Manovich, 2017, p. 40). Here, the lack of any reaction on the part of the second component of artistic communication (i.e. the creative work) detracts from the issue of interactivity.

Under the situation of non-technological media, the interaction of artists with their public took place (for the most part) in accordance with well-established procedures. Shared meanings consisted in the reaction of the public being included in the artist’s intention, as a result of which the course of the proposed scenario could only vary to an extremely limited degree, and for which the media requirement was not very

significant. In the case of the already-mentioned example of the proto-performance, staged altercations, which broke out at different times and places than those envisaged by the originators of the action, were typically used to achieve this effect. The question then arose as to what possibilities existed for working with the public's emotions on a subtler level. At that time, the answer was most likely – not many. The speeches of the Dadaists in the Cabaret Voltaire and Dada Gallery were sustained in the same vein of scandal and outrageous behaviour as the proto-performances of the Surrealists. As a conceptually important means of representation for many artistic trends within modernism, especially the avant-garde, scandal becomes the primary means of promoting new artistic ideas. Implicitly, it was present in any work. Here, the use of interactive elements by artists had a very specific purpose – to attract attention to the new art at any cost, pre-empting opponents and attracting supporters.

The further development of interactive art is associated with the spread of technological media, used by artists both during the process of creating a work (as a new means of artistic expression), as well as for the purpose of subsequently documenting the process. The latter is due to the process-orientation of interactive art, which only exists in the here and now: in the absence of any documentation, it remains only in the memory of the participants. In this context, media such as photography and video have in many ways contributed to the spread of interactive art. Equally relevant is the fact that the appearance of photography deprived artists of their former monopoly on the production of images, forcing them to seek new ways of developing art.

The development of technological media in art began with their use as a means of artistic expressiveness. For example, when designing a scene in Erik Satie's ballet *Relâche* [*The Performance is Cancelled*], electric bulbs were used and the composer exited the stage in a car; during the intermission, René Clair's provocative – and, in full accordance with Dada's covenants, senseless – film *Entr'acte* was shown. In the theatrical performances of the Bauhaus (projection-light plays), as well as for *Pictures from an Exhibition*, staged in Dessau by Wassily Kandinsky to the music of Modest Mussorgsky, light projections were used as means of expression. The general interest in renewing the means of artistic expressiveness, connected with the approach to the latest achievements of science and technology, was reflected in another essay *Theatre, Circus, Variety* (1924) by another representative of the Bauhaus László Moholy-Nagy: "Nothing prevents us from using sophisticated TECHNIQUE: cinema, car, elevator, airplane, other mechanisms as well as optical instruments, reflecting instruments and so on." And further: "It's time to begin to engage in stage activities of a kind that will not allow the masses to remain mute spectators, that [...] will allow them to merge with the action on the stage (Goldberg, 2015, pp. 145–146). Moholy-Nagy's dreams about the viewer's interaction with the work up to and including complete dissolution in it would only be realised several decades later, when art took a performative turn, resulting in a full validation of public participation in the creation of a work of art.

Art's repudiation of the principle of mimesis, its transformation from representation to presentation, makes the work inseparable from reality. According to Weibel, "this

transition from picture to action is responsible for the performative turn, and, for the new role of the audience in art [...], we live in the age of the performative turn. All kinds of art, from music to sculpture, are highly dependent on the participation and performative acts of the public.” (Weibel, 2011, pp. 279–280). Contemporary art not only works with real space (as often as not, as in the case of public art outside the “white cube”), but also time (this art is process-oriented), movement, objects, landscapes. It also works with people’s bodies, whether using them as part of the work, as does Santiago Sierra, for example, whose installation heroes are without subjectivity, part of the installation, nothing more. Or, in becoming an active part of the work, the audience acquires subjectivity, primarily as a consequence of interactivity.

For a long time, it was the medium that was considered as the basis for the typologisation of art. However, during the last few decades of the 20th century, the situation changed. According to Manovich: “The previous criteria for distinguishing art, based on materials used, have lost their relevance. New art practices – installation, performance, happening, etc. – unpredictably and haphazardly incorporate various materials.” (Manovic, 2017, p. 35).

In the performances and happenings of the 1950s and 1960s, interactivity becomes for the viewer a source of new, often nontrivial, absurd, far-from-everyday experiences. Thus, during one of the performances of the Japanese group Gutai, who typically work very aggressively with the public in the spirit of the Dadaists, viewers were invited to paint a large format canvas on which anyone could depict anything. Thus, a situation was created in which any of its participants could turn out to be equal to the artist. Such spontaneity and unpredictability also characterised the performance-festivals of the Fluxus international art movement (among whose participants included Yoko Ono, Joseph Beuys, Ben Vautier, Nam June Paik), in full accordance with the statement of George Maciunas, one of the founders of the movement: “Everything can become a work of art and everyone can create it.” His concept of ‘expanded art’ could not but inspire the public, although, with regard to its direct participation in the events of Fluxus, it is fair to say that initially only the presence of the latter was required.

Much more detailed audience participation requirements were described in the performances of Allan Kaprow. In 1959, Kaprow carried out the performance entitled *18 Happenings in Six Parts*. Visitors were given programmes, which contained a set of instructions: a procedural script detailing the actions of certain groups of viewers. This was the first documented case of direct participation of the public as a component of the artistic work – in the programme, it was listed as part of the performing staff. And although the participation of the public was mainly limited to a transition from one zone of space to another, the absence of any barriers between it and the performers created a completely new situation.

During the 1960s, there was a return to collective ways of organising artistic activity, involving such forms as *performance* and *happening*: Fluxus, Situationist International, GRAV (Groupe de Recherche d’Art Visuel) took aesthetic approaches to levelling critiques against institutions of power, against the Society of the Spectacle, against consumerism. It is during these years that art goes beyond the white cube,

and, in so doing, establishes new formats by means of which the public may encounter works of art (Vali Exports, Peter Weibel, GRAV, etc.). The role of viewers in artistic communication is strengthened, although their actions remain at times destructive or hostile. Here, artistic communication can become more complicated since including such new components as: the *viewer-as-artist* (since in the first performances the artist often was his own performer); the *viewer-as-another-viewer*; the *viewer-as-work*.

Since the 1960s, performances have been characterised by an appeal to an ever-wider range of topics, including those that were formerly considered taboo in culture: among them politics, sex, violence, death, narcissism, and so on. At the same time, the public was liberated; on the one hand, becoming increasingly active; in other cases, also aggressive. Thus, Yoko Ono's 1964 performance *Cut Piece*, during which the audience was invited to cut off pieces from the artist's dress with a pair of scissors, made a dispiriting impression on critics – primarily, in terms of the willingness of some members of the public to perform actions bordering on violence. The subsequent performance by Marina Abramović entitled *Rhythm 0* had to be interrupted due to threats to the life of the artist, who invited the public to perform any actions on her using various items laid out on the table.

The art of the 1960s works enthusiastically with all media, including video, film, television – both as a means of documenting events and as a means of artistic expressiveness. However, with the advent of new digital technologies, their capabilities in this respect have become almost limitless. High technologies have now penetrated almost all spheres of human existence: they mediate labour, leisure, communication, as well as art in many of its manifestations.

For several decades, the experiments of artists with new technologies were transformed into that component of visual arts referred to today as 'digital art'. This art form has already undergone many name changes during its relatively short existence. It has been referred to, for example, in terms of computer-, multimedia-, cyberspace- (Paul, 2017, p. 7), etc. Whatever it is called, it is undeniable that new technologies are claimed by art, according to Claire Bishop, "at least at one stage of their production, distribution and consumption" (Bishop, 2015). Even in those cases where artists do not use new media directly in their work (which, as, Bishop observes, applies to almost the whole artistic mainstream), they are nevertheless forced to take into account new circumstances related to the digitalisation of reality.

Already in the 1960s, in order to realise their projects, artists were entering into collaborations with programmers, engineers, etc. Many adherents of high technology continue to believe that the future lies in a hybrid art that unites science, art, biotechnology and other elements.

Artists working with new media can place their projects directly on the network, where they are available for user input. For example, a user could participate in B. Seaman's project "Prokhodnye nabory/Tyanut' za ruchku na konchike yazyka (Passages Sets/One Pulls Pivots at the Tip of the Tongue)", creating a multimedia poem from words, images and media clips (Paul, 2017, p. 93). Artists can create installations or environments in which high technologies are used in one way or another: computers, interfaces, all kinds of sensors that react to human presence

or to some parameters of the human body or even the weather, e.g. wind speed, etc. In this sense, the viewer becomes part of the installation when, by her actions, she activates it. An example of this is A. Ballock's *Drawing Machine*, a work which hung on the wall and began to draw straight lines in response to the sounds of human presence (or some other human actions that were not announced in advance). The viewer can also consciously interact with an installation: using a gadget, she can change the patterns of projections and colours on three giant screens that represent Masato Tutsui's audio-visual installation *Functional Organics*.

Projects of this kind are typically not only interactive, but also kinaesthetic and immersive; that is, they totally immerse the recipient in an artificial environment created by the artist. Thus, Philip Beasley creates an interactive environment consisting in a kind of forest that affects all the sensory organs of the recipient as well as being sensitive to her touch (installation Hylozoic series: STOA).

Today we live in a post-media world, a situation in which no particular medium has priority; meanwhile, in art, any combination of them is allowed. Nevertheless, it is digital media that exerts the greatest influence on contemporary art. Just as the appearance of photography at one time deprived artists of their monopoly on creating images, which resulted in the performative turn in art, so the appearance of new media, according to Weibel, deprived artists of their monopoly on creativity. "The new 21st century art paradigm consists in a worldwide network, especially following the Web 2.0 revolution: now access to all media open is to everyone at any time [...] With the arrival of the mass media network, the monopoly on distribution was also lost. Creativity is everywhere [...] Everyone can be creative with the help of technology; however, in addition to this, she can also distribute products of her creativity with the help of technology" (Weibel, 2011, pp. 276–277). In this way, new media create a situation of extreme democratisation of creativity. Hence the increase in activity on the part of the public, who are waiting for the co-creatorship invitation from the artist. Hence also the corresponding proposal on the part of artists.

Researchers note the emergence of a kind of 'interactive dependency' in modern culture (Adashevskaya, 2011). The reasons for this dependency are quite understandable: interactive work not only entertains and empowers the viewer, provoking her to perform certain actions, but also gives her something more – new sensations and new experiences. On the one hand, this art undoubtedly arouses genuine interest among the public; on the other, it creates a situation of proximity to the market, for which it is often reproached by critics. In this respect, interactive art fits into the "experience economy", the business concept based on people's desire for a variety of impressions. The product here is the obtaining of a new experience, the possibility of experiencing interesting new emotions.

Interactive art in the Context of Social Practices

New media has turned the viewer into a user, whose ever-increasing activity over time produces the ability to go beyond the boundaries of the work, to form new social ties and on this basis create a micro-society.

The curator Mary Jane Jacob defines art as a kind of social practice. In her opinion, art always creates social interaction, regardless of whether it is a picture, conventional subjects, or multiple varieties of socially-engaged art (Jacob, 2013). Thus, in the context of interactive art, various types of the art of complicity become of interest.

During the 1990s, a period characterised by an unstable socio-political situation, social issues were to the fore in contemporary art. In a situation in which a dominant force in the political arena is absent, art acquires the ability to express itself more vividly. “When the dominant political narratives lose their legitimacy, the space is released for new ideas about the future. It is this sense of opportunity that determines the current proliferation of contemporary art practices associated with collective action and civic participation.” (Kester, 2013, p. 48).

This circle of problems was updated in *Relational Aesthetics*, a collection of essays by Nicolas Bourriaud, which became one of the most discussed (and criticised) books devoted to contemporary art. At the centre of Bourriaud’s attention is ‘relational art’, defined as art that takes as its theoretical foundation “the sphere of human relationships and its social context” (Bourriaud, 2016, p. 15). In other words, on the one hand, while the work of art does not cease to be objective and material, on the other, Bourriaud’s primary attention is emphatically on the human relationships arising within the performance or other event proposed by the artist. Bourriaud’s reflections were inspired by the works of artists who actively work with their public, including Philippe Parreno, Félix González-Torres, Carsten Höller, Rirkrit Tiravanija and Pierre Huyghe.

This kind of relational art takes the interactivity of the work to a new level. Previously, the artist either used viewers as extras, a means of setting the work into motion; or as part of the installation, simultaneously complementing and changing it with their actions. In either case, the viewer acted within the framework of the script created by the artist. Most of the performances of previous decades assumed either merely the presence of the viewer – where she acted as an entourage, or, in other words, was used as a medium – or permitted her a modicum of participation. Unlike most examples of this kind (for example, the events of Joseph Beuys and Bruce Nauman), the art of relationships creates a fundamentally different situation, since it gives the viewer a subjectivity, taking into account not only her body, but also experience, sensations, etc. In this sense, works of this kind are much more variative and open to (two-way) communication.

Bourriaud uses the potential of art to try to find exclusively peaceful means of overcoming the fragmentation of the consumer society and alienation inherent therein. In his opinion, one should not create new utopias or make plans for improving the world through revolutionary change (as, for example, the Situationists did). Rather, one should learn to live in the world as it is, making it better, friendlier and more harmonious through the establishment of new social ties, the emergence of which in other circumstances, outside art, would be difficult or impossible. The art of relationships should become a source of alternative forms of sociality, its projects oases of good will and mutual understanding. In the opinion of Bourriaud, this art

is “a pore, a notch in alienation everywhere” (Bourriaud, 2016, p. 96). Sometimes he understood the space of human relationships as is, on the one hand, inscribed in the global system; on the other hand, he admits “alternative [spaces], not accepted in this system of exchange opportunities” (Bourriaud, 2016, p. 18). Although Bourriaud objects to a definition of relational work in social terms, this can be seen as an attempt to organise fragmented reality into a positive social project.

Quite quickly, relational art becomes supplemented by the large number of practices associated with the general idea of establishing social ties through interactive artistic approaches. These include socially engaged art, dialogic art, the art of social practices, the art of experimental communities, the aesthetics of communication, etc. They are united by the absence of a border between art and life: actions take place in real time and space, requiring the simultaneous presence of both artist and public.

For the designation of art of this kind, art critic Claire Bishop uses the term “participatory art” or the art of participation. A consistent critic of Bourriaud, Bishop tries to reveal art in areas where there is a much more obvious social and ethical dimension, in connection with which the problem of the criteria to be used for evaluating such creative works from an aesthetic point of view remains unresolved. In striving to avoid the terminological uncertainty inherent in art of this kind, Bishop distinguishes between the concepts of “participation” and “interactivity”. By interactivity is implied the work of the 1960s and 1970s, based on a one-to-one relationship between the viewer and a technological device or interface (for example, the viewer can click a button). For Bishop, “participation” implies that a work is created by several people, each of which also acts as a medium, a communicative means within this work (Bishop, 2010). In the digital age, such an idea of interactivity is already inherent. In the case of participative art, interaction is made more complicated, but never abrogated. Its structure becomes more complicated, in this case including not only the viewer and the work, but also the viewer and the artist, the viewer and other viewers.

In the case of collaborative and collective art practices, the structure of interaction becomes even more complex. These are large-scale projects that unite many artists with different social groups, who interact for long time periods often measured in years. As an example of how art creates micro-societies, united by common goals and values, art critic and art historian Grant Kester led the project *Park Fiction* in Hamburg (Kester, 2013, p. 47). Due to the efforts of artists and local residents, a river bank area intended for gentrification was not only defended against the city authorities but also turned into a fantasy public park. During the process of project implementation, alternative platforms for community communication (cafes, bars, schools, etc.) were created and local opinion leaders (musicians, priests, school principals, etc.) were invited. Naturally, the most active local residents took part in the discussion and implementation of the project. In this case, additional interactive structures were associated with the interaction not only of individual viewers, but also of individual social groups.

Critics of interactive art (and all its modifications) often doubt its ability to do anything to radically change society through such “baby steps”; clearly, it does not

constitute a magic wand for solving all social problems. Nevertheless, projects of this kind continue to be implemented and can be seen to contribute to positive social change. The success of the curator Charles Esche is explained by the combination of artistic imagination with the original realism of the task: at the base of such projects are “modest proposals”, seeking to use existing objects, conditions and situations with the aim of their due transformation. Esche is convinced that collective creativity not only opens up new opportunities, but also becomes a “method of research and analysis of objective conditions” (Esche, 2005, p. 8). Another important factor is the increasing impossibility of experiencing collective creativity in other spheres of contemporary society, making its realisation even more attractive both for artists and for the public.

In this regard, the curator M. Lindt notes that in recent times, culture and art have become an effective force for provoking artistic activism. For her, collaboration is “a way to create a space that would allow us to escape the instrumentalising impact of the art market and state-funded art” (Lindt, 2013, p. 115).

Conclusion

Despite its clear role in determining the development of art since the time of the historical avant-garde, the importance of interactivity to the emergence of contemporary art has, in our opinion, been underestimated. It is no exaggeration to say that today’s state of art is due, *inter alia*, to the interactivity that made the process of artistic communication bilateral and active, resulting in the emancipation of both individual audience members and society as a whole. If it hadn’t been for interactivity, many of the former boundaries between art and reality, between the artist and recipient, would still remain in place. The active deployment of interactivity allows contemporary artists to not only entertain the public, but also involve them in the social projects initiated by the artists, thus contributing to the socialisation of art.

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