

Łukasz Białkowski

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3895-4462>

Department of Art Studies, Faculty of Humanities

Pedagogical University of Krakow

lukasz.bialkowski@up.krakow.pl

EXPERIMENT AND “ART ART”. FROM UNCERTAINTY TO IMITATION

Abstract: The article discusses three various stages of artistic experiment. Both a source concept of experiment in artistic practice, developed by Émile Zola in the 19th century under the banner of 'experimental novel', and the neo-avant-garde distinction into Art art and experimental art created by Allan Kaprow in the 1960s, established a close connection of experiment with uncertainty and risk. In this context, the article investigates the extent to which contemporary artists' practices, including those frequently defined as experimental, can be subsumed under the historical meaning of experiment and poses a question whether they might have created another style of art. The problem is analysed in reference to Artur Żmijewski's film, *Powtórzenie* [*Repetition*].

Keywords: experiment, Art art, experimental novel, experimental art, pastiche, imitation

Much like sandstone is not the most preferred material among artists, as it lacks the prestige of marble or the latest digital imaging technologies, its humility and inconspicuousness make for a brilliant metaphor of language temporarily used to discuss art. Similarly to every sedimentary rock, the contemporary art world's discourse is the result of the superimposition of millennia of concepts and representations which, to the untrained eye, appear to form one coherent solid. A geologist, however, knows that sandstone's cohesion is the effect of combining calcium particles. By the same token, a conscious philosopher, critic or historian of art is aware that the ostensibly homogenous composition of the language used to describe artistic creation today is but an illusion. The discourse consists of numerous layers of sediment accrued from by-gone intellectual trends and fashions, concepts eroded of their original meanings, nomenclature of forgotten, if frequently puzzling, provenance.

In their uniform mass, all the concepts form equivalent sand particles to be variously recombined with one another, since their origins have either been forgotten or have become meaningless. Those sedimentary layers have often been drawn from as disparate resources as the language of religion, psychology or politics. With respect to religion, it is not only the remains of Romanticism, in the light of which 'passion', 'mission' or 'temple' have become natural elements of the language describing art, but also, to name but a few, such religion-rooted terms as 'consecration' and 'novice' have been introduced into the language of contemporary art criticism from sociology. Psychology has smuggled, for instance, the terms 'transgression' or 'emancipation' into the language of art, whereas political discourse has lent it not only such concepts as 'avant-garde' or 'revolution', but also 'participation' and 'autonomy', among many others. One of those sedimentary layers has accumulated from expressions borrowed from the world of science. A plethora of texts discussing contemporary artistic practice contain juxtapositions of such concepts as 'research', 'testing', 'analysis', 'laboratory' and 'experiment'.

The latter concept, similarly to some other of the terms above, has infiltrated the substance of the language used to describe art and, nowadays, is perennially employed when referring both to historical formulae of artistic creation, as well as to its contemporary incarnations. Certain doubts, however, have been raised by the facility with which it has been applied to such diverse artistic practices as the collage, the ready-made, the Situationist drift, on-camera performances, multi-media installations and participatory practices at art institutions. In a number of its various uses, particularly in the avant-garde context, the term was practically synonymous with 'art'. Nonetheless, the fact that, in its artistic context, the term denotes such a large number of variegated phenomena and is also frequently used outside of the jargon of art – i.e. in science, but also in the realms of the kitchen, sex life, use of consciousness-altering substances or sport – raises the question as to its actual meaning and even as to whether it actually has any meaning.

It seems that the term had also become a sort of sediment in the language of science, when, having come from common parlance, it lost its subjective, intransitive character and gained a solely objective meaning. The Old French *experiment*, obviously rooted in Latin, denoted knowledge and skills acquired through the observation of a particular phenomenon, a relation between an observer's private experience and an object.¹ Hence the present-day 'expert' referring to personal knowledge. However, through its uses in the context of Enlightenment and Post-Enlightenment scientific methodology, the emphasis has

¹ See: the entry for 'expérience' in: *Dictionnaire du français moderne* by Maurice Remy (Hatier, Paris 1969, p. 258).

clearly shifted towards an experienced object, making the experiment a means of speaking about an object in a universalist perspective, in an inter-subjectively communicable language. An experiment began to be understood as a primary instrument of falsification in the natural sciences, charged with the task of verifying the personal experience of a phenomenon and reducing such experience to its commonly observable properties. Thus, the very structure of a phenomenon becomes significant, is studied in separation from any private experience, based on objective properties which are independent of the observing subject.

This is also the conceptualisation in which the term 'experiment' has its first significant use in the context of artistic practice. It does not appear in the visual arts, where the term has been a social butterfly ever since, but in literature. In 1880, Émile Zola publishes a collection of five essays under the title *Le Roman expérimental* [*The Experimental Novel*, English translation by Belle M. Sherman, 1893], expounding his views on literature. The fact that his naturalist perspective, both on the role of the writer and of literature, was derived from a scientific outlook, also translates into his understanding of the concept under scrutiny here. Following Claude Bernard, Zola presents twofold perception of the role of the writer, foregrounding approaches of the observer and the experimentalist. The former »gives the facts as he has observed them, suggests the point of departure, displays the solid earth on which his characters are to tread and the phenomena to develop.«² Therein enters the experimentalist who »introduces an experiment, that is to say, sets his characters going in a certain story so as to show that the succession of facts will be such as the requirements of the determinism of the phenomena under examination call for.«³

Although both tasks, the description of phenomena and the examination of their mechanics, are equivalent for the writer, it is essential to distinguish the subjective and the objective dimension of the fictional world. As much as the observer strives to be as objective as possible, he constructs a world seen with his own eyes only.⁴ Only the experimentalist analyses the truth conditions of the universe, pushing its elements into wheels governed by 'hard determinism'. Therefore, in Zola's eyes, literary practice becomes an analogue of scientific work: the novelist constructs an image of the world, thereby posing a hypothesis, and moves onto its verification, unfolding the story according to the objective mechanics of human interactions and the rules of logic. Zola fails

² É. Zola, *Le Roman expérimental*, 6th ed., Éditeur G. Charpentier, Paris 1881, p. 7 [https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/67128/mod_resource/content/1/Zola%20-%20Le%20roman%20exp%C3%A9rimental.pdf]; *The Experimental Novel*, trans. from the French by B. M. Sherman, The Cassel Publishing Co., New York 1893, p. 8.

³ Ibid.

⁴ The 'writer' in the English Zola remains consistently masculine.

to notice any dangers in the procedure or the circularity of the device; he concludes that it will verify the precepts of characters' behaviour (or rather rules of 'human passions', as was the French writer's preferred "scientific term"⁵), having previously taken those precepts for granted. Nonetheless, the almost charmingly naive and all too literal translation of the procedure onto a literary ground allows him to conclude that literature is a search for the truth as identically rigorous as the experimental sciences. Their task is to verify hypotheses on the subject of human habitat, the man's individual and social behaviours.

As an experiment and thereby a search for the truth, as well as a replication of a scientific procedure, writing thus becomes, first and foremost, an encounter with the unknown at least on two levels: the cognitive and the artistic. In the former instance, it challenges reality, so as to unearth all its mysteries and to uncover its hidden precepts. In the latter, which is a consequence of the former, the ultimate shape of a literary work also remains a mystery. Under the rigour imposed by Zola on novel writing, it is no longer the author's will which decides the protagonists' lot, but the mechanics of social determinism: the literary experiment is a logical and consistent inference of conclusions from accepted initial data. Also the author should find their final outcome to be surprising. The tasks which Zola charges the author with demand that one takes a dim view of the construct and recognises its inherent wishful thinking. Regardless of the extent to which the narrative mode proposed by Zola is capable of realising his expectations, it nonetheless manages to produce a significant shift from the Romantic tradition. The author ceases to be the creator and becomes an observer, and an obedient rapporteur of the experiment he has performed. Therefore, we notice how the 'experimentalist' – understood in the sense bestowed on him by the French writer – shifts the emphasis from the author to an object of description, from creativity to research. If creative uncertainty accompanies a writer, it is so not due the fact that he may have suddenly been abandoned by inspiration, lacking vision, or that he may have ceased to understand himself. The uncertainty is solely cognitive in nature and does not result from the artist's quandaries, but from the state of the object under examination.

It would be difficult to follow paths along which the notion of experiment travelled from literature to the realm of visual arts. Besides, even establishing whether it had actually arrived from literature or came from elsewhere and who used it first may be impossible. Nevertheless, it took firm root in the climes of the first avant-garde, three decades after the publication of Zola's essay. Progress, originality and novelty – the avant-garde fetish words – chimed perfectly with risk and uncertainty inherent in the experiment. The concepts of the

⁵ See: p. 8, 10, 27, in French; p. 9, 11, 29.

avant-garde and artistic experiment came to be virtually synonymous – to such an extent that finding the term 'experiment' in avant-garde manifestos and art criticism poses no difficulty, whereas it is much harder to come by its explanations, even as rudimentary as Zola's.⁶ It turns into dust suspended in the air one breathes, settling in the lungs and environment. Its meaning is explained by use, while roughly anything surprising and reaching beyond received conventions becomes 'experimental'. In order to consider itself 'absolutely modern', modernity has to experiment, even as it escapes the experimentalist's attention that their innovative and emancipatory gestures are becoming a bargaining chip in a bidding. After several decades, the stakeholders will have entered a state of absolute uncertainty as to the basic question, i.e. what a work of art actually is.

That very time, i.e. the mid-1960s, sees a publication of a text which appears to be the first significant attempt since the time of Zola at defining the meaning of the term 'experiment' in the context of art. The task was undertaken by Allan Kaprow in his essay entitled, quite simply, *Experimental Art*. His statement largely expresses fatigue with the procession of subsequent art styles and '-isms' which, at that time, the artist claims, were merely repeating formulas developed by the first avant-garde.⁷ Thus, Hard Edge is, in his view, »a summary of neoclassical abstractions of 1920-1945«;⁸ Op-Art merely »intensifies the color theories of Pointillism ... and the retinal-fatigue game of Duchamp's Roto Reliefs«;⁹ Abstract Symbolism and Colorfield painting is a continuation of the activities of Purists and Symbolists from Mallarmé's circle;¹⁰ Object Art is, on the one hand, a contemporary version of the ready-made and the tradition of object trouvé, and, on the other hand, a three-dimensional complement of Hard Edge and Colorfield painting.¹¹ Kaprow also severely judges Pop Art and Assemblage, claiming that the former is an extension of photo-montage, graphic design and conventions taken from comics and film, whereas the latter, notwithstanding its relatively great innovativeness, is a combination of devices employed in Cubism, Dada and Surrealism.¹² All those tendencies are sarcastically dubbed by Kaprow as 'Art art', i.e. one which concentrates its efforts on replicating well-known styles.

⁶ See: C. Greenberg, *Obrona modernizmu. Wybór esejów*, translated by G. Dziamski, M. Śpik-Dziamska, Universitas, Kraków 2006, p. 5, 22.

⁷ A. Kaprow, *Experimental Art*, in: *Essays on Blurring the Life and Art: Expanded Edition*, ed. J. Kelley, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 2003, pp. 66-68.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

Kaprow uses the term 'developmental' in contradistinction to experimental art. General public mistakes Art art for experiment, whereas it offers nothing new. Differences between blueprints and their reinterpretations in Kaprow's times are so subtle that they require exaggeration. The practice resembles marketing soap, where the practically identical commodity is peddled, packaged in »blue, greenish blue, turquoise and lilac, each dramatically novel...«¹³ In fact, this is unsurprising, since an impossibility of experimentation is essentially inherent in Art art, originating, for example, from the exceptional familiarity that 'stylists', as Kaprow calls them, have with art history, their source of inspiration for their constant foregrounding of style.¹⁴ They work in such a manner that they consciously contain their productions in self-imposed frameworks and endow their pieces with features which situate them within the tradition of art. In other words, the status and value of their work is based on the historical context and culturally legitimised conceptualisation of what art has been.

The American happening artist is sceptical about his contemporary art scene, criticising it from a radically modernist or even progressivist position. The vantage point also determines his understanding of experiment. Experiment is, of course, everything Art art is not – namely, above all, the unknown. The latter can be understood as peculiar “innocence”,¹⁵ an effort to remain untouched by artistic traditions and thinking in terms of style. Traditional art becomes art precisely owing to the knowledge of what art 'ought to' be, whereas »experimentalists are temperamentally less likely to be able to take a stand in their cultural kaleidoscope.«¹⁶ Instead of taking preceding techniques and styles as their starting point, the experimental artist »must violate their beliefs regarding the very idea of art; they must destroy as many distinctions as still exist in the idea and let loose with confusion and insecurity.«¹⁷ Another aspect of such ignorance emerges here: whereas 'stylists' always know whether the thing they are doing is or is not art, radical experimentalists never enjoy the certitude. And the more they are unsure about the status of their activities, the more they want to cross borders.¹⁸ Experiment is, therefore, strongly related to the constant fluidity of the status of one's work and the object resulting from it. Within the vision that Kaprow advances, this is related to yet another distinction: between “composition” and “juxtaposition.”¹⁹ A 'stylist' follows a certain path, combining elements into a coherent entity through composition, or his/

¹³ Ibid., p. 68.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 72.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 66.

her knowledge of conventions. He or she decides that their produced object acquires substantiality on the go and becomes an artwork. If experimental art is to remain detached from conventions, it has to be based on juxtaposition: elements are loosely connected, maintaining uncertainty about their mutual relations and any coherence of the whole.

The aspect of juxtaposition is also significant due to the fact that it requires developing distance towards the aesthetic dimension of the work of art. 'Stylists', making use of conventions, operate on an aesthetic level of the artwork. It is possible, on the one hand, thanks to the coherence of objects of their production and, on the other hand, through viewers' traditionally sanctioned habits. Within the understanding that Kaprow outlines, neither is achieving the aesthetic dimension possible, nor is it of interest to the experimental artist. Both are rather concerned with the continual shifting of cultural conventions related to the perception of particular objects as artworks, meaning »philosophical rather than aesthetic«²⁰ issues become the object of their attention. The incoherence and 'juxtapositional' character of experimental art also make notions such as »pure form« or »significant form« irrelevant with respect to the art.²¹ Rather than form, an experimental artwork is an indeterminate, pulsating and ever living conglomerate of elements. It is a continual expression of distance towards the aesthetic.²²

Zola's and Kaprow's theoretical proposals differ in many respects, starting with the medium they refer to and ending with a temporal distance of over eighty years. Nonetheless, both conceptions seem to contain two elements which are crucial to their understanding of experiment. First, the suspension of one's own agency and unwillingness to play the role of an artist "expressing" anything. The very material in which work is done has to speak for itself. If only declaratively, Zola perceives his own role as a mere chronicler of changes 'human passions' undergo in mutual interactions. He is only responsible for setting out the initial conditions. This leads to the second element, i.e. insecurity, albeit placed on different levels in the two expositions. For the French writer, it signifies an adventure resulting from setting the machinery in motion, with its ruthless cogs feeding the characters and their environment. The end-point of the process is independent of the artist's will and is assumed to be completely unknown to him. For the American artist, it is a constant lack of certainty about the place they find themselves in. It is meandering through the game of artistic conventions, the conventionality of which is, on the one hand, assumed and regarded as a reference point. On the other hand, transgressing

²⁰ Ibid., p. 69.

²¹ Ibid., p. 78.

²² Ibid., p. 72.

the social contract with respect to the nature of art is undertaken in order to draft a new contract. It is an oscillation between an essentialist and a relativist understanding of 'the work of art', performing a shift from the aesthetic order to an order that has to be nameless by definition and is located in the zone of eternal indeterminacy.

I have converged on the perspective put forward by Kaprow, since it seems symptomatic for neo-avant-garde practices of the period. The understanding of experiment advanced by the American happening artist shone through a whole array of very different artistic phenomena: from practices at the junction of technology and art (e.g. *Experiments in Art and Technology*), through body-oriented practices (Viennese Actionism, body art), research into the limitations of film and video, and activities in urban space (e.g. Situationism), to conceptual art. Many trends of the kind could be enumerated, but in spite of all their variety, they were conjoined by a belief in the historical changeability of the concept of the artwork, which transformed it into a fluid and freely redefinable object. In his *Intermedia*, a text written one year before Kaprow's, Dick Higgins called for abolishing distinctions between art disciplines and media, ceasing to treat them as closed forms and approaching them as a temporarily evolving event, rather than an object petrified in space.²³ It is also no accident that, in the very same year, Theodor Nelson came up with the concept of hypertext: conceiving of media as a network of mutually communicable and translatable content carriers, in opposition to Greenberg's idea of "medium specificity".²⁴ The form of the artwork, formerly a crucial term of its description, began to crack and transform into an amalgam, open to every possibility and all-absorbing. Operating under the banner of 'experiment', the neo-avant-garde wanted to be as modern as its precursors a few decades earlier, renouncing the dead weights of form, style and aestheticism.

Despite the cooling effect of post-modernism on progressivist fervour of the 1960s and '70s, the 'experiment' slogan is still often used in the discourse of art. However, it could be argued that even though we are as distant in time from the neo-avant-garde as Kaprow was from Zola, a new sedimentary layer has accumulated in the meaning of the term. It is quite another thing to experiment when "everything has already happened" and the performance of every gesture is accompanied by the awareness that it already has its evil twin somewhere in the past. Such ambience must lead to the belief that the 'experiment' itself has also become suspiciously repetitious and serves to verify hypotheses which

²³ D. Higgins, *Intermedia*, translated by M. and T. Zieliński [in:] idem, *Intermedia i inne eseje*, Akademia Ruchu, Warszawa 1985, pp. 11–26.

²⁴ T. Nelson, *A File Structure for the Complex, the Changing, and the Indeterminate. Association for Computing Machinery*. Proc. 20th National Conference 1965, pp. 84–100.

have been repeatedly confirmed. There are countless examples, especially due to the fact that the artistic practices of the past two decades were marked by re-enactment. In this respect, Artur Żmijewski's *Powtórzenie* [*Repetition*] is an exceptionally appealing production. The action which, according to its curatorial description, was an experiment²⁵ reiterating the notorious Stanford Prison Experiment conducted by Philip Zimbardo in 1971, became the subject of a documentary representing Poland at the Venice Biennale in 2005.

The undertaking in the 1970s involved a group of students who were locked up in several rooms and randomly assigned the roles of prisoners and prison officers. Due to growing brutality in the latter's behaviour, Zimbardo decided to terminate the experiment after seven days. The Polish artist's project involved releasing press adverts to find potential candidates and selecting twenty participants who, in exchange for a daily wage of 120 PLN (€30), were supposed to »live the life of prisoners and prison officers for two weeks. Roles were randomly assigned; the officers were given uniforms, while prisoners wore orange knee-length shirts, their names were replaced with numbers and they were locked up in cells. All participants had been informed that they would be constantly filmed. Every person was also aware that, at any point, they could use a magical formula and forego their further participation in the project without explanation.«²⁶ Żmijewski's "experiment" was also discontinued, except that it was called off by participants themselves who claimed that »something strange was happening to them.«²⁷

Probably contrary to the author's intentions, the event became a pastiche of the idea of experiment, both in its scientific and artistic dimension. As for science, the pastiche resulted not only from a lack of any proper methodology, including a clearly stated hypothesis the "experiment" was supposed to verify, but also from its spectacular character. From an academic perspective, the event could rather be regarded as a sensational imitation of a scientific study, not only of the Stanford original, but also of every other study. Incidentally, Żmijewski managed to gain popularity, since the film's release sparked public outrage in Poland and the pointless instrumentalisation of employed participants became a subject of debate in Polish media. As for an artistic pastiche, the problem is slightly more complex. What seems significant in this context is the titular repetition which plays the role of an idiosyncratic technique in

²⁵ J. Mytkowska, *Repetition*, curatorial text for the 51st International Art Exhibition - Biennale di Venezia, Polish Pavilion, 2005, <https://labiennale.art.pl/en/wystawy/repetition/> [accessed: 17 July 2020].

²⁶ E. Bendyk, "Powtórzenie" - Żmijewski contra Zimbardo, "Antymatrix. Blog Edwina Bendyka", <https://bendyk.blog.polityka.pl/2006/06/06/powtorzenie-zmijewski-contra-zimbardo/> [accessed: 14 July 2020].

²⁷ Ibid.

Żmijewski's practice. As such, it is a symptom of a broader, global trend: from the aforementioned fashion for re-enactment (arguably catalysed by Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave* of 2001) to practices of appropriation and the phenomenon of what Dubravka Ugrešić called "karaoke culture".²⁸ In Żmijewski's works, repetition appears on numerous occasions: its 'hard' version was used in his famous piece, 80064 and in *Msza* [*Mass*], while a 'soft' variety is featured in *Berek* [*The Game of Tag*] and *Lekcja śpiewu* [*Singing Lesson*]. It would be difficult to refrain from the question whether the popularity of the device, both internationally and in Żmijewski's own work, does not make it a sort of a style. The question will appear reasonable if we remember that 'style' as a term is inherently ambiguous: on the one hand, it refers to a distinctive, unique form of self-expression and, on the other hand, it points to a possibility of repetition. It is based on employing the same solutions, drawing on similar motifs, etc. In the latter sense, style is nothing but a well-defined and predictable form, by means of which very similar objects can be produced. If we look at Żmijewski's "experiment" in this manner, we may ask if it could also be an imitation of an artistic experiment.

At least in the light of Kaprow's above-discussed claims and his criticism of Art art, the question does arise. And the problem is whether, in the course of several decades that have passed since the 1960s, artistic experiment has also become a specific stylistic formula due to its repeatability – a collection of devices copied by rote, identical phrases circulating within the discourse of art and a ritual ceremony performed as much by artists as the audience. An essential role is also played here by familiarisation, incorporation and the sanctioning of similar practices by the art market and institutional circulation. The uncertainty accompanying an experiment has turned into a habit. As can be noted in the case of Żmijewski's *Repetition*, the only unpredictable element of his activity was the audience's behaviour, whereas the realisation of the project was characterised by its schematic course, typical of every "experiment" which, ultimately, is meant to become a commodity on the art market. It was produced according to rules: organised as an undertaking which, despite its spontaneous character, was to assume the finite form of a film. A cast of performers was employed, cameras were installed in rooms, material was recorded and edited. Then, the film enjoyed a peculiar promotional action – first at the Venice Biennale and then through the media scandal in Poland. From this perspective, even the only unpredictable element of this 'action' performed a pre-established function: instrumentalised²⁹ participants in the "experiment" played their proper roles

²⁸ D. Ugrešić, *Kultura karaoke*, translated by D. J. Ćirić, Ha!art, Kraków 2013.

²⁹ Notably, the instrumentalisation of participants is another device repeatedly employed by the artist.

in a pre-arranged scandal invaluable for the promotion of the enterprise. The formal requirements of an artistic "experiment" have been fulfilled. Even a socio-moral transgression – the element of foreseeable effects that would arouse the public opinion – perfectly carried out its assigned task.

Several decades after Kaprow's essay, experiment is likely to have become yet another Art art. Uncertainty has been replaced by domestication, juxtaposing has turned again into a unitary composition, formlessness and spontaneity have been substituted by a structured pattern. In this light, it is striking that the process of experiment transforming into another recognisable style of art occurred throughout decades (the 1990s and 2000s), hallmarked by participatory and socially engaged art – practices which were, at least theoretically, intended to liquefy the work of art or even abandon the category altogether. Equally, however, precisely during this period, the ostensibly most progressive art criticism called for a return to using the concept of form in reference to the artwork. In the then highly influential publications *Relational Aesthetics* and *Postproduction*, Nicolas Bourriaud refers to the artwork as form practically on every page. The chapter *Relational form*, being part of the first aforementioned book, especially reveals that free and spontaneous relationships generated as part of artistic actions require some discipline and limitations, a possibility of control and smoothing out.³⁰ In that context, art seems to be comprised of standard elements assembled on a production line into a well-known commodity. Similarly, Clare Bishop, once famous for her polemic with the French critic and curator, in her *Artificial Hells* demands a re-appreciation of the concept of form and its use in reference to socially engaged practices. Only this concept, she argues, would make it possible to categorise them in terms of artistic autonomy and admit them into the discourse of art history.³¹ The ploy implies that the turn, proclaimed by the art historian in "Artforum International" in 2006, was aesthetic rather than 'social'³² – a return to tradition and a manner of thinking that requires us to identify an artistic practice in terms of the previously existing forms to which the practice alludes. Socially experimental art heading towards re-playing historically legitimised rules.

A humorous, yet melancholy-tinged summary of this essay comes from an episode of *Druga twarz* [*Second Face*] broadcast by the Polish television station TVN in 2004. In this remake of the British programme *Faking It*, amateurs

³⁰ N. Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, translated by Simon Pleasance & Fronza Woods with participation of Mathieu Copeland, les presses du réel, Dijon 2002, pp. 11–24.

³¹ C. Bishop, *Artificial Hells. Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, Verso, London–New York 2012, pp. 11–40.

³² C. Bishop, *The social turn: Collaboration and its discontents*, "Artforum International", February 2006, No 44(6), pp.178–183.

impersonated members of the artistic profession under expert supervision and visual art was also put to the test in one episode. Under the watchful eye of Grzegorz Sztwiertnia and Leszek Danilczyk, an entrepreneur from Bielsko-Biała was supposed to create an object, so that a jury could evaluate it in the final scenes of the episode. However, the judgement was not meant to be concerned with the quality of art. The object was to be placed next to two pieces produced by two professional artists holding a degree in fine arts and the jury, made up of curators and critics, was asked to decide which of the objects was the work of the amateur. Preparations of the 'work' lasted one month, resulting in the exposition of an installation composed of freely combined elements which one could easily come by at a construction site, in a junk room or at a dump. In a word, an object reminiscent of numerous productions encountered in museums of contemporary art was made. Obviously, at a key moment at the end of the episode, the jury failed, mistaking the work of a professional for the amateur's. This created a momentary scandal in the local art milieu. Sadly, nothing more seemed to ensue. The suspicious facility which the "experimental" formula of an art installation could be imitated with, has made nobody think.

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EKSPERYMENT I „SZTUKA ARTYSTYCZNA”. OD NIEPEWNOŚCI DO IMITACJI (streszczenie)

Artykuł przedstawia trzy różne odsłony eksperymentu artystycznego. Źródłowa idea eksperymentu w działalności artystycznej, przedstawiona w XIX wieku przez Émila Zolę pod hasłem „powieści eksperymentalnej” a także neoawangardowe rozróżnienie na „sztukę artystyczną” i eksperymentalną dokonane przez Allan Kaprowa w latach 60. XX wieku łączyły ściśle eksperyment z niepewnością i niewiedzą. W tym kontekście w artykule postawione zostaje pytanie, w jakiej mierze praktyki współczesnych artystów, również często określane mianem eksperymentalnych, wpisują się w historyczne rozumienie eksperymentu i czy nie stały się kolejną artystyczną stylistyką. Kwestia ta jest analizowana w odniesieniu do filmu *Powtórzenie* Artura Żmijewskiego.

Słowa kluczowe: eksperyment, sztuka artystyczna, powieść eksperymentalna, sztuka eksperymentalna, pastisz, imitacja

Łukasz Białkowski (born 1981) – Ph. D. in philosophy. He is a university lecturer, art critic and independent curator. He focuses on the problems of socially engaged art, as well as relations between a structure of art production and the development of audio-visual technologies and the Internet. He has published his texts in numerous magazines, exhibition catalogues and monographic studies. Author of *Nieszczere pole. Szkice o sztuce* elaborating on various aspects of the notion of autonomy within the art field and *Figury na biegunach* discussing the figure of an author in 20th-century philosophy of art. Associate Professor at the Faculty of Humanities at the Pedagogical University of Kraków and lecturer at the Faculty of Graphic Arts (Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków). He lives in Kraków.