

INTRODUCTION

Art and culture in times of danger

In the 21st century, more and more philosophical and cultural theorists are paying attention to the fact that human beings living in a state of danger transmit the "affect" that grips them through works of art that they create. A theoretical concept that seems particularly promising in such a context of visual culture reception, based on the notion of affective imagination, was proposed by Ernst van Alphen. In his view, an affective and empathetic attitude towards a work of art proves useful in situations where analysis and intellectual distance fail, either not guiding us to any revealing interpretive path, or leaving us completely helpless. This is because "[...] painful places, [...], necessarily fall outside the framework of [...] conventionalized forms of story and image, escape them."¹ Władysław Tatarkiewicz formulated a similar view in his alternative definition of art presented in the volume *Dzieje sześciu pojęć* (Eng. *The History of Six Concepts*), writing: "Art is the reproduction of things, or the construction of forms, or the expression of experiences - if the product of this reproduction, construction, or expression is capable of delighting, **moving, or shocking** [bolding by A.P.]"². For Gilles Deleuze, an often-negative external sensation becomes a catalyst for critical inquiry or thought. Thus, affect is a more effective trigger for deep thought than rational insight because of the way it touches the viewer, forcing them to become involuntarily involved. The philosopher believes that "What matters much more than thought itself is what »gives food for thought« [...] impressions that force us to look, encounters that force us to interpret, expressions that force us to think"³.

In the current volume of *Art Inquiry*, we would like to explore the role of art and culture in dealing with tragic challenges faced by humanity both in the past (e.g., iconoclasm, religious wars, colonial conquests, the Holocaust during World War II) and in the contemporary context: wars (in Ukraine, Israel with

¹ E. van Alphen, *Afekt, trauma i rozumienie: sztuka ponad granicami wyobraźni. Ernst van Alphen w rozmowie z Romą Sendyką i Katarzyną Bojarską*, „Teksty Drugie” vol. 4, 2012, p. 210.

² W. Tatarkiewicz, *Dzieje sześciu pojęć*, PWN, Warszawa 1982, p. 52

³ G. Deleuze, *Proust i znaki*, transl. M.P. Markowski, *Słowo/Obraz/Terytoria*, Gdańsk 1999, p. 82.

Hamas), but also pandemics, cybercrime, environmental threats and economic crises, and their impact on societies. We are also interested in the problems of art as a tool for therapy and emotional support during difficult periods. We want to consider the role of cultural institutions in adapting to new socio-cultural conditions and contemporary social challenges, such as pandemics, economic crises or global conflicts.

The articles should be interdisciplinary in nature, combining aspects of art, culture, philosophy and social sciences. Case studies, field research and theoretical reflections are encouraged.

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