



Agata Sulikowska-Dejena
**A COMMUNITY OF MEANINGS?
EXOTICISM? THE PERIPHERY
LOOKS AT THE CENTRE**

Introduction

The subject of this article is an attempt to answer the question of how the artistic periphery in Poland perceives the artistic centre. What connects and what divides these two worlds? The centre is well recognised and described in Polish science, while few researchers are interested in the province. Therefore, in order to answer the question posed, it is necessary to show the specificity of the functioning of peripheral hubs and the art created there.

In the article, the centre will be understood as a network of avant-garde institutions and contemporary art hubs, open to the presentation of art, which, paraphrasing Grzegorz Dziamski's words, aims at the 'liberation from all limitations, including the limitations of one's own definition, to obtain absolute freedom'.¹ The periphery will be defined as hubs remote from the avant-garde ones, not so much in geographical terms but, above all, those which remain focused on artistic practices devoid of avant-garde features. An example of a peripheral hub will be the visual artists' community in the Podkarpacie [Subcarpathia] region. The article uses the results of empirical research that I conducted in 2017–2019 among visual artists who live and work in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. The research was of a qualitative nature: it encompassed individual in-depth interviews, group interviews, participatory observation, and analysis of the content of existing materials. The text will quote the original statements from interviews with artists, all of which have been anonymised (only the interview number, information about gender and age have been included: e.g., 22K54 [where M stands for man, K for woman]). Since this community has extensive artistic contacts and cooperates with many similar hubs, it can be treated – to a certain extent – as representative of the periphery.

In order to answer the question of how the centre is perceived from the perspective of the periphery, it will be important to show how such local *art worlds* work, whether artists notice the difference between their own environment and the centre, what they think about the art presented there, and what kind of art they cultivate and recommend themselves.

ARTISTIC PRACTICES IN THE PERIPHERY

Answering the above questions, we should begin with the fact that the artistic practices associated with the centre have included them not only in the global mechanisms of art circulation, but also in the global process of knowledge production. Meanwhile, in many areas, the periphery remained faithful to the model from the times before the system transformation in 1989. It is still an area of a resilient activity of artistic associations (Związek Polskich Artystów Plastyków – The Association of Polish Artists and Designers, Związek Polskich Artystów Malarzy i Grafików – The Association of Polish

1 G. Dziamski, *Sztuka po końcu sztuki. Sztuka początku XXI wieku*, Poznań 2009, p. 7.

Fine Art Painters and Printmakers), and the affiliation to them is considered as something prestigious (as evidenced by the presence of mentions about it in biographies, even in the case of young artists). Another characteristic feature is the maintenance of regionalisation of artistic environments originating from the period of the People's Republic of Poland: reviews and competitions for Podkarpackie artists and environmental plein-air trips are organised. The circulation of art around the voivodeship is, to a large extent, closed within its borders, focusing mainly on the local environment's needs.

The Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych [*Art Exhibition Bureau*] state network galleries have remained the most prestigious. The dominant number of galleries operating in the voivodeship are not adapted to the presentation of art using new media: they do not have the necessary infrastructure and do not take action to acquire it. They lack beamers, monitors, and players. It is also often impossible to interfere artistically with the state of the exhibition space. Traditional exhibitions of painting, prints or sculpture are preferred.

The analysis of the trajectories of local careers shows that, in the prevalent model, artists study at a university or at an art faculty (Academies of Fine Arts are considered to be the most prestigious), when they master their skills in the domain of traditional media (painting, printmaking, sculpture). Then, they gain a status in the local environment, participating in plein-air trips, symposia, and competitions, as well as organising their own exhibitions. They refer to exhibitions and competitions as a 'confrontation', since those are intended to assess their existing achievements.

Thinking about the art of the studied artists is thinking in institutional terms. The institutions accompany them at all stages of their careers. The high status of institutions, especially the public ones, is associated with the fact that a career confirmed by institutional certificates of 'consecration' (awards, distinctions, scholarships, publications, exhibitions in the largest local galleries or employment in institutions recognised as prestigious) is valued in the local field.

During the assessment of the rank and prestige of artistic institutions, the respondents do not refer to their program or the achievements of curators working there. The statements most often refer to two criteria: whether the institution is seated in a big city and whether it is distinguished by the size itself: 'The largest galleries. Every artist dreams of exhibiting at some big gallery in Warsaw, and a thought of an invitation for the artist immediately brings a smile on their face. Then, you don't think whether they're going to pay for it or not. Then, you don't think about money, you just think that: I can finally show my works in a big gallery, I have the whole gallery to myself.' (05M25).

In the periphery, the thinking that city galleries or the BWA network are places of meetings of local elites and presentation of high culture is still maintained. Large retrospectives of local 'masters', post-competition exhibitions, industry-specific presentations create space for ceremonial speeches, presenting flowers and congratulations letters, refreshments at lavishly set tables, and introduction to distinguished guests of title.

These galleries create an aura of their own inaccessibility (applications and requests from artists, long queues, closed access for amateurs), they pride themselves on broad and intensive cooperation with professors and artists of local and supra-local 'renown'. The artists maintain this state of affairs by submitting applications for the organisation of the exhibition and waiting for their appointed date. It is significant for this circle that its members limit the exhibition activity only to institutions designated for this purpose. They prefer individual exhibitions and they use traditional techniques. They are not interested in activities in alternative or public spaces.

The galleries avoid exhibitions that can shock someone: 'In smaller hubs, this is avoided for well-known moral reasons. Small environments, small towns are not prepared for such activities. Organisers or directors of such institutions do not want to jeopardise their own existence, their own work, their own financial stability (*Laughs*).' (26M56)

The reason for not presenting new and important phenomena is also that people responsible for creating exhibition programs do not know and do not understand contemporary art: 'It's very difficult. I don't have a clear opinion here. I don't dig into all this contemporary art so much, for which I reproach myself, because as an employee of a cultural institution I should be deeply involved in it. And I'm kind of pushing it away from me. This art has taken a path that I don't quite understand. I'm old enough, and the world that's coming around is no longer mine. There are certainly phenomena that are delightful, sincere, authentic, but there's also a lot of strange shallow stuff, or pushing for career at all costs. Only time will sift through these phenomena that are taking place.' (26M56)

In most galleries of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, the people responsible for the exhibition program are artists (they are often gallery directors as well). They also act as curators of their colleagues' exhibitions; the understanding of the task of a curator is different here than in the centre. It is usually the author who chooses the works, arranges the exhibition in the gallery space, and the curator is the person who opens the exhibition, less frequently they are the author of the text about the exhibition, agreed with the artist. The attitude towards curators working in the centre is definitely negative. Their actions are identified with manipulating and distorting art: 'Well, now it's the curator who will tell you what is art at all. On the other hand, the position of a curator is somehow

similar to law. Unfortunately, it often doesn't matter whether someone is guilty or innocent, what matters is whether we can prove it. I'm sorry to say this because it sounds very cynical and nonsense. But it's the same here.' (22K54)

Curators are also perceived as a threat to the existing order and to artists managing art institutions: 'I once heard such a voice: if you want to have curators, why are you necessary?' (51M51).

Galleries limit their role to 'hanging' exhibitions and making them available, without being interested in the theory or discourses arising in the domain of contemporary art. Local critics are popularisers of artistic events rather than an important voice in the discussion, as they write texts commissioned by the organisers. Artists, as practitioners (especially those who are professors), cast themselves as experts and highest authorities in the field of art (understood as proper handling of formal values and skills). The high position of professors is evidenced by the fact that they are jury members in art competitions; BWA galleries pride themselves on having their works in local collections, professors are especially honoured as participants of artistic open-air trips (their presence increases the rank of the event, competition, and collection).

Employment in art institutions and art schools allows the respondents to maintain the myth of selflessness of their art. Artists are distrustful of market mechanisms. The art created and exhibited in free time, when the optional sale is not the main source of livelihood, gives them a sense of freedom and a certain moral superiority.

OPINIONS ON WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE CENTRE

Analysing the beliefs of artists living in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, it can be seen that everything that is going on nowadays is looked at through the prism of art history. It is the past that provides the definition of the present, it is where the answers to all the questions are sought. It is also important that this is not the entire past, but specific traditions extracted from it: 'However, art has for centuries been such a domain that is chosen, where not everything can get. So many generations, so many canons have created this sense of aesthetics, that now at some point has got completely blurred, that there are no limits, that everything and nothing really can be art.' (20K24)

The respondents' attention is focused primarily on those trends and artistic biographies in which a romantic vision of dedication to art was fulfilled, which focuses, like a lens, the most important values for the studied community: the ethos of hard work, passion, constant search for the right form or selflessness of actions.

The respondents associate new phenomena in art with the West and the import of foreign tradition. They perceive them as activities subordi-

nate to the laws of the market, where fast success results from efficient promotion and is not so much an artistic success as a purely commercial one. In their perception, such activities penetrate Poland, to find here followers tempted by an easy career and money; however, they are something external to the history of Polish art and alien to its best traditions: 'It is also necessary to distinguish between what happens in Polish and world art. These are two completely different things. As usual, we live in a mushroom pit, imitating whatever crops up somewhere in the United States, or in London galleries, or at great art festivals in Germany, Italy, Venice. It reaches us as a bounced echo and this is our unpleasant reality. I don't understand why we haven't been able to achieve mental artistic independence for so many years. This parrot is still here with us.' (26M56)

It is also significant that artists cannot talk about contemporary phenomena, they lack historical knowledge and appropriate concepts: 'And there was silence (*laughs*). I don't know how to put it into words.' (15M35) 'We haven't been taught to talk about art. That's what critics are for. At the college, we've been taught how to do our job, art history was only general.' (35M60)

Apart from aesthetic categories, they do not know other evaluation criteria of, e.g., conceptual art or works related to the critical current, which are more intellectual constructs using non-traditional media: 'Besides painting, there are also many other media and it's difficult to say anything about them. I can't tell, for example, whether a performance is good or not, because there are no criteria for performance, or at least I don't know about them. If it triggers someone's emotions, then it's on point and good. What is good art and what is bad art is also determined by critics.' (07M40)

Most of the interviewees limit themselves to the interpretation of contemporary art in terms of scandal or teasing the viewer. In such statements, neither the names of artists nor the titles of works or exhibitions are mentioned. Most frequently, a case somebody got word of is treated as representative of the entire contemporary art and as evidence of the lack of any values in it. The statements about contemporary art highlight primarily its banality and even ridiculousness: 'Another situation has just come to my mind. A colleague from Tarnów says: Now we have a new director who... There was a fan standing in the middle. I thought it was necessary to lower the temperature, or maybe a work of art should have optimal conditions (*laughs*). It turned out that was the work of art. And she says, "I don't understand some actions, but we're now *trendy* and we're showing everything we can"' (06K42)

In the periphery, one of the main accusations formulated against artists creating installations, performances, new media art, etc. is the speed and ease of achieving the intended goal and the capacity of creating

media buzz with such activities. They are interpreted as being calculated to impress: 'At the college, well, I had to get my one hundred and sixty teaching hours done with and, for example, I saw how the paintings were made, I call it a mechanical result. It means that if I take a doll, break it, pour, let's say, some pencil shavings on it, pour red paint on it, then I attach everything to a canvas and write the stop abortion slogan, well there is a mechanical effect at this point, but is it art? It's not.' (22K54)

Crossing and blurring the boundaries between art and other fields of culture and science or social reality is perceived as a harmful phenomenon: 'Now, due to the contact of these two worlds, the one I call "false", where artists play the roles of various other disciplines, has been legitimised because such channels and such possibilities of fulfilment of these artists have been created through this art, which has ceased to refer to pure art and is based on sociology, philosophy, history, music, some para-performative actions and we are currently part of a huge insane system that has legalised fiction, inconsistency, lack of skill, ignorance... Everything is heading towards catastrophe, and while it's heading towards catastrophe, it's as if it's been completely excluded from the real, honest circuit, which would shape a man who would like to understand the language of art, make it their own and learn from it.' (25M60).

VISION OF ART AND ARTIST IN THE PERIPHERY

When determining their difference from contemporary artists present in the global circulation, the respondents primarily emphasise the aspect of the form of the work and the sincerity of actions. A common problem in the reception of contemporary art, for them, is not so much its controversial content as the insufficient formal and aesthetic qualities of the works. On the one hand, they respect 'Marcel Duchamp's gesture' and are aware of its consequences for the development of art, on the other – they still demand art created using traditional media. The criteria they use when formulating assessments of an artist's work concern almost exclusively the formal layer of works. The artists do draw on modern traditions, but in a selective way. They value abstract art. They recommend searching for new forms of expression, experimentation and resorting to chance, but in safe doses and within the limits of easel painting, printmaking, or traditionally understood sculpture.

They justify their resistance to the rapidly following changes in contemporary art with statements of respected classics, such as Vassily Kandinsky. That theorist was opposed to new trends and art reflecting its era, because 'it passes quickly and becomes morally dead as soon as the atmosphere that sustains it changes', while 'timeless art', based on purely formal values 'has in itself a fertilising and prophetic power, is capable to

have a broad and profound impact':² 'In general, a trend in art is something I consider out of place. There may have been a trend in art in the past, but it was something new. Now it is said that, in art, everything has already happened. In my opinion, art is not just about something new appearing in it. I believe that art should be true.' (19K31)

The key criterion that a work must meet in order to be classified as art is the correctness of the artistic form. The form category introduces the need to create material works that can be assessed according to aesthetic criteria. It is precisely the mastery of formal principles by students that local educators consider to be of fundamental importance: 'Form is the most important. They must master the form, because this is the basis and the starting point for other activities. Only later can you do things... once you're able to give them some form. (45M59)

In order to illustrate the process of artistic education in the discussed environment, as well as the reproduction of such a model of being an artist among young candidates, it is best to refer to the distinction made by Grzegorz Kowalski.³ The artist compared two models. He called the first of them, that which takes place in a hierarchical relationship – master-disciple and teacher-student – 'teaching art', while the other one, consisting in meeting various autonomous personalities – teachers and students, was described as 'education of artists'.⁴ In the 'teaching art' model, the student is expected to master a specific range of knowledge and manual dexterity, the rewarded features of professionalism and skilfulness (verifiable in an objective manner); the student learns well-proven things, communication takes place through a work that is concretised as a material object, the language of art is limited to general compositional and technological principles, thanks to which the applicable rules can be verbalised and described, and the language of art itself refers to forms known from the history of art. In the 'education of artists', the student is supposed to reveal their individual features, needs, and aspirations; innovation, originality and subjectivity are rewarded; communication takes place through one's own physicality, one's 'whole being', which makes the work dispersed; the language is created *ad hoc* for the needs of the moment, it refers to the existing situation, it exceeds the framework typical of visual art.⁵

The periphery appreciates the first model, they educate young people at local colleges according to such assumptions, and then present artists shaped in this way in local galleries and reward them in competitions they organise.

2 W. Kandinsky, *O duchowości w sztuce*, transl. S. Fijałkowski, Łódź 1996, p. 28.

3 G. Kowalski, *Uczyć sztuki czy kształcić artystów?* in: *Polskie szkolnictwo artystyczne. Dzieje – teoria – praktyka. Materiały LIII Ogólnopolskiej Sesji Naukowej Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki*, ed. M. Poprzęcka, Warszawa 2005, pp. 21–25.

4 Ibidem, p. 22.

5 Ibidem.

The respondents, asked about important figures from the history of art, most often provided names of classics they valued (mainly for their skills and expression), such as Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt, Vermeer, van Gogh, Picasso,; the story ended in the second half of the 20th century, with artists such as Mark Rothko and Anselm Kiefer.

Artists are taught to express themselves primarily through the form, not the content of the works. The content is only a pretext for 'formal search' where, besides aesthetic values, truth and sincerity are also important: 'I haven't reflected too much on what is important to me. I think honesty and values that are purely aesthetic. I wouldn't like to add any message and philosophy to it, I only care about the visual side of the painting.' (28K40) 'I don't really raise any subject. The subject is in the form.' (19K31)

Formal values are appreciated for their timeless versatility. Therefore, the respondents separate their work from current social and political problems: 'For me, art is a kind of escape from what is outside, it brings me closer to what's inside me. This is the quintessence of the whole. I'm more interested in the interior than in the exterior.' (14M62)

In the community being studied, self-expression through a work is considered as the primary goal of the artist's activities. What is important, the artist expresses their hopes, emotions, states of spirit, and by doing it in an intuitive and spontaneous way, they anticipate in their intention a similar reception in the viewer. Emotional qualities are valued higher than intellectual ones.

For the respondents, a work of art is something autonomous, which does not require additional commentary. If it has been created properly, it speaks to the viewers. Direct and emotional perception of a work is clearly preferred and valued higher than engaging intellect and knowledge: 'I don't want to complain here, but there is less and less contact with pure visual art, understood as an image. A huge expansion of the so-called new media art, where the entry and understanding of the entire mechanism and cause of activities, the reason for creating a film or a project, well, that's the way it's done, require the recipient, that is, me, to take the time to understand, to come and read. Now there are a lot of interesting initiatives of this kind. On the other hand, I perceive this as a kind of functioning of the creators in the manner of their statements, because they believe this is their form of expression or communication. On the other hand, what I find more pleasant or attaching me more, is an object in the sense of an image, a print, also a film, a photograph.' (21K50)

In the category of values considered the most important in artistic practice, it is truth that holds the first place. The interviewed artists' statements suggest that it is understood as the sincerity of self-expression and compliance with one's own personality. The statements refer also to intuition and spontaneity. For the respondents, truth is achieved by surrendering to emotions, while all previously planned and deliberate strategies of actions or intellectual decisions

are considered to be something insincere and valued negatively: ‘Now, for me, it’s most important to make it some kind of truth, that I don’t want to invent things or symbolisms here, that I invent from somewhere out there, that I will paint some tendencies or something and it will be cool, eye-catching... It used to be done to get the applause, to say something, now I want it to be honest.’ (08M42)

CONCLUSION

The results of the research reveal an image of the periphery which does not form a community of meanings with the centre, but rather treats what is happening there with deep distrust. These two environments follow different models of practicing and presenting art; they engage different values in these construction processes and undertake different activities.

The Podkarpacie community, within the limits of its own model, maintains contacts with similar communities in Poland, and does so by organising and/or participating in joint plein-air trips, symposia, and competitions. The periphery creates their own *art world*, based on the acceptance of similar values, rules, and conventions. Moreover, they feel they are depositories of the best European artistic traditions.

What can be helpful in showing the difference between the periphery and the centre is French sociologist Nathalie Heinich’s distinction of the paradigms dominant in the history of Western visual art. Those paradigms include the modern and the contemporary one. The former, associated with the emergence of such currents as Impressionism, Expressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, Abstraction, Surrealism, etc., broke with the classical rules, and the main task of art was to express the artist’s inner life, while the changes in the way of imaging were of a purely formal nature.⁶ Piotr Piotrowski defined Modernism as ‘an international style, based on the autonomy of the artistic object and the dominance of aesthetics’.⁷ According to the author, the main strategy of modernity was to neutralise the framework (context) and to blend the work into the ‘uniformist world of the universal *artistic idiom*’, which in turn meant that Modernism was characterised by formalism and maintaining the ‘utopia of the universal language’.⁸ In the context of the previous considerations, this paradigm can be indicated as important for the periphery, but also as a model to which it reaches quite freely, noting and quoting only what allows to justify its own artistic attitude, embed it in an important tradition and give it the appearance of modernity. It should be emphasised

6 N. Heinich, *Sztuka jako wyzwanie dla socjologii*, Gdańsk 2019, pp. 34–35.

7 P. Piotrowski, *Znaczenia modernizmu*, Poznań 1999, p. 266.

8 Ibidem.

that the problem is not to abide by the modern paradigm, but to choose its academic, safe versions, while completely abandoning its avant-garde ambitions. This is also how local outsiders evaluate this art: 'This is, however, more of a classic than avant-garde art. There's a lot of safe activity here that you might enjoy. There are few activities that I value in art, that is, art that has something to communicate. Most things around here are shown rather than communicated. They're supposed to look, and not to carry any content.' (04M44)

For artists operating in the contemporary paradigm, boundaries are set only to be crossed; art keeps annexing new areas, such as politics, religion, or social problems. The authors undertake activities of an intermediate nature, create in alternative spaces, outside the framework of traditional institutions, emphasise the processualism of projects, sometimes give up a material work and settle for provoking a specific situation or experience. The very structure of the world of art and the popular practices become a medium in their hands, also changing the rules of participation of the recipient who not only constitutes the meaning of works and activities, but also influences their final form and course. According to Grzegorz Dziamski, art has now become absolute, which means that it determines its own areas and forms of action.⁹

What is helpful in understanding the closure to changes in art, observed in the periphery, is the concept formulated by Niklas Luhmann who also perceived art as one of many closed social systems. In his concept, art, as an operationally closed system, produces itself all the operations it needs to continue. The history of art in this approach is 'a conversation between some works of art and others' and 'contains nothing imported from outside', and the autonomy of the art system consists in the fact that 'the artist is oriented in the world of previously created works and his own creative programs'.¹⁰ The differentiation (distinction between what is and what is not art) takes place in the context of already recognised works, theories already functioning; moreover, it requires a limitation of the social conditions for the creation of works and their reception, because an artistic work must be able to distinguish itself from something else, 'it must be able to recognise that it is about art';¹¹ the limitation of contacts with the surrounding environment is to protect the borders of its own definition of art.

This kind of concept is helpful in understanding the past, when art was a separate sphere of activity, put apart from such areas as politics, social problems, science, etc. However, it no longer suits the modernist concepts, let alone the present. Maintaining such a view in the face of

9 G. Dziamski, op. cit., p. 11.

10 N. Luhmann, *Pisma o sztuce i literaturze*, Warszawa 2016 p. 278.

11 Ibidem, p. 276.

current phenomena in art excludes from an understanding participation in what is current and important.

The attitude of closing and opening to other areas of reality (especially social reality) can also be considered, following Piotr Piotrowski's model, as a manifestation of agoraphilia or agoraphobia. The first attitude is based on the need to go into public space (agora) and participate in it, on the desire to shape public life.¹² Agoraphobia is the escape from public space, withdrawal, fear and resistance, as well as the prohibition of participation in the creation of democracy.¹³ After 1989, according to the author, a 'spatial turn' took place, and the artists undertook 'critical and design activities for the benefit and in the social area'.¹⁴ That happened in the centre, because the attitudes typical of the periphery are still those qualified by Piotrowski as manifestations of agoraphobia, which are: the use of 'censorship' activities (justified by the social interest, respect for religious feelings, customs, the interest of taxpayers or the protection of the institution's good name), the reluctance to go out into public space and participate in it.¹⁵ Fear of social space causes artists to prefer art enclaves separated from current events, strongly institutionalised, similar to those from the previous system of 'art enclaves' where no critical actions are taken.

Finally, it is worth noting that it is possible for the centre and the periphery to experience the community of meanings in the field of art. Two projects conducted in the Podkarpacie region at the BWA in Krosno should be mentioned here; both made the two environments meet and penetrate. The first of them, entitled *Moja matka, moja córka* [My Mother, My Daughter] curated by Agnieszka Bartak-Lisikiewicz and Magdalena Ujma, took place at the end of the year 2021, extending into 2022. Paweł Korbus's exhibition entitled *Zwracam się uprzejmie* [May I kindly address] was opened in February 2022. Both are connected by the fact that their authors invited local artists to cooperate.

In the first, the experience of being a mother, daughter, and artist connected women who had been working in the main circulation of art for years with those for whom this very circulation is something distant and not fully understood. Some of the local artists reached for different media than before, showing works for which they had not seen a place and justification earlier. Also, many of the artists, through the interviews conducted by curators, became aware that it is not the aesthetic qualities of the form that matter most: it is, above all, the content behind the works; not the

12 P. Piotrowski, *Globalne ujęcie sztuki Europy Wschodniej*, Poznań 2018, p. 171.

13 Ibidem.

14 P. Piotrowski, *Agorafilia. Sztuka i demokracja w postkomunistycznej Europie*, Poznań 2010, p. 7.

15 Ibidem, p. 8.

'general human themes', but the women's individual biographies. Similar life experiences and social roles have created an atmosphere of openness to other artistic languages.

Paweł Korbus, in turn, invited local artists to accompany him during his artistic residence at the BWA in Krosno. The artist wanted to influence the new environment, but he also allowed the environment to influence him. The exhibition summarising the project was a record of various interactions with local artists; those interactions spontaneously took the form of performances and minor interventions in the public space.

These two exhibitions show that projects based on common experience, established friendships and personal relationships allow the two different worlds of art to establish a dialogue, learn, and tame what is alien. Moreover, such projects show the periphery an alternative to the dominant model, and participation allows the artists to verify critical, but also stereotypical beliefs about the new forms of functioning of contemporary art. Perhaps this is the best strategy for the periphery to become more open to change.

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Abstract:

The article presents the specificity of the functioning of peripheral hubs and the art created there. The subject of this article is an attempt to answer the question of how artistic periphery in Poland perceives the artistic centre, what connects and what divides these two worlds? The article uses the results of empirical research conducted in 2017–2019 among visual artists in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. They give an insight into how local art worlds function, whether the artists belonging to them notice the difference between their own environment and the centre, what they think about the art presented there, as well as what art they themselves practice and recommend. The difference between the periphery and the centre was discussed in reference to the tension between the Modernist search for a universal, timeless language of art and the contemporary blurring of boundaries and definitions of art as well as its involvement in various social areas.

Keywords

periphery, centre, visual arts, models of action, contemporary art

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