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## Art Connection in the Metaverse or Online Space. Visual Arts Painting and Performance

*Abstract:* Art is one of the most influential and powerful ways of conveying ideas and emotions. Art is found in people's homes, in galleries, museums, and elsewhere. Artists have many ways to connect with their audiences; they can paint, sculpt, write poetry and drama, and create music and dance. In shaping the minds of others, the way an artist chooses to communicate is crucial. We use art to express ourselves uniquely, and it is an essential part of our world. Each art form has advantages and disadvantages. Connecting the different mediums and the audience of different cultures may be a challenging task. In this article we will try to set up a methodology of building bridges and engage to a more wired society both in the real space as well in the metaverse. The process of connection is a form of expression, an exteriorizing of an inner content. The case studies in the article, which are part of the visual arts field, discuss both the process and the content of arts-based research. The study purpose is the identification of different media connections from virtual space to physical space. It is our hope that through the creation of new connections, we can enrich the field of visual arts. The authors find that different people with very different cultural influences of a particular medium arrive at highly congruent systems by overlapping layers of memory, of transgenerational genetic, empirical and emotional heritage. To realize this, it is necessary to delve into this topic and explore the phenomenon in all its actualization.

*Keywords:* visual arts, metaverse, online space, art connection, performance.

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## Conexiunea artistică în cadrul metaversului sau al spațiului online. Arte vizuale pictură și performance

*Rezumat:* Arta este una dintre cele mai influente și mai puternice modalități de a transmite idei și emoții. Arta se găsește în casele oamenilor, în galerii, în muzeu și în alte locuri. Artiștii au la dispoziție multe modalități de a se conecta cu publicul lor; pot picta, sculpta, scrie poezii și piese de teatru, pot crea muzică

și dans. În modelarea mișcării celorlalți, modul în care un artist alege să comunice este crucial. Folosim arta pentru a ne exprima în mod unic, iar aceasta este o parte esențială a lumii noastre. Fiecare formă de artă are avantaje și dezavantaje. Conectarea diferitelor medii și a publicului din diferite culturi poate fi o sarcină dificilă. În acest articol vom încerca să stabilim o metodologie pentru a construi puncte și a ne angaja într-o societate mai conectată atât în spațiul real, cât și în metavers. Procesul de conectare este o formă de exprimare, o exteriorizare a unui conținut interior. Studiile de caz din articol, care fac parte din domeniul artelor vizuale, discută atât procesul, cât și conținutul cercetării bazate pe artă. Scopul articolului este identificarea diferitelor conexiuni mediatice de la spațiul virtual la spațiul fizic. Sperăm că, prin crearea de noi conexiuni, putem îmbogăți domeniul artelor vizuale. Constatăm că diferenții oameni cu influențe culturale foarte diferite ale unui anumit mediu ajung la sisteme extrem de congruente datorită straturilor suprapuse de memorie, moștenire genetică, empirică și emoțională transmise din generație în generație. Pentru a realiza acest lucru, este necesar să aprofundăm acest subiect și să explorăm fenomenul în toată actualizarea acestuia.

*Cuvinte cheie:* arte vizuale, metaverse, spațiu online, conexiune artistică, performanță.

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## Introduction

The blending of multidisciplinary practices can be defined as a suggestion of expression of the phenomena of artistic process. Both a traditional empirical approach and a method of eidetic insight fail to capture the penumbral quality of expression. Husserl's discussion of "expression" in *Ideas* (Husserl) refers to "*logical meaning*," i.e., to the unambiguous, the conceptual, the goal, to the realm of logos or language in its universal nature. The analytical criteria of conventionality and publicity are replaced by concepts of pure conceptuality and explicit meaning. However, the tendency to limit the phenomenon of expression to its most objective, specifiable dimensions can be observed in both cases.

There are other similar statements regarding the birth of modernism, such as that of the critic Harold Rosenberg (Balken), who wrote that the canvas at a certain point became a place in which an object was no longer produced or expressed, but a place like a stage on which to act, in a way predicting the emergence of performance and happening. However, one may ask whether other forms of human expression are as dependent as language is on fixed rules, content or contexts. The dynamics of current trends seem to find their source in working and thinking with modern artists. I say this because 1990s conceptual art produced images and solutions similar to that half a century ago. The solutions proposed by the new generation of conceptual artists have been adopted with far greater serenity, with fewer disruptions and shocks than those that preceded them.

Until the 1990s, the term conceptualist was often connected with insanity, ignorance and opposition, but this has changed with the new generations, who in the last decade have given the term a different connotation, with much softer implications, which may be due to the socio-economic and political environment, which has not been affected by as many transformations as in previous years.

However, in 2020 a crisis emerged due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the severe lockdown from March, 2020, the new generation has been forced to adapt to a new environment in a short period of time in terms of creation cycles. Meanwhile, the creative industries, along

with others, have experienced some setbacks. Galleries have closed, depriving many artists of a source of income.

However, in the first phase of the pandemic, there was no migration to online versions by actors in the creative sector. As the pandemic progressed, an online network of events was established.

Cultural events are increasingly being held online, with a growing number of cultural events being held online.

So, this reiteration of themes, ideas and concepts over the past thirty years, reworked slightly, more elaborated, in order to be accepted by the public, could be seen as ready-mades after already created concepts, concepts that have been slightly modified from the previous ones, has changed due to another event similar to the great depression. Significant events changed the course and mentality of the artist, who, sensitive to the changes in the surrounding environment, reacted more forcefully with new ideas, new concepts and new technical visions. It can be said that, to a certain extent, you can intervene in the ideas that already exist and come up with the idea of creating art out of the art that already exists. In this way, through a new reconceptualisation and representation, tradition is reintegrated, re-proposed and re-enacted.

To develop the study, the authors analyzed works of Debra Bricker Balken ([Balken, 2021](#)), Mark Bradford ([Bradford, 2018](#)), Mark Brown and Francis Bacon ([Brown & Bacon, 2016](#)), Mark Cartwright ([Cartwright, 2020](#)), Jürgen Habermas ([Habermas, 1984](#)), Edmund Husserl ([Husserl, 2010](#)), Douglas Kellner ([Kellner, 2006](#)), Claude Monet ([Monet's Shapes, 2023](#)), Pablo Helguera ([Pablo Helguera's blog archive ..., 2016](#)), Jackson Pollock ([Pollock, 2013](#)), Ichiro Sato ([Sato, 2017](#)), Katja Juhola and Smaranda Sabina Moldovan ([Moldovan & Juhola, 2020](#)).

It is believed that with the concept of “Connections” specialists have moved further away from this reintegrated tradition and have taken a step towards a new way of thinking about and approaching space and time in art.

## Methodology

### ***Memory on interconnections***

Memory has always played an important role in *collective unconsciousness* and this fact had a special importance in art history too. Generally speaking, past is considered to be the main source of inspiration which can be actually compared, visually speaking, to a giant on whose shoulders several “*layers*” of centuries are constantly carried on, whether we like to admit it or not. Carl Gustav Jung’ researches about collective unconsciousness are a proof in this sense and I dare to state that personal *memory* is strongly connected to the collective one which incorporates geographical, social, cultural, political and historical aspects. Thus, one can consider that nobody is alone from this point for view; a human being itself is a sum of multiple “*layers*” of former generations known or rather unknown. We are caring in the structure of our spirit, mind and body an entire amount of information that we are actually conscious of in about 10% or 20% and if we have a strong desire to find our more, we need to make an effort to dig into ourselves and bring to light specific “*numb*” aspects from our lives. We are connected to each other like a very intricate *network* we cannot get rid of as it’s imprinted in our genetic structure code. Our body itself is made from layers of various anatomical layers represented by our bone system covered by the muscular one and then by skin which has its own layers. And if we are trying to

analyze the development stages of our mind since the prenatal period until let's say an older age, one can notice the presence of multiple *layers*, in a form of life periods that we are continuously crossing and which inevitable come up in a very natural way as if they have always been there. Our brain develops and our body and mind follow the same steps; everything is happening in a continuous and unstoppable rhythm and cyclicity. We are regenerating, nature is regenerating, time is regenerating which means that it cannot be just "freezed," as most of us thought that this happened because of the pandemic period that we have recently experienced. Nothing stops, not even death can stop anything and a proof is that a lot of generations during humankind history shared mostly in an unconscious way a lot of information no matter if it was expressed in a written, oral or unspeakable way. So, all these things being said, I think that we are all connected to each other despite our differences as for race, gender, culture, physical space and so on. At the beginning of this world there was a unique land which was gradually divided by water and thus continents appeared but this doesn't mean that humankind doesn't have the shape of a whole itself. The historical *energy* has so much power that cannot be buried, it just needs to be discovered due to a thorough research.

### ***Public intervention***

Performance over the years has become a genre in its own right, where art is presented live, also known as *artistic action*. Pablo Helguera ("Pablo Helguera" Blog Archive » An Aspect of Freedom (2016)") in his view, the embedding of performance in social aspects of living is achieved by borrowing several conceptual mechanisms and strategies from the history of performance art and architecture. Helguera asks what is the meaning of performance art and what makes it sociologically oriented art. He also gives examples based on Louis Sullivan's theory of how the function follows the form applied on performative acts. In other words, the form of something should be primarily a function of its purpose (*Pablo Helguera's blog archive ...*, 2016).

Just as painting has a two-dimensional canvas, pigments, brushes, the illusion of three-dimensionality, i.e., time, space, the body and presence of the artist, and the relationship between the creator and the public, the content of the action has these basic elements.

The process of creating an artwork does not stand in the foreground, but rather the process of creating it: the collecting, the sorting, the assembling, the associating, the patterning. Process artists saw art as a purely visual form of human expression. Process art advocates the idea that the process of creating a work of art can itself be a piece of art. The artist Robert Morris placed "anti-form" procedure and time before a finished artifact.

*Communicative action theory* (Habermas) is a critical project that reconstructs a concept of reason not instrumental or objectivist, but based on an emancipatory communicative act. Developing a concept of rationality that is no longer bound and limited by the subjectivist and individualist premises of modern philosophy and social theory (*Habermas, 1984*).

The difference between symbolic and actual practice is not hierarchical; rather, its importance lies in allowing a certain distinction to be made: it would be important, for example, to understand and identify the difference between a project in there is a concrete action and a project in which imagination is the main instrument to fabricate a documentation of it in a digital medium. It would be a symbolic act, using literary and public-relations mechanisms to achieve authenticity and credibility.

### ***Study case: Visual arts. Painting***

In Renaissance, whether we are talking about tempera, fresco or oil painting, artists used to put emphasis on the color refinement and also on the methodological procedure which consisted in adding layers (in case of fresco technique, artists used to add layers of plaster and then water-based colors; in case of tempera technique painters used to add dark layers of colors consisting in pigments mixed with egg yolk combined with water and afterwards successive lighter shades were added and in case of oil colors technique artists used to paint a primer layer of light gray and then various layers starting with background, clothing, hands and faces, thus reaching a certain level of depth and color refinement ([Cartwright, 2020](#)).

Rembrandt used a complex technique based on lower opaque layers of colour covered with upper transparent layers, thus creating with great mastery transitions between lights and shadows through multi-layered glazing ([Sato, 2017](#)).

Starting with the modern period, artists used to change their way of working, as the living times used to be different, taking into account that in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries great revolutions in many European countries and in United States as well started for the sake of independency and fight for citizen's living rights which also had a strong imprint on the collective unconsciousness. There was a general restlessness which influenced artists' minds and their perception of time. Even art movements which appeared in this period were several and lasted for a few decades in comparison to Renaissance or Baroque style which used to last for a few centuries.

Claude Monet used to paint in a very fresh and spontaneous way, by adding first thin layers of color and then thicker layers, (Monet) and visible brushstrokes ("Monet's Shapes") in order to rework the surface of his paintings ([Monet's Shapes, 2023](#)).

During the two world wars artists like Jackson Pollock ("Artists During the Second World War") began to experiment with unconventional materials added directly on large surfaces of canvas placed on the ground; the perspective of painting on a canvas changed and also the method of painting. The artist became part of his painting and his body touched the surface of the canvas. In his work entitled *No. 5* Pollock used to paint thick layers of brown and yellow layers on top of it, creating a nest-like appearance ([Pollock, 2013](#)).

Francis Bacon (Brown and Bacon) used to paint often on raw canvases, as is the case of the artwork called *The Study of a Bull* where one can notice that underneath the bull, he used real dust which became also a symbol of meditation on the ephemerality of this life.

The contemporary artist Mark Bradford (Bradford) used to create a huge installation which had the shape of the gallery walls, by using layers of paper collage, textiles and paint.

All this being said, one can state that there is a strong *connection* between art techniques from past and nowadays, there is a string which crosses the art and history centuries... If artists since the early periods would not have patiently created their artworks based on complex techniques, the contemporary artists would not have thought about this possibility of interpreting some techniques or compositions from a conceptual point of view by changing the perspective. Past will always be a source of inspiration for the times we are living now. This concept of *layer* is visually represented in the images below which are my own paintings that were done in unconventional techniques by using overlapped layers of industrial paints, wax, oil colors, transparent varnishes and pitch whose aim was to achieve particular textures highlighted by the

*chiaroscuro* contrast. I started from a figurative style which represented some fragments of the human face and which were gradually made more abstract, being like a codified message, semantically speaking. In fact, there is a dynamic between figurative and abstract styles, between clear and obscure (message) and between outer and inner world.

### ***Study case: Performance***

Habermas (“Habermas, the Public Sphere, and Democracy: A Critical Intervention | Request PDF”) argues that social action as the performative act (social action as an “acting” constructed by relationships between individuals) is more than an isolated individual’s manipulation of circumstances to achieve a desired end (that is, more than the use of strategic and instrumental reason). Rather, he privileges what he describes as *communicative action*, a type of social action that is geared to understanding and communicating between individuals and that can have a sustainable impact on the spheres of public and culture as a genuine emancipatory force.

Instead “the inner form of language” theory by Wilhelm von Humboldt interpreted by Noam Chomsky in the debate with Foucault’s studies of man, from history to linguistics and psychology, offers us the perspective of the language as a rule-based system that makes “infinite use of finite means,” i.e., an unlimited number of expressions can be created using a fixed set of semantic and syntactic conventions (*Human Nature ..., 2015*).

During the summer of 2018 with the ISEAS Finland (*Moldovan & Jubola, 2020*), I started to conceptualize the performative act with the first performance at the KMart, Karjaa Raasepori. After the group exhibition *Bound* at Galleria Perspektiv was elaborated. The public intervention of “*bounding*” was created in collaboration with the Norwegian artist Kimmo Ylonnen. The starting point of the concept was the observation of the target audience during the first performance with the help of photo and video documentation by Alessandro Sabena and Daniel Fuss. Observing the documentation was used as a basis to start a dialogue with Kimmo regarding the Nordic approach to performative art. The dialogue led to the following observations: the shyness of the people; The safety of observation from a distance; Curiosity; Need for interaction.

On the basis of the clarifications offered by Kimmo, the seed of the idea to bring the people together was planted and it was put into praxis using a long red woolen wire. I first tied a knot between Kimmo and me and the Turkish painter Ahmet Ozel, and then between the other people who had attended the exhibition and the other public workshops.

Socially engaged art and the public intervention by non-verbal communicative action operates by tackling themes and concerns that would normally be the domain of other fields, and temporarily shifting them into a space of ambiguity. It is this temporary appropriation of topics into the domain of art production that provides new perspectives and understandings of a particular or complex problem or issue, and thereby reveals it to other disciplinary fields. In this case is clearly an acknowledgement of a *connection* with the art practice and also of *layers* of various perception perspectives regarding this performance.

### **Results**

Two examples of artworks with an ethical and social purpose, but which function through the representation of ideas or problems. These are works that address social or public issues only

on a figurative, metaphorical or symbolic level (e.g., a painting about social issues is not very distinguishable from a public art project that claims to offer a social experience, but only in a symbolic way, as above). The artwork does not control a specific social situation in an objective and strategic way in order to achieve a specific outcome.

The results are only at the theoretical stage and will be on display at the Art Gallery of Auckland, New Zealand in March 2024. The connection between people, culture, places and ideas will be the main theme addressed to the public through visual art and performance. Two other artists will be involved, namely the choreographer Amber Liberte from Auckland, New Zealand and Alina Tofan from Bucharest, Romania who will participate in an online performance that will be documented as a video performance.

The main reason for this interaction is the fact that the New Zealand society was one of the last to come out of the lockdown. The side effects on the community are well visible. In order to build a bridge of understanding, to mitigate the side effects of isolation and to create new opportunities for social interaction, action art and public manifestations, we decided to focus the exhibition concept on community issues.

Connection is a form of expression. It is the outward representation of a substance. Both the processes and the contents of arts-based enquiries are explored in the case examples in the present and future contribution.

## Conclusion

The authors find that different people with very different cultural influences of a particular medium arrive at highly congruent systems by overlapping layers of memory, of transgenerational genetic, empirical and emotional heritage. To realize this, it is necessary to delve into this topic and explore the phenomenon in all its actualization.

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## Appendix



Figures 1 & 2. Ioana Palamar, *Essence*; *Pain*, 2023, mixed techniques on canvas, 80 x 60 cm; 70 x 50 cm.



Figure 3. Ioana Palamar, Another world, 2023, mixed technique on canvas, 200 x 150 cm (personal archive of Ioana Palamar).



Figure 4. Article about the Bound performance in Tammisaari Finland (screenshot from personal archive of Smaranda Moldovan). In the picture above, Smaranda Moldovan with Kimmo Ylonen and Ahmet Ozel with the red rope