

# Art as Journalism as Critical Artistic Research

Cătălin Gheorghe\*

## Abstract

*Different forms of visual and discursive communication transformed practices in the field of art. One relevant turn in the thinking and production of art is based on the intricate philosophies and practices of 'artistic research'. Using journalistic practice as a key model of problematization and positioning in the social field, the artist as a researcher engages in protocols and operations of informing public opinion and mediating the formation of an agentified audience. As such, journalistic artworks can be perceived as critical projects that can expose conditions of social inequity, political hegemony, and economical precarity in their investigations and performances. Examples of artworks produced by Schlingensiefel, Boulos, and Sekula with Burch are used to prove the formation of a paradigm of "art as experimental journalism" based on the practice of critical artistic research.*

**Keywords:** *art as journalism, artistic research, critical research, agentified audience, public opinion.*

In the mid 60's, the conceptual artist and theorist Joseph Kosuth subtitled a series of photostated definitions from the dictionary "art as idea as idea". A few years later, in an interview with Jeanne Siegel,<sup>1</sup> Kosuth explained the 'device' of the phrase as being based on the thinking and making process of art, advancing from the understanding of the creative context of art to the realisation of an effective change in art.

After questioning the nature of art in relation to the system of language, it became an urgency to question the function of art in connection with social issues. In a series of 'turns', art has been transformed from a formal medium of representation into an instrumental medium of communication. Crossing through and building its recent history, along its manifold transformations – such as the conceptual and linguistic turns of the 60's, the institutional critique turn of the 70's, the pictorial and social turn of the 80's and the relational, participatory and educational turn of the 90's –, contemporary visual art increased its interest in research practices in the beginning of 2010's.

Nowadays, art is considered more than an idea, being understood rather as a practice with a social or market impact. The production of knowledge became a principle of economic governance in society, being politically imposed as an asset in cultural philosophy and production through the funding policies that ideologically support the 'creative industries' as generated structures of profitable academic education. In

opposition to this 'neo-civilizing' tendency, the critics of cultural industries reassess the social function of art as a critical tool to investigate the consequences of the free and invisible marketization of life.

Even if research in art, understood as a practice-based research, is more related to the financially forced implementation of 'knowledge production' politics in art academies, showing its effects on the format of the PhDs in higher arts education, it could also be found in professional contexts, where artists propose specific interdisciplinary investigations in a multitude of life forms.

It is, thus, relevant to focus on the specificity of critical artistic research in the social practice of art understood as an experimental form of journalism. Experimentalism implies performances of different forms of artistic practice conducted with the intention to challenge and transform experiences for a different understanding of existence. Thus, through the experience of art, journalism is reconsidered as a social experiment that should test formatted perceptions and assumed positions in relation to accepted or rejected performances of social norms and values or political sensibilities and convictions. Interpreted and transformed in art practices, journalism can be understood as research engaged in the reconstruction of social knowledge with a critical view.

\* "George Enescu" National University of Arts (UNAGE), Iasi, Romania

It can be said that the construction of social knowledge occurs at the intersection of two meaning-systems, one of theory and one of facts (Reed 2011, 15). When knowledge is treated as a material of art production, what is processing this material is the way the artist (as journalist) understands the conditions to work with the raw social facts.

### **The artist as a researcher**

Discussions about art in the last decade take into consideration the ideas of agency and effective causality resulted from a reflection on the relationships between artists as producers, artworks as products, and public subjective receptions as interpretations of meanings and uses of functions. The production of artworks as messages could be understood as part of the processes that make people socialize in a community (Preziosi and Farago 2012, 75).

Journalistic art could be considered a socially engaged artistic practice that observes, investigates, analyses, interprets, and communicates factual news which have an aesthetical and political influence on social life.

The artist, as a journalist, reacts to the problems identified in the social tissue and tries to approach them from an alternative artistic perspective. If mainstream media favours straight communication between spin doctors and journalists, alternative art mediation presents socially aesthetic investigations about facts and processes of mystification, marginalization, exploitation, and alienation. There are also situations when interventionist artists propose imagined solutions for living in common, acts that are journalistic to the extent that they identify and communicate problems which should be at least creatively addressed.

The artist, as a researcher, is the producer of the research project that becomes an artwork with journalistic implications. As a consequence, the alternative artistic message is not only aesthetically, but also socially codified, in contrast with the mainstream journalistic message which is mostly ideologically structured, mediating hegemonic discourses of power.

There are strong similarities between the artist who acts as a journalist researcher and the artist envisioned as a cultural anthropologist by Joseph Kosuth, or as a self-critical ethnographer by Hal Foster.

In the 70's, Joseph Kosuth presented a model of an artist as an *engaged* anthropologist in a praxis of mediation. In his engaged activity, the artist depicts reality while he is in the situation of altering society. While endorsing social awareness, art is anthropologized, but it fails to be scientifically objective. In the process of making art, the artist as an anthropologist is affecting the cultural field while he/she is simultaneously learning from it. Becoming politically aware, but avoiding the aestheticization of political action, the artist proposes an explicitation of the lived culture (Kosuth 2002, 117-124).

Later, in the 90's, Hal Foster talks about the status of the artist as an ethnographer. As Walter Benjamin thought about the author as a producer to act in his/her social interventions as a revolutionary worker of cultural transformation (Benjamin 1934), Foster identifies a related paradigm of the artist as an ethnographer who has to struggle for advancing the understanding of "the radical alterity of the cultural other" (Foster 1995, 303). In presenting the characteristics that make anthropology a relevant model for artistic practices and critical discourses alike, Foster considers *self-criticality* as one important task that should be applied by the artist before immersing in the exploration of the other.

Today, we can talk about a model of an artist as a journalist, namely configuring that kind of investigator who uses his/her critical skills and aesthetic sensibilities to produce a significant work, mediated through tactical displays, for a curious and inquisitive audience. In terms of Geeta Kapur, we can see the artist as a journalist, behaving like a citizen artist who is engaged in struggles for civil rights and developing forms of political empowerment (Kapur 2007, 422). The engagement in the political situatedness of the other people is an important characteristic of journalistic attitude, open to the vigilant depiction of social problems and being involved in debates conducted in the agonistic public sphere.

### **Journalistic artworks vs. television's reality effect**

The engaged artist is checking the reality for revealing news, as events and situations, that affect social life, and for producing meaningful and appealing artworks in order to create

conditions for ameliorations. If mass media became an effective, but also obscure, tool to gather information and communicate positions in a fragmented world of social conflicts and natural catastrophes, different artworlds try to reflect, but also to intervene, upon dramatic social challenges and sublime natural disasters. There are relevant differences in the fields of media and arts concerning the treatment and reception of reality, but there are also common features that strengthen family resemblances, even if keeping with the paradox of adversarial balance specific to a dysfunctional family of public communication.

As one of the most frequented medium of information and entertainment communication, television is presenting dramatized and exaggerated things and events that are not usually experienced by ordinary people. But its aim is to maintain symbolic order. There are invisible structures that organize what is to be seen. This is how, by dramatization, the sensationalism and the spectacularism are created in the same manner as the words in the journalistic contexts make things in people's minds (Bourdieu 2001).

Journalistic artworks deliver critically interpreted information and create specific contexts of aesthetic communication (see Cramerotti 2009), questioning the ideology of messages and deconstructing conditions of hegemonic orders as spectacular manipulations of opinions. An exhibition becomes the strategic medium to communicate situations that can influence understanding without further explanations. Seeing an artwork conceived with journalistic intentions produces events of consciousness that can contribute to the empowerment of personal reasoning. Nonetheless, there are issue-specific conditions that can transform indeterminacy of meanings in self-motivated and accepted illusions against the incommensurability of reality.

According to Patrick Champagne's work *La Misère du monde*, used by Bourdieu as an exemplificatory case in his essay on television, as long as journalists are interested in the exceptional, in anything that breaks the routine, with direct political prescription, they are in the position of presenting images which can produce a *reality effect*. This is done in order to make people believe in what they see and to use the power to mobilize people's emotional actions (Bourdieu 2001, 248-9).

In the production of an artwork, most of the time a *reality effect* is implied being intentionally constructed to realistically simulate the conditions of the production of the mediated event. In the reception of an artwork, the evaluative deliberation is based more on a critical assumption that what it is visible and aesthetically composed has to be addressed as a supportive effect.

If there is a possible comparison of an artwork with news, there is also a possibility to allude to critical remarks of media theorists like those that talk about the wrapping up of public knowledge mediated by news in 'a glitzy package of entertainment and diversion' (Hachten 2005, 171).

Television, as the main apparatus of discursive and emotional manipulation through the articulation of images and dogmas, creates the conditions to re-structure the public space through questioning the changing power of public opinion (see Martínez 2010). An artwork can have the same effect, but alternatively making transparent the conditions of discourse production. In an institutional context, an artwork provides the theoretical conditions to be critically experienced. In a domestic context, television facilitates the manifestation of ideological strategies, mechanisms, and technologies that will function effectively for the mobilisation of the imaginary, affectively activating the fears and desires of the viewers.

It is true that there are opposite perspectives on the functions of television in the use of mass media. Caught between the discourses of entertainment, celebrity, sensationalism, and commercialism – manifested as impulses commanded by advertising, PR, and marketing –, the viewers are exposed to different impulsive or interpreted decisions to situate themselves in mediated realities.

From a liberal-pluralist perspective, mass media is seen as a form of democratization developed in a society of free expression, elitist or popular. From a Marxist perspective, mass media is seen as an apparatus of ideologization, which is reproducing the values and structures of the hegemonic economic power (Holmes 2005, 23-4).

A strong argument is that mass media is an industry not only with commercial consequences, but also with consciousness effects. Thus, there is not only an industry of new (flowing and growing) markets, but also an industry of new (material

and intellectual) needs and desires. In contrast with the standardization and marketization of the social messages in mass media, journalistic art is interested in showing that exceptional situations, aestheticised as artistic expressions from a commercial disinterested point of view, could have a critical social impact.

### **Agentified audience vs. commodified audience**

One of the most important functions of critical media today corresponds to one relevant purpose of critical art, namely to contribute, through its communicative actions, to the formation of a knowledgeable citizenry. The citizen audience is seen as a critical participant in the analysis of political actions, exercising its democratic rights more than by voting at fixed periods of time (Ross and Nightingale 2003, 95).

Artists who engage themselves in investigations that aim to reveal abuses of power, acts of injustice, economic inequities, social disorders, or ethnic turmoils can be entitled to expect the audience's responses as social effects of citizen responsibility.

Against the tendencies in mass media that facilitated a tabloid turn and the tendency in arts for a satisfying a neo-pop appetite, there are important segments of audiences (manifesting even as counter-publics) that play a strategic role in the critical interpretation of mediated facts. Taking positions against commodification and fetishization of media and art products, the critical (even cynical) audience intervenes through disclosing ideological domination of the discretionary power.

As media and cultural workers, journalists and artists assume responsibilities in opening public communication channels and investigating the effects of governancy. In response, the audience can modify their rational or affective behaviour according to the quality of the challenges of their beliefs. The advantages of artistic discourses and displays are based on the premises of aesthetic seduction which can use the mechanisms of rhetoric and vision to persuade the involved viewers.

Both in the art field and mass media, ritualized communication performs everyday life mythologies and historicized cultural symbolisms through the representational politics of spectacle and theatrical displays. The visual information becomes a marketable commodity to be

exchanged or a culturalized experience to be shared.

If information is perceived in mass media as a commodity to be consumed, but not questioned, by a mass audience, then someone can assume that the oppositional views are confronted by a political marketization of knowledge. The transmutation of information as a marketable product, which is designed to industrially change consciousnesses in the process of productive consumption, is accelerated by the efficacy of the ideological implementation of the neoliberal promise of individual happiness. In the personalized act of consumption, it is always projected a new desire, as a product of consumption, which is the fictional engine to accumulate information for an emotional stabilization of the future.

In the integrated artworld, with its neoinstitutional condition and its fragmented audience, information is rather differently felt and interpreted. Being personally processed and publicly debated in seminars and conferences that are organized as appendices of art exhibitions, information is critically disputed and reconfigured as relational knowledge. The diversity of cultural formation, with its mix of creativity and cultural reproductions, provides a striated space of reflection which constitutes unforeseeable actions in the public sphere. An important segment of art audience becomes effectively critical in relation with certain products of mass media, being informed by the critical theory that still flows in the contemporary artistic discourse.

On the one hand, as a common fact of critical media theory, mass media is criticized that is performing discourses which alter perceptions and shape beliefs (Rheingold 1997, 406). The manufactured information is creating an operational theatre in which communication becomes an elaborated system of biopolitical control. On the other hand, debate culture performed in the frameworks of exhibitional projects provides the political conditions of a participatory engagement for expressing public opinion about different states of affair.

The artist operating with journalistic intentions is widening up his/her audience from the one directly interested in artistic statements to the one more interested in the social and political impact of aesthetically processed news and journalistic reports. On the contrary, as a cultural industry, mass media produces

audiences for its content, the mass being constituted by the broadcasting systems (Ettema and Whitney 1994). Other positions raise the question of different concepts of audiences, from the understanding of audience as a collection of people experiencing a performance to the acceptance of audience as a fragmented composition of people exposed to narrowcasting (Burton 2005, 84).

In art and journalism, it is important to appreciate the involvement of the public, being it understood as 'art public' or as 'media audience'. Paraphrasing Raymond Williams (Williams 1963), Lewis and Wahl-Jorgensen said that there are no publics, there are only ways of seeing people as publics (Lewis and Wahl-Jorgensen 2005, 99). What is important here is to dissociate accordingly, not based on the ways of addressability to the public, but based on the ways the public is formatted and acts.

If most of the critics in media theory identify a commodified audience, which is informed by the insidious ideology of marketing and advertising, art theorists tend to privilege the agentified audience, which is engaged in the artistic process and generation of meaning. There is a clear motivation to talk about a participatory aesthetics, as a new thinking paradigm, in which relationships become more important than objects, and interaction decides the meaning (Gablik 1991, 7).

### **The artistic informing of public opinion**

Both journalistic art and mass media shape public opinion. We can assume that art audience can be envisioned as a collectivity of groups interested not only in living aesthetic experiences, but also in understanding interpretative meanings of artworks and cultural manifestations. In the same time, we can understand public opinion as a set of positions assumed by a group with the intention to share and debate views on socio-political matters informed by public discussions.

Generally speaking, public opinion is informed by mass communication which is an important medium for the mediation of the ideologized political agenda. As an alternative medium, art can also contribute to the formation of public opinion by mediating verisimilar images about social injustice, racial discrimination, genre or identity disruptions, or postcolonial/decolonial conditions. In the

reception of journalistic artworks, the level of political involvement determines the elaboration of public opinion and the development of public abilities to express opinions in an aesthetically supported critical manner.

The material of journalistic art is constituted by events transformed in aestheticized news. Aesthetics can be understood as a state of mind, beautifully designed, based on details of subjectively perceived everyday life things and situations. The communication of journalistic art takes place through the alternative media of artworks. Artworks can be interpreted as performances of discourses elaborated in relation with sensibilities, beliefs, convictions, arguments, epiphanies, intuitions, and inspirations. Taking into consideration the social function of art, it is important to know if a journalistic artwork can influence public opinions in the same manner as a journalistic report.

If we start from the presumption that public opinions could act on people's mind, creating propensities or dispositions on their political consciousness (Hannay 2005, 63), we can understand it as a political or even artistic product that is processed in the medium of thinking, not in a situation of consumption. An interesting explanation of the activation of critical thinking in the expression of public opinion is given by Lippmann who states that public opinion serves a useful political function: to neutralize excesses of force that tend to get us out from the habitual process of life (Lippmann 2003, 56-7).

In the process of critical thinking which informs public opinion, citizen journalism can play a strategic role which is also a model for the instrumentalisation of art as journalism. Apart from the so-called professional journalism, citizen journalism uses alternative media, being considered a kind of guerrilla type of journalism with strong opinions, comments, and analysis. Usually activated through bloggers – citizens willing to share their opinion in order to participate to the life of the public sphere –, and different other networkers, who provide critical expertise in analysing social issues, citizen journalism supports the alternative structuring of public opinion which becomes a stronger oppositional voice in reaction to hegemonic forms of political orders.

People engaged in the formation of public opinion, acting as citizen artists or citizen journalists, have the opportunity to get attention

as much as the ones who mediate information from the perspective of institutionalized cultural industry or art market, constituting artworks as news at the edge of ideology and propaganda. Agentified audiences become users of a new power configuration in an age of accelerated information through the media of advanced technologies and tactical exhibitions.

In his book about the contemporary power shift, published at the beginning of 1990, Alvin Toffler was talking about a predominant power of information organized in the field of knowledge through the development of technology to be used against the past power of money, status, and military force (Toffler, 1990). The 2010's - 2020's instrumentalized power of knowledge presupposes the development of a research culture, not only in the domains of sciences, but also in other fields of human activity, like media and art.

### The 'artistic research' turn

In the last decade or so there was a vivid discussion in different interconnected artworlds about the development of 'artistic research' as an autonomous field of knowledge and action reflected on the improvement of social life complimentary to a round of discoveries in natural sciences. Most of the publications on this issue discussed the conditions to implement this kind of practice-based research in art academies as a new paradigm of art production. Correlating 'artistic research' with PhD work became an institutional strategy in art academies to meet the obligatory politics in the neoliberal reformatted higher education systems to produce 'new knowledge' through research. The model of 'scientific research' is still dominating the educational political discourse, assessment practices, and funding policies. In these conditions, for an important number of European art institutions, resistance proved to be futile. Nonetheless, as a new paradigm of artistic thinking and practice, 'artistic research' came to be a powerful tendency to express aesthetic experiences and hermeneutical meanings, being lived and operating in the unforeseeable social life.

Exposed to controversies, artistic research is considered a constellation of practices, using interdisciplinary methodologies, and resulting in a diversity of products: from images and texts to graphs and installations. Many of the artistic research processes are based on scientific

investigations and aesthetic solutions. Other artistic researches are considered critical in their enterprises based on the use of critical theory problematization and methodologies.

Against the difficulties to describe a common interface of different types of artistic research, there are some characteristics that could stand as indicators of research with artistic output. These indicators are also applicable to the description of critical artistic research from the perspective of art understood and practiced as journalism.

As such, primarily, the research process is based on identifying an issue and defining a significant problem. In the research process, observation is mostly used as a method of objective or subjective recording of conditions, behaviours, and facts, in the case of detached or participant attitude. The information provided by observation is subsequently analyzed with the intention to produce more understanding on a subject, even if the analyzed data are prone to uncertainties and doubts.

It is common knowledge that in the empirical research of social science, quantitative research presupposes the collection of data by conducting surveys, making use of numbers, while qualitative research presupposes participative observation, making use of words and images (Kalof, Dan and Dietz 2008, 31-37). If we make a distinction between a positivist, objective approach, and a critical, interpretative approach, we can say that the creative research in art presupposes an experimental production which is more interested in using interpretation and understanding as principles of research, than in testing hypotheses.

In journalistic critical artistic research, there is not an interest for testing a particular hypothesis using a hypothetico-deductive method which is more specific for natural or social science research. On the contrary, one important research objective of critical artistic research is to act through artistic intervention with the intention to facilitate social change. In order to understand intervention as a kind of experimental research, an interpretation can be applied to one of the definitions assigned of the action research carried out in social sciences: 'a small-scale intervention in the functioning of real world and a close examination of the effects of such an intervention' (Cohen and Manion 1994, 186). This kind of intervention implies a specific behaviour undertaken in a determinant situation.

Through the act of a critical intervention, an artist can perform a participative observation in a targeted context. As a consequence, artistic research in that context can be structured on specific data gathered by the artist. Whilst social research is mostly looking to ensure the production of valid and credible conclusions based on research questions, hypothesis, and propositions, the artistic research is more focused on aesthetic reactions based on social inquiries. In the end, the result of the research should be processed in an artistic communication with a participative audience.

### Critical projects

In her enterprise to rethink the role of the artist and the work of art in relationship to society in various forms of participatory art, Claire Bishop identifies a relevant tendency in producing artworks as *projects*, which presupposes proposals for an open-ended, post-studio, research-based, and socially processed works (Bishop 2012, 194).

Various forms of collective, activist, and documentary works are based on interdisciplinary artistic and journalistic practices engaged in projective researches with critical objectives. In many situations, critical research proposes projects of artistic research conducted through the interests and methodologies of critical theory. This kind of critical theoretical approach in thinking the impact of art projects is determined by a social and political orientation of art production in the last years. The problematization and the critical outputs of artworks examination is mirrored in the discourse of various forms of critical theory even today, which includes discussions on subjects disputed in political and social theory.

Proceeding to exemplification, there is one work, also discussed by Bishop (2012, 279-283), which can be considered that has acted as a critical artistic research in the public sphere, with both artistic and journalistic consequences. It is the performance staged by Christoph Schlingensiefel in front of the Vienna Opera House and on television, *Ausländer raus – Bitte liebt Österreich (Foreigners Out – Please Love Austria, 2000)*.

In the context of coming to power of the far-right nationalist party FPÖ in Austria, at that time, and critically alluding to one of this party's campaign xenophobic slogans against foreigners,

Schlingensiefel installed a container with a *Big Brother*-style system of surveillance and transmission, hosting a group of asylum-seekers relocated from a detention centre situated outside Vienna. The container was signalled with the text "Ausländer Raus" (Foreigners Out) printed on a banner, and the activities of the forced inhabitants were broadcasted through an internet television station. In 6 days, the viewers voted daily to send back to the detention centre the refugees they disliked. In the end, the last one was supposed to win a money prize and Austrian citizenship through marriage.

The reactions in the public space, around the container, and in the media, in printed and televised formats, were contradictory, showing the cynicism of the prejudices and the pitfalls of the convictions. This work can be considered journalistic in terms of the problematic issued for public interpretation, in terms of the way it communicates with a diverse, antagonized audience, and in terms of its consequences on informing and contradicting public opinion. Schlingensiefel's performance can also be interpreted as an experimental research on the habits, beliefs, values, and norms of the citizens exposed to moral panic.

In another artwork with a journalistic impact, the American artist Mark Boulos critically describes the power relation between two different worlds. In his two-channel video installation, *All that is solid melts into air* (2008), the artist-as-journalist investigated the concept of commodity fetishism, in which the commodity seemed to have metaphysical properties, even if it represented material things. Identifying oil as an example of commodity, Mark Boulos configured a problem that tried to emphasize how a certain Nigerian community responded to the way oil is produced and distributed. So, on one of the screens, the artist presented interviews with members of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, a guerrilla militant movement acting to diminish poverty in the region by creating conditions for the redistribution of oil resources that are exploited and distributed by the Nigerian government in partnership with Royal Dutch Shell Corporation. Opening a visual dialogue, on the other screen, Mark Boulos presented the context of a commercial institution, Chicago Mercantile Exchange Inc., whose activity object consisted in the exchange of derivatives (contracts or agreements for exchanging payments whose

value depended on the prices of other commodities projected in the future). In this institution, a commodity – that physically does not exist (the unextracted oil) and which is not yet distributed – was in fact speculatively commercialized, but had already a price established and anyone could make transactions with it in the future. Thus, this commodity was taken/stolen from an exploited environment and dispersed in Western economy.

Interested in representing the relation between ideas and materialities, Mark Boulos caught aspects of political militancy and religious ecstasy in his artworks. Based on the statement of members of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, that they are invincible and protected from bullets because they are blessed by local gods, Boulos comparatively analysed the relation between the metaphysics of the Nigerian religious system of beliefs and rituals, and the logic of the Western capitalist financial system. In this way, the artist was acting as a journalist who is experimentally researching an oppositional contextual situation to be revealed to a wider audience.

The last illustrative example of artworks with a journalistic impact and based on a critical research model is *The Forgotten Space*, an art documentary written and filmed by Allan Sekula and Noël Burch. Made in 2010 as a filmic essayistic sequel to Sekula's *Fish Story*, this work analysed the impact of globalised industrialism and trading over workers' daily life with a special focus on the exploitative labour conditions of dockers and ships' crews. Regarding the sea as the forgotten space of globalization, Sekula and Burch constructed a visual and narrative essayistic critique of disorientation, violence, and alienation of advanced capitalism. They were treating the issue of sea labour and trading mysteries, but nonetheless criticising the 'flag of convenience' system that was created to obscure legal responsibility for safety and fair labour practices in the harbours of the Third World countries.

According to authors' sensibilities, rough industry was not to be replaced by cybernetic solutions and easy service economy, but it seemed to be hidden at the margins of the world, moved away to other spaces. The improvement in cargo logistics facilitated the quantity and speed of transportation, building specific architectures on ships, and assuring the efficient transfer of the

commodities produced by invisible, anonymous workers.

To construct the alternative journalistic message, the authors used interviews, archive stills and footages, and fragments from old movies. Using observational strategies to construct public knowledge from visualised interpreted facts, Sekula and Burch elaborated a critique of the structure and processes of maritime economy, especially targeting the regulations of intercontinental transportation of commodities.

These aforementioned artworks can be seen as alternative journalistic messages to mainstream media, exposing anomalies in the structural organization of society, having its financial and affective economy imposed to public debates. The practices of artistic research involved in producing the content and conditions of its distribution differs in each of these three artworks, but they are using criticality as a common as well as a persuasive communication tool. Christoph Schlingensiefel's work can be perceived as a research in the contradictory behaviours of various social and political groups and also on the political situation in Austria at the beginning of the 21st century. Mark Boulos' work is based on a research undertaken on the economic conflict for the use of resources between the activists of a local community and governmental and global corporation policies. Lastly, the work of Sekula and Burch is a critical visual and narrative research on the invisible global trading and the consequent alienation of workers living their precarious life.

## Conclusion

As a structure of power involved in criticality, journalism is an operating tool that could be experimentally used by artists as an investigative method to counteract social inequity, political hegemony, economical precarity, and even nowadays cultural dominance. Journalistic inquiries functioning in the strategies of a research practice for covering reports on various social issues improve our social and political knowledge and offer us chances to take indirect actions against different forms of ideological exploitation. By the labour of experimental journalistic research, art is transformed in a medium of reflection through its own making and mediation.

Understood both as a process of production and as a mediated product, journalistic artwork

(as a form of artistic research) is semantically informed by the reflections from critical theories and it is aesthetically driven by the ideal of beautiful, but effective, thinking. Moreover, journalistic art is interested in creating scenarios based on *projects* of critical research and it is engaged in tactically informing public opinion.

An agentified audience, involved in the reception and interpretation of an artwork with critical thinking, can collectively contribute to activate changes in social conditions and improving communication through critical

understanding. The practice and production of art as a form of experimental journalism constitutes a creative alternative to the moral and political crisis of mainstream media.

The emphasis on artistic research as a process and product, with consequences in the evaluation of occurrent knowledge values applicable in order to improve the quality of social life, facilitates the viable association of art with journalistic practice that can generate a paradigm of art as journalism as critical artistic research.

### Note:

<sup>1</sup>The interview was broadcasted on WBAI-FM on April 7, 1970 and thereafter published as “Joseph Kosuth: Art as Idea as Idea” in J. Siegel, *Artwords: Discourse on the 60s and 70s*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1985: 221-31. The interview was republished as “Art as Idea as Idea: an Interview with Jeanne Siegel,” in J. Kosuth, *Art after Philosophy and After. Collected Writings, 1966-1990*. ed. G. Guercio. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2002: 47-56.

### Bibliography

- Benjamin, Walter. orig. 1934. 1999. “The Author as Producer.” In Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, Volume 2, Part 2, 1931-1934, Translated by Rodney Livingstone and Others, Edited by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 1999
- Bishop, Claire. 2012. *Artificial Hells. Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, New York: Verso.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 2001. “Television,” *European Review*, Vol. 9, No. 3: 245-256.
- Burton, Graeme. 2005. *Media and Society. Critical Perspectives*. London: Open University Press.
- Cohen, Louis, and Lawrence Manion. 1994. *Research Methods in Education* (fourth edition). London: Routledge.
- Cramerotti, Alfredo. 2009. *Aesthetic Journalism. How to Inform Without Informing*. Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, co-published with Büchs'n'Books.
- Ettema, James S., and Charles D. Whitney, eds. 1994. *Audience-making: How the Media Create the Audience*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Foster, Hal. 1995. “The Artist as Ethnographer?” In *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*. ed. George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Gablik, Suzi. 1991. *The Reenchantment of Art*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Hachten, William A. 2005. *The Troubles of Journalism. A Critical Look at What's Right and Wrong with the Press*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Hannay, Alastair. 2005. *On the Public*. London: Routledge.
- Holmes, David. 2005. *Communication Theory. Media, Technology and Society*. London: Sage.
- Kalof, Linda, Amy Dan, and Thomas Dietz. 2008. *Essentials of Social Research*. Berkshire, England: Open University Press.

- Kapur, Geeta. 2007. "Secular Artist. Citizen Artist." In *Art and Social Change. A Critical Reader*. eds. Will Bradley and Charles Esche. London: Tate Publishing in association with Afterall.
- Kosuth, Joseph. 2002. "The Artist as Anthropologist." In *Joseph Kosuth's Art after Philosophy and After. Collected Writings, 1966-1990*. ed. Gabriele Guercio. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press. The text was first published in *The Fox* (New York) 1, no. 1 (1975), pp. 18-30.
- Lewis, Justin, and Karin Wahl-Jorgensen. 2005. "Active citizen or couch potato? Journalism and public opinion." In *Journalism: Critical Issues*. ed. Stuart Allan. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Lippmann, Walter. 2003. *The Phantom Public*. New Brunswick, NJ/London: Transaction Publishers.
- Martínez, Chus. 2010. "Television Atmosphere," In *Are you ready for TV?* ed. Ester Capdevila. Barcelona: MACBA.
- Preziosi, Donald, and Claire Farago. 2012. *Art Is Not What You Think It Is*. London: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Reed, Issac Ariail. 2011. *Interpretation and Social Knowledge. On the Use of Theory in the Human Sciences*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Rheingold, Howard. 1997. "Disinformocracy." In *The Media Studies Reader*. eds. Tim O'Sullivan and Yvonne Jewkes. London: Arnold.
- Ross, Karen, and Virginia Nightingale. 2003. *Media and Audiences. New Perspectives*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Toffler, Alvin. 1990. *Powershift: Knowledge, Wealth and Violence at the Edge of the 21st Century*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Williams, Raymond. 1963. *Culture and Society*. New York: Columbia University.
- 

## Biographical note

**Cătălin Gheorghe** is Professor of Curatorial Research and Practice at "George Enescu" National University of the Arts from Iași, Romania. He recently edited "Learning by curating. Current trajectories in critical curatorial research" (2022), and co-edited with Mick Wilson "Exhibitionary Acts of Political Imagination" (2021). He is a member of WG5 Curatorial Studies Workshop of EARN (Extended Artistic Research Network) [www.artresearch.network](http://www.artresearch.network). His explorational interests are elaborated around critical artistic research, curatorial critical practices, art as experimental journalism, contemporary art (political) theories, xeno-spaces, xeno-practices, trans(ex)positions, post-capitalism. ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4273-702X