

Hungarian University of Fine Arts Doctoral School

**The Inner Subject of the Artwork**

Theses of the dissertation

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## **Aim of the thesis**

The aim of the work is to separate the subject of the artwork from its object and to find it in the inner intention of the creator. By considering the initial state of the creative process, the moment when the work comes into being in the mind of the artist. The circumstances of the creation of a work in thought are crucial to its final, embodied form. Without these conditions there is no artwork. The "virtual" creation of an artwork is accompanied by the creation of its object. The conditions and aspects of the emergence of the subject, its 'climate', are laid on the dissection table in this thesis. By this I mean a complex cognitive and emotional process that the essay approaches from multiple sides and then provides answers to seemingly random and incomprehensible phenomena. The dissertation attempts to provide a general picture of the problem of theme selection and asks whether the theme of the work can be explained by the conditions of the artist's existence.

## **Thesis Structure**

### 1. Definition of subject matter (What is the subject matter of an artwork?)

The subject of the painting as the object of the work. The relationship between inspiration and object. The relationship between the message to be conveyed and the object. The relationship between style and subject matter.

### 2. Historical aspects of the themes of artworks

The chapter gives an overview, although not exhaustive, of the main artistic themes of the historical periods. This is necessary because the aspects arising from the respective disciplines cannot be separated from each other and therefore can be interpreted in relation to each other, e.g. art history cannot be separated from history.

### 3. Ideological and sociological aspects of the subject of the artwork

This chapter analyses the relationship between the artist and society. After a discussion of the ideological context, it is divided into subsections; an explanation of the sociological categories of the artistic subject; the impact of standardization; painting after photography;

following the old masters; science as the subject of art; and the art mediator as a determinant of the subject.

#### 4. Spiritual conditions for artistic inspiration

This chapter elaborates on the psychological aspects of this topic. Following the historical and social context, the psychological conditions for choosing an artistic subject are described in detail, including the results of recent research on creativity, the relationship between psychosis and genius, and an explanation of the emergence of emotions in the context of the creative process.

5. Options for future direction. The future development of the theme of the artwork. Actor-Network theory

#### 6. Summary, conclusion

### **About the research**

The literary sources used in the writing of the thesis, which serve to further clarify the topic, relate to the fields of art history, history, sociology and psychology. The content has been supplemented with an appropriate number of references from the past and present. These data form the information basis of the thesis. I supplemented the academic sources with examples from fiction and visual art, especially where I felt they illustrated the content in a meaningful way. In the course of my research, I did not find any examples in the domestic and foreign literature that deal specifically and extensively with the topic of my dissertation, i.e. the circumstances under which the subject of the artwork was born. At the same time, I have found sources in several literary works, journal articles and websites that may be related to the topic of my dissertation.

## Results

1. Accurate definition of the topic of the thesis. What is the subject of the artwork?

The subject of an artwork is not identical to its object. It could be defined as the inner expressive intention, the artistic experience from which the work arises, rather than as the element to be depicted. The psychological conditions for the choice of subject matter are based, on the one hand, on internal psychological factors that take place within the artist, and, on the other hand, on so-called external sociological factors, resulting mainly from the relationship between the artist and society, which are decisive for the artistic experience.

2. The subjects of artworks cannot be separated from the historical situation in which they were created.
3. In exploring the ideological and sociological aspects of the subject of art, I examined its ideological and sociological context. Given that the same motifs have different meanings in different periods, it is assumed that the theme of an artwork is socially determined, because the artist cannot escape the context in which he lives. However, the aesthetic quality of an artwork, whether it is good or not, cannot be explained sociologically. This dissertation draws a parallel between the ideological determination of the subject of an artwork and the ideological determination of the human body.

The chapter is divided into subchapters and explores the influence of each aspect on the formation of the theme, drawing on literary sources.

The mediation of art is necessary for the public to become aware of and accept the work. The art critic, museum, and seller play a role in understanding art forms and in the mediation and ownership of artworks. By virtue of the position, he or she is an unintentional tastemaker who can influence the theme of the work.

4. The contents of the dissertation are interrelated. They do not in themselves explain the conditions under which the artistic subject comes into being. But they are also interdependent. For example, psychological aspects can be an integral part of social aspects and vice versa.

Psychological conditions for the creation of a theme:

- The activity of dissociation is self-reward, which is the strongest driver of creative activity. The choices made during the creative process can have repercussions on the theme of the work.

- I have placed the creation of the theme of the artwork between the "recognition" and "evaluation" phases of the creative process.
  - The impact of distorted thinking on the quality of artistic work is not clear. These forms of thinking, in the case of artworks, have no relevance in judging aesthetic quality.
  - We cannot say that creative behaviour can only be caused by some kind of psychosis or neurosis, because there are at least as many arguments against this.
  - The positive interpretation of creativity in contemporary psychological thinking is questionable.
5. The creation and legitimation of the works in progress is oriented towards the future, and therefore the creators may voluntarily and involuntarily make predictions, speculations and visions of future relations.
- Statistics and forecasts are a factor in shaping the future.
  - If network theory can map the path to success, it can also predict the artistic themes of the future based on computation. At the same time, the question arises as to what the real purpose of creative work is.
  - The subject matter of a given work will inevitably change in the future, because posterity will give it new content.

The dissertation brings the reader closer to the recognition of the artistic theme, opens up the possibility of interpretation, and points the way to its origin and source. But it also proves that the artistic choice of subject cannot be simplified into a formula. No matter how thoroughly we examine an artwork, we must beware of the possibility of misunderstanding. We can misunderstand the artist's original intention and the circumstances that explain the subject of the work. Nevertheless, in some cases, the theme of the artwork has the same meaning for many recipients, due to the patterns they have learned from the culture.

There is no such thing as an illegitimate subject, because the subject of the artwork is closely linked to the artistic experience. Even the judgement of the audience cannot question its validity, since judgement cannot override the experience from which the work is created. The experience cannot be undone.

Understanding the subject does not in itself explain what makes an artwork aesthetically high or low, what makes a painting, sculpture, photograph, etc.