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Zbigniew Dłubak : From a Constituted Sense to the Sense Constitution

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Wioletta Kazimierska-Jerzyk

Image and Idea. Aesthetic and Anthropological Paradoxes of Conceptual Art (Iconoclastic Implications)

When taking into account the iconoclastic implications of conceptualism, we may observe its close but at the same time, warped relationship with aesthetics. I developed this thought after reflecting on Arnold Berleant. Such a view allows one to support the idea of a wider understanding of the notion of conceptual art, which accepts the presence of an art object not only in the form of art documentation, but also as an object included in an aesthetic awareness. One of its main aspects is the problem of the effect (power) of images. The problem of an aesthetic awareness was developed by Joseph Kosuth through a suggestive formula of 'art as anthropology'. I treat this as a consequence of previous ideas developed by the artist, not as a total turn away from them.

As a consequence one may consider as conceptual the attitudes and projects that keep the image in its physical sense and make the creating of images problematic in such a way that the most important seem to be reflections on the notion of art (image). In the article I consider two examples of Polish artists – Jan Berdyszak and Grzegorz Sztabiński. I underline how their activities are involved in certain iconoclastic practices (typical for conceptualism) and with which means they articulate the need to overcome them.

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The article is based upon his translation of a French text published in 1994. The text was part of a catalogue featuring an individual exhibition by Zbigniew Dłubak in Maison des expositions de Genas. There were some minimal changes introduced by the author to the original work entitled "Du sens constitué à la constitution du sens." The text highlighted the originality of the artist's inspirations: on the one hand – similarly to other conceptualists in 1960-1970 – Dłubak was interested in semiotics and linguistics. However he was more captivated by Jakobson and Mukařowský than Ayer and Wittgenstein. On the other hand, in a similar way to some 20th century painters, he intuitively discovered the procedures of phenomenology. Dłubak's contribution to conceptual art is based on a 'structural-painterly' approach to art, which is reminiscent of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. According to this French philosopher, language signs are 'forms *in blanco*'. For Dłubak, a work of art is an 'empty sign', which will acquire meaning during a process which Dłubak equaled with the work of art itself. The artist suggested an original – phenomenological concept of aesthetic experience, which was based on the idea of stepping outside 'the world of meaning' in a search for the source where the sense of art is constituted. The discovery of the process in which the sense of art emerges and understanding its mechanisms, stand in opposition to aesthetic concepts, as these aesthetic concepts find the style as the main goal of art creation and assume that for an artist a specific style represents a specific way of thinking. Breaking away from the stylistic focus and from thinking in the categories of style, is one of the most significant elements of creation according to Dłubak; a style is an ossified and fossilised sense. One of his characteristic strategies, which is aimed at overcoming the category of style, is a parallel and concurrent use of painting and photography. He underlined the overlapping of artistic and cognitive processes and by doing so, Dłubak arrived at an original concept – not very new in the history of aesthetic thought – which sees art as 'principle to the liveliness of one's mind'.