

# Ewa D. Bogusz-Bołtuć

---

## Editorial

---

Sztuka i Filozofia 42, 5

---

2013

Artykuł został zdigitalizowany i opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

The claim that art needs interpretation has become commonplace. There is no doubt among the majority of philosophers of art, art critics, artists, curators and conservators that interpretation is indispensable to making sense of an artwork and for allowing the content of a work to become apparent. Moreover, how works of art are perceived is not only a theoretical matter. Curatorial practices and art conservation-restoration choices instantiate our understanding of what art is and what is significant in artworks.

However, some philosophers may still oppose the interpretation of art. They usually dismiss interpretational inquiries for two reasons. Firstly, they claim that theory driven interpretation, such as psychoanalysis, feminism, or social radicalism, impose their own particular values on artworks. Consequently, cultural interpretation does not primarily promote the attitude of art appreciation; neither has it tried to establish standards for art. But, in this situation, even if some particular interpretational theories are refuted, the general idea of interpretation – epitomized by the *cliché*, “being true to artworks” – may still be acceptable. The second reason why interpretation has been questioned is heavier in assumptions and consequences. Namely, philosophers, who urge us to give up the idea of interpretation *per se*, claim that there is no such a thing as the nature of art or the intrinsic meaning of an artwork. Hence, we can only describe a work according to what we find useful for our own purposes. Thus, our pragmatic purposes seem to guide our encounter with artworks which, in turn, are supposed to help us to rearrange our life. One of the main problems with this view is that artworks are treated as blunt incentives, without their own rights, but at the same time they are, miraculously, supposed to change our existence. Nonetheless, even those philosophers, who are against interpretation and just opt for pragmatic uses of a work, are not inclined to embrace the radical arbitrariness of critical judgment.

So, we must face the non-arbitrary normative aspects of assessing the correctness of interpretation and, perhaps, even the correctness of use. So far, no one has justified that all interpretations are equally good. At any rate, art interpretation is a powerful and complex activity that cannot ignore simple questions such as: How are we going to assess the epistemic validity of interpretation? Which interpretation is correct or true, better or worse? Does the interpretation alter the meaning of an artwork? Is interpretation constitutive to the identity of an artwork?

I'm grateful to all Contributors to *Art and Philosophy* who decided to provide us with their answers to those disturbing questions.

*Ewa D. Bogusz-Bohtuć*