

## ABSTRACT

HORVÁTH GIZELA: *Contemporary Art in Light of Philosophy*

(habilitation thesis 2021)

The present habilitation thesis, respecting the national legal guidelines in force, contains two major units: on the one hand, a retrospective summary of my activity, on the other hand, my future plans.

The analysis of narratives teaches us that the meaning of a journey, i.e, the appraisal of the ground that has already been covered in a story cannot be done permanently while we are still in progress on the given journey. Thus, writing a habilitation thesis proves to be quite difficult: one must stop in the middle of one's path and pretend that the path (or, at least a part of it) has been completed; as also, one must talk about oneself as if one praised a complete stranger's work. Perhaps, our colleagues, disciples, readers, and – we daresay – our posterity were more suitable for the task. In order to overcome these difficulties, I will attempt to present my work so far and my plans for the future through well-defined categories.

The first chapter of the thesis summarizes my academic activity, following, on the one hand, the changes over time (diachronic); and, on the other hand, the thematic (synchronic) arrangement. As far as the thematic arrangement is concerned, three major areas are to be distinguished; these are also, broadly speaking, separate phrases of my academic activity from a chronological point of view:

- the study of the French School of Spiritualism and the philosophy of life,
- engagement in Rhetoric and Argumentation,
- my research in the fields of Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art.

I consider the first two areas as units that were formed at the beginning of my career that later have been left behind. I believe to have spent most time and effort with the third category, in which I have achieved the most important results as well. Therefore, the presentation of this area represents a large proportion of the present paper. In this part, I present the monographies I have published so far and my studies in a separate subchapter. In the fields of aesthetics and

philosophy of art I am interested first of all in the questions that touch upon both interpretations and self-interpretations of contemporary visual arts. I follow the current affairs of the art world, and I am intrigued by the transgressions that affect the self-definition of art.

I consider my most significant academic result the monography entitled *A szép és semmi (Beauty and Nothing)*. Here I attempt to trace down the modern paradigm of art from Kant's notion of beauty, namely that beauty is without concept. The three pillars of this perception of art are: the genial and original creator, the organic work of art, and the museum as the temple of art. I also attempt to prove that in the heart of beauty the perception based on nothing (a something devoid of concept) compels artists to constantly attempt experiments and that the majority of these experiments in the twentieth century seek to destabilize this paradigm. I believe this framework of explanation to be wide enough to embrace the interpretation of many relevant artistic phenomena that would be difficult to grasp from a more traditional perspective (e.g. from the point of view of Formalism or Hermeneutics). From the perspective of the modern paradigm of art one can interpret uniformly experiments of the twentieth century such as appropriation art techniques, ephemeral creations, interactive works of art, performances and situations, conceptual art, land art, Fluxus, the body art, etc. In spite of all these attempts to peel off the outer layers of art, the modern paradigm of art proves to be unsurpassable within the frame of autonomous art. Consequent interest in tresspassings of contemporary art is reflected in *Képkertes történetek (Framed Stories)*, a collection of essays, as well as in studies published in various national and international journals.

In order to complete the illustration of my academic activity, I presented the volumes I edited, the volume translated by me and my conference presentations as well.

The second chapter of the habilitation thesis presents my activity in education and administration, including the various roles I fulfilled in the institutional management system (head of department, dean, rector, vice-rector, member of the University Senate, etc.), as well as our role in various projects. In terms of scientific management, I would like to highlight the series of interdisciplinary conference *Argumentor*, which focuses primarily on questions of argumentation and rhetoric and which lately has been extended to include other areas of research as well. In odd years the language of the conference is Hungarian with international

participation, while in even years it is held in English as an international conference. Papers presented at the conference are published in a series of volume of proceedings.

Finally, the third chapter contains my plans of career development in which I have touched upon, plans of individual and group research, upon future tasks pertaining to scientific management, and upon my views regarding my role as member of a doctorate school. I also plan to study the forms of artistic activism in relation to the idea of autonomous art, in addition to studying the street art phenomena and focusing on its relationships to the institutional system of art, and to elaborate the concept of *social media art*.

The habilitation thesis also includes a last chapter with a bibliographic list of the works cited in the thesis.