

# ROMAN INGARDEN'S AESTHETICAL THEORY AND CONTEMPORARY ART

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**Abstract:** *The article is devoted to the main aspects of Roman Ingarden's aesthetic theory that concern contemporary art. Modern discussions on Ingarden's aesthetic axiology are dedicated, in particular, to the question of the possibility of using his theory to analyze contemporary art. In this article, the authors seek to demonstrate that the main ideas and categories of Roman Ingarden's aesthetic theory are adequate and suitable for analyzing not only classical art but also contemporary art. Ingarden's aesthetic theory is an open system (which is the general characteristic of phenomenology).*

**Keywords:** *aesthetic, Roman Ingarden, aesthetical axiology, contemporary art, phenomenology.*

## I. Introduction

Roman Ingarden is known for his aesthetic ideas of the multilevel artistic work, its "schematic" and artistic "openness." For example, he analyzed the "openness to communication" as a significant part of the perception of the art. He also presented phenomenological axiology, which gives us a fundamental understanding of aesthetical values.

Modern discussions on Ingarden's aesthetic axiology are dedicated, in particular, to the question of the possibility of using his theory to analyze contemporary art. If we examine the works of R. Ingarden to statistically study the names of writers, composers, and artists to whom he refers in his works, it becomes clear that the list of artistic works is limited to the 1920s. Among modern painters, only the name of Polish artist Waclaw Taranczewski is mentioned; several interesting points also concern Pablo Picasso, Jean Arp, and Jacques Villon. If we refer to Ingarden's aesthetical analysis of music, we can find his interest in music from early Sebastian Bach to the early Igor Stravinsky. In general, R. Ingarden knew and appre-

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ciated classical art. His reflections on art are limited to the phenomena formed at the beginning of the 20th century. Therefore, sometimes it seems that he lacks an understanding of contemporary art.

Most researchers note that the phenomenological method is an obstacle to applying R. Ingarden's theory of aesthetics to contemporary art<sup>3</sup>. In particular, Joseph Margolis says that Husserl's phenomenology in Ingarden's version is the opposite of any substantial connection with the historicity of thought<sup>4</sup>.

In this article, we seek to demonstrate that the main ideas and categories of Roman Ingarden's aesthetic theory are adequate and suitable for analyzing not only classical art but also contemporary art. Ingarden's aesthetic theory is an open system (which is the general characteristic of phenomenology). Therefore, its modifications are not only possible by further development of this theory but also allowed by Roman Ingarden himself<sup>5</sup>. Thus, the main aesthetic ideas of R. Ingarden open the possibility of using his aesthetic axiology in the study of contemporary art.

There is a significant difference in understanding the values of classical and modern art. The reason for this is, first of all, the change of worldviews and socio-cultural dominants in modern times. The man of the previous era felt good in a world that was a "closed" system of values and ideas. The human being could return to those moments in life or works that touched her. The attempt to preserve them testifies to man's power and his need to realize this power. This is due to the desire to create lasting foundations of life, to achieve the rationalization of all spheres of human life. Today, people are trying to adapt to a fleeting world that opens up many opportunities. Man strives to keep up with the times and therefore is not able to return often to observe the world with fascination. The individual does not have a strong need to communicate with the past act, even if he once touched him very much. But each time, he or she opens to new experiences that give new sensations, a new vision of the world, and more suitable for reconstructing reality. Value is closely linked to novelty and originality in a fast-paced world ("liquid world"). Such changes are the context of contem-

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<sup>3</sup> Majewska Z. (2001). *Świat kultury Romana Ingardena*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, S. 44.

<sup>4</sup> Margolis J. (2004). *Czym w gruncie rzeczy jest dzieło sztuki. Wykłady z filozofii sztuki*. Kraków: UNIVERSITAS, S. 107.

<sup>5</sup> Ogrodnik B. (2001). *Ingarden*. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, S. 5.

porary art. That is why applying aesthetic theory to its understanding is problematic.

Analysis of the possibility of using Ingarden's aesthetic theory in the study of contemporary art is based on the following approaches:

- formal-ontological approach: Ingarden's aesthetic theory is based on analyzing the main concepts and processes in art, so it can be applied despite the changing historical context with which certain artistic phenomena are associated. Ingarden's theory is focused primarily on outlining the essence of a work of art, the way it exists, the process of creation and perception, and the mechanisms of aesthetic values. Also, Ingarden focuses on the ontological status of the work of art;

- critical approach: due to the fact that R. Ingarden created his aesthetic theory in relation to works of classical art, there may be criticism from thinkers who doubt the possibility of using Ingarden's concept in the study of contemporary art. However, we believe that the view of modern art from the standpoint of Roman Ingarden's theory, on the contrary, only contributes to a better understanding of it. Ingarden's aesthetical axiology presents an ontological analysis of artistic phenomena. This allows a more holistic outline and correct interpretation of the phenomena and processes of contemporary art;

- interpretive approach: it is important to find out whether contemporary art is something radically new, entirely opposite to classical art? The answer to this question is related to the need to study the debates that arise around the interpretation of the controversial phenomena of contemporary art. In general, the phenomena of modern art are ambiguous and require detailed analysis. The following questions remain debatable: what is contemporary art? Are we dealing with art that completely rejects classical tradition or continues to develop its themes and expands the horizons of its experience and sensuality? In interpreting the essence of contemporary art, we also explore the possibilities and limits of Roman Ingarden's aesthetic axiology.

The most important topic of discussion is the problem of the value of works of contemporary art. Are they endowed with artistic qualities (in R. Ingarden's terminology), or does modern art deliberately reject them? The solution to this problem is not easy because the phenomena of contemporary art are quite diverse. Therefore, our article is devoted, in particular, to clarifying the essence of the phenomena of contemporary art and the possibility of using the aesthetics of Roman Ingarden to understand it.

An important aspect of Roman Ingarden's aesthetic theory is the distinction between aesthetic values and artistic values. This aspect of his work is considered a novelty of aesthetic theory within phenomenological aesthetics. The central thesis of R. Ingarden's aesthetic axiology is the assertion of the need to distinguish between two orders: 1) the work of art and the values that serve it; 2) the aesthetic specification of a work of art with its characteristic values. Ingarden believes that aesthetic values are objective, absolute, and non-relative, and artistic values are simultaneously objective and relative. Aesthetic values are determined by the specification of a work of art and its aesthetic experience. Artistic values are related to understanding the qualification of a work of art "in itself." At the same time, it should also be noted that the detection of artistic values is a more complex process and requires higher competencies of the assessment subject, as it is not necessarily directly related to aesthetic experience.

## II. Meta-artistic reflections on contemporary art

The question of the terminological delineation of contemporary art is a complex matter. Meeting the new and unusual images, the modern recipient is often disoriented. He does not have an adequate outline of new works and does not know whether what he communicates with is art at all. Thus, to understand the language of contemporary art, it is not enough to define the terms used to determine the directions and phenomena of contemporary art. Aesthetics must take into account the profound changes that have taken place in art and caused significant changes in culture and aesthetic sensuality. In other words, aesthetics must provide a kind of meta-artistic reflection on contemporary art.

At the same time, the boundaries of art, according to some researchers (for example, Morris Weitz<sup>6</sup>) are not stable, and the scope of the concept of art is historically variable. As a result, the meaning of the term "art" in different periods of history was subject to significant changes. Therefore, it is difficult to talk about only one concept of art; it is worth considering the existence of many definitions of this term.

It is worth referring to the definition of art by R. Ingarden. From his statements, we can distinguish three meanings of this concept. While two

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<sup>6</sup> Weitz M. (1985). Rola teorii w estetyce, in: *Estetyka w świecie*. Red. M. Gołaszewska. T. I. Kraków, S. 353-354.

of them consider the objective criteria to be decisive, the third has a subjective-objective character.

In a broad sense, art, according to R. Ingarden, is a collection of individual intentional objects with a special structure and elements that build a quasi-reality, equipped with different “artistically valent” moments. Not only works with positive aesthetic value can be artistically valent, but also objects that are minimally endowed with artistic qualities. This notion of “art” also encompasses works with scant artistic qualities, in which, for various reasons, there is no realization of positive artistic value. R. Ingarden's interpreters often do not pay attention to this aspect of his aesthetic<sup>7</sup>. This meaning of the term “art” is perhaps the most open, tolerant and allows to include in the field of works of art many phenomena of contemporary art. However, Roman Ingarden would rate some manifestations of contemporary art lower in terms of aesthetic values than those he recognized as authentic and original works of classical art. We can assume that he would consider most contemporary art phenomena as those that only resemble art or are on the border of art and non-art. For example, even contrary to the intention of their creators, many happenings can have a certain aesthetic significance (there is a script, the division into stage, and audience). Thus, the happenings are contained within Ingarden's understanding of art, but the problem is that he would not recognize them as true works of art. We can say that a broad understanding of art was introduced in Ingarden's theory at the cost of the depreciation of that art. In this way, the aesthetic normativism of Ingarden's concept is clearly manifested.

Purely Ingarden's meaning of the concept of art is based on the understanding of it as the integrity of the “encounter of the subject with the object in the aesthetic experience.” This meeting is not a phenomenon but an unfolding process. Under the influence of value, there is a mutual transformation of two individual beings, formed in a certain way, “transformation of what is experienced and transfiguration of what is given.”<sup>8</sup> This concept of art was not, in fact, represented in Ingarden's major works on aesthetics. It appeared only in the final period of his aesthetic research. However, it can be considered the quintessence of his entire theory.

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<sup>7</sup> Ciszewska J. (2001). *Sztuka*, in: *Słownik pojęć filozoficznych Romana Ingardena*. Kraków, S. 267.

<sup>8</sup> Ingarden R. (1981). *Wykłady i dyskusje z estetyki*. Warszawa: PWN, S. 19.

It is challenging to reconcile most contemporary art phenomena with the concept of art in Ingarden's works. The main problem is connected, first of all, with the possibility of the aesthetic experience of works of modern art, as well as the process of their evaluation. A true work of art, in Ingarden's sense, can only be an object endowed with creative qualities as a result of creative actions, which can evoke an aesthetic experience in favorable conditions. Creative manifestations, which, instead, cannot be reconciled with these requirements, should be outlined with the help of some new concepts.

A characteristic of modern art is its novelty. The concepts of "originality" and "innovation" are connected with it. In the process of creation and perception, the use of new elements, new techniques, and means of education is quite valuable, which indicates the creative nature of the artistic activity. Over time, the constant desire for innovation has become a tradition; the artist began to be equated with an innovator. Thus, innovation became a new tradition in the twentieth century, especially in the third quarter.

Contrary to the original and anti-normative principles of neo-avant-garde, the categories of novelty and innovation have become a kind of dogma of modern art. However, "novelty" has always determined the authenticity of art. As Tadeusz Szkolut notes, the most important stages in art history are outlined in works characterized by innovation (formal-technical or substantive). Instead, works endowed with this feature to the greatest extent but also carry aesthetic qualities (structural and constructive), together with the culmination of humanity's most significant achievements, are called masterpieces<sup>9</sup>.

Novelty is one of the fundamental components of the integral value of a work of art because it is not a self-sufficient value. It draws its potential from other values that come with it. Novelty is associated with creativity because it is one of the manifestations of the artist's creative abilities. There is a close connection between novelty and freedom, tradition (which it sometimes competes with, for example, in the case of the avant-garde), and expression.

In R. Ingarden's aesthetic theory, novelty is a positive value of a work of art. It testifies to the artist's creative abilities and his rich imagination. It consists of the application of new themes in art and the use of new tech-

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<sup>9</sup> Szkolut T. (1999). Nowość jako wartość artystyczna, in: *Wartości i antywartości w kontekście przeobrażeń kultury współczesnej*. Lublin, S. 169.

niques in art. It also is opposed to stereotypes in art. Today, however, novelty is the most revolutionary aspect of art because it has become the main principle, associated with the opposition of tradition and the rejection of the basic foundations of classical aesthetics. Some phenomena of modern art can not be reconciled with the characteristic of novelty inherent in traditional art. For example, in neo-avant-garde, we deal with innovation to shock, create a surprise, and capture the recipient.

Contemporary art is characterized by the problem of synthesis of art. For example, during the interwar twentieth century, there were constant proposals, mainly from plastics, that painting and sculpture flow into architecture in a broad way. The integration of art was caused by the dominant re-humanization of architecture that took place after the Second World War.

In Ingarden's works, we can find reflections on the synthesis of art. In particular, he believed that a work of cinematography is a work of art at the intersection of many arts, which due to their interaction are intertwined in exceptional works. He wrote: "Cinema, on the one hand, overlaps with works of literature, and on the other – is closer to theatrical performance, although it differs significantly from it, and in addition, contains significant points of the musical work."<sup>10</sup> He further notes that cinematography is at the intersection of two other arts: painting and literature. Also, in the 9th paragraph *On non-presentational "abstract" paintings (O obrazach nieprzedstawiających "abstrakcyjnych")* of the work *On the structure of painting (O budowie obrazu)* R. Ingarden draws attention to the fact that some works of abstractionism are borderline works, as they are located between painting and architecture<sup>11</sup>.

Analyzing the work of Pablo Picasso, Roman Ingarden argues that although the picture is at the intersection of painting and literature, due to its structure, it introduces the viewer beyond the image itself, introducing him into the realm of imaginary objects, and thus leaves him much more freedom of imagination than it happens in a picture on a historical theme<sup>12</sup>.

In the context of these meta-artistic reflections, we can say that Ingarden's aesthetic theory does not ignore the features inherent in modern

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<sup>10</sup> Ingarden R. (1958). *Studia z estetyki*. T. II. Warszawa: PWN, S. 303.

<sup>11</sup> Ingarden R. (1958). *O budowie obrazu*, in: Ingarden R. *Studia z estetyki*. T. II. Warszawa, S. 81.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, S. 88.

art, which allows us to capture its basic characteristics and specific essence. But the understanding of contemporary art also applies to other positions and ideas that form an essential part of Roman Ingarden's aesthetic theory.

### **III. "Aesthetical situation" and contemporary art**

In works on aesthetics, R. Ingarden wrote about the "aesthetic situation," the main feature of which is the influence of the factors that make up this situation. These factors are work of art, creator, recipient, aesthetic experience, artistic value, and aesthetic value. All these elements can be found in works of classical art.

In classical art, we are dealing with an artist who is the author of a work of art. A work of art influences the recipient, who, in turn, influences the work of art. This is because the work contains the so-called "unspecified places." The work itself is only a certain scheme, which comes to life only in the process of aesthetic experience, or "concretization" of the work if to use the terminology of R. Ingarden.

In avant-garde art, the scheme of the aesthetic situation is changing. In classical art, which was guided by the principle of "compositional correctness," the artist cared about the transparency of the arrangement system of elements of the work. In contemporary art, there is a new technique of construction of elements, called decomposition, so we have a kind of compositional chaos. There was also a rejection of beauty (which for centuries was recognized as the primary aesthetic value) and the skill of execution. We are dealing here with an artist, whose role is often reduced only to the organization of a certain artistic action (installations, happenings). In some sense we can state that the neo-avant-garde artist is outside of art in its classical sense since it has ceased to serve the aesthetic sacrum. A characteristic feature of the neo-avant-garde is the deaestheticization of art and the aestheticization of everyday life. The main value of a work of art is not aesthetic but cognitive and communicative. Renunciation of the values characteristic of art caused the need to fill creativity with explanations, changing the artist's status and artistic role. The difference between classical and modern art is also expressed in the fact that the work of art, according to R. Ingarden, is mainly separated from the world. In contemporary art, on the contrary, the work is included in reality and becomes one of its elements. The boundary between the work and what it is not blurred. The recipient becomes a co-organizer of the artistic action, its participant.



Changes in contemporary art are related to the disintegration of the object of art. The object takes on a different meaning by giving it a new name (for example, an ordinary urinal is called a "Fountain"). Ready-mades gave impetus to a new understanding of art. This causes a change in the position of the artist, who, as a result of a creative act of choice, glorifies the "finished object" and thus places it in the world of art. Ready-mades requires a different setting for the recipient: "The new name given by the artist to the selected object stimulates the recipient's imagination to look for new, more or less distant connections between the object and the name."<sup>13</sup> These changes in art also cause changes in aesthetic values: the aesthetic value of art can be defined as an attempt to express the irrational factors of human reality. This is evidence of both the development of art and the dominant attitude of human beings of our era.

The evolution of contemporary art demonstrates changes in all elements of the traditional understanding of the aesthetic situation. The world around us is changing at the same time, as is the model of the artist. Therefore, the question arises: can the scheme of the aesthetic situation proposed by R. Ingarden be used in the study of contemporary art? The answer to this question is ambiguous because some elements of the aesthetic situation, according to Ingarden's theory, are inherent in modern art; some have changed or do not exist. In our opinion, the main problem is related to the possibility of aesthetic experience and aesthetic evaluation of works of contemporary art. This problem has a strong connection to changes in aesthetics and modern culture. The key to understanding these changes is aesthetic value as an essential part of the aesthetical situation.

In the second half of the 20th century, philosophers drew attention to the exhaustion of the aesthetic paradigm in art. The essence of the crisis of modern aesthetics, according to Teresa Penkala, is "the lack of integration of tradition, modernity, and vision of the future. From a philosophical perspective, contemporary art emerges as a space of constant competition with an old tradition firmly rooted in the artistic consciousness."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Książek A. (2000). *Sztuka przeciw sztuce. Z teorii awangardy XX wieku*. Warszawa, S. 81.

<sup>14</sup> Pękala T. (1992). Wartości estetyczne w sztuce awangardowej i postmodernistycznej, in: *Przemiany współczesnej świadomości artystycznej: wokół postmodernizmu*. Red. T. Szkołuta. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, S. 113.

Arthur Danto, George Dickie, Joseph Margolis, Bogdan Dziemidok, and others put forward their proposals for overcoming the crisis of modern aesthetics. The theoretical proposal was the view that the way out of the crisis is a modification of the philosophical principles of aesthetics of the previous era.

Another view of contemporary art and aesthetics is presented by post-modern theorists who proclaim an unprecedented renaissance of aesthetics. For example, Wolfgang Iser claims that “we are experiencing an unprecedented boom in aesthetics, [...] we live in an age of aestheticization of all our reality.”<sup>15</sup> Brigitte Sheer also writes about the exceptional flowering of aesthetics in the late 20th century<sup>16</sup>.

Some philosophers advocate the preservation of the aesthetic paradigm of art. They state that contrary to declarative anti-aestheticism, modern art is not aesthetically neutral. For example, contrasting his position with the statement about the “end of art,” Bohdan Dziemidok notes that “despite all the radical changes in modern culture, art has not ceased to be needed by people. Neither the latest technology nor scientific achievements [...] can replace a person's intimate creative and receptive contact with art. Art has not ceased to shape a person's attitude to the world; it helps him understand other people, other cultures, motivates reflection and activity, causes a variety of experiences, develops intelligence, imagination, and emotional sensuality. It helps a human being to become a person and survive the most difficult moments without losing humanity”<sup>17</sup>.

Art has always been connected to the sphere of values. Therefore, art theory cannot abandon the study of the functioning of art as a source of values and various evaluation processes. Contrary to the predictions of anti-art spokesmen, art that realizes aesthetic values has stayed to be actual, although the range of aesthetic values has increased significantly. In this sense, the aesthetics of R. Ingarden, which can be called aesthetical axiology, is still relevant.

Contemporary philosophy of art is tolerant and open to the most contradictory artistic proposals, which breaks with the normative principles

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<sup>15</sup> Iser W. (1996). Estetyka i anestetyka, in: *Postmodernizm. Antologia przekładów*. Kraków, S. 524.

<sup>16</sup> Scheer B. (1997). *Einführung in die philosophische Aesthetik*. Darmstad, S. 1-7.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, S. 10.

that restrict freedom. The most important thing, however, is that aesthetics, both normative and descriptive, is always axiological<sup>18</sup>.

Some aesthetics emphasize that despite the differences, modern aesthetics continues to use the categories of traditional aesthetics. For example, Jadwiga Ciszewska states that the old aesthetic categories are fully applicable and correspond to the study of the aesthetic nature of reality and the aesthetic nature of art. However, contemporary art changes require rethinking concepts corresponding to artistic practice<sup>19</sup>.

To achieve this goal, J. Ciszewska turns to the aesthetic theory of R. Ingarden, recognizing it as the highest achievement of phenomenological aesthetics. R. Ingarden's position, which preserves the meaning of the concept of art based on the classical paradigm, differs from the prevailing tendency to reduce the aesthetical dimension of works of art. However, the undoubted relevance of R. Ingarden's concept is to emphasize the value of works of art, which is the basis for preventing a crisis of aesthetics and art. In addition, the reference to the value of art allows us to emphasize the aesthetic situation as a way of identifying artistic practices.

#### **IV. The idea of "unspecified places."**

Some contemporary aesthetics (in particular, Raymond Bayer and Robin George Collingwood) argue that postmodern art is characterized by the principle of axiological emptiness and uncertainty. The incompleteness of the paintings is considered even a condition of beauty. However, we must state that a kind of uncertainty and incompleteness are characteristics of all outstanding works of art, not only postmodern. R. Ingarden wrote about the incompleteness of the work of art. In his opinion, incompleteness indicates the openness of the form of the work.

The concept of "open work" was presented by Umberto Eco<sup>20</sup>. In his opinion, the openness of the work is seen as a fundamental ambiguity of

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<sup>18</sup> Dziemidok B. (2002). *Główne kontrowersje estetyki współczesnej*. Warszawa: PWN, S. 33.

<sup>19</sup> Ciszewska J. (1994). Estetyka fenomenologiczna wobec współczesności, in: *Czy jeszcze estetyka? Sztuka współczesna a tradycja estetyczna. Materiały XXII Ogólnopolskiej Konferencji Estetycznej*. Red. M. Ostrowicki. Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagielloński w Krakowie oraz Instytut Kultury w Warszawie, S. 49.

<sup>20</sup> Eco U. (1973). *Dzieło otwarte. Forma i nieokreśloność w poetykach współczesnych*. Warszawa: Czytelnik, 48 s.

artistic translation, which is a permanent feature of any work at any time. In modern art, it is manifested to a greater extent than in classical one<sup>21</sup>. However, similar ideas have appeared in different versions of many theorists. Roman Ingarden stated about “unspecified places” in the work of art. According to him, the work of art is a “schematic work.” It has the construction that always “counts” on additions from the recipient.

In U. Eco's theory, an open work is a certain proposal of a “field” of interpretive possibilities, a group of stimuli, the fundamental feature of which is their uncertainty. In this case, the aesthetic value of the work depends on the possibilities of its interpretation and the aspects it reveals to the recipient without losing its own identity<sup>22</sup>. Thus, a work of art is “open” only in a particular field of relation. Similarly, R. Ingarden speaks of a large number of possible concretizations of the work of art within the framework defined by the logic and leading idea of the work. He also notes the limits of concretization that it provides to work and the “proximity” or “remoteness” of concretization<sup>23</sup>.

We must remember that according to Ingarden's aesthetical theory, the openness of a work of art is different from that which we encounter in neo-avant-garde art. Arguing that a work of art is an open subject, R. Ingarden, noted the need to supplement only schematically defined substantive parts of the work in the process of its concretization by the recipient. In this case, the concretization was consistent with the work's logic. In the case of, for example, happening, it is about openness to improvisation, the purpose of which is to surprise, impress, fascinate, and evoke unusual associations; we are dealing here with several objects, and events, not related to logical action.

The changes that take place in art affect the changes in aesthetics itself. Therefore, we can find the idea of “open aesthetics.” This idea was presented, for example, by Umberto Eco, Morris Weitz, and William E. Kennick. Also, the conception of open aesthetics was developed by Polish philosopher Mieczyslaw Wallis. He paid attention to aesthetical and artistic pluralism<sup>24</sup>. Generally, the idea of “openness” of aesthetics corresponds to modern

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, S. 6-9.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, S. 26.

<sup>23</sup> Ingarden R. (1976). *O poznawaniu dzieła literackiego*. Warszawa: PWN, S. 380-381.

<sup>24</sup> Szkołut T. (1999). *Awangarda. Neoawangarda. Postawangarda*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, S. 133.

pluralism. Eclecticism, hybridity, and stylistic diversity of postmodern art are associated with the openness of aesthetics as a response to open works of art.

In the context of such reflections on modern aesthetics, we can interpret Ingarden's ideas about the concretization of work of art. The work of art, as well as the aesthetic object, are intentional objects. In other words, they are formed in the acts of consciousness of the creator or recipient, which carries out the process of concretization. Roman Ingarden presented a critical perception of the traditional model of passive external reception and the "finished" artistic object, which is perceived as objects of sensory perception. He sought to convey that the recipient is not dealing with finished work, but he or she co-creates it. Thus, R. Ingarden emphasizes the active participation of the recipient in creating an aesthetic object as an intentional object. The distinction between a work of art as an artistic object and an aesthetic object makes it possible to elucidate a number of phenomena in relation to which traditional aesthetics has remained helpless<sup>25</sup>. First of all, it is the historical variability of the role and functions in the culture of some of her works, as well as various perceptual experiences that belong to them. R. Ingarden's understanding of the work of art as an intersubjective scheme, which is uncertain and potential, allows us to establish the identity of the work of art as the object of various perceptual acts and the historical variability of aesthetic objects.

Although R. Ingarden did not deal in detail with the social determinants of the processes of communication with art, however, he took into account the importance of socio-cultural and historical factors as a certain variable that appears in all processes of perception. He emphasized that these factors determine the form of concretization that occurs in a particular era. He stated the importance of the "cultural context" in the process of exploring the "life" of a work of art. He wrote: "Each epoch in the holistic development of human culture has its type of understanding, recognition of aesthetic and non-aesthetic values, its priorities in terms of ways of understanding the world in general, as well as types of works of art in particular. At a certain period of time, we are especially vulnerable to certain aesthetic qualities of values, while we remain blind to others."<sup>26</sup> In addition, Roman

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, S. 257-258.

<sup>26</sup> Ingarden R. (1960). *O dziele literackim. Badania z pogranicza ontologii, teorii języka i filozofii literatury*. Warszawa: PWN, S. 430.

Ingarden noted that the concretization of a literary work depends on the position of the reader, so in all respects bear the “signs of the times” and, to some extent, participate in changing the cultural atmosphere<sup>27</sup>.

Thus, we can say that Ingarden's theory of concretization is a “weapon” against extreme axiological relativism and skepticism because the object of aesthetic evaluation is a concretized aesthetic object, not a schematic work of art as a carrier of artistic values in a potential state. The source of differences in aesthetic assessments is not a misperception but differences between concretizations.

## V. Phenomena of modern art

It is possible to demonstrate the possibility of interpreting the phenomena of contemporary art by using Roman Ingarden's aesthetics for analyzing abstractionism, neo-avant-garde, and postmodern art.

R. Ingarden's views on abstract art are contained in the 4th and 9th paragraphs of the work *On the structure of the painting*, as well as in the article *On so-called abstract painting*. R. Ingarden notes that there may be works of art, even masterpieces, in which no homogeneous objects (things or people) are presented, and their artistic value is high. Such works can be defined as works of fine art and should be analyzed as such.

In *On the structure of the painting*, we can also find Ingarden's reflections on impressionism. He argues that the characteristic of the Impressionist way of conveying the form is that the paints create only the background of the impression of a particular form, which we get when observing things. This background, which the viewer sees, encourages the filling of many of these impressions with different structural and substantive techniques, that is, to the intentional construction of the form of a higher constitutional level<sup>28</sup>.

R. Ingarden also drew attention to the works of cubism. He noted that they refused to reproduce the views in favor of the presented objects. Comparing impressionism with cubism, he writes: “Impressionists emphasize the richness and diversity of immediate color spots, [...] cubism attempts to abstract as much as possible from this diversity and variability.

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, S. 432.

<sup>28</sup> Ingarden R. (1958). O budowie obrazu, in: Ingarden R. *Studia z estetyki*. T. II. Warszawa. S. 46.

Thus, in the picture, there is a reconstruction from the sensory basis of the views of only the simplest material and often reduced to one quality<sup>29</sup>.

According to R. Ingarden, the difference between impressionism and cubism lies in the method of creation. When presenting a thing in the shape of a sphere, cubism chooses among the various ellipses the one in which the circle form is most expressive. On the other hand, Impressionist painting chooses the type that would be most spectacular and would best convey the shape of the circle when viewed in reverse.

The purpose of the article *On so-called abstract painting* was Ingarden's desire to understand abstract painting through structural analysis. The philosopher drew attention to the difference between abstract painting and presentational art in terms of their perception. Traditionally tuned to the perception of the depicted image, the recipient of the abstract work does not know how to behave, feels helpless, and even rejects as unimportant what gives him the seen image<sup>30</sup>. R. Ingarden notes that the essence of the "abstract" painting is devoid of depicted objects. The only thing that remains in it is a certain system of colored spots, light, and shadow, as well as the integrity formed by them. Perceiving them, the viewer has no reason to go beyond them, as with traditional paintings. Therefore, Ingarden suggests using the term "concrete" paintings rather than "abstract" because what they have for review is a concrete, purely visual work<sup>31</sup>. He notes that the name "specific painting" is often suggested by the artists (in particular, Jean Arp).

Studying the issue of evaluating works of abstractionism, R. Ingarden notes that the principle of the general conditions for the emergence of aesthetically valuable qualities based on purely visual moments (colors, light, shadows, shapes) has not yet been theoretically resolved. He emphasizes that abstract art is quite complex because the artist must intuitively predict aesthetically valuable qualities and their set, which forms the outlined aesthetic value, before finding out what the basis of purely visual qualities can or should lead to the desired qualities of value<sup>32</sup>. However, a considerable number of "abstract" paintings are not, according to Ingarden, clearly un-

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, S. 51.

<sup>30</sup> Ingarden R. (1966). O tak zwanym malarstwie abstrakcyjnym, in: Ingarden R. *Przeżycie – dzieło. – wartość*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, S. 198.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, S. 205.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, S. 217.

representative, and it often happens that they have no artistic value because they are only kitsch.

In general, we can identify the main features of the art of neo-avant-garde: the relationship between reality and art disappears completely or plays a minor role; there is no work of art as such because more important is the idea (conceptualism), choice (land art, pop art); some works are one-time, short-lived (happenings); the artist chooses and gives the existing objects the status of a work of art (pop art); there are values that were previously perceived as unaesthetic; the recipient disappears in the traditional sense as an admirer of art.

However, some aspects of neo-avant-garde can be correlated with the theory of R. Ingarden. For example, Ingarden acknowledged that, in addition to positive, there are also negative aesthetic values. Researchers of modern art note the growth of the role of the ugly (that is, the opposite of the beautiful as aesthetical concept) or even talk about the real aestheticization of the ugly, the exaggeration of the value of this “negative” value. Sometimes a “work of art” pursues a single goal: to cause acute negative feelings to shock and disgust the recipient<sup>33</sup>. Aesthetic values in his aesthetics arise in the process of experiencing and capturing the qualitative artistic qualifications of the work. In neo-avant-garde, we are dealing with the decline of artistic value. “Going outside, art, unfortunately, does not equate life with art, adding value to it, but rather is banalized by the average, everyday life [...]. In many happenings, installations, emptiness, and freshness are hidden behind external pseudo-ritual forms, waiting to be filled with the appropriate content. In the pursuit of new symbols, new reading, their deep meaning perishes, and the external form is so open and ambiguous that it is incomprehensible.”<sup>34</sup>

In the late 70s – early 80's of the 20th century, it became clear that neo-avant-garde art was replaced by a new formation – postmodern, which launched the next cycle of modern culture. The source of the artistic practice of postmodernism is the belief in reaching the limits of artistic possibili-

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<sup>33</sup> See: Welsch W. (1996). Estetyka i antyestetyka, in: *Postmodernizm. Antologia prze-kładów*. Kraków, S. 520-546.

<sup>34</sup> Pękala T. (1992). Wartości estetyczne w sztuce awangardowej i postmodernistycznej, in: *Przemiany współczesnej świadomości artystycznej: wokół postmodernizmu*. Red. T. Szkołuta. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, S. 116.



ties. Recognition that the most outstanding works have already been created leaves the postmodern artist the right to use fragments, quotations, or parodies. Redundancy, metaphorical utterances, and associativity often act here.

In contrast to the break with tradition in avant-garde and neo-avant-garde, postmodern art refers to tradition. We can find the understanding of tradition here, similar to the approach of Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics, where tradition is presented as a constant interaction of our present and past<sup>35</sup>. Postmodern art adopts the artistic tradition of the past; many references to the past characterize it.

We suppose that the turn to tradition, which is characteristic of postmodern aesthetics, opens the possibility of using the concept of R. Ingarden, focused on traditional aesthetic positions. However, postmodernism does not simply refer to classical art and quotes it. Postmodern art creates collages, flirts with popular art, ironically treats works of classical art, and produces kitsch or pastiche. Ingarden's art theory is based on thorough spiritual experiences that enrich the recipient's personality.

## VI. Conclusion

The main advantage of R. Ingarden's aesthetics is that his conception is not evaluative but purely ontological. Therefore it has universal significance because it does not state that the value of a work of art depends on historical conditions. Artistic objects that meet the conditions defined by Ingarden's theory belong to the field of art, regardless of anyone's assessment. R. Ingarden, first of all, emphasized the aesthetic dimension of works of art. This is the relevance of Ingarden's aesthetic concept. A positive aspect of his reflections is the definition of the aesthetic criterion of art, which sets the boundaries of its space, as it opposes the "blurring" of art in reality and the reduction of aesthetics to epistemology or philosophy of culture.

R. Ingarden, as a representative of phenomenological philosophy, is more interested in the problem of the emergence in the context of changes in works of true values and changes in the relationships that characterize classical art, i.e., the relationship between artist and work and work and recipient. Changing the artist's position leads to a change in the work itself.

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<sup>35</sup> Gadamer H.-G. (2013). *Truth and Method*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 623 p.

In our opinion, the phenomenological method helps to reach the essence of the studied phenomena by focusing on the holistic capture of the studied objects and determining the structural parts of this integrity and the connections between them. Phenomenological attitude to the essence allowed us to overcome the prevailing in the theory of art psychologism and naturalism and also allowed looking at the work of art as art itself, whose role is to stimulate aesthetic experiences.

R. Ingarden does not rule out the possibility of performing non-aesthetic functions by art, but he argues that these functions can not raise the work to the level of a work of art. The main task of philosophical aesthetics, according to R. Ingarden, is not the creation of inductive generalizations but the implementation of an eidetic review of the artistic objects.

Ingarden is both a scientist, a philosopher-phenomenologist, and a true lover of art. Educated in classical art, he became a true admirer of it. Perhaps this is the reason for the lack of proper attention to the phenomena of contemporary art. Communicating with masterpieces, he could not take the side of low-value works, which he often considered works of modern art.

In contemporary art, along with the erosion of the concepts of traditional aesthetics, there has been an erosion of artistic qualities, the separation of which leads to a developed aesthetic experience and the emergence of aesthetic values. Some "artistic acts" of neo-avant-garde consciously arose as a protest against the recognition of only masterpieces as works of art. R. Ingarden's position presupposes an axiological approach to aesthetics associated with the high art of the Western cultural tradition. Therefore, the lack of interest in the phenomena of contemporary art is a kind of protection of aesthetics against the onslaught of the new avant-garde.

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