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Ordinary and Extraordinary in Contemporary Art: Toward the Problem of Legitimizing the Unique and Reproducible in the Philosophy of Culture

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***Abstract.** The article is devoted to the analysis of the opposition of the ordinary and extraordinary in contemporary art through the prism of the philosophy of culture and the problem of legitimizing the artistic gesture.*

The purpose of the study** is a philosophical and anthropological analysis of the opposition of the ordinary and extraordinary in contemporary art. **Methods:

hermeneutics, philosophical and anthropological and art historical analysis. Based on the material of the work of the Argentine artist Iles Kilen, Berlin museums and Ukrainian artists, the phenomenon of recognition, autonomy of the creative process, as well as the special status of a unique work in the conditions of reproducibility are considered. The thesis about the transformation of the criteria of artistic value in the era of digitalization and postmodernity is substantiated.

Scientific results *1. The ordinary in the conditions of contemporary art is a structural condition of the extraordinary. 2. Uniqueness is transformed from a property into an effect. 3. Legitimation is contingent and event-based. 4. Ires Kilen (duration and bodily practice), Hamlet Zinkivski (existential gesture) and the Berlin scene (institutionalization and hybrid generation) represent three models of contemporary art. In the digital age, art exists as a mode of circulation.*

Conclusions. *In contemporary art, uniqueness is no longer tied to the object, and institutions perform the function of a «translator», therefore reproducibility does not destroy value. The shift in the ontology of art from the object of art to its procedural feature, which, in turn, depends on the context and network factor, is explored, which establishes new criteria for artistic value and legitimation. Therefore, in contemporary culture, the extraordinary is not an exception, but a way of organizing experience in different modes of reality. In Ires Kilen, the extraordinary is time and body, in Zinkivskiy's Hamlet the extraordinary is the everyday, in military Kharkiv the extraordinary acts as the limit of life, in Berlin the extraordinary as an institution and an algorithm. Uniqueness in the contemporary artistic situation is ensured by a set of spatio-temporal characteristics and methods of legitimation. Adding the military Ukrainian context radically strengthens the main thesis of our study, when in contemporary art the extraordinary is no longer an exception, it is a function of the limit situation, where life itself becomes an artistic gesture.*

Keywords: *contemporary art, uniqueness, reproduction, legitimation, abstraction, philosophy of culture, authorship, synesthesia.*

Ординарне та екстраординарне в сучасному мистецтві: до проблеми легітимації унікального та відтворюваного у філософії культури

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***Анотація.** Стаття присвячена аналізу опозиції ординарного та екстраординарного в сучасному мистецтві через призму філософії культури та проблеми легітимації художнього жесту.*

***Метою** дослідження є філософсько-антропологічний аналіз опозиції ординарного та екстраординарного в сучасному мистецтві. **Методи:** герменевтика, філософсько-антропологічний та мистецтвознавчий аналіз. На матеріалі творчості аргентинської художниці Ідес Кілен, берлінських музеїв та українських митців розглядається феномен визнання, автономії творчого процесу, а також особливий статус унікального твору в умовах репродуктивності. Обґрунтовується теза про трансформацію критеріїв художньої цінності в епоху цифровізації та постмодерну.*

Наукові результати 1.Ординарне в умовах сучасного мистецтва є структурною умовою екстраординарного. 2. Унікальність трансформується з властивості в ефект. 3. Легітимація є контингентною і подієвою. 4. Ірес Кілен (тривалість і тілесна практика), Гамлет Зіньківський (екзистенційний жест) і берлінська сцена (інституалізація і гібридна генерація) репрезентують три моделі сучасного мистецтва. У цифрову епоху мистецтво існує як режим циркуляції.

Висновки. У сучасному мистецтві унікальність більше не прив'язана до об'єкта, а інституції виконують функцію «перекладача», через це відтворюваність не знищує цінність. Досліджено зсув в онтології мистецтва з об'єкта мистецтва на його процесуальну ознаку, яка, в свою чергу, залежить контексту та мережевого фактору, це закладає нові критерії художньої цінності та легітимації. Отже, у сучасній культурі екстраординарне не виняток, а спосіб організації досвіду в різних режимах реальності. У Ірес Кілен екстраординарне є час і тіло, у Гамлета Зіньківського екстраординарне повсякденне, у воєнному Харків екстраординарне виступає як межа життя, у Берліні екстраординарне як інституція й алгоритм. Унікальність в сучасній мистецькій ситуації забезпечується сукупністю просторово-часових характеристик та способів легітимації Додавання воєнного українського контексту радикально підсилює головну тезу нашого дослідження, коли у сучасному мистецтві екстраординарне більше не є винятком, воно є функцією межової ситуації, де саме життя стає мистецьким жестом.

Ключові слова: сучасне мистецтво, унікальність, репродукція, легітимація, абстракція, філософія культури, авторство, синестезія.

Problem statement. The problem of the ratio of the ordinary and the extraordinary in art acquires particular relevance in the conditions of postmodern culture, where the classical criteria of «genius» and «uniqueness» undergo radical

revision. Since the time of Walter Benjamin and his concept of the «aura» of a work of art [1], the question of uniqueness and reproducibility has ceased to be only aesthetic, it has moved into the plane of cultural ontology [3].

The phenomenon of Ides Kilen is a revealing case, since the artist, who worked outside the institutional field of art for over 80 years, achieved recognition only in her late years [16]. Her work questions the established mechanisms of legitimization of art [11]. Another case of the ratio of the ordinary and the extraordinary is found in the work of the Berlin School of Art, which is important because it is in Berlin that the ordinary in art acquires institutional power [6; 20]. The third case is connected with the unique re-empowerment of the ordinary and everyday during the Russian-Ukrainian war, it is a number of Ukrainian artists who again enter the agora of publicity and everyday life with a completely new existential experience, the center of institutionalization here is the Yermil Center and its exhibitions, and the most indicative for the purposes of our study is the work of Hamlet Zinkovsky.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The classical aesthetics of modernism built uniqueness as the central criterion of artistic value [4]. However, in the twentieth century this paradigm was subjected to deconstruction [14]. In particular, the first existential doubt in the uniqueness of a masterpiece is substantiated by Walter Benjamin [1], who speaks of the loss of «aura» in conditions of technical reproduction. Jean Baudrillard proves that simulacra create the basis for the functioning of art in a new hyperreality [2].

Arthur Danto lays the foundations of the institutional theory of art, where the change of styles in the history of art is determined by the change of institutions [10]. He rethinks the theory of mimesis, and claims that a high degree of mimeticity as the greatest correspondence to reality is valued primarily by traditional art [11]. The real theory of reality begins with avant-garde art [15], from post-impressionism to Marcel Duchamp's «ready-made», reality no longer needs masking and mimesis,

speaking directly [8], and the artist's skill is not in copying, but in setting contexts, the more perfect this contextualization [13; 18], the more successful the institutionalization of both the object of art and the artist himself. A. Danto in his work speaks of a separate «world of art», which functions according to its own rules [10, p.572]. In this context, the ordinary is no longer the opposite of the extraordinary, it becomes its condition. Any object can be art, provided it is interpreted appropriately [18].

Formulation of the objectives of the article (Problem statement). The aim of the research is a philosophical and anthropological analysis of the opposition of the ordinary and the extraordinary in contemporary art.

In accordance with the goal, the following tasks have been formulated:

1. To define the new role of the ordinary in art through the prism of the philosophy of culture and the problem of legitimizing the artistic gesture.
2. Using the material of the work of the Argentine artist Ides Kilen, Berlin museums and Ukrainian existential artists, to show the shift in contemporary art from global narratives to the corporeality and value of every moment of life.
3. To show the transformation of the criteria of artistic value in the postmodern era.

Presentation of the main material of the study. The biography of Ides Kilen [16] demonstrates the radical autonomy of the artistic gesture due to the lack of orientation to exhibitions or the market, the refusal to date, sign, archive, and the destruction of a significant part of the works [14]. This undermines the basic mechanisms of artistic legitimation: authorship, punched-out presentation, historicity [15]. Her work existed as a pure practice, reminiscent of Niklas Luhmann's concept of «autopoetic» art, J. Deleuze's concept of the meaning of humanitarian activity [12].

Ides Kilen begins to create outside the institution, but her work itself demonstrates institutional changes, the decline of official institutions that cannot

guarantee the stability of experience and aesthetic experience. Kilen's evolution from figurative to abstract is in the tradition of Paul Klee and Joan Miró, but her abstraction is specific through the use of synaesthetics (sound turning into color), repetitive motifs (number 5, line, rhythm), and the unexpected use of everyday surfaces (walls, doors) [16]. Thus, the extraordinary arises not through form, but through the intensity of practice.

In Kilen's work, there is a radical democratization of artistic material, when newspapers, book pages, and interior items become art objects. This echoes the practices of Marcel Duchamp's «ready-made» and Joseph Beuys's social sculpture [14]. The ordinary ceases to be «low» according to the old classification of genres when it becomes a field of artistic intervention [15]. The fact that Kilen received recognition at the age of 84 testifies to the contingency of institutional discovery and the dependence of legitimation on the external gaze, as well as the temporal asymmetry between creation and recognition. This confirms Pierre Bourdieu's thesis about art as a field of struggle for symbolic capital and a social marker of prestige: «Symbolic capital is any kind of capital (economic, cultural, social) when it is perceived through categories of perception that arise from the division into dominant and subordinate; it is, simply put, capital perceived as legitimate» [7, p.22]. Pierre Bourdieu emphasizes that the production and consumption of art is primarily a game of power, where high art often serves as an instrument of symbolic violence, cutting off mass culture [7]. I. Killen demonstrates a radical ethic of freedom, from the refusal of medication and the autonomy of the rhythm of life to the general independence from social expectations. In this sense, her life is a continuation of art, which echoes Michel Foucault's ideas about the «aesthetics of existence» [5]. The extraordinary in contemporary art is no longer a function of form, it is determined by the regime of existence of practice and life, the «lifeworld» [12]. The ordinary does not act as an antagonist, but as the material and condition of art. The legitimation of a work of art is contingent and institutionally conditioned. The

phenomenon of Ides Kilen [16] demonstrates the possibility of an autonomous existence of art outside institutional structures.

In the digital age, the problem of uniqueness is transformed, as it is shifted from the object to the process [17; 20].

Berlin in the 21st century functions as one of the key centers of experimental art in Europe. Institutions such as the KW Institute for Contemporary Art, the Hamburger Bahnhof or the Berlinische Galerie form a special type of artistic ecosystem, where the line between the high and the everyday is blurred, legitimization often occurs post facto, the process is more important than the finished object. Berlin exhibition practice (including shows of late or «open» artists) demonstrates a specific temporal logic: art can wait decades or even centuries to be «read». In this sense, exhibitions of Ides Kilen's work in a European context are not simply presentations, but acts of retroactive legitimation, in which an institution affirms the value of what already existed as extraordinary outside of it.

Ides Kilen emerged on the Buenos Aires art scene shortly after she turned sixty. The daughter of a Swiss couple living in Argentina, she grew up in the cities of Puerto Bermejo and Resistencia. She continued her studies at the Ernesto de la Carcava School of Decorative Arts in Buenos Aires, studying art history and piano in particular. [16] She studied with artists such as Emilio Pettoruti, Vicente Puiga, Juan Batllé Planas, Pio Collivadino and André Lote. Although Kilen's work is mostly non-figurative, many of her compositions contain references to music, such as soaring keyboard shapes, clefs and staves. Kilen has exhibited her works in South America, North America, and Europe [16]. Kilen's phenomenon radically expands the temporal perspective of art, as over 100 years of continuous practice and delayed recognition, as well as the general absence of a «career» logic, allow us to speak of a «long duration» of art (in the sense of Fernand Braudel), where the ordinary as Zen-like daily drawing accumulates, and the extraordinary as recognition is postponed. Thus, the extraordinary is not a moment, but an effect of duration.

In our opinion, the work of Hamlet Zinkivskyi opens up another pole of the problem, namely radical ordinariness as an artistic method. His practice is characterized by minimalist textual and graphic interventions, the use of the urban space of Kharkiv as a «carrier», and the absence of a clear institutional framework; in this respect, it resembles the recent work of Serhiy Zhadan, who operates through verbal rather than visual channels of perception [21].

Unlike I. Kilen, he works not in a private space or studio, but in the public space of the city, not with eternity and centuries, but with the very instant, where the city walls, as in the epic of Gilgamesh, become a pledge of immortality, and legitimation becomes dispersed across many social institutions. However, both cases have in common the key point, when the extraordinary arises as an effect of the intensive repetition of an ordinary gesture.

Let us compare the cities of Kharkiv and Berlin as cities of mediums and also consider the specificity of the wartime Ukrainian context in its significance for art as an existential practice, in particular for the exhibitions of the Yermilov Center, Kharkiv.

First of all, the comparison of Kharkiv and Berlin allows us to clarify the mechanisms of legitimation. In Kharkiv, the art of Hamlet Zinkivskyi exists in situ, the viewer is random, but remains a «real Kharkiv resident», documentation is secondary, resembling an Instagram diary, when the event is important first, and then its presentation to the public.

In Berlin, art is quickly institutionalized under the conditions of a high density of galleries, archiving and curatorship as cultural practices are decisive [9; 18]. In this sense, Berlin exhibitions can «recode» practices like Hamlet Zinkivskyi, transferring them from the regime of an ordinary urban gesture to the regime of an extraordinary artistic object. The blurring of authorship and the algorithmization of art are indicative for Berlin [6; 9].

An algorithmic extraordinary is emerging, symbolizing not only the

dominance of AI installations, but also the crisis of authorship (for example, the Beeple exhibition at the Neue Nationalgalerie in April 2026) [6]. Beeple's installation «Regular Animals» presents robotic «dogs» that combine the corporeality of a machine (robotic mobility), hyper-realistic human faces (3D modeling), and algorithmic image processing (AI stylization) [9].

The key difference from classical art objects is that these «sculptures» are operating systems that themselves scan space, create images, transform them into styles (cubism, pop art, etc.), and then produce a material result (Polaroid) [20]. So, we are not dealing with a static work, but a self-replicating process [8].

In this installation, uniqueness is redefined, where the algorithm acts as the author, a radical shift from the classical model of art to the AI model is made, the place of the author is replaced by a work [6] created on the basis of an algorithm as a series of variations, a unique object appears not as the will of the author, but as the result of endless generation, completeness is deceptive, and processivity becomes the hallmark of the entire installation. In Walter Benjamin's terms, we can speak not only of the loss of "aura", but of its redistribution, when the aura passes from the object to the algorithmic mode of production [1]. This clarifies Benjamin's position on the peculiarities of the work in modernity. For contemporary art is defined not by the object, but by the mode of its presentation and circulation.

The use of the face of figures such as Elon Musk or Mark Zuckerberg (representatives of technological power), as well as Pablo Picasso and Andy Warhol (as icons of modernism/pop art), forms a complex semiotics, where the «face» becomes an interface of power, with technological power determining the control of infrastructures, and aesthetic power supporting the control of forms of vision [6].

The robot «dog» here functions as a metaphor for the subject's subordination to algorithmic systems [8]. In the context of Jean Baudrillard's philosophy, this can be interpreted as hyperreality, because images do not reflect reality, but construct it, «creepiness» emerges as a new aesthetic [2]. The effect of «uncanny» (creepy

resemblance) becomes central, rethinking the traditional theme of living-dead, natural-artificial, this is an experimental combination of the living and the inanimate, the use of the gap between the body and the face, the emergence of the subject's uncertainty [8].

This corresponds to contemporary aesthetic trends, where the extraordinary arises from the violation of cognitive expectations. That is, the «strange» becomes a new form of artistic intensity. Recent exhibitions and critical publications dedicated to Beeple's work [6; 20] demonstrate a shift in discourse from the problem of digital art as such to the problem of algorithmic formation of perception. In particular, institutional texts of the Neue Nationalgalerie emphasize that the meaning and authorship of contemporary art are increasingly mediated by “invisible technological infrastructures” [6]. In parallel, media criticism emphasizes that algorithmic systems and digital platforms actually take over the function of the artist as a subject that shapes the vision of the world (Museumsportal Berlin) [20]. Over the past 3 years, Beeple has moved from NFT to AI and robotics art, while becoming a key case in AI aesthetics and algorithmic authorship [17]. Beeple is not just an artist, but a symptom of the transition from representation to generation as the main principle of art [17].

Thus, Beeple represents the third phase of art: instead of the object in classical art and the context in non-classical and postmodern (post-non-classical), a pendulum metamodern algorithmic process of generation appears. The appearance of such an exhibition in the Neue Nationalgalerie is not accidental. Berlin integrates technological art into institutions, legitimizes the experiment until its historicization, acts as an «accelerator» of artistic paradigms. In this sense, the city functions as a laboratory for the transition from human to post-human art. Uniqueness is algorithmized when each result is unique, but fundamentally reproducible. The role of the viewer changes, in the process of art, the viewer becomes a co-participant, he is included in the process of generation. This confirms the radical thesis that in

contemporary art the extraordinary no longer belongs to the person, it belongs to the system that produces experience.

The military experience of Ukraine in 2022–2026 radically transforms not only social structures, but also the ontology of art itself. In this situation, the ordinary and the extraordinary cease to be aesthetic categories in the narrow sense and acquire an existential dimension.

Art no longer functions exclusively as an autonomous system (in the sense of Niklas Luhmann), but becomes a form of survival, testimony, and anthropological response to the catastrophe. A key center of such transformation is the Yermilov Center in Kharkiv, a city under constant threat of shelling and at the same time remaining one of the centers of contemporary art in Ukraine. In a city under constant shelling, the status of the ordinary changes, in «art under shelling», when ordinary life is destroyed, there is no old infrastructure, security as such, and the rhythm of time changes to «survive now», in this moment, to make the time of everyday action a time of eternity, the extraordinary becomes the norm (explosions, ruins, the threat of death).

In such a situation, an artistic gesture, even a minimal one, acquires radical weight. A drawing, an inscription on the wall, an installation in a shelter, all this functions as an act of fixing the presence of a person in the conditions of his potential disappearance. This allows us to clarify the position of our research, when the extraordinary in conditions of war is equal to the possibility of an ordinary gesture.

The Yermilov Center as a space for legitimizing traumatic experience performs several key functions, from archiving the experience of war, where exhibitions record traumatic reality, transforming it into cultural memory, to institutional legitimization. Through the institution (Yermilov Center), what arises as a spontaneous gesture (street art, documentary practices) gains the status of art.

As a communicative platform, the center acts as a mediator between local experience and global artistic discourse. In this sense, the Yermilov Center functions

similarly to Berlin institutions (KW Institute for Contemporary Art), but in conditions of a fundamentally different extreme reality.

In particular, the artistic practice of Hamlet Zinkovskiy during the war period acquires new dimensions, when his texts become evidence and reflection of war, and urban space turns into a field of collective memory, here the ephemerality of works is enhanced by the physical destruction of the environment and his method is radicalized, because through the trials of wartime, an ordinary inscription turns into an extraordinary document of the era.

The status of art in Kharkiv retains its original, existential, almost sacred meaning, where the ordinary is destroyed and the extraordinary becomes everyday, the status of art in Berlin is institutional, where the stability of the ordinary provides only a partial status of testimony, and provides opportunities for interpretation and contextualization. This allows us to make a fundamental clarification, while in Kharkiv art returns to its primary function, namely to be a form of life [1; 8], in Berlin it remains a form of reflection, and sometimes reflection on reflection, transflection. The wartime Ukrainian context allows us to reconsider classical philosophical theories, when Walter Benjamin's «aura» returns due to the threat of destruction, the experience of Bernhard Waldenfels [19] becomes a response to the radical Other. Thus, Ukrainian war art demonstrates the extraordinary not as an aesthetic category, but as a limit state of human existence.

According to our hypothesis, we draw conclusions about reproducibility vs. uniqueness in three cases.

For I. Kilen, uniqueness lies in the very imitation of the process of life, and reproducibility is minimal.

For Hamlet Zinkivsky, uniqueness is created through the situation (the context of the wall), and reproducibility is reinterpreted through photographs and uncontrolled distribution of images through social networks.

The uniqueness of Berlin art is within a curatorial framework, and

reproducibility is created through institutional replication/ This confirms the thesis of Boris Groys, important for our study [15], that in contemporary art, the mode of its presentation becomes more important than the object.

The second factor is the use of synesthesia, text and abstraction as a common denominator. Despite the differences, there is a deep kinship through synesthesia: when Kilen uses colors as music, and Hamlet Zinkivsky uses text as a supplement and visualization of the visual image, then Berlin takes intermediality as the basis of the artistic process. This is in line with Gilles Deleuze's logic, according to which art creates perceptual and affective blocks that transcend the medium. The third factor is legitimation as an event, not a property. In all three cases, legitimation is not an intrinsic property of the work, it is not guaranteed by quality, it depends on the context. It arises as an event of the intersection of the artist, his environment, the institution and the viewer.

Conclusions. 1. A new role for the ordinary in art has been defined. The ordinary in contemporary art is not the opposite, but the condition of the extraordinary.

The phenomenon of Ides Kilen demonstrates the extraordinary as a result of duration. The practice of Hamlet Zinkovski is the perfect result of the intensity of the everyday gesture. The Berlin context shows the role of institutions in the recoding of art. In the digital age, uniqueness shifts from the object to the mode of existence and circulation. The Berlin scene (KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Hamburger Bahnhof) demonstrates the rapid institutionalization of the experiment, active curatorial interpretation, the transformation of the local gesture into a global discourse. It is here that the transition from the ordinary to the extraordinary takes place through the institution.

2. In contemporary art, uniqueness is no longer tied to the object, and institutions perform the function of a «translator», because of which reproducibility does not destroy value. Thus, in the ontology of art, there is a shift from the art object

to its procedural feature, which, in turn, depends on the context and network factor, this establishes new criteria for artistic value and legitimation.

So, in modern culture, the extraordinary is not an exception, but a way of organizing experience in different regimes of reality. In Ires Kilen, the extraordinary is time, in Hamlet Zinkivsky, the extraordinary is everyday life, in wartime Kharkiv, the extraordinary is the limit of life, in Berlin, the extraordinary is an institution, in the Bleep exhibition, the extraordinary is an algorithm.

3. Uniqueness in the modern artistic situation is ensured by a set of spatio-temporal characteristics and methods of legitimation. The longevity and privacy of I. Kilen's space contribute to the late legitimation of her work, uniqueness is ensured by the process of creativity, not recognition. The immediacy of Hamlet Zinkovskiy's art fits into the urban space, creating a new urban metaphor of the transition between genres and ways of broadcasting art, from the street to the social network, providing a networked way of legitimation and contextual uniqueness. The institutional space of Berlin museums and galleries turns to historical reflection, legitimizing the new in art through its fit into the cultural-historical horizon and the uniqueness of the presentation. Uniqueness here can become algorithmic and generational.

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