

# THE IMAGINATIVE WORK OF ART AND ITS WAY OF MANIFESTATION

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*Translated from German by Filip Borek*

*Abstract and keywords prepared by Filip Borek*

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## *Abstract*

The text distinguishes three modes of aesthetic presentation: perceptual, imaginative, and signitive, with a particular focus on analyzing the imaginative mode of manifestation of a work of art in contrast to the other two. In the case of imaginative perception, there are three objects to be distinguished: depicting, imaginative, and depicted objects. Unlike the object of simple sensory perception, which exists within the spatiotemporal reality of the observer, the imaginative object does not appear

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in this reality. Instead, it exists as something quasi-real rather than genuinely real. The text argues that imaginative perception differs not only from simple sensory perception, but also from signitive perception—such as the perception of literary work of art, which renders its proper object in a non-intuitive way.

*Keywords:* aesthetic experience, aesthetic perception, sensory perception, imaginative presentation, signitive perception.

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### **Domišljajska umetnina in način njene danosti**

#### *Povzetek*

Besedilo razlikuje tri moduse estetske prezentacije: perceptivnega, imaginativnega in signitivnega, pri čemer se z vidika kontrasta z drugima dvema posebej osredotoča na analizo imaginativnega modusa manifestacije umetnine. V primeru imaginativne zaznave je potrebno razlikovati tri predmete, in sicer: prikazujejoči, imaginativni in prikazani predmet. V nasprotju s predmetom preproste čutne zaznave, ki obstaja znotraj časovno-prostorske resničnosti opazovalca, se imaginativni predmet ne prikazuje v njej. Namesto tega obstaja, ne kot nekaj dejansko resničnega, temveč kot nekaj kvazi-resničnega. Besedilo zagovarja mnenje, da se imaginativna zaznava ne razlikuje zgolj od preproste čutne zaznave, temveč tudi od signitivne zaznave, kakor je to tudi pri zaznavanju literarne umetnine, ki svoj pravi predmet predoča na neintuitiven način.

*Ključne besede:* estetsko izkustvo, estetska zaznava, čutna zaznava, domišljajsko predstavljanje, signitivna zaznava.

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[| 245]<sup>1</sup> In a *receptive* aesthetic experience, there are three ways, in which objects manifest themselves. Natural phenomena, products of arts and crafts, architecture, “abstract” [“*gegenstandlosen*”] sculpture, and most works of music are *perceived* [*wahrgenommen*] and aesthetically enjoyed on the basis of this perception [*Perzeption*].<sup>2</sup> Works of art, such as paintings and sculptures, stage plays, movies, radio dramas, etc., are presented *imaginatively*. In turn, literary works of art are the object of *signitive* perception. These three types of aesthetic perception are not always rigorously distinguished, because one usually pays more attention to aesthetic enjoyment than aesthetic perception. The latter, however, does affect the relation between the subject of aesthetic enjoyment and its aesthetic object, as well as the constitution of the aesthetic object itself.

In particular, the difference between perceiving [*Wahrnehmung*] and the imaginative grasping of aesthetic objects is often overlooked. We see a sea, [| 246] and it evokes an aesthetic pleasure, as does a Gothic cathedral. In this sense, we see a picture as a colorful canvas, a marble figure, an actor, or a play of lights and shadows on a cinema screen. However, these are not the primary objects of aesthetic enjoyment. What we enjoy aesthetically are, rather, the landscapes, objects, and people imaginatively depicted in them. The bearer of aesthetic value becomes two-layered. The object of pleasure or displeasure is not only the actress, but also the character of the drama, not only a complex of colors, but also an imaginative sea, not only a marble statue, but the body of a Greek goddess, not only a play of light

367

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1 [This translation indicates original pagination directly in the text in square brackets; all page numbers refer to: Blaustein, Leopold. 1937. “Das imaginative Kunstwerk und seine Gegebenheitsweise.” In *Deuxième Congrès International d’esthétique et de science de l’art*, eds. Paul Valéry, Paul Claudel, and Victor Basch, 245–249. Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan.]

2 [Blaustein distinguishes between “*Wahrnehmung*” and “*Perzeption*,” with the former being a subclass of the latter. Due to the difficulty of conveying this distinction in English, I render “*Wahrnehmung*” as “perceiving” and “*Perzeption*” as “perception.” In order to avoid ambiguity, I occasionally refer to the original term in certain passages.]

and shadow, but the plot of a movie. In this case, there are different sources of aesthetic pleasure, because the perceived object refers to another, makes another object intuitively present, and both can have aesthetic value.

The intention of the subject of aesthetic enjoyment who uses the depicting object as a “transitional object” can, however, go in two directions. On the one hand, it can be directed toward the depicted object—a portrayed face, a painted landscape, hence an object that is intended as truly existing, which may have served as a model for the artist. On the other hand, it can be directed toward the imaginative object that manifests itself to the enjoying subject “in” the picture, “on” the stage or cinema screen. The imaginative object is no longer the object of perceiving. Every object of perceiving is to the right or to the left of the spectator’s body, more or less far from it.

368 The imaginative objects are neither to the right nor to the left of the spectator, neither far from nor close to it. Generally, there are no spatial relations between these objects and the objects surrounding the spectator in the real world. The same applies to temporal relations. A cinemagoer does not think that the character in a movie was killed at the same time as a person sitting next to him [| 247] coughed, nor earlier or later. The imaginative objects exist in spatial-temporal relations only with other components of their imaginative worlds. There are as many imaginative worlds as there are pictures, sculptures, stage plays, movies, etc. In the case of aesthetic perceiving, its object is also isolated from the surrounding world or the whole surrounding from its wider world. The isolated fragment remains, however, a part of the spectator’s surrounding spatiotemporal world. The admired mountain lies in front of someone; the mountain peak is further away from someone than the forest situated on the slope. This distance is calculated on the basis of one’s real body and not on the basis of a center of orientation projected into the invisible fragment of the imaginative world, which is not intuitively presented. An imaginative mountain is experienced by the spectator as an alien body, with a clear awareness that the subject and object of aesthetic experience belong to different worlds. This also explains the lack of any deception or illusion on the part of the subject of aesthetic enjoyment who does not, for instance, feel the need to actively interfere with an imaginative storyline, in order, e.g., to prevent an assassination attempt.

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In the case of perceived aesthetic objects, there is an overarching thesis about the reality of the world, even if we do not make an explicit judgment about its real existence in the aesthetic experience. When I admire a city hall or an island, I grasp them as components of the real surrounding world. The imaginative objects on the canvas, stage, or cinema screen are experienced solely as quasi-real. The positing of the world as real is not even [*einmal*] neutralized in respect to imaginative objects; it encompasses these objects, only insofar as we interpret the canvas or an actor as something existing in reality, as well as the objects depicted in them (even if not as existing *hic et nunc*). Correspondingly, on the side of the subjective experience, this means [| 248] that we judge the perceived aesthetic objects, as well as depicting and depicted objects, while in the case of imaginative objects, we only make assumptions [*Annahmen*].

Other properties of the imaginative way of manifestation of aesthetic objects result from their comparison with the signitive way of manifestation. As demonstrated by R[oman] Ingarden in his groundbreaking analysis of the literary work of art, the signitive way of manifestation is not more complex. The layers of word sounds, meaning units, depicted objectivities, and their aspects form an intimately connected whole [*innig verbundenen Ganzen*]. Each and every one of them contributes specific value-qualities that, in polyphonic harmony, create the aesthetic value of the literary work of art. While the most fundamental layer of the literary work of art, i.e., word sounds, manifests itself in perceiving, the layer of depicted objectivities is constituted for the reader on the basis of signitive acts.

There is an essential difference between the polyphonic harmony of value-qualities that stems from different layers in the imaginative and signitive ways of manifestation of a work of art, respectively. In the former, the aesthetic values are “connected-with-one-another” [*Miteinander*], while in the latter they form a “side-by-side” order [*Nebeneinander*]. The beauty of a perceived actress has a decisive impact on the beauty of the imaginatively grasped character in a drama; the beauty of the colors covering the canvas impacts the beauty of the painted landscape. In contrast, the aesthetic value-qualities of the objects depicted in a literary work of art have no impact on the value-qualities of the word sounds. The specificity of the respective layers is much

less sharp in the case of the signitive way of manifestation. In the case of the imaginative way of manifestation, the perceived [| 249] sense-qualities serve to constitute both the depicting and the imaginative object, whereas, in the signitive way of manifestation, they are used solely to construct the layer of word sounds. For this reason, the imaginative objects are given also intuitively, while the depicted objectivities of a literary work of art are given solely in a non-intuitive manner, i.e., signitively, whereby they can (though do not have to) be made secondarily intuitive [*sekundären Veranschaulichung*] due to phantasy presentations [*Phantasievorstellungen*].



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## **Transitions | Prehajanja**

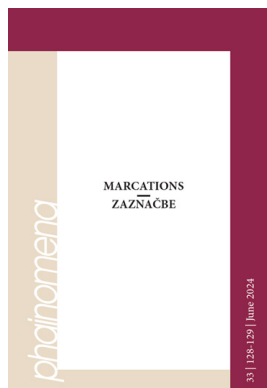
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## **Marcations | Zaznačbe**

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