



UDK 792.01:7.038(497.4):502

DOI 10.51937/Amfiteater-2026-1/234-250

Abstract

The article begins by laying the groundwork for discussing selected performative works by the contemporary Slovenian artist Neja Tomšič in relation to how the concept of ecology has been defined in contemporary art over the past few decades. In line with Tomšič's interdisciplinary artistic approach, which lies at the intersection of performative and visual arts, the article briefly explores the relationship between narrative and space or spatial categories. Building on this, it provides a basic contextualisation of Tomšič's work, analysing her specific performative pieces in the process. The article attempts to demonstrate that Tomšič's projects can be analysed from an ecological perspective, understood as a methodology for examining the relationship between the environment and its interacting actors. The ecological aspects of her work are therefore evident not only in her focus on space and landscape but also in the significant role that space, place or landscape plays in the narrative.

Keywords: space, landscape, ecology, visual arts, performative arts

Kaja Kraner is an assistant professor in the Department of Theoretical Studies at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design, University of Ljubljana, and a researcher at the ALUO Research Institute. Between 2015 and 2019, she was editor of *ŠUM*, a journal of contemporary art criticism and theory. In 2021, she published the monograph *The Chronopolitics of Art: Changes in Aesthetic Education from Modern to Contemporary Art* (Ljubljana: Krtina). From 2021 to 2022, she was a research associate at Moderna galerija in Ljubljana, working on the project Sustainable Digital Preservation of Slovenian New Media Art (ARRS, J7-3158). Since 2025, she has been a member of the editorial board of the *Journal for the Critique of Science*.

kaja.kraner@aluo.uni-lj.si

Space as Protagonist: Ecological Aspects of Neja Tomšič's Performative Works

Kaja Kraner

Academy of Fine Arts and Design, University of Ljubljana

Since the second half of the 20th century, the concept of ecology in the humanistic analysis of art has generally been understood as closely related to nature/environmental protection or sustainability, particularly in recent decades.¹ However, it does not have this exact meaning in biology and natural history, the fields in which it was first defined. The concept was introduced into biology and natural history by the zoologist Ernst Haeckel in the second half of the 19th century, but it did not become widely established in American botany until the end of the century. In this context, ecology can be considered, first, as a *methodological approach* to the study of living beings, their relationships with one another, and their adaptation to geographical conditions. This approach has historically developed in dialogue with simultaneous theories of evolution. Secondly, ecology can be considered as a *theory of development* that forms the basis of a specific methodology of study (Kingsland 1–13). For the purposes of this article, we could consider the relationship between ecology and theories of evolution by drawing an analogy with the approaches to the study of the historical development of art that developed simultaneously: theories of evolution could be placed in proximity to the so-called formalist approaches to art history that separate individual works of art from their broader context, analysing them as separate entities by focusing on their intra-formal characteristics (e.g., phonetic, morphological, syntactic and grammatical) and comparing them with other equally “atomised” artworks. In contrast to this, ecology as a methodology of study could be placed alongside contextual approaches to analysis based on Marxist, feminist, postcolonial and other theoretical contributions that emphasise the embeddedness of works of art in sociopolitical, economic and cultural processes and circumstances (Adams 16–100), with an additional, more direct focus on the relationship between the artwork and the situated viewer.

For this reason, it is no coincidence that the concept of ecology has entered discussions in the broader field of the humanistic analysis of art in recent decades,

¹ This paper is a result of the research programme P5-0452 Visual Literacy, conducted at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design, University of Ljubljana, and co-financed by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS).

with a focus on the concepts of space and the physical environment. The themes of ecology, environmental issues and climate change have been consistently represented, particularly in the interdisciplinary fields of ecocriticism and environmental literary criticism, which began to emerge mainly in the 1990s. Initially, literary ecocriticism focused on the relationship between literature and the physical environment. However, subsequent developments have brought themes such as deep ecology (see Ferry 81–107), the relationship between human and non-human agents, the notion of nature, and material ecocriticism to the fore (Marland 846–859). In dialogue with related critical-theoretical research approaches, particularly postcolonial studies, the early phase of this subfield developed a conceptual apparatus for analysing specific literary works, focusing primarily on spatial categories, such as space and place, and different understandings of place (locus, place and site), the relationship between the local and the global as well as the urban and the rural, which are established through the construction of literary worlds (Jurša 182–183). In short, over the last three decades, the themes of ecology, environmental issues and climate change have become more prominent in art discussions through a focus on space, the physical spatial environment, or spatial categories, as well as through the analysis of certain types of relationships between entities and the environment, which are “proposed” by works of art (Morton, *Ecology* 29–35; Morton, “Why Ambient Poetics” 52–56). This has primarily occurred in the literary arts, even though previous approaches to analysis have more often placed time or temporal categories in the foreground through their focus on the story (Ryan), directly or indirectly following the differentiation of temporal and spatial arts, which stems from Lessing’s comparison of literature and fine arts in *Laocoön* (1766).

In narratology, space has traditionally been discussed in terms of the narrative situation’s setting or physical environment. However, this does not mean that space merely serves as a passive backdrop to the action; it can also play an important role in shaping characters. For instance, the natural landscape can serve as a projection surface for characters’ psychological and mental states, based on an analogy between these states and perceptible aspects of the landscape, as also seen in the tradition of landscape painting (Carus 92–94) and contemporary film production, particularly in environmental science fiction (Mattis and Tynan). Additionally, space can resonate with the thematic starting points of a story, as observed in the frequent depiction of confined interior spaces in modernist prose and vast exteriors in Romantic poetry (Barotov 40–43). A greater focus on space within narratology can be observed only from the second half of the 20th century onwards. Examples include Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the chronotope, Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space* (1957), Yuri Lotman’s *Structures of the Artistic Text* (1970), and Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1974). Lefebvre’s work, among others, analyses the role of art and the

humanities in the production of social space while distinguishing between abstract space and “emotionally charged” place.²

In relation to the connection between ecology and art, the focus on spatial categories is also evident in the notion of environmental imaginary, which emerged in the diverse field of environmental humanities (Neimanis et al. 70–73) and gained recognition and formalisation in the 2000s. In this context, the environmental imaginary – modelled on the concept of the social imaginary – provides a starting point for explaining “how the natural environment shapes the attitudes, discourses, and practices of the people who dwell there” and can be interpreted in three intertwined ways: as something that is socially constructed, implicitly present and of which individuals are not fully aware; as a starting point for how individuals access the world and construct identity; and as a starting point for imagining the future (Warf). Specifically, the concept of environmental imaginary has recently taken on a more prominent political role based on the idea that environmental science alone is insufficient to attract public attention and trigger changes related to environmental issues (Neimanis et al. 80). Environmental science and the policies and measures aimed at addressing environmental issues should take into account human desire, motivation and values, since “a deep understanding of the environment cannot be divorced from human imagination, culture, and institutional and social practices” (80). In other words, the concept of environmental imaginary serves as a starting point for emphasising the role of imagination and emotion in experiencing space and the relationship between humans and the environment, particularly regarding environmental issues and climate change. It is therefore presented as a possible means of eliminating alienation from environmental issues and the negative framing of climate change in the current post-political context or the context of political resignation. This approach also recognises the role of art in addressing climate change and ecological collapse.

The concept of space, physical environment or landscape is a key starting point for the performative works of the contemporary Slovenian artist Neja Tomšič, whose work lies at the intersection of performative and visual arts. Tomšič, who is primarily a visual artist, having graduated in painting from the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana, has presented most of her work created over the last decade in both institutional contexts of contemporary performing arts and in gallery contexts. She often frames her work with hybrid media markers, such as immersive documentary installation with narration (*Circle*, 2022), theatrical essay (*Circle*, 2022) and visual essay (*Opium Clippers*, 2017), as well as a novel in the landscape (*Jadran Resort*, 2024) and a narrative walk dedicated to the stories of trees (*Untangling a Garden III*,

² The conceptual distinction between space and place can also be found in the book *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, written by the humanist geographer Yi-Fu Tuan and published three years after Lefebvre's book. French anthropologist Marc Augé proposed a similar distinction – namely, the difference between “place” and “non-place” – in his influential book *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (1992).

2025). Productively combining the artistic fields of performing and visual arts, the artist aims to expand the established modes of presentation and reception of both. For example, her work focuses on objects and materials that are not merely props, but rather carriers of emphatically aesthetic qualities (auditory, tactile and visual) and examples of material culture surrounded by narratives, in line with the contemporary intertwining of art and anthropology/ethnography (Hayward).

Tomšič's performative works, which are always based on a specific space as a starting point for research – often abandoned spaces, architecture or public infrastructure – could be placed alongside approaches to documentary theatre. The works created in collaboration between Tomšič and the Nonument group could also be placed in proximity to spatial dramaturgy, which emphasises the connection between architectural space and dramaturgy (Griffero; Kleine). In addition to space appearing as a key actor and “source” of the story in Tomšič's works, objects also play an important role, a general characteristic of the visual arts. A focus on objects can also be found recently in object theatre – primarily a subfield of puppetry based on the animation of found objects or an approach in which found or everyday objects serve as a starting point for creating a story with characters (Foley). Despite the possible entry points listed for analysing Tomšič's work, the article will primarily focus on contextualising it from the perspective of shifts in the field of visual and intermedia arts, which has a somewhat longer tradition of more direct “staging” and construction of the experience of space or landscape.

The Narrative “Construction” of Space in the Work *Circle*

Before turning to an analysis of the performative work *Circle* (2022), it is worth highlighting the basic features of the Nonument group's approach. Tomšič has been a member of this multidisciplinary collective since 2011. The Nonument group also includes intermedia artist and curator Martin Bricelj Baraga, architect and architecture theorist Miloš Kosec, Nika Grabar and other occasional collaborators. The continuous starting point of their artistic and research work is *nonuments* – architecture, public monuments or public infrastructure that once had a specific meaning, ideological function and clear purpose but that has subsequently lost them due to historical, political and economic processes, leaving these spaces to decay and turn into ruins (Nonument group). In the works of the Nonument group, these spaces represent a basis for researching social processes, tensions and values, especially those that define public space, since no social or cultural practice takes place outside of space; space is the site upon which all experience transpires and the scene in which public memory and cultural identity are generated. It could be said that the artistic and research work of the Nonument group follows the premise that social processes can be reconstructed

by focusing on space itself – on the historical processes accumulated within it – rather than solely on the users, architects and practices associated with that space.

Tomšič, who has a similar research background and also works independently, consistently uses storytelling in her work, a practice that has become more widespread in the performing arts in recent decades and often historically contextualised with the tradition of folk culture and oral histories (Sobol 122–133). However, storytelling is also well-established in the field of visual and intermedia arts – especially in the context of research-oriented approaches grounded in ethnographic methods (Foster 27–39). In the latter context, it most often takes the form of contextualising visual, audio or audiovisual documentation, either as alternative guided tours of the exhibition or as lecture-performances by artists accompanying the exhibition presentation. Despite the diversity of approaches, storytelling often allows visual artists to connect diverse information stored in material objects, documents, spaces, times or subjects of discussion. It is rarely a linear narrative based on a plot with a clear beginning, middle and end; rather, it is a fragmented narrative with gaps that the audience is expected to fill in based on their experiences, memories and cultural context.

This approach is certainly evident in the work *Circle* from 2022, which Tomšič (in collaboration with the Nonument group) labels an “immersive documentary installation with narration”. *Circle* stems from research into a very specific spatial context, namely, the Railway Workers’ Park in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, which is established in this work as a palimpsest of human history and memory – a sediment of human interventions, economic processes and political changes. Although the park can be defined as a public garden in an urban context, in landscape architecture, there is a clear distinction between gardens and public parks. Gardens have a longer history and are often defined as venues for private desires, whereas public parks began to develop particularly during the industrialisation process from the 19th century onwards and are intended to serve the community, therefore having a distinctly democratic foundation (Ward Thompson 57). Furthermore, a park is not just an artificially created space; it is also a prime example of landscape architecture, situated at the intersection of nature and culture. Landscape architecture, namely, creates hybrids and connections between the two, making it a meaningful starting point for reflecting on human relationships with nature and, above all, for articulating a non-dichotomous understanding of nature pertinent to the Anthropocene (Prominski 74–79). From this perspective, gardens and public parks, as well as ruins, are not only a possible foundation for reconstructing social processes, but also for how we imagine and implement our relationship with nature.

In the institutional context of contemporary performing arts, *Circle*’s performance venue is centred around a circular sand-filled structure on which various objects

are arranged. Additional assemblage objects are also arranged throughout the stage area, which features improvised seating for the audience. At the very beginning of the performance, Tomšič addresses the audience directly. The narrative part of the performance then leads the audience through individual gardens and parks. First, we take a narrative stroll through Antoniadis Park in Alexandria. Tomšič evocatively describes its peculiarities, providing a foothold for the audience's imagination while simultaneously reconstructing the park's history. This is followed by a chapter focusing on a different type of space – a playground – in which Tomšič invites the audience to use their childhood memories to picture it while offering additional points of reference through gestures and actions relating to the objects arranged in the circular sand structure. Through childhood memories, we finally enter the Railway Workers' Park in Cluj-Napoca, which, as the artist points out, evoked the sensory fragments from her childhood experiences of a particular playground, sensorially recreated in the performance (touching the earth, picking up stones from the ground or listening to the sounds they make, the creaking of rusty old doors, etc.). The connection between the physical space and the "virtual" memory space is further substantiated by the circumstances: as Tomšič explains, the Railway Workers' Park had already been demolished by the time she visited it, meaning she could only experience it through the combination of material residues on site, stories of others and documentation. After the artist describes the park's special features and contextualises its construction in the 1960s, recorded statements made by its former users are played. These narratives focus particularly on the key changes the park began to undergo in the mid-1990s, when the city's public infrastructure gradually came under private control, prompting numerous artistic and civil society initiatives seeking to keep the park public.

At the time *Circle* was created, the specific park that served as a starting point of the performance was a kind of hybrid between a ruin and a construction site or between a place with tangible characteristics and cultural significance and a transitional non-place characterised by constant movement and a less definable identity (Augé 77–116). Following the reconstruction of the recent history of the Railway Workers' Park, Miloš Kosec and Nika Grabar of the Nonument group also contribute to Tomšič's narration with their own storytelling interventions. In the final part, *Circle* stops at the Pata Rat landfill site in Cluj, while also referencing Jorge Luis Borges' short story *Circular Ruins* from 1940. *Circle's* central structure, based on an analysis of a particular park, appears in the narrative as a collision between the cyclical aspects of natural processes and the – even if fragmentary – linearity of the story, or perhaps a mirror of human history, which always oscillates between the imperative of progress and condemnation to cyclical repetition.

Through storytelling and minimal, barely perceptible material supports for the audience's imagination, Tomšič constructs *Circle* as a journey through a specific space

and, due to its unique characteristics, enables the reconstruction of the forces that determine this particular social space, which lies at the intersection of nature, culture and civilisation. In this context, the park is neither a fixed site where the performance attempts to reconstruct its original state nor merely a ruin that has been constituted throughout modernity as an object of fascination. Instead, *Circle* narratively constructs the park as a cultural-natural hybrid, highlighting its transformations and how society and the non-human world jointly shape its materiality and meaning. In short, the park is considered an environment that is inseparable from the various forms of life that inhabit and interact within it. Furthermore, the narrative structure recognises the vitality of this environment rather than treating it as merely a backdrop for the action and a passive witness to historical changes.

The Atmospheric Landscape of the *Jadran Resort*

Similar to *Circle* and other works by Tomšič, the “novel in the landscape” *Jadran Resort* stems from research into a specific spatial context – namely, a cluster of ultra-luxurious resorts built with foreign capital along the Montenegrin coast. Based on interviews with workers and the founder of one such resort, Tomšič and her collaborators, Natalija Vujošević and Tara Langford, created four characters who, alongside the carefully designed set, introduce the audience to the *Jadran Resort* environment. At the beginning of the performance, the audience gathers in the venue’s foyer, where they watch a promotional video of the resort. They then randomly select an accompanying script, which determines their role: they can either be part of the audience watching the onstage action as Tomšič narrates, or they can be a performer – a mountain waitress, a seasteader on a cruise ship, a corporation or a luxury guest – experiencing the performance in a particular way. The hybrid form of a “novel in the landscape” intertwines theatrical and exhibition presentation conventions, requiring the audience to be active and physically immersed – either by taking on the role of a performer and immersing themselves in an evocative script read through headphones, or by browsing the archive stations onstage after the narrative performance concludes.

As my primary interest lies in the approach to constructing landscapes or environments, it can be pointed out in the first phase that the formal design of the performance itself introduces a landscape connected with the context of Montenegro and – more broadly – with the Mediterranean experience as an atmospheric or ambient entity, rather than merely as an object of the gaze and aesthetic contemplation, as is generally characteristic of the modern Western tradition (Kante 127–157). According to contemporary definitions of atmosphere, such an atmospheric presence cannot be attributed to the objects or environment from which it originates, nor to the subjects

who experience it through empathy or projection, as it is essentially an emergent property (Böhme, "Atmosphere" 114).³ The origins of the concept of atmosphere and ambience in relation to artistic landscape representation can otherwise be traced back to the tradition of 19th-century landscape painting. During this period, there was a radical shift in the subject of artistic depiction: the landscape ceased to serve merely as a backdrop for human action or narrative, becoming the focal point of the composition, that is, acquiring the perceptual status of a figure. In the former, the reception of the artwork proceeds gradually as the viewer reconstructs the composition, its elements and, above all, the interactions between them. In the latter, the landscape directly transposes the viewer into an aesthetic mood or atmosphere. In short, there is a difference between the gradual choreography of attention, which, even in the context of the fine arts tradition, follows the example of linguistic narration and the dramaturgy associated with it, and the immediacy of sensory confrontation, where the landscape is a projection surface for human mood and, above all, a means of transposition into mood. It is precisely in this context that the aesthetics of atmosphere is crucial. Atmosphere is essentially relational, leaning more towards affects than emotions, the latter of which have a more gradual structure that is closer to the story (Jameson 48).

Contemporary authors who systematically deal with the aesthetics of atmosphere and ambience, such as Gernot Böhme and Tonino Griffero, have emphasised that it clearly calls into question the distinction between the material and the mental, as well as the dichotomy between object and subject. The concept of atmosphere originated primarily in meteorology. It was only in the 18th century that it began, through its association with the weather, to be used metaphorically, referring to the aesthetic aspects of the environment or to the sensory effect the weather has on humans. Starting from a meteorological origin, Tonino Griffero defines the atmosphere as the phenomenic character from which the pre-object impressions originate (Griffero, *Atmospheres* 27) or the mostly external sensations "effused into a (not yet clarified) spatial dimension and tied to situations" (31). Such an understanding of atmosphere therefore defines it as the result of the interplay of various environmental factors, both human and non-human, rather than being merely the projection of human emotional states or the result of material interventions in the environment. In addition, atmospheric space is defined as the logical, psychological and anthropological precondition of locational space; the latter has clear lines, definable areas and spatial relations and can be used to delineate the boundary between objects/bodies and their environment (Schmitz, *Atmospheric Spaces* 1–3). It goes without saying that

³ Here, I am referring to the concept of emergent properties as defined within the framework of assemblage theory, which was initially proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* and subsequently developed by Manuel DeLanda, Donna Haraway, Bruno Latour and others – often a more direct reference to the work of contemporary ecological art. In these theoretical frameworks, an assemblage is defined as a whole made of parts; however, the whole cannot be defined as the sum of the parts, since what is essential to assemblage are the qualities of the whole, which are not present in its parts, but are the result of their productive encounter (DeLanda 7).

locational space, most often conceived as the abstract space of Euclidean geometry, forms the basis for representations of space in both visual art, which constitutes space as an object of gaze, and architecture, which constitutes space as a material site of intervention or a venue for inscribing ideas/plans into passive matter.

In the performance *Jadran Resort*, the phenomenon of ultra-luxurious hotels privatising the Montenegrin coastline serves as a starting point for constructing an immersive environment for the audience, and for presenting a series of libertarian utopias related to the marine/ocean environment. This includes various forms of “seasteading” – the practice of creating permanent residences in international waters and building maritime settlements independent of established governments. Documentary stations, which the audience can browse at the end of the storytelling part of the performance, showcase projects such as *The World*, a cruise ship offering billionaires the opportunity to purchase their own apartment, and the *MS Satoshi*, originally conceived during the COVID-19 pandemic as an attempt to establish a crypto-state unbound by territory and territorial restrictions. The performance indivisibly combines fact and fiction, intertwining multiple temporalities, perspectives and geographical locations, thus providing a glimpse into the so-called sublime of global capitalism, while the structure and choreography of the viewer’s experience create an atmospheric, almost phantasmagorical Mediterranean landscape, inseparable from the fluid and shifting hydroecology of the Adriatic Sea. As mentioned, in Tomšič’s work, landscape is always a palimpsest of human history. In the performance *Jadran Resort*, the experience of the landscape is distinctly class-conditioned: the concept of a floating, independent state where capital can circulate freely is intertwined with the wellness experience of luxury tourism supported by New Age ideals, apparently unhindered by limitations, obstacles or disruptive situatedness. *Jadran Resort* thus lucidly indicates that the difficult-to-define aesthetics of atmosphere is, in fact, today’s prevailing commodity aesthetics.

Another important point for contextualising Tomšič’s work is the shift in how the landscape or a specific location becomes an integral part of the artwork in a diverse tradition of land, environmental and site-specific art since the 1960s and 1970s. The diversity of this tradition is perhaps most evident in the classification offered in the extensive monograph *Land and Environmental Art* by Jeffrey Kastner and Brian Wallis, in which the authors begin from the question of what artworks do in relation to the environment in which they are placed, or what concept of nature they imply. Kastner and Wallis thus offer five fundamental clusters: “integration”, relating to works that treat the environment as a material, for example, by removing or moving materials located at a specific site; “interruption”, bringing together works that attempt to combine the environment and human activity, simultaneously cooperating with and criticising the exploitation of natural resources in the name of industrial and urban

development; “involvement”, grouping works that attempt to build on a one-to-one relationship with the earth/nature/environment, often through the performing body or rituals; “implementation”, highlighting works that focus primarily on exploring the environment as an ecosystem and repository of sociopolitical realities; and “imagining”, bringing together works in which nature is most often thematised as a metaphor or signifier, understood as a concept, an optical construction or linguistic elaboration that can take the form of a diagram, sentence or photograph, which is why these works also focus on research into historical practices of mapping, organising and cultivating nature, etc. (44–189).

What is common to this diverse art tradition is that the perceptible aesthetic and material qualities of the landscape or a specific space – sometimes even in a purely physical sense – become an integral part of the artwork, whereby the initial basis of this strategy was often a tendency to eliminate representation and the possibility of market circulation of the artwork, as well as a certain relationship with concurrent ecological movements and the beginnings of environmental humanism (Ratz 72). Recent art approaches regarding the relationship to a specific landscape, location or environment have shifted from the original “site-specific” to “site-sensitive” or “site-responsive” (Hayes 83–92), introducing a specific space or landscape not only as a subject of research but also, often, as a starting point for confirming its local singularity. In addition, a strategy that Robin Mackay calls “plotting the site” is intended to redefine the basic premise of previous site-specific art and is also pertinent to Tomšič’s approach: the question is no longer how the viewer responds to a location through the mediation of the artist, but rather, “what is the site (qua nested material complex) responding to – what are the traumas that haunt it and drive it [...] and how do they address me? Surface read as symptom, and the artist-investigator as already implicated in the contingencies of the plot” (Mackay 267). In other words, space as a determinable location or landscape is treated not only as an object of research but also as a subject.

Conclusion

Whether working independently or in the framework of the Nonument group, Tomšič’s work is characterised by the fact that a specific space does not merely appear as the setting for a story or the depiction of human action, or as a metaphor reflecting the content, identity or emotional state of the characters. Instead, it appears as a key source or even the protagonist of the story. In a perceptual sense, it is the (back)ground that has become the figure. In the storytelling that forms an integral part of Tomšič’s performative works, the human protagonists – if one can even speak of them as such – do not primarily refer to themselves. Rather, the space offers additional information

about their identity through its material, aesthetic and atmospheric qualities. It is the space itself that acts as the main protagonist. In addition, in Tomšič's work, objects and materials do not primarily serve as a starting point for creating characters in a story; rather, their capacity to create experiences of an atmosphere "between objects and subjects" (Bjerregaard 1) is at the forefront.

The concept of ambient poetics, as defined by the ecological philosophy of Timothy Morton, is therefore pertinent to the analysis of Tomšič's works. Artists whose work could be described as an example of ambient poetics rarely position themselves as activists aiming to "'solve' the climate crisis or raise awareness of the dire conditions awaiting humanity in the twenty-first century and beyond" (Spencer 5). However, they often provide a foundation for a more nuanced approach to engaging with the environment. Morton defines "ambient" as a "sense of a circumambient, or surrounding, world", suggesting "something material and physical, though somewhat intangible" (Morton, *Ecology* 33). By this definition, he outlines the features of literary, sound, performative and visual artworks that are environmental in form, even if they are not necessarily directly ecological in content. By describing the numerous aesthetic qualities of such artworks, Morton argues that ambient poetics seeks, above all, to undermine the normal distinction between background and foreground (32–43).

In her performative works, Tomšič's approach operates simultaneously on two levels: historical reflection/contextualisation, which is inherently situated, and ambient poetics, which attempts to sensitise ambient perception and has a long tradition of intertwining art and phenomenology. With regard to space as the main protagonist of her performances, Tomšič productively combines the traditions of visual and performing arts with a Lefebvrian systemic, or macro, view of the social construction of space (as presented in *The Production of Space*), and with the micro perspective and imaginative construction of space (as most consistently represented in another seminal 20th-century work on space, namely Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*).

Bibliography

- Adams, Laurie Schneider. *The Methodologies of Art: An Introduction*. Westview Press, 1996.
- Augé, Marc. *Nekraji: uvod v antropologijo nadmodernosti*. Maska, 2011.
- Bachelard, Gaston. *Poetika prostora*. Študentska založba, 1998.
- Barotov, Savlatbek. "The Peculiarities of Space Functions in Literary Texts." *Intent Research Scientific Journal*, vol. 4, no. 2, February 2025, pp. 40–46.
- Bjerregaard, Peter. "Dissolving Objects: Museums, Atmosphere and the Creation of Presence." *Emotion, Space and Society*, vol. 30, 2014, pp. 1–8.
- Böhme, Gernot. "Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics." *Thesis Eleven*, vol. 36, no. 1, 1993, pp. 113–126.
- . *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres*. Routledge, 2017.
- Carus, Carl Gustav. *Nine Letters on Landscape Painting: Written in the Years 1815–1824*. Getty Research Institute, 2002.
- DeLanda, Manuel. *Deleuze: History and Science*. Antropos Press, 2010.
- Ferry, Luc. *Novi ekološki red: drevo, žival in človek*. Krtina, 1998.
- Foley, Kathy. "Object Theatre." *World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts*, 2014, <https://wepa.unima.org/en/object-theatre/>. Accessed 5 Jan. 2026.
- Foster, Hal. "Umetnik kot etnograf." *Likovne besede*, no. 63–64, 2003, pp. 27–39.
- Griffero, Tonino. *Atmospheres: Aesthetics of Emotional Spaces*. Ashgate, 2014.
- . "The Landscape Spreads as Far as You Can Feel It: An Atmospheric Liminology." *Lebenswelt: Aesthetics and philosophy of experience*, no. 23, 2023, pp. 76–101.
- Griffero, Ramón. *The Dramaturgy of Space*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022.
- Guldi, Jo. "What is the Spatial Turn?" *Scholars Lab – University of Virginia Library*, 2011, <https://spatial.scholarslab.org/spatial-turn/what-is-the-spatial-turn/>. Accessed 17 Dec. 2025.
- Hayes, Lauren. "From Site-Specific to Site-Responsive: Sound Art Performances as Participatory Milieu." *Organised Sound*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2017, pp. 83–92.
- Hayward, John A. "Art and Things: Narratives of Material Culture." *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702029.2024.2393503>. Accessed 15 Jul. 2025.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Ancients and the Postmoderns*. Verso, 2015.
- Jurša, Barbara. "Presečišča med ekokritiko in postkolonialnimi študijami." *Primerjalna književnost*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2013, pp. 179–198.
- Kante, Božidar. *Estetika narave*. Sophia, 2009.

- Kastner, Jeffrey, and Brian Wallis. *Land and Environmental Art*. Phaidon, 2010.
- Kingsland, E. Shanon. "Foundational Papers: Defining Ecology as Science." *Foundations of Ecology: Classic Papers with Commentaries*, edited by Leslie A. Real and James H. Brown, University of Chicago Press, 1991, pp. 1–13.
- Kleine, Holger. *The Drama of Space: Spatial Sequences and Compositions in Architecture*. Birkhäuser Verlag, 2017.
- Mackay, Robin. "The Barker Topos." *When Site Lost the Plot*, edited by Robin Mackay, Urbanomic, 2015, pp. 253–270.
- Marland, Pippa. "Ecocriticism." *Literature Compass*, no. 10–11, 2013, pp. 846–868.
- Matts, Tim, and Aidan Tynan. "The Melancholy of Extinction: Lars von Trier's 'Melancholia' as an Environmental Film." *M/C Journal*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.491>. Accessed 8 Jan. 2026.
- Morton, Timothy. *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*. Harvard University Press, 2007.
- . "Why Ambient Poetics? Outline for a Depthless Ecology." *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2002, pp. 52–56.
- Neimanis, Astrida, Cecilia Åsberg and Johan Hedrén. "Four Problems, Four Directions for Environmental Humanities: Toward Critical Posthumanities for the Anthropocene." *Ethics and the Environment*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2015, pp. 67–97. <https://doi.org/10.2979/ethicsenviro.20.1.67>.
- Nonument group. "#140 – Prestopi 2023: V krogu z Nonument Group." Interviewed by Ivana Kocutar and Žiga Brdnik. *Maribor Is The Future*, 2023. <https://soundcloud.com/maribor-is-the-future/140-prestopi-2023-v-krogu-z-nonument-group>. Accessed 29 Dec. 2025.
- Patrizio, Andrew. *The Ecological Eye: Assembling an Ecocritical Art History*. Manchester University Press, 2019.
- Prominski, Martin. "Postati vrtnarji sveta." *Vrt kot prisposodba*, edited by Ana Kučan and Mateja Kurir, Muzej za arhitekturo in oblikovanje, Biotehniška fakulteta, 2021, pp. 74–79.
- Ratz, Dominic. *Metaphorical Materialism: Art in New York in the late 1960s*. Brill, 2021.
- Schmitz, Herman. "Atmospheric Spaces." *Ambiances* [Online] no. 2, 2016 [2012]. DOI: 10.4000/ambiances.711. Accessed 1 Aug. 2025.
- Sobol, Joseph Daniel. "Contemporary Storytelling: Revived Traditional Art and Protean Social Agent." *Storytelling, Self, Society*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2008, pp. 122–133.
- Spencer, Daniel Gerald. *Ambient Aesthetics and the Spirit of Disintegration in Ecological Art: PhD Dissertation*. Ohio University, College of Fine Arts, 2022. https://etd.ohiolink.edu/acprod/odb_etd/ws/send_file/

send?accession=ohiou1647517672976607&disposition=inline. Accessed 15 Nov. 2025.

Tilley, Christopher. *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments*. Berg Publishers, 1994.

Vaupotič, Aleš, and Narvika Bovcon. "Obrat po prostorskem obratu: umetniškora ziskovalni pristop." *Primerjalna književnost*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2013, pp. 225–244.

Ward Thompson, Catharine. "Vrt življenja: od rojstva do smrti – kje drugje kot v vrtu?" *Vrt kot prispodoba*, edited by Ana Kučan and Mateja Kurir, Muzej za arhitekturo in oblikovanje, Biotehniška fakulteta, 2021, pp. 57–67.

Warf, Barney. "Environmental Imaginaries." *Encyclopedia of Geography*, edited by Barney Warf, University of Kansas, 2010. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412939591.n359>. Accessed 15 Jul. 2025.

Warf, Barney, and Santa Arias. "Introduction: The Reinsertion of Space in the Humanities and Social Sciences." *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Barney Warf and Santa Arias, Routledge, 2009, pp. 1–10.



UDK 792.01:7.038(497.4):502

DOI 10.51937/Amfiteater-2026-1/234-250

Povzetek

Članek na začetku vzpostavi osnovo za analizo izbranih performativnih del sodobne slovenske umetnice Neje Tomšič, vezano na vprašanje, kako je bil v zadnjih desetletjih v sodobni umetnosti opredeljen pojem ekologije. V skladu z interdisciplinarnim umetniškim pristopom Tomšič, ki ga je mogoče umestiti na presečišče performativnih in vizualnih umetnosti, se članek v osnovnih potezah dotakne odnosa med pripovedjo in prostorom ali prostorski-mi kategorijami. Na tej podlagi članek ponudi osnovno kontekstualizacijo dela Tomšič in pri tem analizira njena izbrana performativna dela. Kot poskušamo pokazati, je dela Tomšič mogoče analizirati z ekološkega vidika, razumljenega predvsem kot metodologija za preučevanje odnosa med okoljem in akterji, ki z njim interagirajo: ekološke aspekte njenega dela je mogoče locirati ne le v fokusu na prostoru in krajini, ampak zlasti v tem, kakšna vloga prostoru, kraju ali krajini pripade v pripovedi.

Ključne besede: prostor, krajina, ekologija, vizualne umetnosti, performativne umetnosti

Kaja Kraner je docentka na Katedri za teoretične vede Akademije za likovno umetnost in oblikovanje Univerze v Ljubljani ter raziskovalka na Raziskovalnem inštitutu ALUO. Med letoma 2015 in 2019 je bila urednica *ŠUM*, revije za sodobno umetnostno kritiko in teorijo. Leta 2021 je izdala monografijo *Kronopolitika umetnosti: spremembe v estetski vzgoji od moderne do sodobne umetnosti* (Krtina). V letih 2021 in 2022 je bila raziskovalna sodelavka v Muzeju moderne umetnosti v Ljubljani v okviru projekta »Trajnostna digitalna hramba slovenske novomedijske umetnosti« (ARIS, J7-3158). Od leta 2025 je članica uredniškega odbora revije *Časopis za kritiko znanosti*.

kaja.kraner@aluo.uni-lj.si

Prostor kot protagonist: ekološki vidiki performativnih del Neje Tomšič

Kaja Kraner

Akademija za likovno umetnost in oblikovanje, Univerza v Ljubljani

Članek se osredotoča na ekološke vidike izbranih performativnih del slovenske umetnice Neje Tomšič, ki deluje na presečišču performativnih in vizualnih umetnosti. Pri tem izhaja iz osnovnega izhodišča, da je sicer v glavnini humanističnih obravnav umetnosti v zadnjem desetletju povezava med umetnostjo in ekologijo pogosto razumljena v določeni bližini z naravovarstvom ali okoljevarstvom, a da na področju biologije oz. naravne zgodovine, kjer se pojem ekologije tudi najprej definira, pojem nima takega pomena. Kot pokažem ob opiranju na vire, bi bilo mogoče o ekologiji v izvornem pomenu razmišljati zlasti kot o *metodološkem pristopu* k preučevanju živih bitij, ki teh ne atomizira, ampak se osredotoči na njihovo razmerje do (fizičnega) okolja in geografskih okoliščin. Do neke mere podobno razumevanje ekologije, ki v ospredje postavi prostor, fizično okolje ali krajino, je zastopano tudi v zgodnjih fazah interdisciplinarnega področja ekokritike (*ecocriticism*) in okoljske literarne kritike (*environmental literary criticism*), ki se je od devetdesetih let 20. stoletja začela osredotočati na povezavo literarnih del in fizičnega okolja. Navezava na literarne umetnosti je v članku vzpostavljena tudi zato, ker je sestavni del performativnih del Tomšič pripovedovanje, zato v začetni fazi nakažem tudi na pogostejšo zastopanost fokusa na prostor in prostorske kategorije v naratologiji, zlasti v okviru t. i. prostorskega obrata v družboslovju in humanistiki.

Glavnina članka je osredotočena na kontekstualizacijo dela Tomšič, pri čemer se posebej osredotočimo na analizo performativnih del *Krog* (2022) in *Jadran Resort* (2024). Zlasti slednje v ospredje postavi tudi tematiko estetike atmosfere, ambienta in ambientne poetike, kot je med drugim definirana v delih ene od ključnih referenc sodobne ekološke in okoljske umetnosti, filozofa Timothyja Mortona. Na podlagi analize konkretnih del Tomšič v zaključnem delu trdim, da je mogoče ekološke aspekte njenega dela locirati ne le v fokusu na prostoru in krajini, ampak zlasti v tem, kakšno mesto prostoru, kraju ali krajini pripade v pripovedi.