



Aesthetic thinking put into practice: From the notebooks of Jean-Michel Basquiat.

Research area Intermediality

Practices of aesthetic thinking

Abstract: A collaborative network of all four German-language universities of the arts in Switzerland is aiming to develop a self-contained epistemology of aesthetics. This project seeks to identify a specific form of knowledge in aesthetics that is distinct from other, conceptual, discursive or 'propositional' forms of knowledge in the sciences and philosophy. The general thesis is that practices themselves are not always bound up with a specific form of thinking (which is based in judgement), but that there are also forms of practices that performatively induce reflexivity.

Introduction: This project aims to establish a more thorough theoretical foundation for 'aesthetic thinking' and to develop different conceptions of it by undertaking a close analysis of the ways in which they are put into practice. Four work groups, each consisting of a senior and a junior researcher, will focus on a specific conception of aesthetic thinking such as the 'wit' of art (A), the essayistic principle (B), the practice of critique (C) and radical self-reflection (D).

Methods: This project strives to expand upon what has hitherto only implicitly been 'put into practice' (tacit knowledge) and does not normally belong to the realm of the expressly known, in order to channel it into a discourse. This can be achieved by putting an emphasis on 'reflection on the arts in the arts' that is irreducible to other forms of thinking. We conceive of this specific mode of artistic reflexivity as a form of thinking-through-practice. Thus the group's research necessitates first a historical exploration of the philosophical traditions of aesthetics (from Baumgarten to Adorno); secondly, a systematic exploration of hitherto discussions of non-propositional thinking in different fields; thirdly, an analysis of this thesis as it pertains to the multiplicity of the arts and aesthetic practices (fine arts, music, film, design etc.); and fourthly, a systematic comparison between the intrinsic 'logics' of artistic and scientific practices of knowledge-production and their methods. The four work groups are linked to this. They encompass philosophical, practical, historical and educational approaches respectively.

Results: They will contribute to research that will be significant both for the philosophy of aesthetics and for pedagogy at universities of the arts, where research on fundamental theoretical principles has always been an implicit aspect of pedagogical practice.

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