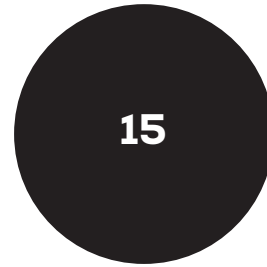




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Mateusz Chaberski

Theatricality as Protean Experience in Hybrid Forms of Contemporary Art

Translated by Jan Szelągiewicz

Contemporary art of the past decade has been dealing with the growing popularity of hybrid art forms, combining not only a variety of artistic methods, but also a range of procedures borrowed from fields like scientific research, new technology design, philosophical inquiry, and politics. Simultaneously, artists working in such diverse fields as bioart, digital art, and site-specific performances have been involving their audiences with human and nonhuman actors participating in artistic endeavors to such an extent that they end up questioning traditionally binary aesthetic categories, including stage/audience. Let us take, for example, the incredibly popular virtual singer Hatsune Miku, whose performances are a combination of cutting-edge holographic technology and a Yamaha voice synthesizer. The 'artist' appears on a semi-transparent surface surrounded by a highly animated crowd of fans. Her performances carry traces of traditional music shows, including a distinct separation between the stage and audience, but Miku's stage presence cannot be examined in isolation from the individual and collective experience of her fans who use special software to compose her songs, arrange her choreography, and design her stage costumes. The set list for each concert is drawn up according to the popularity of the songs which, in turn, is determined by a special online voting system. Thus, the audience becomes involved in the creation of Miku's performance both during her "live" shows as well as "before" and "after" them, when they interact with the computer.

In light of these hybrid artistic phenomena that assume the meaning-determining practical participation of the audience, we should reinterrogate theatricality as a category with which to describe artistic effort. I am not interested, however, in the quest for a model of theatricality that would reference and focus only on



Hatsune Miku, *Melt* (live), YouTube.com

theater itself. This is why I will not be discussing in this essay Yuri Lotman's¹ semiotic mode of theatricality or Samuel Weber's² concept of theatricality as medium, the latter attempting to preserve theater's unique nature in the face of the onslaught and ubiquity of new media. The experience of Hatsune Mike's audience clearly demonstrates that when it comes to hybrid forms in contemporary art, the theatricality category cannot simply be replaced with the performativity category, whether defined by Peggy Phelan³ or Erika Fischer-Lichte.⁴ Both formulations assume that performativity is based on the corporeal coexistence "here and now" of performers and the audience, whereas the experience of participants involved with the artistic phenomena I'm interested in demonstrably blurs the line between direct and medially mediated experiences. It seems, however, that in the context of the most recent artistic installations we should take a closer look at the still influential concept of theatricality formulated by American art critic and historian Michael Fried in his *Art and Objecthood* (1967).⁵ Although the concept presented in the book was developed in reference to one specific art genre (minimalist art), it was used not to define its essential characteristics, but rather to capture the emergence of a rigid distinction between the subject and object of an aesthetic experience in the course of artistic efforts. I will try to demonstrate in this essay what happens to the concept of theatricality framed in such a way as a consequence of these hybrid art forms' continuing erasure of this particular distinction.

The Theatricality of the Artistic Installation

We may risk stating that contemporary art is beset by the proliferation of hybrids that Bruno Latour wrote about albeit in a different context.⁶ What we are dealing with here is a proliferation of phenomena considered artistic in nature but which do not fit prior genre classifications. Bioart combines traditional artistic media (photography, cinematography, sculpture, etc.) and procedures customarily considered scientific (genetic modifications, animal experimentation, etc.). In gallery contexts, artists working in that particular field usually exhibit protocols detailing their artistic-cum-scientific efforts, including photographic or film documentation, as well as their effects which resemble an artifact in its traditional understanding. We are not, however, dealing here with a synthesis in which individual artistic media, scientific procedures, and discourses are subordinate to a single objective of the artist-demiurge. Contemporary creators of hybrid art are not interested in

preserving the artwork's autonomy, but rather in compromising Latour's "modern Constitution,"⁷ which perpetuates the strict distinction between nature, culture, and society. Could researchers and critics, therefore, successfully use traditional aesthetic categories in their examination of these forms?

A glimpse of an attempt to find answers for these questions can be seen in the ruminations of art theorist Juliane Rebentisch. In her *Aesthetics of Installation Art* (2012) she broadens art theory by introducing the category of artistic installation that far exceeds all prior genre-related distinctions. She writes:

the umbrella term 'installation' is not so much works but models of the possibility of works; not so much examples of new genres but ever new genres. Installation art offers a resistance to an objectivist concept of the work also by transgressing the boundaries that separate the traditional, the organic work of art from the space that surrounds it and/or its institutional, economic, cultural, or social contexts.⁸

In other words, Rebentisch uses the term "artistic installation" to penetrate the hermetic model of the autonomous artwork. Thus, she makes it possible for other scholars and art critics to grasp the dynamic relationship between artistic installations, their audiences, and a variety of social, political, and economic discourses they put in motion. In such a model, the subject of analysis encompasses not only artistic effort, bound by the beginning and the end of a cultural event, but also the process of its creation and its reception. Rebentisch's work, however, is purely theoretical. The scholar does not analyze concrete examples of artistic phenomena, but rather draws up a conceptual framework for a model of artistic installation that she personally formulated. To do that, she critically examines the category of theatricality as presented by Michael Fried. The arguments she employs against the author of *Art and Objecthood* could be used to formulate a new model of theatricality that would better fit the analysis of contemporary hybrid art forms.

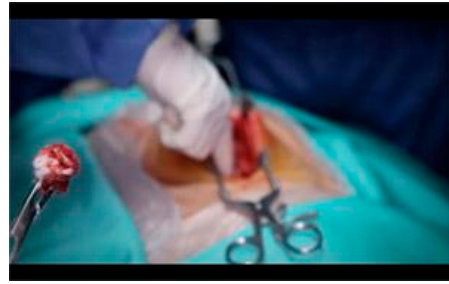
In Fried's work, theatricality is characterized unquestionably negatively. In *Art and Objecthood*, he unambiguously states that "art degenerates as it approaches the condition of theater."⁹ Here, Fried directly references minimalist art, which could be considered an early form of artistic installation. Artists such as Richard Serra, Robert Morris or Sol LeWitt emphasized the material nature of works of art, paying particular attention to material conditions in which they are experienced.

Meanwhile, Fried maintains that a true work of art should exist as an aesthetic whole forming a consistent framework of symbolic meanings. Its own presentness should exert influence directly and immediately, regardless of whether anyone is watching. Theatrical images and minimalist sculptures strip the artwork of its symbolic potential, revealing the "literalness" of the objects exposed to view. In consequence, between the audience and the artwork there arises a distance that "makes the beholder a subject and the piece in question... an object."¹⁰ In other words, according to Fried theatricality entails the reinforcement of the Cartesian binary opposition between the subject and the object of aesthetic experience. In this context, the artwork turns out to be wholly subject to the beholder, who gets the final say in what its potential meanings are.

In *Aesthetics of Installation Art*, Rebentisch convincingly demonstrates that the understanding of theatricality outlined therein stems from the misinterpretation of the ontology of theater. Fried completely disregards the theater-specific dual presence of objects on stage: both as material objects and as theatrical signs. If we take this duality into account, Rebentisch claims, then it will become apparent that a work of minimalist art—or, more broadly, an artistic installation—cannot be simply reduced down to its material qualities. An object placed in aesthetic space is always imbued with specific meanings, contingent not only on the beholder, but also on the broader cultural and socio-political context it finds itself in. From this perspective, no work of art can ever be said to be subordinate to the beholder. As Rebentisch claims, "[writing] about the stage presence of the object, Fried himself in fact describes the relationship of the viewer to the Minimalist object not as one defined by the viewer's command over 'his' object, but as a form of manifested uncertainty on the part of the viewing subject."¹¹ In other words, the experience of the viewer entails the constant interplay of sensory and symbolic orders which, in turn, precludes the emergence of a permanent relationship between the object and the subject of an artistic experience. Moreover, examples of contemporary hybrid art forms demonstrate that uncertainty often emerges at the moment it is established what we are dealing with—artistic effort, scientific experiment, or political undertaking. To demonstrate this, I'll refer to my own experience of participating in a particular artistic installation.

In early September 2016, I visited an exhibition at Warsaw's Copernicus Science Centre entitled "The Lure of Immortality." Artistic installations and exhibits

presented there dealt with the shifting cultural paradigm of life and death in light of recent advances in medical and biomedical technologies. My attention was particularly drawn to *Circumventive Organs* (2013), a work by British artist Agi Haines. The central part of the work comprised three organs crafted using bioprinting,



Agi Haines, *Electrostabilis Cardium*

i.e. the process of creating cell patterns using 3D print technology. Among other applications, this particular approach can be used to print organs for drug research. Placed in a glass exhibition case, the organs printed by Haines combined human and animal cell lines. I will describe only one of them—*Electrostabilis cardium*. This is an organ composed of human and electric eel cells, made up of a special sucker, a tube lined with cilia (like the ones found in the human ear) and an electricity-generating organelle. This allows the *Electrostabilis cardium* to help people at high risk of heart attack. If the heart were to stop working, the artificial organ would act as a defibrillator, releasing an appropriate electric impulse. We can see it in action in a movie shot by Haines herself during an operation where the patient was implanted with the organ.

This description of Haines' installation is perfectly faithful but both the described organ and the film showcasing it in action were fabricated by the artist. The organs were crafted out of synthetic materials and covered with a substance resembling mucus, while the film itself wholeheartedly embraces all the trappings of the mockumentary genre. Only the exhibition catalog explicitly stated that *Electrostabilis cardium* was an example of speculative design. As explained in the exhibition's mission statement by its curator Rafał Kosewski, speculative designers are trying to make "our past more pliable, multithreaded, and polyphonic."¹² My experience demonstrates, however, that the Haines installation dealt with more than just the past, it created a specific, dynamically changing reality, doing so even as I was observing the installation. Exhibiting *Circumventive Organs* in the grounds of the Copernicus Science Centre, an institution dedicated to the popularization of natural sciences, shifted the context for my experience of *Electrostabilis cardium*: it was a scientific exhibit one moment, an artistic object the next. Even the description of the installation within the glass case failed to unambiguously associate it with one of the two discursive orders. My uncertainty as to the status of this particular object and, speaking more broadly, the entire Haines installation, was not anchored

purely in intellectual experience. The strategies employed by the artist, who hails from naturalist art, evoked in me a specific synesthetic experience—visual stimuli immediately produced an intense tactile experience. In other words, I could, for example, “see” the moistness of the mucus covering the organs crafted by Haines. Simultaneously, I was beset by an incredibly intense affective experience stemming from the fact that *Electrostabilis cardium* seemed to me very human at one moment, only to become completely inhuman the next. The mockumentary strategies used by the artist in crafting her fake film, on the other hand, produced in me a sort of a phantom experience. This appeared as the surgeons in one scene started to cut the patient open around the sternum, reflexively producing an uncomfortable feeling in my own chest. Could we, however, go so far as to claim that Haines’ naturalist strategies that I succumbed to served only to create an illusion of reality?

In order to explore how the recording of experience allows us to problematize the issue of theatricality in the experience of contemporary art, I will briefly return to the polemic between Rebentisch and Fried. After reading the account of my experience with *Circumventive Organs*, the author of *Art and Objecthood* would probably point out the hidden anthropomorphizing aspect of contemporary art. Fried asserted that installations created by minimalist artists do not ascribe human characteristics to objects insofar as they transform them into “actors” who are playing specific roles before the audience while simultaneously pretending that they are nothing more than objects.¹³ He considered it another manifestation of the subject’s oppression of the artistic object in contemporary art. From this point of view, *Electrostabilis cardium* would seem an expertly crafted forgery, developed in order to convince the beholder that contemporary scientists have managed to combine human and animal cell lines. It seems to me, however, that Rebentisch’s findings allow us to introduce some nuance into this particular interpretation. The German scholar’s interpretation of Fried goes against the latter’s own intentions, and stipulates that contemporary art is genuinely theatrical.

‘Theatricality’ would then be the name not so much of the establishment of hierarchical subject-object relations, but rather the title of an open space of possibilities – which one might also call the space of the aesthetic experience – in which the subject maintains an experimental, or, at any rate, precisely non-commanding, relation to the object.¹⁴

In Rebentisch's definition, we can clearly see the shift from thinking about theatricality as a category linked with a specific artistic medium towards seeing theatricality as experience. We are not talking here, however, about the experience of theatricality, explored in writing by many, including performance scholar Josette Féral, who maintained that it is "a *process* that has to do with a [beholder's] 'gaze' that postulates and creates a distinct, virtual space belonging to the *other*, from which fiction can emerge."¹⁵ In other words, Rebentisch is not interested in including the stage/audience split in the perceptive apparatus of the beholder. More precisely, she believes theatricality to be the potential of art to create perceptive experiences, ones that would elude traditional binary oppositions. Instead, this experimental nature of the relationship with the object could be read in the context of the ruminations of American performance scholar Chris Salter. In the analyses of contemporary hybrid artistic efforts collected in his *Alien Agency*, he points out the double meaning of the word "experiment" in French (*expèrience*): "that of experiment or speculation and that of experience, of something that happens to us."¹⁶ From this point of view, the theatricality of Agi Haines' installation entails the production of synesthetic and phantom experiences that simultaneously allow us to question and undermine traditional oppositions. The former resulted in *Electrostabilis cardium* being at once human and inhuman, whereas the latter blurred the usually distinct line between beholder and artwork. The line of thinking about theatricality presented by Rebentisch forces a radical rethinking of the status of the participant in artistic efforts. As claimed by the scholar, "what various movements of boundary-crossing [in installation art] reflect is, I think, the constitutive role of the viewer for the ontology of the work of art in general."¹⁷ In other words, the experience of the participant is not only an essential part of artistic effort, it becomes a condition of its existence. For Rebentisch, and in contrast to Fried, it's the experience of the viewer, rather than the presentness of an artwork, that is proof of its inexhaustible power, as it allows artistic efforts to transcend the spatial and temporal frames of the cultural event. Rebentisch writes:

[w]hat is reflected here is not only the historical situatedness of an aesthetic experience that is, by virtue of the realities contained in it, haunted by worlds past and future – that is, historical substance – but the historical changeability of this experience itself.¹⁸

The passage clearly demonstrates that theatricality as an experience is founded

upon the fundamental conjunction of the artistic effort and its participants. The conjunction, however, isn't permanent in nature, it changes dynamically both over the course of the artistic effort and after it concludes. Understood this way, the existence of art naturally does not fit into the essentialist paradigm of reality composed of entities existing independently of one another. Rebentisch, however, still employs language that uses categories typical for that particular approach, such as 'subject' and 'object', thus situating the aesthetic experience solely on the side of the human participant in the artistic effort. We can, therefore, get the impression that the historical changes in aesthetic experience that she describes exert no influence over the people participating in artistic efforts. Meanwhile, the strategies employed by contemporary artists, particularly those emphasizing the agency of different nonhuman participants of artistic efforts, force us to seek such a model of aesthetic experience that would take the mutability of experience into account, thus nullifying the subject-object binary.

The Protean Experience

My quest for a new model for the theatricality of experience will now see me invoking Greek mythology. In Song IV of Homer's *Odyssey*, Menelaus, the King of Sparta who wishes to see his future, visits Proteus, the son of Poseidon and Thetis, sitting on a rock jutting out into the sea, watching over his father's seals. Getting information from Proteus, however, turns out to be a very demanding task—he incessantly shifts between different forms: he's human one moment, a huge boar another, only to become a tall, leafy tree immediately thereafter. Menelaus needs to capture him and prevent him from shapeshifting again—only then does he spill the beans as to what the future holds.

In his book *Proteus and the Radical Imaginary* (2015), Lithuanian philosopher Kristupas Sabolius invokes the myth in order to describe aesthetic experience as Protean. Sabolius's ponderings focus primarily on the paradoxical existence of Proteus. On the one hand, he incessantly shifts his shape and form, on the other hand, however, change or—as Sabolius would have it—the migration of identity becomes the constitutive quality of his ontological status: "although the migration essentially cannot have identity, it becomes the process of change itself, a mode of development of the stream of multilayered metamorphoses, one with a specific pace, rhythm, direction, and type."¹⁹ In other words the Lithuanian philosopher

considers Proteus to be not a metaphor of the experience of reality in general, but a metonymy of a specific paradigm of reality based on the mutability of all its constituent elements. This particular paradigm is fundamentally different from the Newtonian atomist model wherein reality is composed of individual, independent entities, as Sabolius interprets Proteus within the context of new materialism, the latter having steadily gained popularity over the past couple of years. Scholars working in this particular field of the humanities combine philosophy inspired by the thoughts of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari with cutting-edge developments from natural sciences and technoscience and demonstrate that individual entities cannot be examined separately from the wide range of relationships that emerge between them.

Sabolius claims that the "entirety of things and the separation into individual objects is secondary."²⁰ Thus, he clearly refers to the work of American philosopher and physicist Karen Barad, a key figure in the new materialism movement. In *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, she declares that the fundamental unit by which reality is measured is not the individual entity, but rather the phenomena that emerge as a result of the dynamically shifting links between humans and nonhumans.²¹ However, these links are not the interactions typical for the atomistic model of reality, as the category of interaction assumes the existence of separate entities that enter into specific relationships and Barad herself states that these "intra-actions include the larger material arrangement (i.e. set of material practices) that effects an *agential* cut between 'subject' and 'object'."²² In other words, we cannot interpret Proteus as a figure of incessant metamorphosis exclusively in terms of the individual experience of a (human) entity. To use the words of another key proponent of new materialism, the American sociologist Manuel Delanda, in this particular instance we should treat experience as an assemblage—a complex being "whose properties emerge from the interactions between parts."²³ Such an interpretation would nullify the fundamental binary opposition between the subject and object and between interior and exterior, typical of contemporary subjectivity, replacing it with a number of relational entities. By this we do not mean, however, Aristotelean substantial entities which remain in a pre-determined relationship with other entities as well as the substance from which they are made. Assemblage is a relational entity that reconstitutes itself depending on the intra-actions emerging between its constituent elements; both

human and nonhuman. From this perspective, we can consider experience to be an assemblage of a variety of sensory stimuli and intellectual, mnemonic, and affective experiences. So defined, experience is more than a mere collection of elemental experiences but is emergent in nature, therefore it “arise[s] from and depend[s] on some more basic phenomena yet [is] simultaneously autonomous from that base.”²⁴ Only taking the intra-active and emergent aspect of experience as assemblage into account allows us to capture Sabolius’ approach wherein he employs the figure of Proteus in order to describe the experience of art.

In Sabolius’ work, Proteus as the figure of receptive experience is inextricably linked with the category of the imaginary. In his view, the imagination has immense performative potential to change not only the thinking but also the existence of all participants in a given artistic effort. In *Proteus and the Radical Imaginary*, Sabolius writes:

By inspiring the element of metamorphosis, Proteus as a dimension of the imaginary plays in every work of art that particular irrational vestige that no articulated elucidation can capture. Simultaneously, it is that dimension of metamorphosis that no longer is mere representation, the transference of meaning, but rather the situation of transformation itself. In the imaginary, art is what establishes the conditions of the participant’s metamorphosis—it is the participant element because it forces change although it itself does not become articulated meaning in spite of the fact that it remains related to the shaped elements.²⁵

This somewhat poetic fragment clearly demonstrates that the Protean experience as experience of art definitely exhibits assemblage-like traits. It melds the artwork and beholder in a manner where the metamorphosis of one immediately results in the transformation of the other. The trajectory these metamorphoses take depends on the dynamics and the type of relationship linking individual human and nonhuman elements of an artistic act. This, in turn, means that only *post factum* and only temporarily can we ascribe positions of subject and object, both elements of traditional philosophic discourse, to respective participants. As we can see, the model of Protean experience drafted along these lines clearly differs from Rebetisch’s model of aesthetic experience, wherein the subject and object of aesthetic experience exist—to some extent—prior to the artistic event itself.

However, in the context of the diversity of intra-actions that emerge in hybrid forms of contemporary art, we should interrogate and examine the essence of transformation in Sabolius' approach. In another passage, Sabolius writes:

When an artwork spurs the transformation of perception, it looks for reserves of change in the beholder's own consciousness and prosecutes the transformation in accordance with the rule of fundamental conjunction with the world, the latter stoking the flames of the beholder's madness, opening before him the expanse of infinity.²⁶

Sabolius, therefore, correctly identifies the figure of Proteus as the figure of receptive experience, simultaneously ascribing overestimated meaning to consciousness in the creation of the Protean experience of art consumption.

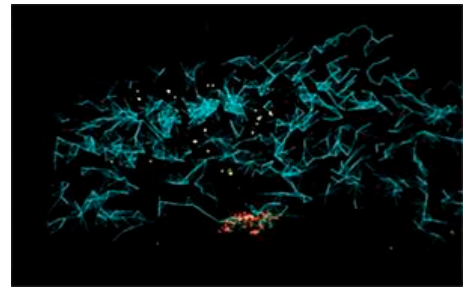
I believe that this is the result of Sabolius basing his model of Protean experience on oculocentric analyses of films and images that traditionally assumed the superiority of the intellect over the senses. Sabolius considered prolonged contemplation to be the prototypical situation wherein one would experience painting. He claimed that "protracted observation stimulates our own transformation and binds us with matter into uniform becoming: I see, I am seen, I become one."²⁷ Do the experiences mentioned by the Lithuanian philosopher exhaust the multitude of sensations produced over the course of consuming a painting? Sabolius quite obviously omits the synesthetic dimension of the Protean experience wherein sensory experiences can permeate one another, producing diverse transformations within all those participating in the artistic effort. Diversity and simultaneity of experiences produced by hybrid forms of contemporary art persuade the performance scholar to broaden the range of Protean experience beyond the sphere of intellectual and visual experiences. At the same time, they cannot pretend that their analysis examines all possible angles and relationships between artistic effort and its participants. And what they focus on will, in turn, significantly influence the Protean experience they are describing.

With these reservations towards Sibelius' notions, I shall try to demonstrate the trajectory followed by transformations of experience using an example contemporary hybrid art form. I will be analyzing an artistic effort that I myself, however, have not participated in. To use a phrase coined by American performance scholar Rebeka Schneider, one could say I will be engaging in a sort of

re-enactment of experience, as the “zillion details of the act of interpretation in an act of live repetition make the pastness of the past both palpable and a very present matter.”²⁸ Naturally, Schneider does not intend to reach “genuine” experience, but rather to create conditions that would facilitate its reconstitution in a wholly different context.

The example I will be exploring will focus on the Protean experience that may have emerged over the course of experiencing the *Biomimesis: Hyphae* installation created by Polish multimedia artist Szymon Kaliski. It was showcased in 2014 in Poznań’s Oscylacje gallery as a result of the efforts of the Adam Mickiewicz University’s HAT Center. Kaliski’s installation is situated at the intersection of video art, algorithm design, and mycology. Attendees were invited into a darkened room where they watched a screening of an interactive multimedia projection that simulated the life cycle of a particular species of fungi. A specially designed algorithm transposed the movements of the attendees into “nutrient” that nourished the digital life form. As soon as the attendees stopped moving or left the room, the mycelium gradually atrophied and died.

According to the notions put forth by Schneider, the reenactment of experience cannot be suspended at the level of factual description of the given artistic event, but necessarily has to include a specific “architecture of access”²⁹ to the past. In other words, it is about the place, the time, and the means of our accessing the past,



Szymon Kaliski, *Biomimesis: Hyphae*

all these factors fundamentally influencing the eventual shape of the reenacted experience. In my case, the architecture of access to the experience of *Biomimesis: Hyphae* was determined by my meeting a friend who was serving as a volunteer supervisor of the installation. In conversation, she mentioned that whenever the installation stood empty for longer stretches of time, she would interact with the fungi herself, in order to—as she claimed—“save them from dying.” What sort of trajectory of Protean transformations of the assemblage of human and nonhuman participants of this artistic installation could have resulted in the emergence of such a peculiar, yet undeniably affective, experience?

As we first enter into a relationship with *Biomimesis: Hyphae*, our participation in the installation is not markedly different from the average experience of art

consumption. The gallery room resembles a darkened theater right before the start of a performance. Thus, the multimedia screening and its beholder become the subject and object of aesthetic experience as defined by Michael Fried. It seems, at first, that the beholder can freely ascribe meanings to the shapes appearing in the dark, but the experience is rather brief. As a physical relationship is established between the projection and the attendee, the digitally-created imagery becomes increasingly palpable. The process is catalyzed by a synesthetic experience, combining tactile and visual sensations. The projector illuminates the skin of the beholder and starts to warm it up, making the projection's presence ever more intense. Simultaneously, the projected shapes start to bear an increasing resemblance to filament-like hypha. If the attendee possesses some knowledge of fungi's life cycles, they will quickly realize that the development of the digital mycellium depends on the movement of their own body. Whether they like it or not, the installation's participants enter into a predator-prey relationship that transforms the human from a consumer of contemporary art into "nourishment" for digital fungi. If such a relationship carries on long enough, we may eventually witness the emergence of conditions facilitating the establishment of an affective relationship between the human and nonhuman participants of *Biomimesis: Hyphae*. Prolonged observation of the digital fungi's life cycle may result in their materialization into a living life form, thus acquiring a right to life. In this context, the installation may at times produce, particularly in the minds of environmentally-minded participants, a curious need to protect and save the digitally-generated organisms from dying. This, in turn, produces a peculiar symbiotic relationship between the human satisfying their need to protect all life and a living organism interested in prolonging its existence.

What we are witnessing here is the emergence of a Protean experience whose trajectory covers three separate phases of transformation. In the first we are dealing with an assemblage of the human subject and the nonhuman object. Subsequently, as a result of a synesthetic experience, the nonhuman object gradually acquires characteristics typical of a living being and thus becomes the predator, hunting the human for nourishment. In the third and final phase, the nonhuman installation participant becomes a living being, potentially evoking an affective experience in the human participant.

The analysis offered above clearly demonstrates that theatricality, defined as

a hierarchical relationship between the human subject and the nonhuman artistic object, is just one aspect—and not a predominant one, at that—of participating in hybrid artistic phenomena. Moreover, it is subject to a continuous metamorphosis that takes place whenever participants enter all sorts of intra-actions. The model of theatricality as Protean experience that I have formulated in this essay allows us to describe the trajectory of these metamorphoses while preserving—insofar as it is possible—their dynamic and performative character. The question, however, of whether the performance scholar can obtain any knowledge from Proteus without forcibly preventing him from undergoing another transformation remains, regrettably, unanswered.

Footnotes

- 1 Jurij Łotman, "Teatr i teatralność w kulturze początku XIX wieku" in: *Semiotyka dziejów Rosji*, ed. B. Żyłko (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1993), 227–253.
- 2 Samuel Weber, *Teatralność jako medium*, trans. Jan Burzyński (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2009).
- 3 Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked. The Politics of Performance* (London–New York: Routledge, 1993).
- 4 Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Estetyka performatywności*, trans. M. Borowski and M. Sugiera (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2008).
- 5 Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood" in: Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood. Essays and Reviews* (Chicago–London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 148–172.
- 6 See: Bruno Latour *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. C. Porter (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
- 7 Latour, *We Have Never*, 13.
- 8 Juliane Rebentisch, *Aesthetics of Installation Art* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 14–15; published in Germany as *Ästhetik der Installation* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2003). All quoted passages come from the English edition.

- 9 Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, 164.
- 10 Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, 154.
- 11 Rebentisch, *Aesthetics*, 53.
- 12 Rafał Kosewski, "Kompasy zamiast map" in: *Pokusa nieśmiertelności. Program wystawy*, ed. J. Jeśman (Warszawa: Centrum Nauki Kopernik, 2016), 42.
- 13 See: Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, 157.
- 14 Rebentisch, *Aesthetics*, 54.
- 15 Josette Féral, "Theatricality: The Specificity of Theatrical Language," *SubStance* 2/3 (2002): 97.
- 16 Chris Salter, *Alien Agency, Experimental Encounters with Art in the Making* (Cambridge: MIT Press, Cambridge), 241. A similar duality exists in Polish as well—the word "doświadczenie" can mean both a scientific experiment as well as all the knowledge and skills acquired in the course of observation and human experience.
- 17 Rebentisch, *Aesthetics*, 15.
- 18 Rebentisch, *Aesthetics*, 59.
- 19 Kristupas Sabolius, *Proteusz i radykalna wyobraźniowość*, trans. K. Pecela and J. Tabor (Kraków: Galeria Sztuki Współczesnej Bunkier Sztuki, 2015), 163. All quoted passages were translated from the Polish edition.
- 20 *ibid.*
- 21 see: Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway. Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham–London: Duke University Press, 2007), 171.
- 22 Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 139–140.
- 23 Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society*, (London–New York: Bloomsbury, 2006).
- 24 "Introduction" in: *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. M. A. Bedau and P. Humphreys (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 1.

25 Sabolius, *Proteusz*, 173.

26 Sabolius, *Proteusz*, 170.

27 Sabolius, *Proteusz*, 179.

28 Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London–New York: Routledge, 2011).

29 see: Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 104.