

A Historical Overview of  
**PHILOSOPHY OF ART**



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# A Historical Overview of **PHILOSOPHY OF ART**

Dzemil Bektovic



**Dzemil Bektovic** was born in 1966 in Gostivar, North Macedonia, completed primary and secondary school in Skopje, and graduated in 1990 from the Faculty of Philosophy, Department of History of Art and Archeology, in Skopje. In 2005, he enrolled in master's studies at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje at the Department of Art History, taking a master's degree in the field of Contemporary Art in the field of History of Design. During his master's studies, he is engaged in numerous projects in the domain of his scientific field and design, and is an active member of the Center for Visual Communication. In 2008, he enrolled in doctoral studies at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Novi Pazar and defended his doctoral dissertation "Interior Aspects of Sacred Buildings in Ottoman Architecture in the 15th and 16th Centuries in the Balkans". Since 2020, he has been an active member of the Commission for International Cooperation and the Commission for Archeology at the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of North Macedonia. In this period, Bektovic was seriously engaged in scientific and research work, published a large number of texts in the domain of theory, history, and philosophy of art in various scientific journals, and is a participant in numerous symposia where he has very notable papers.

Since 2017 prof. Dzemil Bektovic is a full professor of History, Philosophy, and Theory of art in the areas of Art, Design, and Architecture at International Balkan University in Skopje. Several times, he was an external lecturer and visiting professor at different universities in the country, but also in other countries, such as Norway, Serbia, and Bosnia and Hercegovina.

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# FOREWORD

The writing of this book was considered in order to comply with several criteria. First, the book is conceived as preparatory literature for students who attend basic studies and listeners on the subject of the Philosophy of Art. In this context, the style of writing itself is adjusted to easier understanding with selected areas that strictly adhere to the philosophical and aesthetic theories that touch the domain of visual art. We considered that the historical method of art development and its theoretical explanation is more flexible and clearer in order to follow the chronological legitimacy in the development of an idea, in this case, the idea of art. The current literature that deals with the field of philosophy of art is largely conceived on a thematic model without a clear insight into how the idea of art developed from one chronological stage to another. The teaching experience tells us that this approach creates confusion in the understanding of artistic phenomena, and this model can only be used exclusively by well-prepared students in postgraduate studies with considerable research experience. For this reason, we accept the formulation given by Robert Williams in the introduction to Theory of Art, which states that “art is a historical product” in fact. According to him, art is not a natural category but a cultural construction that is forever changing. In this way, the cyclicity of art in historical contexts and the true interpretation of art through theory, philosophy, and aesthetics are followed by this trend. Modern theory and philosophy can be considered an extension of the older, even in the case where the next theory of art is a reaction against the previous ones.

Further, since this matter has been treated through long-term lectures, and in this way, the necessary quantum of material required for a student in

basic studies has been detected, it has been concluded that this book should be an overview of key philosophical directions and philosophers in order to gain insight into a basic understanding of this very complex matter. In this way, students gain an active source of learning, and in particular, this literature provides support to students who have not previously had contact with philosophy and its artistic and visual derivatives. This book also includes a carefully prepared narrative program with numerous biographical data and artistic phenomena in order to strengthen students' critical thinking and analysis of the visual poetics of the artwork.

A Historical Overview of Philosophy of Art does not contain a picture narration or photography related to the text itself but only uses photos of the authors mentioned in the book, although it may be assumed that any discourse about visuals implies pictorial support. The intention was to raise the level of contemplative thinking and judgment through this material in order to create a mental picture (image) or imagination from it and, on the other hand, to avoid the focused understanding offered by picture narration (pictures). We have, therefore, tried to present the Visual Arts Philosophy through a dynamic narrative that follows the historical principles and stylistic tendencies of the artwork. The context of understanding an artwork and its meaning is largely dependent on the time and place where it originated.

Also, the book, at the end of each text related to a particular author, is a short biography with quoted works related to the themes of elaboration and the books by which the respective philosophers are recognized. The aim of the biographical presentation is to acquire a general picture and clarify the quoted literature mentioned in the text and the material.

One of the more important goals of this book is that students and readers acquire the relevant quantum of adopted terms, thus enabling them to actively operate with professional philosophical and artistic terms. For the purpose of recognition, the key terms are bolded or italicized in fonts.

The problem of poetics or development and understanding of the idea of art is central in this book. From the initial idea of the mimesis that dominated in the ancient period, later it was

developed in numerous variants in the Middle Ages, in the Renaissance and Baroque, up to modern and postmodern reflections on the role of sociology, culture, psychology, and politics within the conceptual world of art. Within the framework of this oriented concept, the issue of aesthetic phenomena and the understanding of aesthetics in different periods are especially addressed. Therefore, analytical philosophy techniques are used in the research, and the research itself deals with a representative theory of art, formalism, various aesthetic theories of art, and institutional and historical approaches to the nature of art. As a consequence of such a concept, the book is divided into five chronologically divided chapters. The time periods are determined in dependence and correlation with the dominant artistic concepts.

Ultimately, an important point to highlight is certain dilemmas that arise when considering and treating this topic. Namely, the field of philosophical consideration of art contains two mutually interconnected entities: the philosophy of art or the so-called “meta-aesthetics” that contains philosophical premises in the discussion of objects that contain beauty or cause a beauty experience and aesthetics in a modern sense specialized in the practical and theoretical knowledge of artistic creations. Of course, by its purpose and/or its ability to produce beauty, art implies both types of cognitive practice because it is essentially a tangible result and an expression of a particular concept of a beautiful one. So, there are two ways to understand aesthetics: the study of texts through which the concept of beauty and the doctrine of creation of art is defined; and direct observation of art forms as important objects and the experience they are causing.

**Dzemil Bektovic**

# 1

## PHILOSOPHY OF ART Understandings of Notion

Distinguishing Characteristics

The Mediums of Art

Classifying Arts by Their Mediums

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This chapter explores the evolving philosophy of art and various interpretations of the notion of art across time, cultures, and schools of thought. It examines how philosophers have defined and redefined art's essence, mediums, and aesthetic value, from classical antiquity to contemporary discourse. Through a critical analysis of distinguishing characteristics, the chapter offers insights into how art shapes and is shaped by philosophical, cultural, and societal understandings.

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