

HUNGARIAN UNIVERSITY OF FINE ARTS

Doctoral School

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'Anything goes'

**– Scientific Aspects and Pseudo-scientific Experiments
in Contemporary Art –**

DLA theses

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The starting point of my research is the exploration of new connections in the fields of science (primarily natural science) and art (primarily fine art), giving high priority to research methods. Besides overviewing the theories concerning the unity or incompatibility, the changing appreciation, the applicability and the influence of political concepts of these methods, my aim is to explore the possibility of compatibility. I became interested in researching the methods by Paul Feyerabend's notion 'anything goes'. This, a little strange, terminus technicus does not seem to be a relevant thesis in the philosophy of science at all.

1. According to Paul Feyerabend there is no scientific principle which could not be questioned, re-examined or re-interpreted and he believes that all this is needed so that new theories and paradigms can be introduced. Abandoning the possibility of the generally applicable, universal method he approves of setting up permanent theories which focus on - and consider the aspects of - the given problem and which theories can set new research directions. Feyerabend also examines the role of science in society, its relation with the state and with the Church. According to his radical theory there is no clearly formulated difference between myths and scientific theories, since science is also only one of the lifestyles created by man and - as he puts it - is 'not necessarily the best one'. According to Thomas S. Kuhn it may occur that certain research groups interpret and apply the same paradigm in different ways, therefore it is better not to adhere to certain rules, or their deformity is acceptable. It applies both to science and art that to create new paradigms it is important to break or go beyond existing rules, let it be the result of either a conscious or an accidental decision. With all this I highlight an important feature of arts and sciences.
2. When examining the scientific and artistic methods I did not often meet a special procedure that could not be adapted from one discipline to the other. After this finding my main interest was whether I can also find a theoretical or practical method which is more or less, or completely equivalent. In this way I reached the *experiment*, which can be declared to be a generally applied method both in scientific and artistic fields. In the case of a (natural) scientific experiment it is important that it can be repeated. In the case of a literary experiment (essay) - moving from sciences towards arts - the most significant distinctive feature is that the final outcome is unknown. In the case of experiments in fine arts (besides the fact that they can correspond to both previous criteria) the concept of 'anything goes' is the most applicable and not in a cynical sense.
3. Analyzing the features of the *experiment* the existence of a threefold entity can be established which consists of a preceding, a running and a summarizing phase. These are the *conjecture* – *experiment* – *conclusion*. Hereafter, to prove this proposition, I looked for particular theoretical (in the science of philosophy, science of history) examples, then I analysed works of art that prove my theory.
4. Besides the scientific contents we cannot avoid examining the pseudo-scientific components and assessing the way the 'proof' of pseudo-scientific segments and fictitious theories appear in products of art. In my opinion scientific and artistic opinion can be well separated at this point. As in the case of empirical sciences (apart from mentioning it as a cultural historical phenomenon) it is completely unacceptable to announce deliberately false facts, on the

grounds of art it is not questionable, but in some cases (e. g. the success of Ropaci in the film industry) it can be a celebrated procedure.

5. While treating its bibliography and writing the study another circle of problems arose. While the science discipline struggles with the problem of technical terminology (contradiction between theoretical terminology and the terminology of observation), art cannot set up a relevant structure in the field of conceptual categories. When theoretically systematizing pseudo-scientific works of art which are implicit (e. g. Eduardo Kac's transgenic art works) or explicit (e. g. Stelarc's Third Ear project), appear merely in visual elements and based most often on stereotypes (e.g. Michal Rovner's *Against Order? Against Disorder?*), I concluded that the locale of the work and its medium are key factors. Because of this, in my opinion the present concepts are obsolete and cannot be applied, which arises the problem whether they can be made timely, or are necessary. My conclusion is that the constant pressure to define genre categories is obsolete and unnecessary.

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