

PHOTOGRAPHY AS NECESSITY IN EVERYDAY AESTHETIC LIFE

ANDRA MAVROPOL*

ABSTRACT. Photography as Necessity in Everyday Aesthetic Life. The aesthetic in everyday life is necessarily linked to an interior experience of the world we live in. In this frame of reference, the outlook of this article is that of highlighting the importance of photography as a required practice of recording and sharing experiences. Although the value of each experience is intrinsic, one may notice that the necessity of keeping the significant states of consciousness in an aesthetic wrap, along with sharing them with the rest of the world places us in an artistic mindset, but that does not necessarily make us artists.

Keywords: *photography, everyday aesthetic life, social media, ratification*

Introduction

Starting from the fact that the aesthetic is in need to be redefined, because traditionally the aesthetics of art neglects the experience of everyday events, the aesthetics of everyday life comes as a necessity to that extent. Thus, aside from the initial context in which aesthetic categories applied just to *fine art*, the aesthetics of everyday life can be linked to the contemporary impulse of taking photographs (that can be related both to high art and everyday life). First, while acknowledging the aesthetic possibilities around us, the photographic camera comes to aid - the necessity of holding on to something that has an impact on us, hoping that its image will have the same impact over and over again. Second of all, if one takes into account the renowned phrase "the medium is the message" (McLuhan), one may notice that the medium of photography has *accessibility* and *speed* as properties, both of which favouring the message. What is the message then? The aesthetic acknowledgment is common to every human being, depending on the context. One might not be able to recognize a work of art from a forgery, but one may always find beauty in a sunrise, for example. The ordinary aesthetic life is necessarily linked to an inner experience of

* PhD student at the Doctoral School in Philosophy, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. E-mail: mavropol.andra@yahoo.com

the world we live in; an acknowledgement of the surrounding beauty. On the other hand, beauty is not the only thing attracting one's glance. What might be shocking or deranging to the eye might be considered aesthetic as well.

This article is structured into four parts. The first one is regarding the "Conceptual frame" and it is meant to show that most of the concepts used to describe art are used by the aesthetics of everyday life as well. On the other hand, the latter has its own specific concepts such as 'nice', 'cute', 'fun', accompanied by phrases such as 'looks good' or 'sounds good'. "The Aesthetics of Everyday Life" (Light & Smith, 2005) was helpful in clarifying the basic concepts used in the everyday aesthetic life. The second part, "Artification" revolves around the concept introduced by Natalie Heinich. Yuriko Saito, in her article "Everyday Aesthetics and Artification" (2012), applied the artification to the work environment in order to improve one's quality of being-in-the-world. The purpose of this concept is basically the stimulation of perception and creativity. Furthermore, Kevin Melchionne argues that the aesthetics of everyday life is not equivalent to non-art. He highlights the aspect of continuity, denying that the aesthetics of everyday life is related to episodic experiences. Melchionne's article, "The Definition of Everyday Aesthetics", was relevant to this research because it provided a much clearer approach on the everyday aesthetic life that facilitated my connection between the everyday aesthetic experience and photography. For example, such practices as cooking or dressing up belong to the routine of everyday life, but it is not the activity in itself that matters in this context, but how does that activity make one feel. In this case, photography can easily intervene in order to record a certain look or a certain meal; that is because one desires to record the passing feeling of a certain moment in time and to substitute an experience with an image – to expose an ordinary habit in an aesthetic manner.

The third part of the essay is entitled "The Artist of the Ordinary" and it is dedicated to the "everyday-life-artists" (in the common, non-academic sense). The "Artist of the Ordinary" has nothing to do with what is considered to be *high art* (although to some extent one might have the intention of creating images with some *artistic* value, that are basically considered *artistic* not by acclaimed institutions, but by common folk) and it does not mean 'unsuccessful artist'. Having into consideration that our leisure is limited and the speed of everyday events seems to disregard our rhythm of living-beings, creativity is something that is constrained more and more by duration. Because of one's willingness to preserve what he considers to be aesthetic in the most efficient timing, the "Artist of the Ordinary" is most often a photographer. Every gadget (telephone, laptop, tablet, etc.) has a photo camera attached to it, making it easy to record events with an aesthetic value. The camera is nowadays a ready-to-use medium accessible to everybody. Because of its availability and not otherwise, there is a constant anticipation that something worth photographing is going to show up. One may blame this impulse of taking a photograph on the aesthetic experience. I, on the other side, think that we have this possibility of recording everything due to the capitalistic impulse of owning everything (as previously explained by Gunther Anders).

The fourth part is dedicated to the “Social Media”. The artistic production is constantly growing due to the photo/video media. This idea has its basis on the fact that anyone capable of working with a camera can be a potential artist. On the other hand, where do we place the photos/videos with an aesthetic content that are not considered art? The answer is simple: the internet. A place for aspiring artists or folk with an interest in aesthetics is also a place where well known artists share their works. Thus, we can state that the internet provides a virtual space in which aesthetic experiences can be shared by both artists in the academic sense and ‘everyday-life-artists’. To that extent, the most known and used application is *Instagram*. The common use of *Instagram*, along with *Tumblr* or *Flickr*, shows us that photography has a major role in how we see life – (whether we acknowledge it or not) as an aesthetic experience. Additionally “The Outdatedness of Human Beings. On the Soul in the Era of the Second Industrial Revolution” by Gunther Anders (the two paragraphs that I quoted are translated by myself into English) was important because it offered a different perspective on photography and its everyday life usage, focusing on the question why do people enjoy taking photographs of themselves.

Although I evoked the aesthetic theories of Yuriko Saito and Kevin Melchionne that are considered defenders of the ‘strong’ branch of the aesthetics of everyday life, I believe that the art world and the aesthetics of everyday life are not unquestionably excluding one another, thus I am in favour of the normative aspect of the aesthetics of everyday life. In this article I considered photography a meeting point for the two types of the aesthetic, but, although the subject of photography sometimes overlaps both the art world and the everyday aesthetic, it does not mean we must take one for another. My intention was not to blend the two into creating a heterogeneous body of matter, but to build up an interdisciplinary discourse (basically because photography can be both an aesthetic and a social process) with the purpose of creating a single path for photography to manifest itself whether as art or just as a social activity of recording memories, focusing on the latter. This article will answer the question of how and why is the practice of photography necessary in the everyday aesthetic life.

1. Conceptual Frame

All aesthetic phenomena, whether belonging to the art world or everyday life, have a common framework: the concepts used in identifying the aesthetic qualities of objects or phenomena. To establish if a phenomenon is part of the aesthetics of everyday life or not, one might need to borrow and apply the terminology from the aesthetics of art. Thus, one cannot appreciate an aesthetic phenomenon without referring to its aesthetic features. To clarify, Yuriko Saito states that:

the subject matter of aesthetics is dominated by the definition of art, expression in art, artist's intention, art and reality, art and ethics, as well as the issues specific to each artistic medium. As a result, the aesthetics of non-art is marginalized, attended to only when we discuss beauty and aesthetic experience. [...] for better or worse, aesthetics of art is our familiar frame of reference.¹

Apart from the phrases "sounds good", "looks good", "it is ordered" or "it looks right", that can be related to artistic objects to some extent, the aesthetics of everyday life holds its own range of concepts that can be applied just in common situations. The most frequent notions are: *clean*, *cute*, *fun* and *tasteful*.² The first one, "clean", looks like it might not be applicable to an aesthetic judgment. Yet, something might be beautiful because it is clean if we take into account the relations among some objects, and not just one object.

For example, a photograph of a living room could be considered "clean" because its elements present some kind of harmony. The art world equivalent of this concept is "ordered", underlying other important notions, such as "symmetry" and "proportion". In the same context, if we were to apply the term "nice" to a phenomenon, although it is very important to the aesthetics of everyday life, the art world would consider it kitsch. The concept "fun", although it can be used to separate the aesthetics of everyday life from the art world, can be related to a very important notion of the art world, namely that of "play". What is identified as fun may assume an arrangement in which the one who has an aesthetic experience engages oneself in a *play* with the phenomenon that is experienced or with the other potential participants.³

Lastly, the idea of the "tasteful" applied to the aesthetics of the everyday life may be complicated. We are dealing here with a widespread opinion, namely that there exists a rule by which one can establish what is beautiful and what it is not. This rule would be called in the public opinion "to be in good taste". To clarify,

«The tasteful» is not to be confused with something that is beautiful strictly-speaking, or even with that which is in accord with taste (in the old eighteenth-century sense of the term). «The tasteful» is culturally emergent and constantly changing: turtlenecks may be tasteful one year and not the next. The quality of «tasteful» is generally ignored by contemporary aesthetics mainly because people confuse it with that which is considered aesthetically good by someone with taste.⁴

¹ Yuriko Saito, "Everyday Aesthetics", *Philosophy and Literature*, Volume 25, Number 1, April 2001, pp. 87.

² Andrew Light and M. Jonathan Smith (ed.), *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, Columbia University Press, 2005, p. 9.

³ *Idem*.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 15.

Nonetheless, the aesthetic experience can be a negative one as well. A first example of such a negative experience would be if something can be deranging to the eyesight, or it can be referred to as 'bad to look at' or 'ugly'. This is a form of negative perception that affects the *higher* senses (sight, hearing – 'it sounds bad/ awful') and it can be applied to *high* art as well (not just everyday events), if the perceiver a. does not properly understand art or b. that is the desired effect of the art object that is contemplated. Regarding the everyday aesthetic life, Berleant suggests that the negative aesthetic experience often takes place in circumstances that traditionally were not likely to be called aesthetic:

Perhaps more prevalent are forms of aesthetic negativity not directly associated with art objects but present in situations that are not ordinarily considered aesthetically: urban environments, cultural practices such as ceremonies and rituals, and the functioning of an organization. These are practices of aesthetic import that may have no recognizable compensating features and may be perpetrated through ignorance, insensibility, or callousness, or from motives of enhancing power.⁵

Although the (negative) experience prevails in the *higher* senses, on the other side, the *lesser* senses have their negative counterpart as well: something can 'taste/smell bad' or even 'feel bad' / 'hurt' (if we consider skin to take part to the aesthetic experience). In this case, while facing a bodily experience that affects one directly (one cannot un-taste or un-feel something, but one can always look away or cover one's ears if something is disturbing the so-called higher senses), one is bound to that negative aesthetic experience, without the possibility of avoiding. An exception to this would be if something 'smells bad' and one decides not to taste, or if something 'tastes bad' and one decides not to taste again.

In this context of negative aesthetic experience photography comes as a physical (material) or digital support of a certain experience one wishes to record and remember. Thus, one might say that it is used with the same purpose; but, the 'negative' experience might be recorded with the intention of criticizing something by sharing it with others. In this case, photography is used as 'proof' or 'evidence'. For example, if one sees rats (considering this experience as both aesthetic and negative) in the basement (or any other shared space) one might decide to photograph this encounter in order to warn the other neighbours.

⁵ Arnold Berleant, *Sensibility and Sense. The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World*, Imprint Academic, 2010, p. 165.

2. The Artification

The concept of artification assumes recognizing the aesthetic potential in objects or phenomena that usually would not be classified as aesthetic. If applied, its purpose is to intensify the experience of everyday life through sharpening the aesthetic sensitivity.⁶ The experience of beauty should not be an isolated one or a cut-out one, but it must be taken into account as a part of the living life, favourably influencing the state of being-in-the-world. Artification and all that it implies is important to this research because it can be related both to photography and the aesthetics in everyday life. In this context, photography seems to be the easiest way to self-expression in an aesthetic manner (since it does not require previous knowledge, and one can use the digital camera almost intuitively).

According to Yuriko Saito, the benefits of artification imply finding one's *inner voice* and stimulating one's awareness and creativity. The artification implies a new way of thinking, a new aesthetic approach in everyday life that contributes to adapting to the changes that occur in the environment we live in. With the aid of artification one's *imagination, spontaneity, inspiration* and *improvisation* can be improved through the self-discovery of those involved in the process. Correspondingly, all art forms have their own implied speech which urges one to debate. Thus, in a working environment, applying the process of artification might lead to a better functionality of that institution.⁷

On the other hand, Saito states that "artists working within the art world are free to raise fundamental questions through their works. For every artist whose works endorse and celebrate unbridled capitalism or praise the brave new world of technotopia, there is another artist who challenges it. The point is that that is the choice each artist can make. Such freedom is not granted in artified organizations."⁸ This means that artification assumes the freedom of expression to a more limited extent rather than that promised by *high art*, despite the fact that it encourages critical discourse.

The conclusion Saito reaches is that, nowadays, the purpose of using art in different types of industries is not one that comes to advantage art or creativity: artification or any other aesthetic impulse is used with the strict intent of optimizing a specific industry.⁹ Thus, aesthetics seems to be given a role that is pure functional, utilitarian.

⁶ Yuriko Saito, "Everyday Aesthetics and Artification", *Special Volume*, Issue 4, 2012, p. 1.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

⁹ "Most often, particularly under a capitalist economy, the industry's purpose in using art is to promote successful business, not to enliven the artworld and encourage public discussion on art" in Yuriko Saito, "Everyday Aesthetics and Artification", *Special Volume*, Issue 4, 2012, p. 11.

In one of her early articles, “Everyday Aesthetics” (2001), Saito states that there is a *risk* concerning the comparison between art and ordinary objects and phenomena that are aesthetic. “Non-art objects tend to be regarded as »wannabe« art, which often turn out to fall short of those features characterizing art, such as formal coherence, expressive power, embodiment of an idea, and creativity and originality.”¹⁰ Her refusal of resembling non-art aesthetic experience to art-related aesthetic experience comes from the consideration of the art world and the world-lived as two hermetic spheres that do not interact; this point of view constitutes the basis of the ‘strong pole’ of the aesthetics of everyday life. She claims that “it is misleading to recognize the aesthetic value of everyday objects and activities only insofar as they are momentarily isolated from their everyday context and treated as art objects created specifically and exclusively for aesthetic purposes.”¹¹ On the other side, the thesis formulated by D. E. Rațiu affirms that basically, the everyday aesthetics tries to expand the field of aesthetics beyond the exclusive *realm* of art, meaning there can be noticed a type of communication between the two presupposed separate ‘worlds’. The bottom line of his thesis is that “maintaining a relation of exclusion between our lifeworld (private) and the art world (public), as AEL-strong does, is to fail to see the actual continuity between two worlds that are interpersonal and social.”¹²

Unlike Saito, Kevin Melchionne insists upon the fact that the aesthetics of the ordinary is not a synonym to *non-high art*. It is true that one is facing the risk of trivializing art by claiming that art depends on the judgment of taste of everyone, thus having the possibility of naming anything “art”.

As Melchionne suggests, the aesthetics of everyday life partakes in routine and not in episodic events.¹³ For example, activities that imply some sort of *continuity*, such as cooking, cleaning or dressing up, may acquire aesthetic qualities. In this socio-aesthetic situation photography might easily intervene, and, along with the targeted objects and with the photographer’s perspective, transfigures a phenomenon into an image. The phenomenon that is transfigured has an individual significance and it cannot be considered art. Nevertheless, in a series of events / phenomena with an aesthetic value, a certain change in experience can be traced, marking an impossible wish of recording (impossible because one cannot record an event, but its image). Although it may be about the experience of smell or taste to a greater extent than the visual impact, taking photographs of a certain dish because “it is good” or “it smells nice” is not lacking sense. On one side, the photograph substitutes the memory of the experience

¹⁰ Yuriko Saito, “Everyday Aesthetics”, *Philosophy and Literature*, Volume 25, Number 1, April 2001, p. 88.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² Dan-Eugen Rațiu, “Remapping the Realm of Aesthetics: On Recent Controversies about the Aesthetic and the Aesthetic Experience in Everyday Life”, *Esztetika: The Central European Journal of Aesthetics*, L/VI, 2013, No. 1, p. 20.

¹³ Kevin Melchionne, “The Definition of Everyday Aesthetics”, *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 11, 2013.

with an image, and on the other side, it pretends to render a mundane event in an aesthetic manner. What Melchionne suggests can be applied to photography as a social practice: the outlook matters more than the content.

If we were to ask ourselves why is photography important to the social aesthetics and when did that happen, the answer is simple: the moment photography became so easy to use (due to the improvement of its technical elements – the camera became more and more easier to carry around), both media and common people began to share photographs with different purposes.

Photographs regularly appeared in newspapers, starting around the turn of the twentieth century, and photographs regularly appeared in public shows and galleries. Photographs of the distant and exotic became more accessible via outlets such as National Geographic, while at the same time mundane snapshots were shared with friends and family via albums. Photography began to be part of everyday life.¹⁴

One can admit that the aesthetics in everyday life requires a minimal effort and planning, and also an embedding of aesthetics in everyday routine. A counterexample suggested by Melchionne is that of a pianist who is used to warm up his fingers every day. Watching this practice one may notice its aesthetic potential, but it cannot be a part of the aesthetics of everyday life because this practice is not common to everybody. Additionally, many works of art have everyday life as a theme, but this does not mean that the art object or its making is part of the everyday life aesthetics.¹⁵

3. The “Artist of the Ordinary”

Having into consideration the paradigm shifts that occurred during the dawning of the internet, the whole perspective that we had on culture changed. This is mainly because of the accessibility of the information. The effortless exchange of information (whether it is in the format of text or image) has also an impact on how we come to perceive art. Hence, whom we define as an artist is constantly changing as well.

First of all, it is important to trace back to where the distinction between amateur and professional photographers occurred. According to Gomez Cruz and Meyer, between the 1930s and the 1990s photography became more accessible, gaining an expanded and diverse range of users. Due to the dissimilarity between cameras (cheaper easy-to-use versus expensive and complicated-to-use) and the more or less artificial space used to share photographs (family circles versus magazines, galleries, clubs), a new discrepancy arose, namely that between *snapshotters* and *professional photographers*.

¹⁴ Edgar Gomez Cruz and Eric T Meyer, “Creation and Control in the Photographic Process: iPhones and the emerging fifth moment of photography”, *Photographies*, 5:2, 203–221, published online: 14.08.2012, p. 210.

¹⁵ Kevin Melchionne, “The Definition of Everyday Aesthetics”, *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 11, 2013.

The distinction between amateurs and professionals, especially with photography as art, was not only a matter of technique and the right equipment but also a matter of style, composition, and lab access and expertise. Nevertheless, some of the most famous art approaches were based on techniques and therefore knowledges (Ansel Adams, Paul Strand, and Edward Weston with their f/64 technique, Alfred Stiglitz with pictorialism, etc.).¹⁶

While common people were used to create snapshots of significant (*happy*) moments of their lives, “with cheaper equipment and without any intention of circulating them outside the family circle”,¹⁷ professional photographers had access to a different type of equipment that grant their membership in specialized clubs. Thus, photography was institutionalized; not just because it was a difference of technique or technical equipment, but because of the difference of the space photographs were distributed: “family albums and shoeboxes for snapshots; magazines, journals, and galleries for professional photography.”¹⁸ Nowadays, artists and ordinary people share the same space for photography: the internet. Due to the unlimited possibilities of creation by just pressing the button of the camera or of the phone, ordinary people started taking photographs of things other than just their families to share with the whole world; while searching social media websites, such as *Instagram* or *Tumblr*, we find that the photographs shared (both by professionals and common people) have an aesthetic value (or an artistic intention, at least) and are connected to the inner experience of the world of the photographers.

Considering creativity an important factor involved in artification implies a new way of looking at the world. Furthermore, photography, as an artistic or just social practice, starts from the same premise. John Dewey states that “to some degree we become artists ourselves as we undertake this integration, and, by bringing it to pass, our own experience is reoriented.”¹⁹ In this particular case, the aesthetics of everyday life seems to question the elitist disagreement between art and life.

To bring the past out front or to keep a memory represent just two of the premises of the impulse of taking a photograph. Another cause would have to be experiencing a phenomenon independently of the formerly made assumptions about that particular phenomenon. For example, to place a cup of coffee on a shelf near an open window does not constitute an aesthetic gesture. But, if we consider the relationship between the warm cup and the breezy morning, along with a beautiful sunrise or the smell of spring, we might have a clearer idea about what the aesthetics in everyday life is about and why one has the intention of recording it.

¹⁶ Edgar Gomez Cruz and Eric T Meyer, “Creation and Control in the Photographic Process: iPhones and the emerging fifth moment of photography”, *Photographies*, 5:2, 203–221, published online: 14.08.2012, p. 211.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 212.

¹⁹ Yuriko Saito, “Everyday Aesthetics and Artification”, *Special Volume*, Issue 4, 2012, p. 2.

On the other hand, what ordinary people may consider to be beautiful, might be kitsch to the art world and vice versa. "Berleant implies that things such as telephone poles, power lines, commercial strips, trailer parks, suburban malls, and parking lots necessarily »embody negative aesthetic values«. Yet these are often the subjects of contemporary painting and photography."²⁰ Comparing the two types of aesthetics one may find that while the daily aesthetics is limited to judgments such as "I like it" or "I do not like it", the aesthetics of art is dominated by institutional standards and it is established on tradition. At the same time, one cannot consider discussing pure subjectivity or pure objectivity in the domain of the everyday aesthetics. The features that constitute the aesthetic experience have many variations, so that they cannot be mistaken for the features of the objects abstracted from the real world.

It is important to state that Arnold Berleant challenges the traditional approach on aesthetics, claiming that the social dimension of aesthetics is given by considering the human subject as an active participant to the aesthetic experience. He denounces aesthetics as contextual, signifying that "in a contextual theory no single or dominant feature establishes an aesthetic situation. Instead, a number of factors combine into an inclusive situation."²¹

From another viewpoint, the artwork has become a commodity, thus the boundary between the common consumption and the artistic consumption was erased. In this context, starting with Duchamp, the artist is considering a new technique, namely the "readymade". Anything that can be traced back to this concept is based on two procedures: "production" and "selection".²² As a contemporary artist, the process of selection is the most important. However, having into consideration the fact that the artist must please the spectator, he/she has to make him/herself noticed in the current overproduction of art by playing the part of a *democratic politician*. Because the art world (and its aspiring folk), is characterized by overproduction, the process of selection is necessarily assigned to the spectator/ buyer; the latter is overwhelmed by the flow of pretended artistic creations and has selection as the only weapon against it. Thus, the one who makes judgments about art is evaluated as an artist. Every one of us is condemned to be an artist today, because nobody can prevent oneself of making selections. And nobody is immune while facing an aesthetic judgment, because everyone is a subject of an outside glance.²³

²⁰ "Theorizing the Aesthetics of the Everyday", in Andrew Light and M. Jonathan Smith (ed.), *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, Columbia University Press, 2005, p 5.

²¹ Arnold Berleant, "Ideas for a Social Aesthetic" in Andrew Light and M. Jonathan Smith (ed.), *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, Columbia University Press, 2005, p. 26.

²² Boris Groys, *Topologia Aurei*, Ideea, 2007, p. 9.

²³ "cel care face judecăți despre artă este evaluat ca artist. Fiecare dintre noi este condamnat astăzi să fie un artist, căci nimeni nu se poate împiedica să selecteze. Și nimeni nu este imun în fața unei judecăți estetice, pentru că fiecare este mereu supus unei priviri dinafară." Translated into English from Boris Groys, *Topologia Aurei*, Ideea, 2007, p. 14.

4. Social Media

The photo-video media in particular contribute to the rising of artistic production. "This relatively simple process makes anyone capable of pressing the photo or video camera button tendentiously into an artist."²⁴ Alongside "apparatus" and "camera" there must be taken into considerations the gadgets that facilitate the distribution of photographs and videos into the World Wide Web: mobile phones and tablets. Both gadgets have the possibility of installing applications with which ordinary photographs or videos can be edited and launched into the virtual space.

With the arrival of digital photography and the inkjet printer, and more recently of the mobile phones and online sites for distributing photographs, many of the assumptions about photography are blurring and changing. The iPhone is, among all the current devices, one of the most important, not only because of the technical features that give control to the photographer of the entire process, but because it has been able to enrol different actors to give it a social meaning: professional and amateur photographers, the media, software companies, social networks, and general users.²⁵

The shift from analogue to digital photography is meaningful in a social context especially if we consider the economic issue, namely the fact that everyone can afford it.

Just as the shift from expensive 36-exposure film rolls, with a relatively high per-shot cost, to digital memory cards, with essentially a zero per-shot cost, greatly increased the number of photos people take since the decision to press the button once more has few consequences from an economic perspective, the shift to unlimited internet access changes the calculus people do in their heads when deciding whether to upload and share a photograph, now that they can do it quickly, and for essentially no additional cost. This changes the relationship between people and their devices.²⁶

The most popular application of the sort is *Instagram*, through which every *smartphone* user may create the impression of a professional photographer. Through diverse *filters* applied to ordinary photographs, *Instagram* simulates the renowned software Photoshop. Although it is used generally by ordinary people in familiar

²⁴ Boris Groys, *Topologia Aurei*, Idea, 2007, p. 14.

²⁵ Edgar Gomez Cruz and Eric T Meyer, "Creation and Control in the Photographic Process: iPhones and the emerging fifth moment of photography, *Photographies*", 5:2, p. 217.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 215.

situations (especially in the everyday aesthetic life), the application has become a medium through which artists can promote their works basically because of the possibility of sharing images on other social networks as well. "Devices like the iPhone, combined with applications like Instagram, add a whole range of filters and tools to modify the poor-quality pictures of the camera phone into more »artsy« images. This changes the politics of seeing the banality of images of everyday life."²⁷

In the context of social aesthetics, "while there is no artist, as such, creative processes are at work in its participants, who emphasize and shape the perceptual features, and supply meaning and interpretation."²⁸ Thus, we are facing new trends in the social media, such as the *selfie*. The latter implies a sort of a self-portrait, most often made in front of a mirror, with the aid of a smartphone or a tablet. The selfie has been so overused that other devices were invented to improve it, for example, the *selfie stick*. That is literally a stick that can be attached to the phone to simulate a portrait made by somebody else from a greater distance (the stick represents a continuity of the human arm). There has even been invented a second camera phone, which works as a mirror.

Although the *selfie* is inevitably an individual activity, these type of images are distributed (*shared*) massively on social networks, constantly looking for the "appreciation" (*likes*) of other people (be them known or complete strangers). The paradox in this situation is that although technology dehumanizes us (to the extent that we avoid asking a person to take our photograph), at the same time we are constantly looking for human interaction by way of technology.

In order to broaden our perspective of why humans have this need of taking photographs of themselves, we considered Gunther Anders's theory of the Promethean Shame in "The Outdatedness of Human Beings. On the Soul in the Era of the Second Industrial Revolution" (1956). Despite its context, the text is still relevant for the current status of the world (especially in the framework of photography). The Promethean Shame is a type of guilt that humans feel towards themselves and their origin. Anders suggests that humans feel ashamed of being unique, unlike the objects of mass production that are multiple and ubiquitous. In order to be more like the perfect commodities, humans make virtual copies of themselves through photography.

Among the reasons that are responsible for this hypertrophic production of the image, so pertinently described, one of the most important is that through the image man has won the chance of creating »*spare-pieces*« of himself; thus, of defeating the lie about his unbearable uniqueness. This is one of those counter measurements taken against »I am just one time only«. Having been excluded

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 216.

²⁸ Arnold Berleant, "Ideas for a Social Aesthetic" in Andrew Light and M. Jonathan Smith (ed.), *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, Columbia University Press, 2005, p. 31.

from the serial production, he turns himself yet, when being photographed, into a »reproducible product«. He gains, at least in effigy, a multiple existence, even in thousands of copies. And even if he is living »just« as a model, »he« somehow exists in his copies as well.²⁹

Although photography is considered to be an excellent way of making immortal copies of ourselves, it is not as satisfying as making actual copies (literally). In the framework of mass production there is no distinction between the model and its copies.

But still: compared to the truthful multiple existences that our products enjoy, multiplying ourselves through images is just an »as if«, and the satisfaction that it grants us is just a surrogate of satisfaction, despite our intense iconomaniac activity. The difference between the actual models and the copies, the fact that we must be grateful of the possibility of multiplying in the shape of photographs, while the products are given the liberty to advance into the world as truly identical copies, cannot be changed. That is why the human shame towards »his better things« cannot be completely erased through his images.³⁰

Conclusions

The aesthetic experience in everyday life implies not just *acceptance*, i.e. to have an open mind to discover something that presents itself as *different* in a repetitive situation, but the way in which we *perceive* and *relate* to the world we live in (to be aware of the beauty around us). The way in which we participate to the daily aesthetics makes us, to some extent, potential artists. This occurs not only because we have a

²⁹ "Printre motivele care sunt răspunzătoare pentru această producție hipertrofică de imagine, atât de pertinent descrisă, unul dintre cele mai importante este acela că prin imagine omul a cucerit șansa de a crea »*pare-pieces*« ale lui însuși; deci de a dovedi minciuna unicității sale insuportabile. Ea este una din acele contramăsuri luate în stil mare împotriva lui »eu nu-s decât o dată«. Rămânând exclus din producția de serie, el se transformă totuși, atunci când e fotografiat, într-un »*produs reproductibil*«. *Câștigă și el, măcar în effigie, existență multiplă, ba uneori chiar în mii de exemplare. Și chiar dacă el însuși trăiește »doar« ca model, »el« totuși există cumva și în copiile sale.*" Translated into English from Gunther Anders, *Obsolescența omului. Despre suflet în epoca celei de-a doua revoluții industriale*, TACT, 2013, p. 95.

³⁰ "Și totuși: comparată cu existența cu adevărat multiplă de care se bucură produsele noastre, multiplicarea noastră prin imagini nu este decât un »ca și cum«, iar satisfacția pe care ne-o oferă e doar un surrogat de satisfacție, în ciuda intensei noastre activități iconomane. Diferența dintre exemplarele efective și simplele copii, faptul că trebuie să ne mulțumim să ne multiplicăm în forma fotografiilor, în vreme ce produselor le este îngăduit să se împrăștie în lume ca exemplare într-adevăr identice, acestea nu pot fi schimbate. De aceea, rușinea omului față de »mai bunele sale lucruri« nu poate fi ștearsă complet prin imaginile sale." Translated into English from Gunther Anders, *Obsolescența omului. Despre suflet în epoca celei de-a doua revoluții industriale*, TACT, 2013, p. 96.

constant wish of *recording* and *repeating* significant experiences, but we desire to *share* them with the rest of the world. Thus, in order to share one's personal relationship with the world, one is often turning to the 'service' of photography, a widespread medium of *creation* and *communication* through the pervasive power of the image.

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