

Research Article

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Transformations of the Contemporary Art Practices in the Context of Metamodern Sensibility

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Abstract: The article studies the changes in contemporary art practices within the framework of metamodernism, which combines modernism and postmodernism while introducing new sensibilities shaped by digital technologies and the Internet era. The aim of the study is to explore how metamodern sensibilities rethink audiovisual art practices, emphasizing the interaction between technology, culture, and human perception. The research draws on several methods, including comparative historical analysis, systemic typology, semiotics, hermeneutics, and an anthropological approach. This allows for an in-depth exploration of art practices across various media, including film, music, and sound art. Case studies, including Ariel Guzik's and Jana Winderen's experimental sound works and the net art project Pandemic Media Space, demonstrate how metamodern sensibility fosters new artistic engagement, blending digital and natural elements, promoting participatory culture, and decentralizing authorship. It was concluded that metamodernism deeply transforms contemporary art, dissolving boundaries between real and virtual, artist and audience, technology and nature. It promotes a multifaceted, polyphonic approach to art that reflects the complex sensibilities of the Internet era, encouraging new modes of self-expression and cultural understanding.

Keywords: art, information technologies, postmodernism, posthumanism, transhumanism

1 Introduction

In the previous two decades, the new paradigm of Western thinking – metamodernism – has been evident in academic literature. Metamodernism is an idea that tries to capture the spirit of the time by talking about cultural and artistic practices and events that were made possible by the rise of the Internet, the information explosion, and the total technologicalization of life. Metamodernism regains a new sensibility for culture and art that had been lost during the era of postmodernism. However, it has a new mode of expression that, in its integrity, combines the subjective and objective, real and virtual, emotional detachment and emotional and moving sensibility of the “New Romanticism” and “New Sentimentalism,” as well as “post-irony” and “new

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sincerity.” For that reason, according to Hanzi Freinacht, “metamodernism must be more than a ‘cultural phase’” (Freinacht, 2017a). Currently, metamodernism’s view of a human goes beyond the academic understanding of humanism and is oriented at achieving transhumanism and posthumanism, when “technology and science may well alter us as biological objects as well, even at the genetic level” (Freinacht, 2017a). Metamodernism overcomes antropocentric humanism in the name of a broader posthumanistic and transhumanistic view of life, where posthuman is a technologically enhanced version of a man, and where society becomes more sensible to its inner perspective.

In this context, new metamodern sensibility, embedded in art practices, transforms the stable perception of artists’ creative process, their interaction with contemporary digital and analog technologies, and the perspectives of the use of physical, electromechanical, natural, and virtual means of transmitting audio and visual information. New sensibility forms new ideas about the potential of sound and visual art, about their perception in the participative culture. The current trend of mutual integration of art practices and technologies, of intensification in their interplay, and also the symbiosis of arts and machines gradually consolidates the artists’ autonomy from any constraints of education, professionalism, or gender. This transforms the nature of authorship and signals a departure from the traditional understanding of author vs recipient relations. Metamodernism is also known for the idea of “new physicality,” which means rethinking this basic human trait. This idea is closely connected to both the metamodern concept of “sensibility” and the post- or transhumanistic idea of a “posthuman.”

There is still a lot of work to be done on the theoretical and methodological tools that can be used to further analyze and organize both practical and theoretical material in the context of metamodernism, even though there is more interest in metamodern practices and more attention being paid to the relatively new rise of metamodernism as a new way of thinking about humanity. The purpose of this article is to look at how modern art practices have changed in a metamodern world to broaden our understanding of the audiovisual information space.

2 Literature Review

The theoretical basis of our article was derived from the publications of the founders of metamodernism – Robin van den Akker, Timotheus Vermeulen, James MacDowell, and Jörg Heiser – from the collection of articles “Metamodernism. Historicity, Affect, and Depth After Postmodernism” (2017). Robin van den Akker and Timotheus Vermeulen define metamodernism as a certain stage in the development of modern culture in the introduction to this collection and in the earlier essay “Notes on Metamodernism” (2010). They also talk about the unique qualities of a metamodern sensibility, especially when it comes to new digital technologies. In their understanding of new sensibility, Robin van den Akker and Timotheus Vermeulen are rooted in the “structure of feeling” discourse by Williams (1965, 1979) and consider it to be a true potential of metamodernism. In his 2017 book chapter called “The Metamodern, the Quirky, and Film Criticism,” James MacDowell shares similar ideas. He thinks that the “structure of feeling” can show itself in different ways, such as through different aesthetic experiences. It can also inspire new artistic and aesthetic stimuli in modern art and even in social practices. Jörg Heiser, in his chapter, “Super-Hybridity: Non-Simultaneity, Myth-Making, and Multipolar Conflict” (2017), presents such significant aspects of metamodernism as super-hybridity. He focuses on metamodern art from the standpoint of re-exploring, recycling, and culturally merging the previous styles in the “post-Internet” era, when art practices are increasingly digitalized. In the same way that the Internet has changed the way people think, Denys Bakirov’s 2019 article called “Metamodern Stipulation” looks at how art and technology are constantly interacting and how this changes the ways that art and creativity work in this new culture.

The 2011 book “The Metamodernist Manifesto” by Luke Turner was an important part of our research because it laid out the main ideas of metamodernism for his generation. These ideas include a return to sincerity, hope, romanticism, affects, grand narratives, universal truths, and a desire for new integrity.

The Scandinavian school of metamodernism, e.g., Swedish political philosopher and sociologist Daniel Görtz and art theorist Emil Ejner Friis, who work together under the alias Hanzi Freinacht, consider metamodernism as something larger than just a “cultural phase,” unlike Robin van den Akker and Timotheus Vermeulen. Görtz and Friis look at metamodernism not only through the lens of art but also through the lens of society’s growth, the individual, the deepest parts of the human mind, and the political and ideological foundations of society. Their two books are called “The Listening Society” (Freinacht, 2017b) and “The Nordic Ideology” (Freinacht, 2019).

The books “Posthumanism: Beyond Humanism?” (2014) by Luca Valera, “Philosophical Posthumanism” (2019), “Trans- und Posthumanismus zur Einführung” (2023), and “Post- and Transhumanism: An Introduction” (2014) by Robert Ranisch and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner all talk about the idea of a “posthuman” in the context of the ideas behind transhumanism and posthumanism. The search for one’s own self within this new sensibility and new physicality of information-digital space is the subject of Steen Ledet Christiansen’s study in his book “Drone Age Cinema: Action Film and Sensory Assault” (2017).

Some sources reflect the practical aspects of the art practices’ features in the context of experimental studies focused on the environment and ecology. “Sounding Sound Art: A Study of Its Definition, Origin, Context, and Techniques of Sound Art” (2013) by Maes is a dissertation that adds a lot to what we know about new art forms, such as musical ones and ones that use sound experiments and new technologies. Nicola Triscott specializes in the interconnections between art, science, technologies, and society. In her work, “Ariel Guzik: Holoturian” (2015), based on the sound installations by Guzik, a musician and inventor, Triscott explores the traditional academic concepts of “musical composition,” the role of interpretation in music, the figure of the professional composer, and relations between art and science, natural and artificial, and man and nature. Jana Winderen’s presentation of the video installation “The Art of Listening: Under Water” (2022) at the Columbia University School of the Arts is a musical landscape of the ocean’s Anthropocene. It is a scientific approach to sound that, in essence, changes the view on composing music and expands the scope of experiments with sound for composers or sound artists.

The scientific theories of cultural research, philosophy, and aesthetics form the foundation of the paper’s methodology, leading to an interdisciplinary approach. The methods employed in the article are determined by the multidisciplinary nature of the subject: comparative historical, systematic typology, logical analysis, semiotics, hermeneutics, etc. The study also employed anthropological methods, dialectic, and axiological approaches.

3 Theoretical Analysis of Metamodern Sensibility

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (an external reason) and the crisis of postmodernism (an internal reason) led to the emergence of metamodernism, a global mental paradigm that succeeded postmodernism. The term metamodernism was coined in literary studies by Mas’ud Zavarzadeh (Zavarzadeh, 1975) back in 1975, though as a certain means, it was used in American novels since the mid-1950s. Moyo Okediji then applied this term to contemporary African–American art in 1999. The scholar considers the term metamodernism, an “extension of and challenge to modernism and postmodernism” (Okediji, 1999). In 2002, Andre Furlani defined metamodernism as the aesthetics that comes “*after yet through* modernism ... a departure as well as a perpetuation” (Furlani, 2002, 2007). Still, it was Dutch philosopher Robin van den Akker and Norwegian media theoretician Timotheus Vermeulen who definitively introduced the term metamodernism in academic circulation. In their essay “Notes on Metamodernism,” the authors attest to the death of postmodernism, despite its discursive strategies and ideology still existing. If the main trait of postmodernism was deconstruction, for metamodernism it is reconstruction. In their attempt to define metamodernism, the scholars state, “We will use these connotations of ‘meta’ in a similar, yet not indiscriminate, fashion. We argue that we should situate metamodernism epistemologically with (post)modernism, ontologically between (post)modernism, and historically beyond (post)modernism” (Vermeulen & van den Akker, 2010, p. 2). Luke Turner is another fan of metamodernism. In his 2011 book “The Metamodernist Manifesto,” he says, “We offer pragmatic romanticism, without

ideological support.” Metamodernism is a movement that aims to find a balance between different ideas, such as transcendence and the changing moods of irony and sincerity; naivety and omniscience; relativism and certainty; and optimism and pessimism” (Turner, 2011).

It is worth noting that the desire to introduce the concept of “metamodernism” into theoretical use is indicative of the contentious nature of this concept, as most scholars have attempted to define the difference between such already existing modifications as “ultramodernism” (Kroker & Cook, 1987)¹, “hypermodernism” (Kroker & Kroker, 1988)², “transmodernism” (Magda, 2017)³ and so on. In particular, Ukrainian researcher O. Onyshchenko believes that the prefix “meta” does not so much clarify the situation as reveals its contradictions. The complexity of understanding lies, first and foremost, in the widespread use of the prefix “meta” in contemporary humanities – meta-theory, meta-logic, meta-language, meta-ethics. As O. Onyshchenko writes: “the scientific explorations of European cultural scholars, who (since the beginning of the 21st century), justifying the concept of ‘metamodernism’, on the one hand, emphasize the research significance of the prefix ‘meta’, and on the other hand, attempt to overcome its purely formal presence in contemporary humanities, arguing for the importance of relying on ‘meta’ – ‘modernism’ on substantial theoretical factors” (p. 140)⁴. Moreover, even a proponent of metamodernism like James MacDowell finds himself torn between “for” and “against” the term “metamodernism” and openly distances himself from its conceptualization. And Robin van den Akker talks about metamodernism “as a heuristic label”⁵ (Akker & Vermeulen, 2017, p. 5).

Overall, the adherents of metamodernism link their theories with the category of sensibility or, more precisely, with the “structure of feeling.” Raymond Williams came up with the term “structure of feeling” to describe a way of talking about things that is connected to both collective cultural unconsciousness and ideology. He did this to help people understand what culture means when it talks about “feeling much more than thought – a pattern of impulses, restraints, and tones” (Williams, 1979, p. 159) in “the most delicate and least tangible parts of our activity” (Williams, 1965, p. 64). The author examines the common “structure of feeling” in nineteenth-century novels, both unconscious and conscious, as a representation of the contradictions of nineteenth-century society. Based on the documented facts of the era (poems, buildings, fashion, etc.), Raymond Williams developed a cultural analysis aimed at proving this structure of feeling. As a result, Raymond Williams’s “structure of feeling” discourse laid the groundwork for later metamodernist theorists. This is because Williams’s discourse emphasizes human experience and helps build both ethical and aesthetic foundations at the same time, which is what modernity wants and what is needed to move on from post-modernism. James MacDowell, one of the metamodernists, as a vivid example of this structure of feelings, provides a reviewer’s impression of Dave Eggers’s post-historical novel “A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius” (2001): “as an expression of exactly how ‘our’ (current twenty-something) generation feels: both desensitized, seen-it-all before, alert to clichés, and knowing cultural references – and idealistic, hopeful” (MacDowell, 2017, p. 29).

Therefore, the prefix meta- ahead of modernism, according to its theorists, explains why metamodernism is both a periodization and a feature of aesthetic sensibility. Based on the “structure of feeling” of Raymond Williams, Vermeulen, and van den Akker state that metamodern sensibility combines both the typical modernist and postmodernist standpoints. Modernism typically exhibits a naive fascination with utopian ideals, while postmodernism displays an outright cynical attitude toward them. Metamodern sensibility enables combining the seemingly incompatible connection of opposites, for example, such oxymorons as “ironic sincerity,” “sarcastic vulnerability,” “pragmatic idealism,” etc. To think of metamodernism as a swing between modern and postmodern sensibilities is too narrow, say the authors of the booklet “Foundations of Archdisciplinarity: Advancing Beyond the Meta.” They say we should instead see it as a mix of different Indigenous, heroic, traditional, modern, and postmodern cultural logics (or, as Hanzi puts it, the Animist,

¹ Kroker and Cook, 1987.

² Kroker and Kroker, 1988.

³ Magda, 2017.

⁴ Onishchenko, 2021.

⁵ Akker and Vermeulen, 2017.

Faustian, Post-Faustian, Modern, and Postmodern cultural codes) (Baker & Hedlund, 2023, p. 42). Thus, one of the features of metamodern art is acknowledging the interconnection of all the previous eras, their contexts, and dialectical synthesis. It would be logical to perceive the metamodern “structure of feeling” as a new type of sensibility that can turn to irony when everything gets too serious or to naivety when cynicism starts to dominate culture. Besides, if postmodernism professes the “death of the author” (Roland Barthes) and the artist, compiling various texts, feels their alienation, in metamodernism his true death occurs: when the audience listens to metamodern music, the most common feeling is it belongs to everyone, while there are no straightforward citations.

In addition to the mentioned, the other features of metamodernism are “new universality,” “new sincerity,” “new simplicity,” “new romanticism,” “new sentimentalism,” “post-irony,” “melancholy,” etc. Hence, as Akker and Vermeulen argue, in the twenty-first century, a new metamodern sensibility emerges, the one that the other researcher, Denys Bakirov, labels “the sensitivity of the Internet Age” (Bakirov, 2019). The influence of the total Internet is apparent both in the lower ability to perceive any sort of content and in its continuous production. Another feature of total Internet is the creation of the new “society of artists,” where everyone is capable of generating an enormous amount of text – be it visual, verbal, or audio – regardless of education and professionalism. This, in turn, transforms the traditional understanding of relationships between the author and recipient.

This poses a reasonable question: what is the aim of metamodernism? The answer is straightforward: metamodernism aims to eliminate all limits and boundaries, including those that define our humanity. According to posthumanist thought, “the human is no longer the adoption or expression of man, but rather the result of a hybridization of man with non-human otherness” (Marchesini, 2007, p. 54). The transition from postmodernism to metamodernism does not follow a linear path, as metamodernism aims to represent the crucial segments of the future path. This does not mean rejecting postmodern road maps, but rather learning to read them differently. Therefore, postmodernism that enters a phase of metamodernism expands beyond being just a “cultural phase” (Hanzi Freinacht), which offers a new universal worldview, including a new idea of humanity: “the ideas about how humanity can and should be transformed” (Freinacht, 2017a).

In this way, Jörg Heiser’s use of the word “super-hybridity” is important because it originally referred to a group of art practices that involved “the use of a great number of hugely diverse cultural sources to create work” (Heiser, 2017). In this way, Jörg Heiser’s use of the word “super-hybridity” is important because it originally referred to a group of art practices that involved “the use of a great number of hugely diverse cultural sources to create work” (Heiser, 2017). Similarly to Vermeulen and van den Akker’s concept of “metamodernism,” the objective of Jörg Heiser’s “super-hybridity” is to illustrate the emergence of new phenomena that recreate the connection of art and the Internet, the so-called “Post Internet.” “Super-hybridity,” as Heiser defines it, has two meanings. First, making something by using existing sources wasn’t always a copycat job. This was especially true if the large number of tropes and sources used took the focus off of “quoting” as an artistic act in and of itself (as opposed to earlier postmodernist approaches that praised themselves for “challenging” crossovers between, say, two earlier styles/sources, like baroque and brutalism) (Heiser, 2017, p. 57). The second definition by Jörg Heiser postulates that new ideas of new art practices always originate from the chaos of the existing ones; therefore, it is not possible to state their “purity.” The German philosopher Jörg Heiser thinks it’s important to tell the difference between the “super-hybridity” of modernism and postmodernism (which is what the term is usually used to refer to) and the “recycling past styles” of metamodernism. “Super-hybridity” is our technocultural present that increasingly moves art into the digital, global, or local networks. For that reason, it needs to be looked at from both the point of view of art practices and social practices, since these networks can be used for many political and ideological reasons (Heiser, 2017, p. 57).

Undoubtedly, the majority of the works by metamodernism theorists are dedicated to cultural issues, particularly literature, art, and architecture (as emphasized by Robin Van den Akker). However, no less interesting are the studies that explain the concept of metamodernism in light of the implementation of a certain socio-political project. The fundamental works of Hanzi Freinacht, “The Listening Society” (Freinacht, 2017b) and “The Nordic Ideology” (Freinacht, 2019), have initiated a school of Scandinavian metamodernism called “political metamodernism,” which focuses on identifying a new formation of socio-political perception,

post-materialist values and their bearers, and the politico-ideological foundations of the listener society. As the German political scientist and sociologist writes Elke Fein “The term ‘listening society’ refers to the idea of a societal culture of awareness that listens – and responds to the needs of its citizens in a deeper and more holistic way than the current materialistic one, including the deeper longings of body, mind & soul” (Fein, 2020, p. 273)⁶. Hanzi Freinacht notes that there are three parts of political metamodernism – “The Listening Society,” “Co-Development” and “Nordic Ideology,” which in turn include six new forms of policy aimed at addressing environmental issues, overcoming economic instability, and the widespread hidden anxiety of modern people, global inequality in various aspects of social life against the backdrop of the transition to a post-industrial, robotic and digitalized economy (Freinacht, 2017b, p. 13). In “The Nordic Ideology,” it discusses the aspiration to add a dimension of (inter)subjective experience to the ideological-political regime and to expand its terminological thesaurus. Freinacht identifies six dimensions of inequality in society – economic, social, informational, psychological, emotional, and ecological, pointing to their interdependence and interaction, which forms a “metasystem” a pattern of reproducing inequality in society (Freinacht, 2019, pp. 139–141). As a potential solution to this crisis situation, Freinacht sees the reformatting of the political system and proposes six forms of politics that will guide the evolution of society: Democratization Politics, Gemeinschaft Politics, Existential Politics, Emancipation Politics, Empirical Politics, and Politics of Theory (Freinacht, 2019).

4 Phenomenon of a “Posthuman” in the Context of Metamodernism

Metamodernism serves as a worldwide mental framework that harmonizes opposing ideologies like transhumanism and posthumanism. As it is well known, transhumanism is a new type of rational worldview that, being based on technological and scientific achievements, acknowledges the imperative need for the evolution of an individual – and the entire society and culture – into the new state, The initial object of transhumanism is a human (in this sense, transhumanism traces its genealogy to humanism). Transhumanism views a human as a being, in principle, in the process of continuous evolution who, with the means of scientific and technological progress, can make an evolutionary breakthrough. This is a new type of man, a posthuman or superhuman. Transhumanist thinker Steve Fuller (2011) hypothesizes that the humanity of the present is evolving into the reconstructed beings of the future. For the scholar, this is the transition from Humanity 1.0 to Humanity 2.0 – the humans of the future who actualize the newest technological achievements and who are better than *Homo sapiens* and overcome biological limitations. Hence, Fuller, by emphasizing the transition to Humanity 2.0, in one way or another, asserts the idea of commitment to posthumanism.

It should be noted that currently in the scholarly discourse, there does not exist one common understanding of the concepts of “transhumanism” and “posthumanism” as the ones “beyond humanism.” So, the fact that two ideas have come to life – transhumanism and modern philosophy – makes it hard to define posthumanism using clear language. N. Katherine Hailes, in her work “My Mother Was a Computer” (Hailes, 2005), links a posthuman with the problems of transhumanism. She thinks that in the twenty-first century, the arguments will likely not be so much about the problems with the liberal humanistic tradition and the posthuman, but about the various types of the posthuman that will appear when it mixes with intellectual machines (Hailes, 2005, p. 2). According to Nick Bostrom, N. Katherine Hailes’ ideas and a transhuman (someone who can see completely new possibilities for the future and use them for their own development) are the same thing. A posthuman is a future human whose worldview has changed because of the actualization of advanced technology in their development. The use of these concepts in such a manner simply depicts transhumanism as a subset of posthumanism, where a posthuman is a technologically enhanced version of a human.

⁶ Fein, 2020.

Currently, we distinguish three distinct stages in the development of posthumanism. The first stage has to do with the rise of the ideas of “posthumanism” and a “posthuman” (Ranisch & Sorgner, 2014) in the humanities in the middle of the twentieth century and early twenty-first. This was the time of postmodernism, which tried to rebuild modernism’s ideas in general and its idea of a “human” in particular (Ferrando, 2019). The second stage – the turn of the 21st century – corresponds to the spirit of the postmodern era. The third stage – the first two decades of the twenty-first century – signifies the era of metamodernism that absorbs, similarly to postmodernism, everything previously produced by culture while actualizing transhistorical tendencies. At this stage, scholars concentrate on the epistemological quest, emphasizing significant concepts like post-dualism, the Anthropocene, cyborgs, artificial life, and the Metaverse.

Giving up the anthropocentric paradigm leads to a “metaphysical revolution” that changes the ontological idea of a posthuman from an “inclusive perspective” point of view (Ferrando, 2019). Therefore, posthumanism shifts its focus from technological possibility and ethics to human limitations and environmental relations, decentralizing its position in the universe. In this context, Luca Valera’s idea of posthumanism as an overcoming of transhumanism and a distancing from the uncritical praising of the potential of new technologies appears plausible. In fact, posthumanism understands technologies not only as a technological aim and not as an external possibility to overcome its limitations for the living being but rather as an internal human potential (Valera, 2014, p. 484).

In our article, we incorporated certain points of critical posthumanism as well, which are covered in the publications of Janina Loh (Loh, 2023a, b). According to the scholars, solving the problems facing contemporary culture is possible through the use of technologies for human enhancement by merging humans and machines. At the same time, a human “determines the moral aspects of this programming,” thus retaining control over the moral and ethical foundations of the further actions of the machines. One of Loh’s key points is that the further development of humanism as a line of human thought should be continued, primarily, in a technological manner. Though being human is worth continuing, it will be limited by the difficulty of transcending physicality as we know it. In addition, the physicality itself requires certain “improvements.” Among the latter is the development of special skills. Artificial superintelligence, which can transfer the fundamentals of human brain functioning to a computer and then program it to perform self-development, can assist in achieving this. So, in the future, researchers should look at traditional dualistic categories like nature vs culture, male vs female, and subject vs object through the lenses of transhumanism and posthumanism.

Still, the uniqueness of metamodernism is that it offers not only a specific cultural paradigm but also a “grand narrative” that demonstrates the potential of cultural development across much broader boundaries, reaching as far as the origins of the universe and breaking through modernist and postmodernist traps and limitations. “Because metamodernism tries to bring together all the different cultural logics that have come before it and explain how these logics have changed over time in a cosmic context, it offers theories of everything (ToEs) that can be used in many different areas” (Baker & Hedlund, 2023, p. 49).

5 Metamodern Sensibility in the New Film Practices

In the digital information space, a person can start a journey of self-discovery among the many other images by making a virtual image, or “avatar.” This is one way to search for and build one’s self in a world of new sensibilities and physicalities that are spread and understood through the Internet network and are caused by many technological changes and new developments. For example, the rapid growth of virtual reality technologies and the use of many new gadgets, like Oculus Rift helmets for virtual concerts, make it possible to support not only the full range of audio and visual possibilities but also the body movements that let you dive into virtual reality and experience three-dimensional space. Interestingly, in 2002, the Swedish scientists from Malmö University developed the technologies that enabled feeling scents in virtual reality and computer games. So far, 4D cinemas use scent generators and special chairs imitating vibration and movement, dispersing water drops and creating a breeze, as well as lighting and sound effects.

In the problem range of metamodern sensibility, we are asked to rethink how physicality has changed as a cultural trait of a person and to bring the idea of “new physicality” into modern space. About this: the projects by Shu Lea Cheang, one of the founders of net art and new queer cinema, are notable. The foundation of her works, including the feature films *I.K.U.* and *Fluidø*, is biopolitics, focusing on the human body as its instrument. In *I.K.U.*, the human body becomes the main tool and focus of artificial intelligence, as well as a center of sorts for the human struggle for emancipation, primarily emancipation from gender and ideological stereotypes. Shu Lea Cheang started contemplating these subjects back in the late 20th century, creating her famous *BRANDON* project in 1998–1999. The focus on the theme of queer communities and transgender issues could be traced in the *Fluidø* feature film, inspired by the people with AIDS, who because of their illness became outcasts during the last two decades of the previous century. In both projects, the main character is an artificial intelligence, BioNet, that uses the human body as a tool for understanding the world by penetrating the human cells and transforming a human into an instrument of cognition of the universe. In this case, real human bodies and their digital avatars constantly interact, shift, and create specific mutations in the search for artificial modification to proceed with further development. Thus, physicality becomes a virtual sigh, while the body itself turns into a virtual event and Internet representation.

Liam Young’s videos and films, which focus on the modern industrial ecology and typical urban landscapes, are inspired by the subjects of human–technology interaction, the possible evaluations and characteristics provided by artificial intelligence, contemporary urban development, and human activity in general. Liam Young and his colleagues from the “Tomorrow Thoughts Today” think tank visit existing landscapes and urban locations and write reports for digital systems, mechanisms, and machines based on what they learn. These systems and machines use technology to observe urban life and have a very different view of the city than a person would. For instance, Young’s 2016 film *Where the City Can’t See* employed LIDAR technology to collect data on distant objects through active optical systems. As a result of the visuals created, the viewer receives information as if from the autonomous vehicles that are able to “see” the city only with the modern laser scanners and cameras. This particular perception of a seemingly familiar landscape shows a completely new world to humans – the world presented by a machine. Another of Liam Young’s works covering human interaction with artificial intelligence is the film *Seoul City Machine* (2019). The artist’s work is based on the interaction with the urban operation system that demonstrates to the viewer the object of its interest – the city of the future. Young constantly experiments with the technical means and technologies by involving them to generate new ideas for his films and videos. In 2016, he premiered his video “In the Robot Skies: A Drone Love Story,” which was stimulated by Young’s interest in the subject of the unity of humans and drones, of creating the subculture of the machines due to their significant impact on human everyday culture. The film shot entirely from the autonomous drones presents a love story of two teenagers enabled by drones.

6 New Metamodern Sensibility in the Contemporary Musical Practices

The musical culture of metamodernism is an intriguing intersection of art, technologies, and philosophy. As Bruno Latour states in his essay “Compositionist Manifesto,” in the current era of the Anthropocene, “we feel so close to the sixteenth century, as if we were back before the ‘epistemological break,’ before the odd invention of matter (a highly idealist construct, as Whitehead has shown so well)” (Latour, 2010), much closer than to the present-day world’s self-awareness. Another scholar, Sjoerd van Tuinen, considers “the alchemist as cosmic operator” and not “the artist-genius” to be the most adequate model for contemporary creativity. Sjoerd van Tuinen’s focus is not on the professional but on the transdisciplinary creator and experimenter: “Today’s artisan’s gentle unruliness and experimentations tend towards a new unity of the arts” (van Tuinen, 2017, p. 71).

In this context, contemporary environmental and ecological art experiments are particularly interesting: namely, by the artists, who focus on experimental hydro and bioacoustic sound projects: Ariel Guzik and Jana Winderen.

Ariel Guzik is a Mexican multidisciplinary artist (who does not have any professional art training) and inventor focused on the interconnections between art and science. His exquisite art installations and performances invite the audience to reconnect with nature through music, to develop physical, emotional, and spiritual relations with plants, animals, nature, and with humans themselves. In 2007, Guzik constructed The Nereida Capsule, a submersive sound instrument designed to establish communication with ocean mammals, or cetaceans. Made of quartz, this capsule with a core mechanism of cords and a circuit produces subtle vibrations that are supposed to attract ocean mammals. In 2013, at the 55th Venice Art Biennale, Guzik presented Cordiox, a unique acoustic instrument that used magnetic impulses to generate sound through the central quartz cylinder, cords, and wood. Guzik also invented the Plasmaht Lad, a musical instrument resembling a lute, to transmit signals generated by plants through a channel. In 2015, the Edinburgh Art Festival featured Guzik's underwater resonance capsule-shaped instrument "Holoturian," the aim of which was to communicate with whales and dolphins; it symbolized the fragility of our world. Guzik placed a plant and a string instrument inside. The latter produced subtle sounds, possibly imaginary whale songs. One of the questions that puzzles the author is, "Could animals develop cultural behaviors equivalent to those of art and music?" Might they respond to such manifestations of culture from another species – and perhaps more sensitively than we would to theirs? Guzik's cetacean-oriented music hints that we should open our minds to this possibility (Triscott, 2015, p. 19).

Ariel Guzik's acoustic resonance instruments reach beyond the limits of academic music and the traditional concept of an "instrumental composition." Not intended for interpretation or concert performance, instead, their objective is listening closely and listening through the inaudible in our everyday environment. The main feature of all such sound practices is that they do not originate from the digital world. Ariel Guzik used new technologies to recreate the beauty and elegance of natural sounds. This shows how metamodern sensibilities and ways of feeling combine opposites like technology and nature or art and science.

Jana Winderen, a sound artist and painter from Norway, focuses her experiments on the sound environment and ecosystem. Her sound installations reveal the sound topography of the inaudible sources of sound, difficult for humans to access: deep ocean or ice cracks. Two sound compositions for the installations are particularly outstanding – "Du Petit Risoud aux Profondeurs du Lac de Joux" and "The Art of Listening: Under Water." The first one was presented at Art Basel in Basel in June 2019. The House of Electronic Arts Basel hosted a live performance of this piece. The composition consists of intertwined sound layers that form a symphonic collage. The symphony includes the authentic recordings of birds, insects, and plants (i.e., first) made by Winderen at the Vallée de Joux.

"The Art of Listening: Under Water" was created in collaboration with Tony Myatt and presented for the first time in the Rotunda, Collins Park, Miami Beach, in the context of Art Basel in Miami Beach. Audemars Piguet Contemporary was commissioned to produce this iteration of the 28-audio-channel installation in 2019; subsequently, it was exhibited in 2002 at the Columbia University School of the Arts. Though this composition is not, in the academic sense, a composer's piece, it has a dramatic structure, a thorough development of musical material, and a climax in the coda. For her recordings, which Winderen has collected since 2005, she uses hydrophones that, according to the artist, are much more susceptible to natural sounds than human senses. As Jana Winderen notes, "When I make recordings in the environment, I record the whole ecosystem with the animals in it. ... You will hear crustaceans, schools of fish, and mammals like dolphins, whales, seals, and humans" (Winderen et al., 2022).

For one of her latest projects, *For the Birds: The Birdsong Project* (2022), Winderen collaborated with world-renowned artists, musicians, and actors. *The project includes over 200 original compositions of music and poetry dedicated to birds.* Jana Winderen assembles these remarkable musical collages by combining various sounds produced by birds, wind, and sea waves; they carry the audience to a new world of senses.

Besides collecting the mysterious natural sound samples, the artist also covers the state of ecosystems affected by the Anthropocene. Her works manifest the entire spectrum of natural tonality, which demands a high level of audience concentration. In Winderen's sound experiments, unique natural sounds are transformed into integral and unmatched experimental musical installations. She observes the movements and melting of icebergs; the melodies of birds and shrimp; the sounds of rain and the rumble of thunder; and the dying coral reefs under the strikes of waves. All of Jana Winderen's compositions resemble the voices of nature, as if the artist is pleading with the audience to simply listen.

On the other hand, Laura Maes (Belgium) concentrates on one important feature of this type of sound art practice – their ephemeral nature. Maes says that sound installations, environments, and sculptures made for specific events (like festivals or exhibitions) are temporary in two ways: they are made to be temporary, and time itself is what they are made of. This means that sound art itself is temporary: “[...] when the exhibition is presented, the artworks disappear” (Maes, 2013, p. 1973).

The role of sound in the projects by Ariel Guzik and Jana Winderen is far from the academic musical discourse. Nevertheless, such a scientific approach to sound may offer composers (or sound artists) some alternative perspectives on the very concept of music. By developing a deeper understanding of scientific methods, composers may contribute to the studies of sound more effectively.

Another mode of art practices that is linked to the active development of information technologies is vividly exemplified by the net art project *Pandemic Media Space* (2020) founded in 2020. The project was implemented by the Ukrainian Association of Electroacoustic Music and the Polish Society of Electroacoustic Music (PSeME) with support from the EU’s House of Europe program. The project’s format and conceptual foundation are shaped by the global pandemic and the fact that participants communicated remotely.

Pandemic Media Space is a platform that aggregates various data: ecological, geolocation, and medical, including COVID-19 statistics, climate change, air quality, and other significant meteorological indicators. These data serve as a basis for composers to create their musical pieces, which reflect the interconnections between humans, nature, and technologies. In addition, the project includes the lectures of prominent composers and media artists who provide a broader context and technical guidelines for working with this data. All of the above forms a complex creative environment, sustainable and unlimited in time, that promotes knowledge exchange and the emergence of new experimental projects. Hence, *Pandemic Media Space* is an example of a metamodern approach in art, which combines both the postmodern practices that use randomness and improvisation and the contemporary striving for synthesis and searching for new forms.

7 Conclusions

The metamodern era started around the turn of the century and aims to go beyond the traditional models of modernism and postmodernism while also combining these earlier paradigms. Through the lens of metamodern sensibility discourse, we believe that this era changed both the core and the forms of art practices. It simultaneously reasserts the ethical and aesthetic foundations of art and transforms modes of artistic expression, particularly within the framework of digital and analog technologies. This evolution has significantly expanded the audiovisual information environment, enabling artistic expressions that transcend temporal and spatial boundaries, interconnect diverse cultures and epochs, and facilitate a dialectical synthesis that bridges historical and contemporary contexts.

A fundamental insight of the study is the pivotal role of openness within metamodern artistic practices – manifested as a willingness to dismantle entrenched historical, cultural, gender, social, ideological, and professional boundaries, along with challenging the conventional separation between artist and audience. This openness is further intensified by the sensibility characteristic of the Internet era, defined by concepts like “post-Internet” and “superhybridity.” These notions emphasize the fusion of digital networks, the broadening of global connectivity, and the integration of posthumanist ideas into contemporary artistic practices, thereby facilitating the emergence of novel modes of expression and interaction. The process of digitalization has not only reoriented art practices within new technological domains but has also deepened the exploration of posthumanist thought, particularly in examining how technological advancements reshape the human experience.

The study reveals that metamodern art instigates profound shifts in the audience’s perception of color, sound, video, corporeality, and spatiality. Contemporary artworks increasingly invite active participation and co-creation, dismantling the traditional divide between creator and observer. The proliferation of participatory sound projects – such as internet-based compositions produced by non-professional musicians – exemplifies how metamodern sensibility challenges established notions of authorship and audience engagement.

Through the analysis of key case studies, including Ariel Guzik's ecological sound installations, Jana Winderen's immersive soundscapes, and the Pandemic Media Space project, this research underscores how metamodernism fosters hybrid forms that merge art, science, and technology. These projects advance ecological knowledge within artistic practices, particularly through soundscapes that uncover concealed environmental sound systems, such as underwater acoustics. By integrating natural sounds into artistic compositions, metamodernism enhances human awareness of the audiovisual dimension of the surrounding world and emphasizes the interconnectedness of humans and nature. In addition, the study revealed the significance of posthumanist ideas in metamodern artistic practices, where the boundaries between the physical and the virtual, the organic and the artificial are increasingly blurred. The authors concluded that metamodernism promotes a multifaceted and multidisciplinary approach to art, emphasizing inclusivity, hybridity, and interconnectedness. These practices expand the boundaries of artistic expression and offer new tools for self-exploration and understanding in an increasingly technologically globalized world. Thus, metamodern sensibility emphasized ethical, aesthetic, and ecological awareness and rethinking the role of art in contemporary society, positioning it as a vital medium in the context of the challenges of the twenty-first century. A promising direction for further research involves exploring the implications of metamodern sensibility for emerging AI-driven creative practices, particularly in audiovisual art. Investigating how artificial intelligence, machine learning, and algorithmic composition influence the notions of authorship, interactivity, and artistic agency within the framework of metamodernism could offer new insights.

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