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“PLASTIC ARTS” OR “VISUAL ARTS”? IMAGINARY DE-COINCIDENCE AND IMITATION IN POLISH ART DISCOURSE AFTER 1989

Abstract: At the turn of the 1990s, the term "visual arts" gained popularity among the Polish art community and began to replace "plastic arts". However, it seems that this change was not instigated solely by factors related to art, but primarily by political and social ones. The above assumption is prompted by the fact that the expression "plastic arts" may have very broad meaning – in the tradition of Western humanities it referred to both the material as well as intellectual and spiritual dimensions of creative work and may encompass a variety of artistic practices. This is indicated, among other things, by the continuing presence of the phrase "les arts plastiques" in French, where it is commonly used to this day, signifying traditional art media as well as media and art practices used only since the 20th century (e.g. installations or performance). The author of the article argues that the relinquishing of the expression "plastic arts" in the Polish language had an imitative dimension and resulted from the need to demonstrate the fact of belonging to Western culture after the change of the political system in 1989.

Keywords: plastic arts, plastics, visual arts, imitation, Polish art, Central Eastern Europe

A look at the history of Polish art magazines reveals that at least from the time before the World War I up until the 1970s and 1980s, the terms such as *sztuki plastyczne* and *plastyka* were commonly used. The former term can be literally translated as "plastic arts" (in English means "fine arts"), and the latter as "plastics". Although these terms occasionally appeared as late as the early 1990s, they had virtually disappeared from art magazines by the beginning of

the new millennium. They were replaced by the term that had previously appeared very rarely, i.e. "visual arts". In 2025, it has had almost 6 million Google hits while the term "plastic arts" has had less than 3.5 million. Although this quick search using an internet engine only covers content which exists in digital form, it clearly shows that in two decades, a term that had previously appeared only occasionally has become entrenched in the Polish language¹.

Even without applying such methods, those active in the field of art in Poland are perfectly aware of the fact that the phenomenon indicated here has occurred and that we were dealing with an attempt to remedy a certain "de-coincidence". This means that, at some point, the adequacy of the concept of "plastic arts" in relation to the entirety of artistic work at that time began to be questioned. It was considered obsolete because it suggested a vision of art which ignored the specific nature of such art practices as performance, installation, video or socially engaged activities. It began to be replaced by the term "visual arts", which was to better reflect the nature of the new trends and media, because they were no longer based on working with material and on its "plastic" formation, but instead emphasised the importance of the intellectual component in artistic creation.

Although it is common knowledge that the change discussed here took place and may be felt in the contemporary language used to describe artistic creation, it is difficult to indicate any clear "milestones" of this process. We can only glean certain symptoms by looking, for example, at art magazines from the period and examining how often the terms "plastic arts" and "visual arts" appeared².

When reading these magazines, it becomes clear that the change occurred slowly but gradually. In the early 1990s, the "Obieg" magazine published by the progressive Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art in Warsaw, featured authors who regularly used the term "plastics" and its derivatives³ as well as those who deliberately avoided it, also introducing loan translations into their texts, such as "kurator" from the English curator⁴. One of the impor-

¹ Using the Google search engine seems justified in this case, since the development of the Internet in Poland took place at the same time as the process discussed in this article. Therefore, texts where the term „plastic arts” appeared and texts where „visual arts” were found could have been posted on the Internet at the same time.

² I would like to take this opportunity to thank Grzegorz Borkowski, Leszek Brogowski, Łukasz Guzek, Janusz Janowski, Dorota Jędruch, Jan Koźbiel, Anna Markowska, Magdalena Mazik, Rafał Solewski, Magdalena Ujma and Karolina Zychowicz for their kind help and suggestions.

³ „Plastic arts” appeared, for example, in texts by Leszek Brogowski (see L. Brogowski, *Alechinsky w Muzeum Morskim w Paryżu*, „Obieg” 1992, no. 11-12, pp. 22-26) or in Wojciech Włodarczyk’s text *Lata osiemdziesiąte – sztuka młodych*, „Obieg” 1990, no. 11, pp. 8-15).

⁴ Ł. Guzek, *Odpowiedź na polemikę Małgorzaty Mach*, „Obieg” 1994, no. 3-4, p. 59.

tant factors in the milieu which had impact on changes in the language of art criticism was the emergence of the “Raster” magazine in the late 1990s. Its founders, Łukasz Gorczyca and Michał Kaczyński, mocked conservative art – especially painting – using strong, derisive rhetoric. The art which they called “plastics” was used exclusively in relation to some criticised artists of the older generation and they referred to their paintings as “mud” or “snot”⁵. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, “plastic arts” and “plastics” almost completely disappeared from contemporary art magazines. They no longer appear in “Obieg”, they cannot be found in other art magazines such as “Magazyn Sztuki” and “EXIT”. They rarely appear outside the context related to the administrative operation of even “Biuletyn Informacyjny ZPAP” – a periodical addressed to very conservative readers, members of Association of Polish Artists and Designers⁶. If they do appear there, it is most often in reprints of texts from several decades earlier⁷.

This means that, in contrast to discussions on the validity of the use and scope of the term “critical art”⁸, which became an emblem of an important tendency within Polish socially engaged art at the turn of the 1990s, it is difficult to indicate any attempts at problematising the differences between the expressions “plastic arts” and “visual arts”. There are no articles in art magazines, no conference presentations, records of debates, nor other similar sources. In short: it is difficult to find out who conceptualised this change and how they did it either as opponents or supporters. A lack of such sources shows that this process occurred from the bottom up – that language users spontaneously and intuitively resolved the semantic differences between “plastic arts” and “visual arts”, choosing the latter term. It therefore followed a similar course as words from everyday language, which appear and disappear.

The nooks of imitation

On the one hand, the shift discussed here – based on intuition, to some extent also resulting from fashion and sometimes from social pressure – is difficult to trace. On the other hand, however, a spontaneous, grassroots mode of this process seems to shed some light on its very nature. Perhaps it was not a matter of a choice dictated by clear and well-recognised premises, but

⁵ See *Raster. Antologia tekstów*, ed. J. Banasiak, 40000 Malarzy, Warszawa 2009, p. 22.

⁶ In Polish: Związek Polskich Artystów Plastyków (ZPAP).

⁷ See e.g. J. Sempoliński, Tak i tak, “Biuletyn Informacyjny Związku Polskich Artystów Plastyków” 2000, no. 2, pp. 34-36.

⁸ See Ryszard W. Kluszczyński, *Artyści pod pręgierz, krytycy sztuki do kliniki psychiatrycznej, czyli najnowsze dyskusje wokół sztuki krytycznej w Polsce*, “EXIT. Nowa sztuka w Polsce” 1999, no. 4 (40), pp. 2074-2081.

something else. Originating in the artistic milieu – at least its large part – indicates that it was an outcome of the spirit of the times, of a certain atmosphere, rather than of substantive reasons. In other words, this change was not necessarily dictated by the actual meaning of the expressions “plastic arts” and “visual arts”, but rather by emotions and shared aspirations of absolutely non-artistic origins.

It seems that an interesting perspective on the genesis of the process analysed here may be found in the book *Light That Failed* by Ivan Krastew and Stephen Holmes. Describing the processes of systemic transformation after 1989 in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, they reach out for the category of imitation. They perceive it as a desire accepted by the vast majority of the inhabitants of these countries to become similar to the Western world in political, economic and social sense. This assimilation took place with the universal consent of the majority of citizens, who, on the one hand, had a general aversion to living in the conditions of real socialism, and on the other hand, considered the West to be a model of “normality”⁹. After gaining independence from the USSR, they enthusiastically rushed forward to implement this “normality” in their own countries. Since the USA was the leader of the Western world, an important element of the process was the growing importance of the English language in the societies discussed¹⁰, where imitating also meant borrowing from this language. It seems that this observation may also be interesting in the context of abandoning the terms “plastic arts” and “plastics” in favour of “visual arts” in Poland.

And what could indicate that this process was imitative rather than substantive? Was it the fact that it did not result only from the need to replace an obsolete term with a new one, which would much more adequately refer to the new paradigm of artistic creation of conceptual provenance? Was the irritating “de-coincidence”, which was to be remedied merely an illusion and a desire to change the vocabulary describing art to something more adequate, simply an expression of neophyte zeal to be more western than the West itself? It seems very possible, and the arguments justifying this inkling intertwine with linguistic-philosophical and historical-political threads.

De-coincidence of meanings: Athens, Paris and New York

First of all, the history of the concept of “plastic arts” and the adjective “plastic” shows that they are incidentally very plastic – they were used in ways

⁹ I. Krastew, S. Holmes, *The Light That Failed: Why the West is Losing Its Fight for Democracy*, transl. A. Paszkowska, Krytyka Polityczna, Warszawa 2024, pp. 37-120.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

that often combined mutually exclusive aspects. Their history is itself based on many de-coincidences, on non-obvious and unexpected changes of meaning – on similarities and associations which facilitated transfer from one language to another, and on opposites and renouncement which undermined the apparent ease of such transfer.

The ancient Greek adjective πλαστικός meant something that was shaped or related to shaping. It was used in a colloquial sense and as such it may be found in numerous texts, including those by Aristotle or Plato, who, for example, wrote in the *Laws* about αἱ πλαστικά τέχναι, that is literally about “plastic arts”¹¹. However, it ought to be emphasised that the verb πλάσσω, which has the same etymology as the adjective “plastic”, was also used metaphorically to talk of “simulating” or “inventing”¹². We would therefore be dealing with a very broad meaning in which this and related words were used. On the one hand, in the adjectival form it referred to working with material, on the other hand, as a metaphorically used verb, it could also refer to the work of imagination.

In Latin-based literature of medieval Europe, the adjective “plastic” appeared sporadically and it began to enjoy special attention only in the late Renaissance. This happened, among other things, thanks to Jacob Schegk who, being “professor of philosophy and medicine at the University of Tübingen, developed, through a unique interpretation of Aristotelian embryology, a theory of the “plastic faculty” (*facultas plastica*)”¹³. According to Schegk, the plastic faculty was a potentiality which was present in seeds and sperms “to form the body of animate beings in the manner of God’s hands, although it is itself devoid of intelligence”¹⁴. This idea was an inspiration for creating another term using the adjective “plastic”, i.e. *vis plastica* (Eng. plastic force) which was coined by William Harvey to describe the development of embryos¹⁵.

Nevertheless, the term “plastic arts” did not appear in modern Europe until two hundred years later. It happened due to Anthony Ashley-Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, who – in the spirit of Neoplatonism – understood the concept of “plastic arts” as all human actions consisting of moulding reality according to the principles of proportion, harmony and beauty. However, in the light of his philosophy, plasticity, as well as artistic work, was an expression of a general moral attitude. Shaftesbury’s impact meant that the term “plastic

¹¹ See Plato, *Laws*, 697a.

¹² Entry πλάσσω, *Biblissima*.fr, <https://outils.biblissima.fr/fr/eulexis-web/?lemma=%CF%80%CE%BB%CE%B1%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%8C%CF%82&dict=Bailly#> [accessed: 22 June 2025].

¹³ H. Hirai, *The Invisible Hand of God in Seeds: Jacob Schegk’s Theory of Plastic Faculty*, “Early Science and Medicine” 2007, no. 12, p. 377.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 379-380.

arts” also began to be used in continental Europe. In France, it became particularly popular in the mid-19th century thanks to Félicité de Lamennais. Similarly to the British philosopher, he associated this term with ethics, but he went much further. Being a socialist and a “religious dissident” of a sort, he used this concept in texts that were to justify the idea of “Catholicism without the Church”. For him, plastic arts were not only a metaphor, but also an emanation of a vital force with a divine dimension which manifests itself in the creation of reality¹⁶. Regardless of the religious context in which the term “plastic arts” was introduced into French aesthetics, it gained great popularity in France. And – as Dominique Chateau observes – although “the ‘Anglo-Saxons’ stopped using this Greek-derived expression in the second half of the 20th century, in France it has survived to this day in the educational environment and in art criticism”¹⁷.

Returning to the main subject of this article, that is, the rejection of the phrase “plastic arts” in favour of “visual arts” in the process of imitating the West, voluntary “westernisation” of artistic discourse in Poland, but also in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, it should be emphasised that the history of the word “plastic” and related terms demonstrates their adaptability to many different contexts. Historically, this term could refer to both manual work with material, as well as to the work of imagination and intellect. Later, it could refer to both passively understood matter, as well as to spiritual energy. It could be used in the context of a socialist vision of Christianity and, apart from the artistic context, according to Catherine Malabou, it may be found in the context of the theory of evolution, as well as in post-Marxist materialism¹⁸.

Contemporary French proves a broad understanding of the term. The expression “les arts plastiques” is still widely used in France and Belgium today. It refers not only to traditional media such as painting, graphics and sculpture. With no hint of irony nor any pejorative intentions, it is used when referring to creators who work in media such as performance, video or installation, calling them “les artistes plasticiens”¹⁹. The continued use of the term “les arts plastiques” in French-speaking countries or its parallel use with the term “visual

¹⁶ D. Chateau, *L'ambivalence de la notion d'arts plastiques : Lamennais et Taine*, “Nouvelle Revue d'esthétique” 2023, no. 31, p. 32.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁸ C. Malabou, *Dokąd zmierza materializm? Althusser/Darwin*, transl. E. Wojciechowska, “Praktyka Teoretyczna” 2018, no. 2(28), pp. 16-29.

¹⁹ See, e.g., S. Charpentier, *Londres : l'artiste plasticien Damien Hirst expose ses œuvres à succès des années 80-90*, „TV5 Monde”, 24 December 2021, <https://information.tv5monde.com/video/londres-l-artiste-plasticien-damien-hirst-expose-ses-oeuvres-succes-des-annees-80-90> [Accessed: 9 May 2025].

arts” shows that it does not necessarily have to carry an archaic understanding of art and that its ambiguity may perfectly correlate with the indeterminacy of contemporary artistic practices.

Naturally, French is also affected by English. Nevertheless, this impact – or, to put it mildly: the mutual relations between the two languages in the case of the French-speaking countries in Europe are much less entangled in the logic of relations between the cultural centre and its peripheries. Perhaps thanks to this, the term “*les arts plastiques*” stood the impact of American culture and was not supplanted in France or Belgium, while also showing its own plasticity – the possibility of applying it to a variety of artistic practices. Perhaps the position of these two countries in the context of international relations may have been decisive for the retention of this term there – being citizens of countries identified as the core of this cultural circle, the French and the Belgians felt no need to prove their belonging to it.

By locating themselves completely elsewhere on the map of cultural flows, the artistic community in Poland wanted to prove to themselves their belonging through the process of imitation. Ironically, at the end of the 20th century, by imitating, they confirmed their peripheral status not just at that time, but also in “long-term” relations with the West. In order to adapt to the model and adopt the term “visual arts” from the centre located in the USA, the term “plastic arts” had to be rejected, which most likely appeared in the Polish language from French in the 19th century. Thus, just as in the 19th century using the term “plastic arts” imitated the artistic centre symbolised by Paris, at the end of the 20th century, the expression “visual arts” started to be used when the centre of gravity of this cultural area shifted to New York.

It should be added that the period of political transformation coincided with the strengthening global position of Anglo-Saxon humanities and the rising status of English itself as the language of international communication in science. Researchers associated with Anglo-Saxon scientific centres did not use the term “plastic arts” for two reasons. Firstly, due to linguistic habits in English, the term “plastic arts” seems to be used relatively rarely and, according to Dominique Chateau who is cited above, the term “art” was used, or, more often, “visual art” or “visual arts”. Secondly, many studies on art inspired by post-structuralism, feminist and queer theories, postcolonial studies and new interpretations of Marxism rejected the category of “plastic arts”, because it could be associated with the idea of modernist purity of the medium and autonomy of individual artistic formulas. This clashed with the perspective of interdisciplinary analysis of art as a fragment of broadly understood visual space, popular within these studies. They analysed “vision” and visibility itself, which turned out to be entangled in a network of norms, exclusions, prejudices,

hidden assumptions, etc.²⁰. The aim was not to describe art understood as work with material, but to analyse the culturally conditioned process of creating images and how these images themselves became carriers of norms.

Overlooked revolutions and “visual arts” as a hallmark

From this perspective, the effort to eliminate “de-coincidence” between a language and the artistic practice that this language describes turned out to be not only an attempt at spontaneous imitation, but also a confirmation of one’s own peripherality through a willingness to swap one centre – the place of origin of models – for another. However, the problem of “de-coincidence” was by no means solved, with one “de-coincidence” replaced by another. It is hard to ignore that the term “visual arts” is not at all better than “plastic arts” when it comes to adequately defining contemporary artistic practice. Many strategies used by today’s artists are situated far beyond the “oculocentric” paradigm. The visual dimension of activities such as participatory practices or art-based research is usually only their secondary result. However, in the imitative zeal, this nuance was not taken into account; it seemed more important that “visual arts” was a new term and that it was English.

Moreover, if it were actually substantive factors that were decisive in rejecting the term “plastic arts”, this should have happened already in the 1960s or 1970s. At that time, key changes in the paradigm of artistic creation were taking place, and techniques and media that clashed with “plasticity” in the sense traditionally given to it in Poland were appearing en masse. These artistic novelties reached Poland at that time with a certain delay, but it was not long enough for the community not to have realised that the language also needed to be fundamentally changed. However, such tendencies were not observed, perhaps because the avant-garde of that period simply replaced “plastic arts” with art, which is more difficult to catch. Perhaps it was also because French culture and art were still a point of reference, and French was spoken by many more people than today²¹. In other words, the old centre was still being imitated.

If the declining use of the phrase “plastic arts” was to be related to strictly artistic factors, one can also ask an opposite question. Why did this term not

²⁰ Cf. M. Bal. *Wizualny esencjalizm i przedmiot kultury wizualnej*, transl. M. Bryl, in: *Perspektywy współczesnej historii sztuki*, ed. M. Bryl, P. Juszkiewicz, P. Piotrowski, W. Suchocki, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2009, pp. 839-873.

²¹ The belief that most readers spoke French must have been held by the editorial staff of the *Obieg* magazine in the early 1990s, as they did not translate French quotations into Polish, see M. Dabić, *Pod powierzchnią obrazu, czyli o malarstwie Krzysztofa Pająka*, “Obieg” 1991, no. 5, p.14.

bounce back after 2005, when paintings triumphantly returned to the main artistic circulation? At that time, many adepts of art academies in Poland worked in this medium, often with great success, as shown by the international careers of Wilhelm Sasnal and Jakub Julian Ziółkowski. The return to painting and its prevalence at exhibitions did not involve a new definition of its role, nor did it problematise the "ways of seeing" imposed by traditional artistic media. In short, paintings made at that time could often have been created in the 1930s or 1960s, in the best period of "plastic art". Therefore, if the naming of artistic creations was related to the substantive aspect and adequacy, a return to the expression "plastic arts" should have been considered. However, nothing of the sort happened. Although previously the use of the term "plastic arts" to describe conceptual works was jarring, no one paid attention to the fact that the term "visual arts" is in many cases inadequate in relation to painting.

It seems, therefore, that this change was more about manifestation than about substantive premises and nuances of meaning related to the terms "plastic arts" and "visual arts". Political and generational factors played a significant role in the aversion to "plastic arts" or "plastics". So, if Anna Markowska once noticed that in the Polish People's Republic "quoting from the Western culture was as symbolic as the destruction of the Berlin Wall"²², then drawing from this culture meant much more during the period of political transformation. It was an ostentatious rejection of the Polish People's Republic and a manifestation of openness to the West and values identified with it. The absorption of linguistic borrowings from English was an expression of this pro-Western orientation, but also the simplest, if superficial, way of imitating the West.

Rejecting "plastic arts" and using "visual arts" meant standing with the West on two levels. On the first, it manifested breaking away from the past in the political dimension: "plastic arts" and "plastics" were associated with the language of administration, education, as well as with the cultural policy and propaganda in the Polish People's Republic of that period. The possibility of shaping the language from the bottom up to describe artistic work was an expression of many different changes confirming the departure from the model of central control, both in economy and culture. On the second level, it meant a declaration of artistic affiliation. "Plastic arts" and "plastics" were associated with the generation whose achievements – according to a brutal twist of fate – became a negative point of reference for young artists. The use of "visual arts" worked perfectly as a tool for differentiation, distinguishing the young from

²² A. Markowska, *Definiowanie sztuki – objaśnianie świata. O pojmowaniu sztuki w PRL-u*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Wrocław 2003, p. 348.

the old, the pro-western from the non-western, the progressive from the non-progressive, etc. The more they imitated, the more western they became. In other words, by using one expression rather than the other, representatives of the art community declared their views, regardless of the fact that the declaration was based on not necessarily properly selected emblems, as even a cursory comparison of the meanings carried by the terms "visual arts" and "plastic arts" and the history of the latter concept show²³.

The fact that the change discussed here was not dictated by artistic factors and rather resulted from a certain fashion, constituting a kind of "confession of faith" – a positive attitude towards reintegration with the West – is proved by the fact that "visual arts" was not the only English expression that took the language of the art community by storm at that time. At the same time, such concepts as "curator" also appeared, replacing "exhibition commissioner", or "project", which became a catch-all for various aspects of artistic creation, obtaining funding for art and the lifestyle of artists²⁴. The word "project" perfectly demonstrates that the changes taking place in the language used by the art community were not autonomous in nature and that they did not necessarily occur due to artistic factors. They were a manifestation of a phenomenon that also affected other areas of social life – the word "project" then found its way into the world of business, corporations and technology. All these groups created specific newspeak based on borrowings from English, reflecting a broader tendency to make social, economic and political life in Poland similar to Western countries. The development of the art market and the infrastructure supporting progressive art was to be such an emblem proving the fact of belonging to the Western art circuit. The market was to be a sign of the final

²³ Obviously, „plastic arts” and „plastics” are still used in Polish, especially in language related to the educational system (e.g., in the name of the academic discipline „Plastic arts and conservation of works of art” and the name of a subject in primary schools). The likelihood of using these terms will also increase in the case of people not involved in artistic life. For the part of the artistic community who remember the times of the Polish People’s Republic only vaguely or who do not remember them at all, this „declarative” or „worldview” dimension of the terms „plastic arts” and „visual arts” is not necessarily clear. For the generations that entered the Polish art world after 2000, „plastic arts” is rather an archaism or a linguistic oddity, perhaps even a tempting extravagance – for example, in 2012, the curators of the MSN in Warsaw gave the title *New Plastic Arts* to one of the blocks of the exhibition *What Can Be Seen?*. There they showed artists who – as they suggested – worked and took up issues reminiscent of pre- and post-war „plastic arts”. The term „visual arts” is still used by many art historians, especially those who do not write about contemporary art – although they do not necessarily treat „visual arts” as a concept which would refer to a certain artistic paradigm, but as a further definition of the word „art”, which can also include music, theatre, etc.

²⁴ K. Szreder, *ABC projektariatu*, Bęc Zmiana, Warszawa 2016.

farewell to planned economy, and progressive art was to symbolise openness and progressiveness of views. While today we can say that the imitation game was only moderately successful in the latter two cases²⁵, in the case of language it did quite well.

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²⁵ According to data from the Central Statistical Office, in 2024 there were 310 art galleries in Poland, of which less than 100 were private ones (see the Central Statistical Office Report, Art Galleries in 2024 https://stat.gov.pl/download/gfx/portalinformacyjny/pl/defaultaktualnosci/5493/10/8/1/dzialalnosc_galerii_sztuki_w_2024_r..pdf [accessed on: 10 May 2025]) In France, there are over 1200 private galleries (https://www.artistes-emergents.fr/parlons-d-art/le-marche-de-l-art/1513088_les-galeries-d-art-en-france [accessed: 10 May 2025]).

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„SZTUKI PLASTYCZNE” CZY „SZTUKI WIZUALNE”? WYOBRAŻONA DE-KOINCYDENCJA I IMITOWANIE W POLSKIM DYSKURSIE ARTYSTYCZNYM PO 1989 ROKU (streszczenie)

Na przełomie lat 90. i 2000 popularność w polskim środowisku artystycznym zdobył termin „sztuki wizualne”, który zaczął zstępować „sztuki plastyczne”. Wydaje się jednak, że zmiana ta nie była podyktowana wyłącznie czynnikami artystycznymi, lecz przede wszystkim polityczno-społecznymi. Do takiego przypuszczenia skłania to, że termin „sztuki plastyczne” może być bardzo pojemny – w tradycji zachodniej humanistyki odnosił się do zarazem do materialnego i intelektualno-duchowego wymiaru tworzenia i może obejmować różnorodne praktyki artystyczne. Wskazuje na to między innymi ciągła obecność terminu „sztuki plastyczne” w języku francuskim, w którym powszechnie używany jest do dziś, oznaczając zarówno tradycyjne media artystyczne, jak też media i praktyki artystyczne wykorzystywane dopiero od XX wieku (np. instalację lub performance). Artykuł przekonuje, że porzucenie terminu „sztuki plastyczne” miało wymiar imitacyjny – wynikało z potrzeby zademonstrowania przynależności do kręgu kultury zachodniej po zmianie ustroju politycznego w 1989 roku.

Słowa kluczowe: sztuki plastyczne, plastyka, sztuki wizualne, imitacja, polska sztuka, Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia

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