

## SALOMĖJA JASTRUMSKYTĖ<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Salomėja Jastrumskytė*, PhD., researcher, painter, graphic artist, photographer, art critic and poet. She was born in 1975, in Skaudvilė near Tauragė. In Vilnius Academy of Arts in 2011, she defended the doctoral theses «Synaesthesia phenomenon conceptual transformations in 19th–early 20th century. Western art theory and practice. Critical analysis [art studies, philosophy of art]». Flemish Ministry of Education and Science funded scientific research internship at the Institute of Electronic Music and Psychoacoustics (IPEMA) Ghent University, Belgium in 2006–2007. From 2002 until 2011 Salomėja was a lecturer in Telšiai department of Vilnius Academy of Arts and from 2004 to 2006 a lecturer in the Department of Humanities in Šiauliai University. In 2005 she started working in the Culture, Philosophy and Art Institute (Lithuanian Culture Research Institute) and continued as a scientific researcher since 2014. Salomėja is an author of more than 40 academic publications, presented 34 personal art exhibitions in Lithuania, USA, Germany, Finland, Belgium, Latvia, Estonia and other countries, participated in more than 60 group art exhibitions in Lithuania, USA, Finland, Latvia, Estonia and other countries. Jastrumskytė is a member of Lithuanian Artists' Association (LAA). Research areas: synaesthesia, aesthetics and philosophy of art, Lithuanian culture and art, cultural studies, comparative studies of culture and art, visual culture.

## **THE AESTHETICS OF SYNAESTHESIA. A CRITICAL APPROACH**

### **Abstract**

First of all, the aesthetics of synaesthesia is the compilation of diverse, mostly non-historical vectors with sensory interactions, which permeate the human-made culture. In traditional aesthetics of the 19th–20th centuries, most often they are recognised in the plane of art and interactions between different types of art. Over time, it has been discovered that they cover all embedded, conscious or non-articulated vital human activities, which unfold *sensorially* in communication within the conditions of megasocium, which has no historical analogues. The aesthetics of synaesthesia also includes multifaceted and not necessarily homogeneous manifestations, integrated and interacting in a sensual human plane. In the traditional aesthetic thought, which prevailed almost until the end of 20th century, the programmed cases of interaction between different arts were mainly concerned with interpretations of the synaesthesia phenomenon, which showed an attempt to predispose and limit synaesthesia in the Western aesthetic tradition as yet another, even though a controversial aspect. In the 21st century, with the growing number of synaesthesia research such situation became questionable and the aesthetic articulation of synaesthesia moved not only beyond the boundaries of art, encompassing all human activity in the living world, moreover, the aesthetics of synaesthesia covered the self-perception of the individual recognising the interactions of multilayered senses in a natural and legitimate way of experiencing the world, which primarily has aesthetic value for a person.

-----

### **Keywords**

Synaesthesia, aesthetics, senses, embodiment, perception, art.

The aesthetics of synaesthesia are multidimensional, mostly non-historical vectors of sensory interactions, which spontaneously permeate the human world of cultural values and symbols, especially its artistic plane, as well as the epitomised, conscious or non-articulated, sensually embedded vital and creative human activity. The material basis of such aesthetics is

the *human senses*, not only perceived as the conductor of empirical experience but also as the plastic, universal and creative foundation of human aesthetic existence and artistic forms of self-expression. Artistic activity, unlike philosophical thinking, has been widely based on the body as its instrument and the material of the artistic process from its inception, while the embodied senses in their operation reflect the human's vital and creative activity, influenced by a variety of cultural factors. The link between all of the above factors is a fundamental precondition for the aesthetics of synaesthesia.

In the Western classical aesthetics tradition, synaesthesia is usually defined as the derivative of the concepts of Greek origin (*syn*–together and *aisthesis*–perceive) *syn–aisthesia*, thus defining the fundamental contour of the concept of synaesthesia, expressing temporally posterior unification of individual senses rather than their primaeval unity. The Greek roots in synaesthesia essentially refer not to the individual sensory experience but more to the social phenomenon. The verb *sunaiathanomai* and the noun *sunaiasthesis*, which were primarily used by Aristotle, marked the same phenomenon or sense formation experienced by many individuals, which establishes the encounter of the living entity with the world or with itself<sup>1</sup>.

In addition to the traditional conception of synaesthesia based on the abstract etymological system, various normative definitions of embedded and/or inculturated synaesthesia are gaining strength in modern aesthetics. They are usually still partial, based on one or another synaesthesia or aspect, but already unanimously claiming to be congenital, rare, selfish, automatic and with some other condition. These and similar

<sup>1</sup> Butler Sh. and Purves, A. (2013) Introduction: Synaesthesia and the Ancient Senses. In Sh. Butler and A. Purves (eds) *Synaesthesia and the Ancient Senses* (pp. 1). Durham: Acumen.

concepts refer to the body as the foundation of the phenomenon of synaesthesia and treat culture as an infinite set of expressions.

On the other hand, synaesthesia is usually defined as the interaction of senses (but not the unity) in the act of sensorial experience, or as the transfer of modality of one sense into the modality of another sense. Again mechanicality and artifactuality of traditional Western synaesthesia can be traced here. Consequently, the frequency of non-synaesthetic expression in artworks does not determine the nature of aesthetics of synaesthesia, which is close to the interactions of different arts as the extension of the theoretical constructs of traditional aesthetics. On the contrary, the rational mechanical structure of synaesthesia, which makes it suitable only for artefacts and not for the full sensorial dissemination of aesthetic experience, is anticipated in advance much faster. Therefore, in many cases in traditional aesthetics, synaesthesia is simply identified with the interactions of the arts, and in the artistic sphere; it is not considered that it is only one of the number of areas of sensorial and aesthetic human expressions, which can be encompassed and covered by synaesthesia.

Such universality of synaesthesia is already found by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in the phenomenological acclamations of the synaesthetic experience, which is interpreted as *all-inclusive* and *natural*. It can be stated even easier: the synaesthetic experience is just an aesthetic experience *par excellence* if we acknowledge that the aesthetic experience must consist of an indivisible universe of senses.

Here are some definitions of synaesthesia, which basically refer more to the transfer of characteristics of one sense to another sense, and it is rarely spoken of specific sensorial association. It is worth pointing out this feature of Western synaesthesia—a particular sensorial transfer, which permeates synaesthetic phenomena. The Western mechanics of the scientific synaesthesia definition are somewhat reminiscent

of the dynamic transfer of mental data, intrinsic to the phenomenon of psychoanalysis at a similar time. This aspect deserves a separate cultural and historical study, which focuses on a Western specific unifying mechanism. Here is a group of synaesthesia definitions, on which aesthetics of synaesthesia rests. «Synaesthesia is the phenomenon, in which the stimulation of one sense modality gives rise to a sensation in another sense modality», as Crétien van Campen and Clara Froger<sup>1</sup> state. Also «the term synaesthesia suggests that the joining of sensations derived from different sensory domains», as proposed by Reuven Tsur<sup>2</sup> (2007:30) Michael J. Banissy, Clare Jonas, Roi Cohen Kadosh delivers the definition with the most frequent elements: «synaesthesia is a rare experience, where one property of a stimulus evokes a second experience not associated with the first»<sup>3</sup> (2014:5). In the definition of synaesthesia, Julia Simner also emphasises the transfer of sensorial modalities: «for people with synaesthesia, sensations in two modalities are experienced when only one is stimulated [...]»<sup>4</sup>. Myrto I. Mylopoulos and Tony Ro highlight the atypicality of synaesthesia: «synaesthesia is a fairly common condition, in which individuals experience atypical responses (such as colour experiences) in association with certain types

<sup>1</sup> *Campen, C. Van and Froger, C. (2003) Personal Profiles of Color Synesthesia: Developing a Testing Method for Artists and Scientists, LEONARDO, 36 (4), 291.*

<sup>2</sup> *Tsur, R. (2007) Synaesthesia as a Neuropsychological and a Literary Phenomenon, Issues in Literary Synaesthesia, Spring, 41 (1), 30.*

<sup>3</sup> *Banissy, M.J., Jonas C. Kadosh C.R. (2014) Synaesthesia: an Introduction. In M.J. Banissy, C. Jonas and C.R. Kadosh, (eds), Synaesthesia (pp. 5) 5 (1414). Frontiers Media SA.*

<sup>4</sup> *Simner, J. (2015) Why are there different types of synesthete? In M.J. Banissy, C. Jonas and C.R. Kadosh (eds) Synaesthesia (pp. 8). Frontiers Media SA.*

of stimuli (such as non-coloured letters)»<sup>1</sup>. Shane Butler and Alex Purves open up the anthropological perspective of synaesthesia and the individuality of the synaesthetic effect on a person almost coinciding with aesthetics. They note: «synaesthesia is best known as the name of the condition of those individuals who regularly experience one kind of sensory stimulus simultaneously as another and who universally regard their atypical kind of perception as a gift rather an affliction»<sup>2</sup>.

In order to reach the deepest essence of synaesthesia, firstly it should be rethought and explored as *one of the possible sensorial and aesthetic paradigms of the Western world*. In reality, the non-critical prominence of highly complex and multi-layered phenomenon of synaesthesia, bringing it to the programmed *interactions of the arts* or, in other words, *syntheses*, which was intrinsic to many of the most influential manifestations of art and its theory in the 19th and 20th centuries, in fact, is the heritage of the romanticism and consequent various neo-romantic aesthetic theories, in particular the *aesthetics of symbolism*. In the well-established tradition of Western aesthetics and art theory, the concept of synaesthesia refers to this phenomenon in the form of an artificial, concentrated structure, without the *primaeval*, innate and embodied being. This structure of the concept becomes decisive for the spread of the entire Western synaesthesia tradition and the universal aesthetics of synaesthesia.

In fact, the various manifestations of synaesthesia are found

<sup>1</sup> Mylopoulos, M.I. and Ro, T. (2015) Synaesthesia: a Colorful Word with a Touching Sound? In M.J. Banissy, C. Jonas and C.R. Kadosh (eds) Synaesthesia (pp. 11). Frontiers Media SA.

<sup>2</sup> Butler, S. and Purves, A. (2014). Introduction: Synaesthesia and the Ancient Senses. In Sh. Butler and A. Purves (eds) Synaesthesia and the Ancient Senses (pp. 1). London and New York, Routledge.

in many parts of the cultural and artistic phenomena of romantic and post-romantic epochs, especially in the juncture of the developing poetical, musical and artistic expression. It is no coincidence that since the 19th century through the whole 20th synaesthesia became widespread in art practices century, and its research intensified in a wide range of scientific cognitive fields (aesthetics, art philosophy, art psychology, literary science, psychology, neurophysiology, sensory cultureology, sensory anthropology, sensory archaeology, etc.)

Over the last decade, new cognitive trends of synaesthesia phenomenon have emerged; a *crucial* review of previously dominated theories and, in general, synaesthesia studies have started with an attempt conceptually summarise the achievements and failures in this field. These radical shifts in theoretical thought are evidently demonstrated by the qualitative new programmed editions for the first time in history, dedicated to synaesthesia research as if generalising the earlier scientific achievements, such as the encyclopaedia of synaesthesia, prepared and published in Oxford six years ago: Julia Simner, Edward M. Hubbard (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Synesthesia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Other significant publications include: John E. Harrison, Simon Baron-Cohen (ed.), *Synaesthesia: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, Wiley, 1997; Ophelia Deroy, *Sensory Blending: On Synaesthesia and Related Phenomena*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017; María José de Córdoba<sup>1</sup>, Dina Ricco<sup>2</sup>, Sean A Day<sup>3</sup> (ed.),

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.google.lt/search?tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Mar%C3%ADa+Jos%C3%A9+de+C%C3%B3rdoba%22>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.google.lt/search?tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Dina+Ricc%C3%B2%22>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.google.lt/search?tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Sean+A+Day%22>

*Synaesthesia: Theoretical, artistic and scientific foundations*, Fundación Internacional artecittà, 2014; Aleksandra Maria Rogiwska, *Synaesthesia and Individual Differences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015 and others.

Influential theoretician Jonathan Cohen, summing up the shifts, which emerged in the synaesthesia research over the last few decades, remarkably observes that, despite undoubted achievements, this phenomenon remains puzzling: «it is very little known or completely unknown what synaesthesia is». However, even in such a vague paradigm of the current development of synaesthesia aesthetics, there are undoubtedly different directions of its effective development. It is no coincidence that some authors attempted to eliminate the above-mentioned uncertainties by determining definitions of synaesthesia and their classifications when others looked into the variety of its forms or to synaesthesia as a phenomenon of psychological nature, or as a question of being inherited or acquired, etc.<sup>1</sup>

Richard Shusterman, one of the most influential representatives of the modern pragmatic aesthetics, draws attention to the somaesthetics with a possibility of creating it in the form of continuation to Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* (1850/1758)<sup>2</sup> (Shusterman, 264–265), this way moving the sensations of sensorial interaction and origins of the aesthetics of synaesthesia in the body, rather than in the art outside the body. He is convinced that the aesthetics of synaesthesia has to encompass more fully the multiple

<sup>1</sup> *Cohen, J.* (2017) *Synesthetic Perception as Continuous with Ordinary Perception, or: We're All Synesthetes Now*. In (ed) O. Deroy *Sensory Blending: On Synesthesia and Related Phenomena*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>2</sup> *Shusterman, R.* (2000) *Pragmatist Aesthetics—Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.



sensorial interactions and their aesthetic values regardless of their field of expression. Here there comes an understanding that the aesthetics of synaesthesia is not just the aesthetics of the interactions of art as such or the branches of art. Restricted by artistic interactions, the aesthetics of synaesthesia remains a replica of traditional aesthetics, which represses the multilayeredness of the senses, unable to grasp and utilise the essential assumptions of aesthetic science.

The phenomenon of synaesthesia in Western civilisations was most often observed only in the context of aesthetic and artistic creation. In Eastern civilisation, synaesthesia (as it is understood in the East) covered much more cultural aspects, especially related to the sphere of aesthetic perception, art psychology, and the most sensitive emotional experiences. These aspects of synaesthesia theory and art practice were very important in Indian traditional aesthetics and were reflected not only in the Upanishads, but even in the fundamental «*rasa*» category of the famous aesthetic tractate *Natyashastra*, which appeared at the beginning of our era and contained very important semantic meanings to the phenomenon of synaesthesia, like «juices of life», «taste», «smell», «aesthetic experience», «aesthetic mood», «aesthetic pleasures» and others. The field of exploration of synaesthesia phenomena drawn by Upanishads and *Natyashastra* has originally revealed itself in the conceptions of Alankarika and the most famous representatives of the School of the Kashmir, strongly influenced by Tantrism.

No less important consideration to the problem of synaesthesia was also focused on East Asian Chinese (Daoist, Chan Buddhist, Tantric) and especially Japanese (Shinto, Zen Buddhist, Tantric) aesthetics and art theories, which always paid special attention to the psychological aspects of artistic interaction, which determined the attention in the fundamental categories of Japanese aesthetics to the problems of art psychology. Many similar things can be found in the Arabic-

Muslim world, which has gained great influence in Sufi aesthetics. However, the development of synaesthesia issues in the evolution of the aesthetic thought of the Eastern nations is a separate complex field of problems, which requires independent and thorough research, so at this moment it is deliberately left out of the scope of this research, continuing only with the Western aesthetic thought.

The main area of synaesthesia expression in the West was the problematic field of various types of art, first of all, the interaction between painting and music, and poetry and music, directly related to various psychophysiological reactions of the human body. The long way had to be covered over two centuries until synaesthesia was perceived not as something arriving out of the artistic plane but as something visiting this plane or being deliberately used there, depending on the worldview and aesthetic provisions of the respective period. Two periods of ascent are observed in the synaesthesia studies. They were the penultimate two decades of the 19th century: «beginning in the 1870s, the number of published studies about synaesthesia grew tenfold, reaching its peak in the decade of the 1890s»<sup>1</sup> (Harrison, 2001:27) and the last two decades of the 20th century. If the concept of synaesthesia emphasised romanticism at the end of the 19th century, so by the end of the 20th century, it emphasised the embodiment and sensorial alternativeness of synaesthesia. The 19th-century approach has led to the use of modernism-based programmed synaesthesia models, while at the end of the 20th century, the established model of the synaesthesia embodiment drew up the social, global and general human trajectories of synaesthesia, suggesting a specific synaesthetic epistemology. The latter shaped the new forms of synaesthesia in articulation and

<sup>1</sup> *Harrison, J. (2001) Synaesthesia: The Strangest Thing. Oxford: Oxford University Press.*

embodiment in culture.

It should be noted that the first two decades of the 21st century no longer emphasise synaesthesia as a subordinate art—the *anthropological* point of reference also changes the axis of the aesthetics of synaesthesia. Nowadays, the aesthetics of synaesthesia is generally perceived as a *universal part of the human sensorial system, which can occur in any cultural context*. It is important and remarkable that the synaesthetic event is the act of aesthetic perception, i.e. the synaesthetic experience essentially coincides with the aesthetic, so it only remains to articulate this coincidence with the help of philosophical aesthetics.

It is also worth saying that synaesthesia has not been pulled away from aesthetics in Eastern cultures. Therefore these reconstruction processes are more characteristic of Western synaesthesia concept. They appear even when Western scientists begin to investigate cases of synaesthesia in Eastern cultural structures (e.g., Chinese, Indian).<sup>1</sup> The mechanical model of synaesthesia, which has also come to Western aesthetics through the complex nature of the Greek word concept, which provided a dynamic connection between the conjoining parts, and through the Bertrand Castel's *clavesin oculaire*—the apotheosised thought experiment, with all its essence belonging to the mechanical imagery of Enlightenment, is a feature of Western synaesthesia and its aesthetics. Thus, the initial embodiment of synaesthesia in the artistic, artefact medium is an implication of this mechanicism.

It will be noted later in the article that the area of aesthetics created by Baumgarten in philosophy has also been constrained by the power of Enlightenment mechanics, encompassing the entire cultural field with belief to the power of construction, and

<sup>1</sup> *Sanford, W.A. (2009) Singing Krishna: Sound Becomes Sight in Paramanand's Poetry, SUNY Press.*

exactly like Romanticism this mechanical power of mind will be replaced again with all-encompassing spiritual continuity of faith. Although Baumgarten's work has clear assumptions, which accept aesthetics as an indivisible automatic process arising from human sensual continuity (these preconditions turn out to be close to the concept of spontaneous, involuntary synaesthesia, which has been developed at the end of the 20th century, but acceptable models of thinking of the 18th century hide such aesthetic origins of a thinker. The basic focus of his aesthetics concentrated on the sensation and the generated aesthetic experience. In general, the concept of «sensation» to the 18th-century philosophical array was a foreign body, and this situation was saved by Baumgarten giving a lower status to aesthetics than to gnoseology.

Interestingly, the *Oxford Handbook of Synesthesia*, published in Oxford in 2013, has a separate chapter entitled «What exactly is a sense»<sup>1</sup> (Keeley 2013: 941–959). So the fundamental matter, which enables the 18th-century aesthetics as an independent branch of philosophy and the 20th–21st-century synaesthesia as a union of the independent and enormous scientific object, is the sense. It is the sense as such, which was left in the margins of Western aesthetics and art, not carefully thought through, unfocused, accidental, and as if unnecessary for the existence of what exists only because of it. Meanwhile, the Western thinking tradition has designated thousands of pages to the problems of body-mind relationships. However, the sense-body relationship as such in aesthetics has been overlooked.

The ratio of senses and the base of their activity and body has not been thoroughly articulated for a long time, and today

<sup>1</sup> Keeley, B.L. (2013) What exactly is a sense. In (eds) J. Simner and E. Hubbard *Oxford Handbook of Synaesthesia* (pp. 941–959). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

still lacks this expression, even with a sufficiently large volume of synaesthesia research. The senses, sensations in the research of different directions and artistic practice and the speculations of philosophical aesthetics were usually operated as autonomous structures, as if they were detached from the body, disembodied, abstract or symbolic, acting as separate, independent elements, from which special cultural, aesthetic, artistic forms were constructed, i.e. imagined, metaphorically speaking, some kind of «sensory vault», where synaesthetic events can spread. It was this generalised, rationalised sense of autonomy, which was and still is one of the essential features of the phenomenon of Western synaesthesia and its aesthetics.

This fundamental assumption of discrete and autonomous senses in the aesthetic conception of synaesthesia is not yet properly understood and thought out. Research of this problematic field raises more questions than there are clearly eloquent answers. What could be called as aesthetics of synaesthesia was mostly the artistic programmes proclaiming the unity of senses to serve one or another aesthetic, even ethical purpose but with almost no indication of its sensorial existence and the foundation for functioning, principles and conditions.

It can be said that besides the theoretical reception of synaesthesia, the mosaic of modern Western aesthetics would be incomplete, incoherent, and the created images would remain unrecognisable. Besides, the emergence of synaesthesia in Western culture coincides with the beginning of the representational crisis, or otherwise looking at the significance of this event, merges with phenomena and problems of the representational crisis, reflects them and presents possible alternatives to their solution. Consequently, synaesthesia returns to the scene of Western aesthetics and art when their powers are almost exhausted and compromised. At that time when Western culture was shaken by strong dramas and fractures in the turn of the 19th–20th century, the intensified

search for new art ideas and forms of creative self-expression in the main centres of artistic culture, opened up new possibilities for art interaction. Therefore, the panorama of the emerging contemporary modernist art, as never before, was marked with the breakthroughs of synaesthesia. Accordingly, synaesthesia could not be only a peripheral compensation case for the old weakening Western aesthetic and artistic tradition (there were many and varied possibilities for such compensation), so it uncovered the overly distorted and restrained, repressed system of senses in traditional aesthetic structures.

Whereas the decades of the most turbulent artistic and aesthetic changes in the 19th–20th centuries are related to the release of various repressive mechanisms (one of the most striking examples is the emergence of psychoanalysis, which derived from the shifts of the fundamental Western thinking traditions towards the subconscious structures and the perception of the nature of human physiological existence labelled with the libido symbol), the rise of the importance of synaesthesia can also be seen as one of the forms of liberation of the human sensual being. This liberation of sensations begins in the middle of the 18th century and, with the culmination of modernist art and aesthetics, also comes the excitement of sensual experiences and the ultimate forms of its implementation. As the peak of this implementation, synaesthesia constantly appears from the depths of cultural subconsciousness in various configurations. Synaesthesia becomes the highest aesthetic category in romanticism and symbolism epochs, and even in the era of modernism, it is even proclaimed as a new stage of aesthetics, which conforms to the spirit of a new dynamic epoch where the highest human aesthetic, artistic inclinations and needs are fulfilled. Although it is not yet understood that this romantic, symbolic and modernist apotheosis of synaesthesia is the continuation of the mechanicism of Enlightenment in aesthetics, art, philosophy,

and even in the knowledge of embodiment and it should only be accepted as one of the stages of elaboration of synaesthesia and its aesthetics.

No human-specific phenomenon has attracted such enormous and ever-growing interest as synaesthesia, which, according to Julia Simner and Edward Hubbard, shows an incredible thing—not all individuals have the same understanding of the world (Simner, Hubbard 2013: xx).<sup>1</sup> The discovery of such a fact shakes the fundamental foundations of human self-consciousness, radically moves the so-called «consciousness problem of others» when acting and communicating in the world is guided by the notion that other people perceive the real world more less in the same way, which allows the coordination of the actions. However, since the first established cases of its historical empiricism such as Georg Tobias Ludwig Sachs in 1812, synaesthesia has already proved to be closed and immanent to such extent that it cannot be guessed, nor decoded, nor to be communicated. It is even more surprising why, for so long, synaesthesia, being closed for communication and with no elementary constants found, could have been so desirable and so widely used in Western art.

Here the 18th-century origin of rationalism can be felt again, which mechanically connects all possible elements to processes and structures, without going deeper into their unarticulated individuality, which is probably the essence of the concept of Eastern synaesthesia (in the Japanese language there is no such concept corresponding to Western synaesthesia). The unarticulated, nonlinear individuality in synaesthesia, just like in aesthetics, has been perceived and recognised only in the 21st century after facing the dynamic, connective, continuous

<sup>1</sup> *Simner, J. and Hubbard, E. M. (2013) Overview of Terminology and Findings. In (eds) J. Simner and E. Hubbard Oxford Handbook of Synaesthesia (pp. xx). Oxford: Oxford University Press.*

and communicative structure of megasocium and its volume, in which the narrowly understood rationalism of Enlightenment could hardly function. The larger the society is, the more irrational it is, the more it reveals the nonlinear features of human nature.

It is no coincidence that the strongest and brightest prospects of synaesthesia in the third decade of the 21st century are foreseen precisely in the socio-cultural, socio-anthropological medium (Howes, Classen, 2013)<sup>1</sup>, accepting that the artistic dimension has also become an unstructured mega dimension for aesthetic perception. It can be assumed that the aesthetics of synaesthesia is a distinct readiness to perceive artistic structures, which are completely new with their origins and their managed contexts. Such aesthetics of synaesthesia could no longer remain as narrow speculative aesthetics of local artistic phenomena. It may have remained suchlike (although with reservations) until the 19th–20th century, but its strange expansion in the last century shows quite a different picture.

Huge numbers of communicating human populations, which have not existed until now, shift the exploitation of human sensorial system differently also from an aesthetic aspect. Equally, scientific research reveals that synaesthesia constants become synchronised particularly through the large numbers of populations. More and more individuals are discovered who more or less identically understand sensorial interactions (currently 150 synaesthetic combinations occurring in the population are found). Therefore, looking at the perspectives of art and aesthetics in the coming decades of the 21st century, the aesthetics of synaesthesia cannot be confined as an inert and retrospective phenomenon. In the way,

<sup>1</sup> *Howes, D. and Classen, C. (2013) Ways of Sensing–Understanding the Senses In Society. London and New York: Routledge.*



synaesthesia was involved or prevailed in the 19th or 20th century in an aesthetic environment, and it turns out to be increasingly distinct from how it appears in the 21st century in human sensorial activity. One of the most prominent features of the integration of synaesthesia in Western culture is that, over time, it progressively blends and becomes identical to aesthetic experience, and more precisely, with this process the repressed and disrupted continuity of Western aesthetics comes back.

Synaesthesia does not coincide with the passive, uninterested act of aesthetic observation, which was thoroughly explained in German idealistic aesthetics, especially by Immanuel Kant. Synaesthesia approaches the so-called non-classical aesthetics and philosophy of art (Arthur Schopenhauer, Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson), relaxing the vital powers of human experience, which are subordinate to the irrational elements of will, intuition, spontaneous creativity of the spirit and exalt the existential experience of an individual. This is also confirmed by the fact that already in the middle of the 19th century, in line with the ideals of romanticism, it was perceived and accepted that synaesthesia is extremely individual, authentic and unrepeatable, even the experience of an emphatically subjective nature is not communicated.

Although romanticism artists were still allured by the elitist, subjective and solipsist model of synaesthesia, symbolism has given it a shape of the new announced message, an invitation, a promise, speaking of which it is the beginning of consolidation of a special romantic elite synaesthesia pattern, reserving selectivity, uniqueness, and social exclusion to synaesthetic experience until present day. It should be noted that the elitism of synaesthesia is one of the most visible features, differentiating the aesthetics of synaesthesia of romanticism, and especially of symbolism and partly of the modernism, and deserves separate theoretical attention.

The relevance of the aesthetics of synaesthesia is also closely related to the change of the conception of the individual. The phenomenon of synaesthesia could only play an important role after the formation of certain concepts of inner human experience, his feelings, empathy and senses. It is debatable how much power these new concepts have gained in society, how far they have become widely accepted, universal and exciting. The relevance of synaesthesia in a certain period depends on a dual plan: how a person is assessed, his or her individual sensual and sensorial experience, and how clearly the concept of synaesthesia has been formulated to become the basis for variations of individual perception. If to start with romanticism, both plans were well formed and started to coincide.

It can be assumed that by no means synaesthesia is not a superficial ripple of aesthetics and artistic shifts, on the contrary, it is a universal phenomenon, fundamentally challenging the structure of human senses, on which the Western aesthetics rests more or less uniform. Therefore, the exploration of theoretical concepts, manifests and other programme documents, their selection from a multitude of synaesthesia-based artistic and cultural phenomena, would reveal one of the fundamental aspects underlying the outline of Western aesthetics and art theory. The universality of the meaning of synaesthesia, the spontaneity of its manifestations, aesthetic plasticity, semantic capacity and other spacious dimensions are not a coincidence, error or compensation of Western aesthetics. The artistic approach connecting all senses has been alien to Western aesthetics for quite some time, and therefore it was discarded, so one of the challenges of this study is the need to legitimise it in principle.

It is worth to mention that there is no fundamental difference in modern synaesthesia epistemology between the West and the East, universalist tendencies tend no longer form opposition structures, but there are some differences in the

epistemological assumptions of synaesthesia and especially in the aesthetics of synaesthesia. Here is an interesting parallel. Until the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the neurophysiological synaesthesia paradigm developed by the US scientist, neurologist Richard Cytowico, who has dedicated his life to the study of synaesthesia, was the most influential in the world. From the 8th decade of the 20th century the 1980s, creator of this astounding paradigm turned the eyes of science and art to synaesthesia as a very important but natural feature of the human sensorial system. A closer look into the foundations of Cytowico's theory distinguishes the influence of non-classical philosophy (e.g. Arthur Schopenhauer) of the 19th century, as well as early pragmatic aesthetics (John Dewey), the phenomenology of religion, psychedelics, mystical experience, Zen meditation and others.<sup>1</sup> Aesthetics and art occupy an exceptional place in Cytowico's theory, and his whole theory is essentially directed to expand and stir up the inert Western concept of aesthetics. Since the second decade of the 21st century, the new wave of scientific interest for synaesthesia is also associated with the theory of another outstanding personality, the Indian scientist and neurologist Vilayanur Subramanian Ramachandran, considered to be the most renowned neuroscience representative of the present, which, unlike Cytowico's theory, is not exclusively dedicated to the study of synaesthesia. It gives special attention to this mysterious sensorial phenomenon and opens up synaesthesia in the enormous context of modern neuroscience, culture and art, covering both the East and the West.<sup>2</sup> Again, attention should be drawn to the fact that Ramachandran's synaesthesia

<sup>1</sup> *Cytowic, R.E. (2002) Synaesthesia: A Union of the Senses. The MIT Press: A Bradford Book.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ramachandran, V.S. (2011) The Tell-Tale Brain: Unlocking the Mystery of Human Nature. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.*

research is exclusively used to seeing all the aesthetics and art through synaesthesia prism, thus assessing the place and influence of synaesthesia on the everyday life of a person and the daily aesthetic experience.

In turn, synaesthesia encourages dialogue, because, as a special phenomenon, it is primarily a peculiar, non-compromising carrier of aesthetic. It is no coincidence that artistic manifestations of synaesthesia appeared in art history much earlier than the existence of such a phenomenon was empirically confirmed, even before synaesthesia was legalised as an authentic experience of the individual. However, Douglas Kahn<sup>1</sup> (Kahn, 1999:120) states that synaesthetic systems were legitimised because of the existence of genuine synesthetes and their authentic experience, no matter how little was known and confirmed. At the beginning of the 20th century, artists had a high interest in the phenomenon of synaesthesia, and because of the influence of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche's musical ideas, a lot of influential concepts of modernist art opened up and urged scholars of various fields to review the inertial concepts of synaesthesia and try to move it from pathology, *à la mode* of 1890, or at least out of cultural marginalism. It is important that this process, even in the postmodern culture, under the influence of extremely pluralistic attitudes, is far from being exhausted.

The abundant repositories of modern synaesthesia research reveal that much of the synaesthetic experience has aesthetic value to an individual (not necessarily synaesthetic experience has to be accepted as one of the main categories of classical aesthetics—the beauty, although this approach was followed, for example, by I. Richards<sup>2</sup> and Alfred North Whitehead<sup>3</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> Kahn, D. (1999) *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press.

<sup>2</sup> Richards, I.A. (1922) *The Foundations of Aesthetics*. George Allen and

In other words, synaesthesia complements and extends the human aesthetic existence. Moreover, if empirical research, statistics, and aesthetics of pragmatism are currently used to support this, then artistic-central, panaesthetic epochs, which held art as one of the essential areas of human existence, embodied and established synaesthesia in artworks. Since art has now lost its essence, identity (institutional art theories of George Dickie, Arthur Danto, etc.), cultural universality and significance, the consistent continuity of individual art branches, as it is emphasised, for example, by the widely escalated end of painting (then how it is to speak about the unity of arts, the present-day ideal of romanticism and symbolism), the aesthetics of synaesthesia or articulated synaesthetic aesthetics also had to move out from art and colonise other areas of everyday human existence.

Synaesthesia occupies an exceptional position in human self-esteem. In philosophy and aesthetics, regard to synaesthesia has just begun to rise. The phenomenon of synaesthesia is potentially interesting from the point of view of philosophy for several reasons. One reason is that proof of the existence of an intermodal phenomenon of sensations can affect the solution of the problem of the individualisation of philosophical senses, as well as the answers to such tricky questions about the relationship between individual senses and the details of the experience of each sensorial modality. Another important relevance in reasoning for the philosophical approach to synaesthesia is that sensorial systems, such as sight or hearing, are usually considered as paradigms of modular cognitive systems. Simply, these systems cannot be rationally influenced by beliefs or other high-level cognitive states, or

Unwin: London.

<sup>3</sup> Whitehead, A. N. (1920) *The Concept of Nature*. London: Cambridge University Press.

even affected by other parts of the perception system. Until recently, philosophers and psychologists have discussed whether synaesthesia is a mistake in such cognitive systems, or, on the contrary, synaesthetes use the possibilities of an additional perception model compared to individuals without this feature. A more in-depth look at these intriguing debates would reveal a hierarchical derivative specific to romanticism and symbolism flourishing between the synaesthesia as a psychic, open to transcendence, i.e. additional extraordinary awareness, and the state of daily, pragmatic, «blind» senses. For example, Fiona Macpherson<sup>1</sup> (2007:65) assumes that if philosophical theories match the research of synaesthesia in different theoretical contexts, it can be expected that the synaesthetic experience at the epistemological and even ontological level is identical to the non-synaesthetic.

Finally, there is a sequence of other equally important questions. Is the aesthetic value of the synaesthetic experience recognised and defined as such, or is it constructed? How is the aesthetic concept of synaesthesia integrated into programmes of individual art movements? What place (secondary or main) does it occupy? What makes synaesthetic experience aesthetic? Alternatively, does the synaesthetic element give the object, including the object of art, aesthetic value? Has the synaesthetic experience of an artwork been identified with its aesthetic experience? I.e., is the synaesthetic experience an alternative to aesthetic experience or a parallel?

Each of the raised questions is very complex and needs to be discussed in detail. Historical and cultural circumstances have led Western cultural and scientific synaesthesia being left aside

<sup>1</sup> *Macpherson, F. (2007) Synaesthesia, Functionalism and Phenomenology. In (eds) M. Marraffa, M. De Caro and F. Ferretti Cartographies of the mind–philosophy and psychology in intersection (pp. 65–68). Series: Studies in Brain and Mind, (4), Springer.*

as a strange, incomplete, and inadequately cognisable coincidence. However, this gap may turn into a niche with a unique and realistic structure—the aesthetics of synaesthesia. To justify this position, it is important to select and systematise facts in the field of art and culture history, which diversity and combinations could have led to the existence of a distinct aesthetic strain, not like a peripheral branch (like in a conversation about the aestheticisation of specific human activities, which have spread after the shifts aesthetics after 1980), but like the fundamental difference resulting from the dual mode of sensation: differentiated and unified.

Western aesthetics is the aesthetics of divided senses. This difference is particularly evident when compared to the concepts of aesthetics of the Eastern nations (Indians, Chinese, Japanese). Western aesthetics is aesthetics of divided senses, once made or naturally predetermined fatal choice—selecting a mosaic of individual senses instead of their conglomeration. This point of choice is hardly traceable, because the treatment of this choice, as far as it can be found in the sources, is culturally conditional and polished. So it is not too abstract to talk about the aesthetics of choice, which has formed the whole landscape of Western aesthetics, even if this choice is an anonymous collision or breakthrough of historical-cultural currents. Examining these problems, rather often the negativity of the synaesthesia phenomenon was emphasised, its possibility was shown as suspicious, even appealing to the basic concept of «beauty» of classical aesthetics stating that the creation with confused senses becomes ugly. It is surprising that reflections of this initial turning in the interpretation of synaesthesia are found in the works of Arthur Schopenhauer, which were spiritually close to romanticism and the flourishing of its synaesthetic aesthetics, where the repulsion to the entanglement of sensations can be seen. However, in the culmination of already revolutionary tensions in the classical modernism art, the synaesthetic flow becomes almost a major

aesthetic category expressing its innovative maximalist attitudes. It is amazing what kind of modulation it acquires, for example, in abstractionism or futurism, this once again shows that synaesthesia marks a fundamental, not fully developed opportunity of Western aesthetic.

There is a suspicion that synaesthesia is hidden in the very heart of traditional aesthetics, so we cannot tear it away and look at it through the prism of the aesthetics. By no means, synaesthesia is not a single object among many others, actually or potentially aesthetic objects. Also, synaesthesia is not the single art practice among many art practices or theories. Expression «aesthetics of synaesthesia and the theory of art» can only foresee one more aesthetically acclaimed research object. However, the package of linguistic expressions seems to be insufficient to reverse the connotation in a particular direction to show that synaesthesia grows out of the array of aesthetics and its stem, wraps it around, questions it and essentially shows its disharmony and boundaries and variability.

In such a subtle reversal of thought lies the problem, which is often overlooked in the research of synaesthesia and art relationship. Usually, synaesthesia and its manifestations in art and aesthetics are studied on the basis of established concepts of aesthetics, their periodisation and generally accepted concepts. However, assuming that synaesthesia is a potential, but unselected and displaced direction of traditional Western aesthetics, such research finds itself at least in the trap of the logic, i.e. it has to be defined what is searchable with what has been used for the search. Moreover, the definition appears to be the one, arriving from the same traditional aesthetic positions. However, it is indeed possible to find an alternative line of aesthetic development, especially becoming more apparent from the beginning of romanticism to the postmodern, *resting on a deep and primaeval plan of Western aesthetics*.

In the case of synaesthesia, there is a presumption that synaesthesia goes beyond the significant postulates of such



aesthetics, such as the purity and discreteness of sensations, the attribution of aesthetic experience from cognitive and so on. Primarily aesthetics were formed to define and explore certain sensorial models and their systems, which are embodied among other things. However, as the Western tradition of aesthetics evolves, everything that has pointed to corporeality, sensitivity and sensuality is pushed to the periphery of such aesthetics and even beyond it.

Therefore, aesthetics and art theories, which in one way or another sought to restore these sensory losses, began to emerge in the Western aesthetic horizon. Synaesthesia began to penetrate through the thick layer of traditional aesthetics indirectly, but emergence and formation of various new, buffered branches of the same aesthetics eventually changed it, especially since the moment when it became possible rationally mark the appearance of so-called non-classical aesthetics. Such aesthetic drift was accompanied by the corresponding metamorphosis of the art. It can be asserted that the appearance of synaesthesia in the traditional panorama of Western aesthetics was prepared by the fundamental changes of the same aesthetics, crushing many of its artificially strengthened, historically conditional and contingent postulates. It is because of such an automatic process that synaesthetic aesthetics and art theory have become possible.

Here some other important questions arise. What assumptions would be appropriate if to speak of the specific situation of synaesthesia in Western classical aesthetics, of its strange silences or sudden distinctions in the history of ideas and art? What are these assumptions: cultural, anthropological, historical, aesthetic etc.? What other supports are needed to sense this ambiguous, non-homogeneous, even unnatural state of synaesthesia in Western aesthetics and cultural tradition? Where does the alienation of synaesthesia, its disconnectedness, transcendence, and ultimately the speculative nature of its ontological nature, leaps of its

rejection or apotheosis come from? The state of synaesthesia in aesthetics is not natural, but where do the origins of this unnaturality lie? Clearly, they lie not in the nature of the phenomenon itself, if to obey the essentialism, but in the situation of this phenomenon. However, what determines the specific situation of synaesthesia in the present case in aesthetics? Why is the need to constantly declare the confirmation of syntheses of the senses and arts, the global system, integrity, necessity for integrity and requirements?

Although it is defined as an exchange of immanent capacity for individual senses («the transfer of one-sensation modality to modality of another sensation», etc.), exchange, linkage (each of the concepts draws a different trajectory of the link of synaesthetic sensations, but this is not yet considered in the theoretical dispersion of synaesthesia, and the linguistic contour of the synaesthetic relationship is even more neglected), but most often referred to as non-artistic synthesis, which is the roughest stage of synaesthesia articulation. However, synaesthesia is referred to and perceived as something above the sensations, a particular «superstructure», in which symbolic exchanges can be carried out. The modality of the sensation and its immanent ability to experience being is too multilayered, holistic, undifferentiated in itself, and possibly appearing only through the entirety of sensations, then in this aspect synaesthesia is no longer reflected and becomes intangible when it appears in the cluster of modalities, which are considered as objects.

Aesthetics is a normative rule. By its very nature, the division of arts according to material and sensation is normative. The intentions of aesthetics of synaesthesia, which are still strongly expressed in the articulations of romanticism, symbolism, modernism, and even postmodernism, emphasising the hierarchy, will eventually liberate itself from these principles of classical Western aesthetics and move to a fundamentally new stage of art and aesthetics

development. The internal transformations of aesthetics of synaesthesia testify its autonomy, necessity and vitality, challenge conceptual differences in perceptions of senses and arts, avoiding the position of undifferentiated aesthetics, but raising new or expanding rudimentary ways of aesthetical perception.

Precisely, philosophical and aesthetic methods, which rejected the spatial and temporal distance between the different thresholds of presence and experience (intuitionism, phenomenology, partly post-structuralism), the best felt the synaesthetic pulsation beyond the distinctions (types of art, sensory moduses, distancing of critical positions). The aesthetics of synaesthesia are always a halfway, equilibrium, bargain, even at the heart of denial. Synaesthesia is the relativity of traditional aesthetics, its liberation and staying alert in any state of the art.

Synaesthesia is an alert, translucent, transparent entity of the historical ideas, which pulsates, sometimes with purposeful expression, but never appears clearly enough.

The feeling is free from the associations; it is the initial material of the aesthetic relationship. Therefore, aesthetics and art theory can only be fundamentally renewed by focusing on the concept of sensation, its change and potential. Since the 19th century, the fastest developing conception is the concept of the unity of the senses (and of the arts), unfolding all the theories of synaesthesia. The possibility that the perception of senses, currently existing only in the latent state, can arise and become relevant (and in this case, synaesthesia due to its *actuality* has flourished over the last two centuries) cannot be rejected, and even it can become necessary for the formation of a living, ever-changing context of aesthetics.

The founding of the aesthetics of synaesthesia is not the intention to create an indestructible *aesthesia/syn-aesthesia* dichotomy, i.e. it is not intended to contrast the aesthetics of synaesthesia to aesthetics as such, just like refusing of its

particularity and the existence of aesthetics as a separate part of the whole, especially a marginal one. The aesthetics of synaesthesia is the latent state of the same Western aesthetics and its tradition.

Starting from the 19th century and at the present time, the sensorial and aesthetic position of synaesthesia has become the most influential, most developed, all-encompassing, breaking out from the latent state (which can be identified as fragmentary derivatives of the synthesis of senses and arts, inclusions in art history; and indeed, it may be assumed that retrospective recording of synaesthesia samples is indeed the proof of the existence of such latent synaesthesia state in the culture), which emerges in the bright forms of symbolic, modernist, postmodernist art. The increasing momentum of synaesthesia intensity can be seen here. There is undoubtedly another potential, «dormant», irrelevant (what factors can suddenly turn them into the actual and developing?) concepts of sensorial states, which can be activated in the culture at any time and emerge in new, alternative forms. *An-aesthesia*, *hyper-aesthesia* and other sensorial/aesthetic states appear in fragments but periodically in aesthetics, cultureology and anthropology. What does this mean?

By presupposing the above mentioned hypothetical sensorial and aesthetic states, the situation of synaesthesia and its aesthetics can be better understood. After all, it is also a cultural idea, which has suddenly passed from latent to active and progressive state, and it can return into a passive, irrelevant state at any time. Although synaesthesia is seen currently as an energetic challenge to the outdated tradition of Western aesthetics, the prospect that the synaesthesia paradigm may also experience the sunset cannot be excluded. The transformations of contemporary art, which are directly related to the potential of synaesthesia and which continue exploiting it, in turn, actuate its development. The potential of synaesthesia cannot be absolutised and indiscriminately

claimed that the aesthetic potential of synaesthesia would never exhaust itself. It is not known what activates and moves sensorial paradigms; these studies have just started in the grounds of Western humanities.

Therefore, synaesthesia should be considered and studied not as an absolute but as one of the possible sensorial/aesthetic paradigms of the Western world. The uncritical exaltation of synaesthesia, which is now characteristic of many artistic and theoretical manifestations, is indeed a heritage of romanticism. In this perspective, synaesthesia is given a profile of a wave, rolling over the human sensorium and creativity. The spread of synaesthesia, named under the metaphor of wave, can trigger the new phenomena or fade away, leaving the aesthetics of synaesthesia open to development and possible termination. Meanwhile, a theoretical or plastic form of synaesthetic thought/artefact with strict boundaries is meant to be pushed aside from the path of the history of ideas. Therefore, when the spread of aesthetics of synaesthesia and art theory is critically evaluated, its instability, plasticity, the conditionality of individual manifestations, incompleteness and uncertainty has to be kept in mind.

Obviously, the aesthetics of synaesthesia and art theory embody and conceptualise many artistic and aesthetic phenomena as well as concepts, which are not included in the area of attention of classical aesthetics. Although the development of synaesthesia at a certain stage can be observed and confirmed as a coherent sequence of chronological events and concepts, the aesthetics of synaesthesia appears as a self-reflective phenomenon of the history of ideas, which oversteps the historicity in constantly changing shapes.

Synaesthesia often remains outside the epistemological boundaries of the aesthetic field. The synaesthetic experience and characteristics of the artwork implicated by synaesthesia are not considered as aesthetic, resulting from this unique phenomenon. Synaesthetic works, their aesthetic quality, the

position in the totality of arts are usually considered on the categorical basis of the classical aesthetic system. Meanwhile, if to take synaesthesia as an exclusive, authentic, biological or psychological experience, or interpret synaesthesia as an intellectual synthesis of senses and media, in both cases it transcends the boundaries of traditional aesthetic categories, disrupts a well-established discourse between the art philosophy and aesthetics with a whole range of unresolved issues indicating inadequacy of such access.

Synaesthesia cannot cope inside a narrow axiological aesthetic space, so it is still difficult to determine what it expresses and what its value is for human experience. Synaesthesia and the artwork concept of being a finite and passive artefact, typical to classical aesthetic attitudes, does not exhaust it. It can be said that the synaesthetic work is an open work—*opera aperta*—if to rely on the concept of Umberto Eco, but the openness of the synaesthetic work is deeper than the dichotomous open/closed or active/passive divide. Finally, the phenomenon of synaesthesia is not eliminated by the contemporary concept of interactivity in aesthetics, although there are promising liberalisations in theatrical, cinema, musical gesture, music embeddedness and other theoretical planes. In these cases, the concept of synaesthesia reveals a highly undifferentiated level of sensorial and aesthetic relations and partly overcomes conceptual contradictions, such as the problem of the sense of divisibility and the totality, and because of such a connotation, the concept of synaesthesia can be more often observed in the context of postmodern aesthetics.

Such understanding of synaesthesia highlights the beginning of the affect, involuntariness, spontaneity, characteristic to the aesthetic experience, so the origin of the aesthetics of synaesthesia was related to the fundamental transformation of Western philosophy, emphasising the authenticity, spontaneity, uncontrollability and flow of human being and experience. The fundamental principle of Western

aesthetics tradition to treat sensorial data as structures, things opened up. Therefore the inequality of feelings at first is assessed by their ability to form stable aesthetic layers and forms.

The senses and sensations, in any case, should remain (become) the axiom of aesthetics. However, the tradition of Western aesthetics was expanding for a long time through the assumption of strange insensitivity, in general, the absence of any, solid or partly assembled sensorium. The latter was usually used only for epistemological whims. The sensations are transformed into empirical vassals, while the basis and vector of aesthetic experience are often left unclear in the field of aesthetics. Are the senses so transparent and so unobtrusive that they can be ignored in the universal processes of aesthetic discourse? The tradition of aesthetics emerged as a silent denial of sensuality, but its critique periodically erupted in one form or another. The essential contribution of synaesthesia changing the paradigm of the traditional Western aesthetics would be the return of the senses as such.

Synaesthesia does not coincide with the *passive*, uninterested aesthetic observation act, which was broadened by the German idealistic aesthetics, especially by Immanuel Kant. Baumgarten's contribution to aesthetics is revolutionary because it has recognised the aesthetic experience as being of bright and sensorial rather than intellectually representational or cognitive nature<sup>1</sup> (Guyer, 2005:269). Baumgarten considered aesthetic goals a necessity to improve sensorial knowledge as such. He explained the aesthetic pleasure not as a sensorial perception of perfection but as its improvement. However, laying the foundation of aesthetics on a hard-to-define sensorial system is like constructing something

<sup>1</sup> Guyer, P. (2005) Values of beauty—historical essays in aesthetics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 269.

in a swamp. Baumgarten's task of improving sensorial experience led to special educational aesthetics. However, this project was soon interrupted by the rationalisation of aesthetics. The rationalist line, saturated with the attitudes of the Enlightenment, separated Western aesthetics from its synaesthetic foundations and the aesthetics of synaesthesia and pushed it into the latent state for a long time.

### *Conclusions*

After briefly discussing the paradigmatic attitudes of classical and new synaesthesia and the radical theoretical transformations, which emerged in recent decades, there is a move on to the formulation of principal conclusions. First of all, the study has shown that synaesthesia has always been sidelined in the tradition of Western culture, aesthetic thought and art practices, as a path to the great but unused potential for creative activity, although retrospectively it can be traced in many different contexts and sources. Such a latent state of synaesthesia is neither casually nor sequentially evolved but probably imposed by the formulated conventions along the path of repressive development of Western civilisation.

Secondly, since Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* (1750/1758), from it and beyond (German romanticism, neo-romanticism, symbolism, the tradition of British sensualism) the aesthetics were discovered as a new conscious and legitimised area of human experience and thought it had to rise as *especially pure sensorial and ultimately corporal and intellectual discipline*. However, as a separate and distinctive field of thought in the age of rationalism and prosperity especially of German philosophy of classical idealism, this field of aesthetics did not escape the influence of the dominating ideological medium, which imperceptibly permeated and overwhelmed the construction of synaesthesia theory projects by Baumgarten and his abundant German successors. Probably, this penetration of rationalism in the aesthetic field has led to its further



distancing from the non-tactile sensual experience towards artificial structures, which represent the mind but not the sensual experience. Thus, while Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* remains the signpost of the Western aesthetic origins (actually, quite symbolic), its potential and primary tasks after the establishment of suggestive non-classical and romantic art philosophy projects, which indulged the selfishness of artists, have almost been forgotten, and the consistent reception of formulated ideas has also ceased, and it became distorted by the trend of scientist, pragmatic, neo-positive aesthetic theories.

And finally, despite the many ideological transformations, which were discussed earlier, it can be acknowledged that the tension of aesthetics of synaesthesia as the of deep sensorial and corporal discipline remains in the evolution of Western art and constantly reveals its intrinsic rebellions, as if the very nature of aesthetics continually rose against its assumed constraints. This happens in constantly rising epistemic fractures, and especially in the 20th-century continuing artistic outbreaks of art self-denial, such as the problem mentioned above of anti-essentialist art theories, responding to Georg Hegel's end of the artistic expression, which, although perceived very naturally, expresses paradoxical tightness and inadequacy of Western aesthetics.

Thus, sensuality in itself in Western aesthetics remained like a forbidden marginal area destroying the garden of regular Hegelian systems and violating the universal discipline of aesthetics. Because of the fact that the spread of aesthetics was developing separately from the senses, the new attention determined a rather grotesque theoretical situation, a kind of «added aesthetics», «aesthetics of individual senses», concerned with the rehabilitation of individual sensory entities, as if it would not have anything in common with the realisation of the essence of aesthetics, or as if a common array of aesthetics would never have arisen as a reflection on the

sensory act. For the aesthetics of synaesthesia, such a theoretical slope is dangerous, because there is a tendency to create it as an added and peripheral, rather than fundamental, critical aesthetics. That is why talking about the senses and sensations in aesthetics is cautiously strange.

Indeed, the sensation as a subject of theoretical dispersion and later its avoidance in the aesthetics of Western synaesthesia shows the anomalous state of the latter. Can synaesthesia smooth out this distortion, if it is not questioned that, in the aesthetics of synaesthesia but only on a different scale, the fundamental deformities of Western aesthetics repeat themselves? Such synaesthesia and its aesthetics could easily continue even extending it beyond the perspective of traditional aesthetics. Hence, the aesthetics of synaesthesia, as a radical contradiction of exhausted classical aesthetics, must be introduced by reflecting on the meaning and position of the senses as such, challenging the assumptions, which distort this perception, recognising that synaesthesia is a purely sensorial phenomenon and not merely a result of imagination and intelligence. Fundamental rehabilitation of the senses in the theoretical field of the current aesthetic of synaesthesia would irreversibly shift its axis, stimulate new methods of artistic perception and analysis, new principles of aesthetic experience and create new concepts. However, it may also be that synaesthesia with its aesthetic potential will be confined inside the eroding circle; in order to create a new aesthetics based on synaesthesia, it is necessary to justify the presence and necessity of synaesthesia in the origins of aesthetics.

### **References**

- Banissy, M.J., Jonas C. Kadosh C.R. (2014) Synaesthesia: an Introduction. In M.J. Banissy, C. Jonas and C.R. Kadosh, (eds), Synaesthesia (pp. 5) 5 (1414). Frontiers Media SA.*
- Butler Sh. and Purves, A. (2013) Introduction: Synaesthesia and the Ancient Senses. In Sh. Butler and A. Purves (eds) Synaesthesia and the Ancient Senses (pp. 1). Durham: Acumen.*

- Butler, S. and Purves, A. (2014). Introduction: Synaesthesia and the Ancient Senses. In Sh. Butler and A. Purves (eds) *Synaesthesia and the Ancient Senses* (pp. 1). London and New York, Routledge.
- Campan, C. Van and Froger, C. (2003) Personal Profiles of Color Synesthesia: Developing a Testing Method for Artists and Scientists, *LEONARDO*, 36 (4), 291.
- Cytowic, R.E. (2002) *Synaesthesia: A Union of the Senses*. The MIT Press: A Bradford Book.
- Cohen, J. (2017) Synesthetic Perception as Continuous with Ordinary Perception, or: We're All Synesthetes Now. In (ed) O. Deroy *Sensory Blending: On Synesthesia and Related Phenomena*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Guyer, P. (2005) *Values of beauty—historical essays in aesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Harrison, J. (2001) *Synaesthesia: The Strangest Thing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Howes, D. and Classen, C. (2013) *Ways of Sensing—Understanding the Senses In Society*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hung, Wan-Yu (2011) *Investigation Into the Underlying Linguistic Cues of Chinese Synaesthesia*. University of Edinburgh.
- Kahn, D. (1999) *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press.
- Keeley, B.L. (2013) What exactly is a sense. In (eds) J. Simner and E. Hubbard *Oxford Handbook of Synaesthesia* (pp. 941–959). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Macpherson, F. (2007) Synaesthesia, Functionalism and Phenomenology. In (eds) M. Marraffa, M. De Caro and F. Ferretti *Cartographies of the mind—philosophy and psychology in intersection* (pp. 65–68). Series: Studies in Brain and Mind, (4), Springer.
- Mylopoulos, M.I. and Ro, T. (2015) Synaesthesia: a Colorful Word with a Touching Sound? In M.J. Banissy, C. Jonas and C.R. Kadosh (eds) *Synaesthesia* (pp. 11). Frontiers Media SA.
- Ramachandran, V.S. (2011) *The Tell-Tale Brain: Unlocking the Mystery of Human Nature*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Richards, I.A. (1922) *The Foundations of Aesthetics*. George Allen and Unwin: London.
- Sanford, W.A. (2009) *Singing Krishna: Sound Becomes Sight in Paramanand's Poetry*, SUNY Press.
- Shusterman, R. (2000) *Pragmatist Aesthetics—Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Simner, J. (2015) Why are there different types of synesthete? In M.J. Banissy, C. Jonas and C.R. Kadosh (eds) *Synaesthesia* (pp. 8).

Frontiers Media SA.

*Simner, J. and Hubbard, E. M. (2013) Overview of Terminology and Findings. In (eds) J. Simner and E. Hubbard Oxford Handbook of Synaesthesia (pp. xx). Oxford: Oxford University Press.*

*Tsur, R. (2007) Synaesthesia as a Neuropsychological and a Literary Phenomenon, Issues in Literary Synaesthesia, Spring, 41 (1), 30.*

*Whitehead, A. N. (1920) The Concept of Nature. London: Cambridge University Press.*