

ARTUR OLEŚ
REPOSTER

Doctoral dissertation
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SUMMARY



REPOSTER

My doctoral dissertation focuses on the socio-technological phenomena and changes over the last decade. The issues that define them are part of the mainstream but my view is that their impact on our culture and public perception goes beyond that.

The interpretive paths for the title Reposter lead in several directions, through many contexts of potential meanings and connections. The first direction comes to mind immediately – the title derives from the word ‘to repost’, or to share content created by another internet user. What becomes crucial in the cognitive process in this case are the issues of ownership, copying, appropriation, placing in contexts different from the original, criticism and judgement but also sharing, shared or individual opinion, point of view as well as showing solidarity, appreciation, understanding and that we can relate to what has been said. In this sense, ‘reposter’ may be understood in the context of a subject acting as curator, populariser and promoter. The defining factors are their motives and the space and context in which the sharing takes place. The function of this subject can be viewed in terms of publishing or exhibiting, which offer opportunities for circulation and exposure, and a chance at creating your own selection.

One visual representation of the title word is ‘re:poster’, meaning a form of reaction or reference to a comment made by a subject who posted some content, i.e. a poster. What comes to the fore here is the nature of the response, which may or may not be

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critical of the source and can make a literal reference to the source or elaborate on it.

Another potential path of interpretation involves a mutation of the word 'poster', understood as a visual, artistic or informational form in an online or digital environment. Often seen in technological terms as a time-based media, it is no longer defined solely by the image but also through reference to a timeline.

'Reposter' is therefore a contemporary form of expression in which the author addresses the source in a direct way. They try to understand and make their own interpretation of the source, often taking a critical stance towards it but, above all, always placing it in a new context. They make a statement through borrowing, so far known as 'quotation', which is particularly justified today, when it is often said that everything has already been done. It may seem that the only promising forms are hybrid ones, incorporating both the achievements of the past and the present influences.

In the following chapters of my dissertation I delineate the cultural and technological landscape that has determined the way society functions today, in my opinion. In 'Protonet' I describe my experience of understanding culture in the pre-internet era, when every artefact was incredibly important to my generation, right up until the moment when the evolution of the online distribution of cultural assets led to the present situation where cultural tastes are shaped by marketing mechanisms. The chapter 'Kryptoutopia' (Crypto Utopia) is devoted to the peculiarity of the now-popular blockchain technology, which has taken the art world by storm in recent months and redefined the value of this art in digital space. 'Szybciej niż słowa' (Faster than Words) is about the culture of photography, which has evolved in social media and made image the most popular means of expression. 'Postprawda' (Post-Truth) focuses on the mutation of facts and the mechanics of their dissemination in a reality where the ubiquity of information defines the nature of present-day society. 'Aksjomat' (Axiom) describes the gap between the early vision and the current state of the internet. The cause identified is affective capitalism with the colonisation of the user's attention as its principal tool. 'Dron' (Drone) is dedicated to the automation of many spheres of today's life and reflections on the meaning and ethical aspect of its dehumanisation. At this point I also define my own approach to the creative process and to the function of a studio. 'Feedback Loop' determines the meaning of displays and cameras in contemporary mass culture. The chapter refers to artworks that used screens and cameras to convey meaning rather than for purely aesthetic reasons and are crucial in the context of my dissertation. 'Diagram' defines data visualisation as a form of the creator's individual relationship to the information presented graphically. In 'Ton' (Tone), I present Krautrock and Detroit techno genres, which served as the chief inspiration for my musical work. I focus on their relevance in the context of transformation and on the attempts of their representatives to detach themselves from reality.



The practical part of my dissertation is an audio-visual installation in the form of a modular studio. The individual elements of the exhibition are placed around the room on studio desks and racks. The installation can be described as a 'work in progress' with exposed sound- and image-producing equipment, accessible to the public. A large-format video is projected onto one of the interior walls. It has its source in a computer which generates animating image via a patch I designed in TouchDesigner. Because of the modular structure of the software, which receives MIDI messages from musical devices, I can fully control and shape the modulation of the generated image, using an Elektron Octatrack sampler and sequencer. The device is also the central unit responsible for sound, as it controls the other instruments. A second computer, running another TouchDesigner project, sends image to two out of four TVs. The signal transmitted to one of them is additionally modulated by a video mixer. The third monitor receives image from a camera pointed at the large projection. Its signal is modified by a second video mixer. The image on the final, fourth TV is produced by several sources. The video mixer connected to it merges the signal from a camera pointed to its own screen with input from the third monitor, adding on-board effects to the resulting image.

The arrangement is a kind of intricate network where one loses their bearings whenever they think they have figured out the key to the operation of the installation. This effect is amplified by exposure to binary light impulses produced by video mixer feedback and TouchDesigner module combinations. All of that is designed to make the viewer confused and overstimulated, which is how today's media reality feels, in my opinion.

The sound layer sets the tone for the work and controls some of its visual aspects. The instrumentation in the form of my own modular synthesizer and machines manufactured by the Swedish company Elektron is used for both sound creation and controlling many spatial and temporal image factors. At the same time, it is featured as the object part of the installation, in line with Marcel Duchamp's 'readymade' concept. Its visual nature and operation reflect the idea behind my dissertation. What is important to me is the context and manner in which the equipment is used. For each piece is sort of synonymous with the artificial intelligence, algorithms and robots that replace humans in so many tasks today. With the brilliant concepts inherent in the architecture of these instruments, even such a cold and precise form of music as electronic music starts to resemble organic structures.

The main device that dictates the rhythm and dynamics of the changes in the installation is the Octatrack mentioned above. Its arranger and eight MIDI sequencers control events on the timeline. The bank- and pattern-based structure modifies both the sound and the visual layer. Each of the eight elaborate sequencers simultane-

ously sends several variable MIDI messages, which are additionally modulated by a variable-shape LFO (low frequency oscillator). The sequences sent are of different lengths and trigger individual steps at different speeds, creating polyrhythmic information structures in which the same resultants are repeated very rarely or not at all.

The installation is therefore an ever-changing, open-form structure. Its dynamic nature alludes to the characteristics of today's technology and information culture, which undergoes constant transformation due to user-made changes and technological advances. The work raises questions about the role of humans in this process, the reliability and effectiveness of information communication, and the reasons for the collective mood instability in contemporary society.

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