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Error in Art

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## Introduction

Technical errors that occur when a medium is used, as well as logical or cognitive errors, are commonly seen as challenges and obstacles in a creative process. Technical proficiency has been an indispensable and celebrated aspect of artistic practice from the very beginning of its modern history, indeed, its very essence, persistently inhabiting the language used to describe popular and admired artworks. Terms such as “masterpiece” and “Kunstwerk”, although fully meaningful when used in the context of the master-apprentice guild system of the pre-modern times, when repetition and imitation were prevailing methods of education, still define the linguistic and mental universe of values through which art is perceived and assessed.

Meanwhile, the history of 20th-century art, but also a broader history of human progress, the advancement of science and developments in technology, have shown us that to attain proficiency or mastery one must follow established criteria. But to make a breakthrough, to push the boundaries forward, one must take a path previously untrodden, by conscious choice but also by sheer mistake. Numerous achievements are made incidentally, that is, by accident, on the margin of conducted research and investigations, along the route taken to reach a different goal.

In visual art, errors can also offer a source of inspiration and an insight into otherwise unknown reality. Very often, they are made outside the author’s awareness, yet with the support of the viewer, who shows the courage to act against traditions or established rules. The artist’s certainty about his or her intentions, and the viewer’s openness, seem necessary for their communication to succeed. But the way art is experienced often runs against the author’s concept and contrary to the viewer’s expectations.

In the 20th and 21st century, the reliance of art on the criteria of mastery and technical perfection have been called into question on numerous occasions and from a variety of perspectives, from the postulates of de-professionalisation advanced by Jean Dubuffet and the Art Brut movement and the notion of “de-skilling” recurrent in recent practices, through the Post-Structuralist investigations of slips, omissions, and unconscious errors, to the queer politics that favours failure over perfection and indeterminacy over clear-cut categories. To a large degree, the dynamics of the development of contemporary art has relied on moments when the very logic of success and failure, hit and miss, was called into question. Moments when artists refused to let artistic practice be swallowed up by the overriding pressure of success, quantifiable in the capitalist categories such as profit and progress and – instead – allowed themselves to fail, err, or disappoint.

In this volume, authors are interested in the discrepancies that occur between the intention and effect of actions undertaken by artists and researchers. Thus

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described approach determines the illusion and uncertainty that reveal themselves en route to experience and intellectual cognition. They examine the anxiety or even true fear of making a mistake, which makes an impact on immediate and distant future, but also the pleasure that errors may bring. The notion of error and its economy is analysed in a broad theoretical context (historical, cultural, philosophical, sociological, and political), as something as yet unrecognised – potential obstacle or side effect that will bring unexpected results.

*Karolina Kolenda*