

Ewa Wojtyniak-Dębińska

Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Łódź
ewa.wojtyniak-debinska@asp.lodz.pl

EXTRASENSORY IMAGES: MARGINAL PHENOMENON OR IMPORTANT TREND IN THE EUROPEAN ART?

Abstract: This article attempts to answer the question of whether a work of art created under the influence of extrasensory images can be considered a marginal phenomenon in the European art. The author points out that in our culture the interest in this kind of creative inspiration gained importance only in the mid-nineteenth century. Then, she discusses various causes of altered states of consciousness and subsequent stages of trance during which extrasensory images appear. Focusing on works of art which were inspired by such images, she refers to the concepts of David Lewis-Williams, Stanislav Grof, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, Aldous Huxley and Carl Gustav Jung. The text is concluded with a reflection on the contemporary significance of art with extrasensory sources. The author emphasizes the remonstrative nature of such art and its role in self-knowledge. It is believed that extrasensory images expand our understanding of personality and allow us to go beyond the scope of the problems imposed through the media by politicians or religious leaders.

Keywords: imagination – altered states of consciousness – visionary art – extrasensory images in art – transposing works of art.

In the history of European art, particularly from the fifteenth until nineteenth century, a clearly discernible tendency can be observed to reproduce reality according to the stimuli transmitted through the senses. Such an attitude had its roots in the ancient understanding of art as a skill of making things according to strictly defined rules. Arts that did not produce useful items adhered to the theory of mimesis – imitation of reality. Although there was a trend, discussed by Plato in *Ion*¹, of praising poetry growing out of the

¹ Platon, *Ion*, 533E, 534C, *Selected Dialogues of Plato: The Benjamin Jowett Translation*, Modern Library, New York 2001.

“divine madness” – links with divination seem to suggest that words as well as images they evoke, sent by the muses or gods, can be of extrasensory nature. For a long time, however, this concept had only a marginal impact on the work of painters and sculptors.

Mastering the techniques to render the visible was the objective of the Renaissance. Many theorists and artists, such as Giorgio Vasari, Leon Battista Alberti, or Filippo Brunelleschi, equated progress in art with the study of nature and creation according to the principles of harmony typical thereof. This manifested in the invention of the rules of perspective combining vision and knowledge. They became the basis of artistic education and drew artists’ attention to the possibility of illusive reproduction of visible reality. In the 19th century, the Romantics posed the question whether intellect and vision should be the main source of art. In the subsequent century, in the field of psychology and art theory, Francis Galton, Herbert Read and others argued that pictorial thinking, although most characteristic of childhood, also plays an important role in adulthood. For example, they pointed to the role of visualisation skills in logic problem solving or in remembering, which is as important as strict conceptual thinking².

The broad definition of the concept of extrasensory image includes any mental image, afterimage, or eidetic image appearing after the stimulus is removed. Within this category, also taken into account is the reproductive function – in this sense it is included in the category of reproductive imagination. However, according to the common belief, images extrasensory images are primarily included in the creative imagination, the task of which is the original transformation of the reality³. In this perspective, it is associated with “altered states of consciousness”. I would like to focus on this particular definition later in the text.

Both imagination and extrasensory images can also be divided taking into account the purpose and level of consciousness. Thus, we may differentiate between passive and active imagination. Extrasensory images, which are classified as passive imagination, are spontaneous, appearing independently of the will of the artist. Such a view fits into the medium concept, which treats the artist as a medium through whom images are communicated. In contrast, images consciously stimulated by the artist are assigned to active imagination. Later in this article I want to focus on passive and active extrasensory images which became a source for works of art. They can be defined as hallucinations, delusions, or “false perception”. They consist of mystical,

² E. Nęcka, *Psychologia twórczości*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk 2001, pp. 61-65.

³ J. Górniewicz, *Sztuka i wyobraźnia*, Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, Warszawa 1989, p. 5.

narcotic, alcohol- and sickness-induced visions, as well as dreams and day-dreams. Their existence was explained by supernatural powers, a manifestation of exceptional ability of the human mind, or proof of the existence of the unconscious. Today, the emergence of an extrasensory image is associated with the weakening or loss of consciousness. Most extrasensory images are found in the so-called altered states of consciousness, accompanying alpha brainwaves (13 Hz – 8 Hz), when consciousness is slightly changed giving way to the sensation of relaxation and peace, and theta brainwaves (7 Hz – 4 Hz), which occur during dreams, meditation, or hypnosis. As numerous studies have shown, images can also be the result of disease (epilepsy, migraine, schizophrenia), the effect of sensory deprivation, social isolation, or starvation, or they may arise as a result of severe pain, participation in exhaustive dancing, listening to rhythmic sounds, as well as taking psychotropic substances (cocaine, LSD, etc.).

As has already been mentioned, as a result of the rational-empirical predilection of our civilization, representations rooted in sources other than the reality had not been popular among artists until the Romantic era. Exceptions included representations of dreams and visions which dealt with religion or mythology. Such themes were undertaken frequently, usually in an appropriately highly sophisticated form. *The Dream of the Virgin* by Simone dei Crocifissi, *Ezekiel's vision* by Raphael Santi, or *The Temptation of St. Anthony* by Matthias Grünewald, are just a few examples of works in which extrasensory images inspired by religious themes were reflected in painting. Artists, even if they felt the need to register extrasensory images that appeared in their minds, usually did not give them any refined form. They were often kept only in the form of sketches⁴. It seems that images classified as passive imagination, appearing spontaneously, were recreated in their ephemeral, oneiric form, preserving their original content. As far as dreams are concerned, they were recorded in dream-books of sorts. An example would be a card from Albrecht Dürer's notebook, on which the artist hastily sketched the disaster he had dreamt about. As he wrote, "In the year 1525 between Wednesday and Thursday after Whitsunday during the night I saw this appearance in my sleep, how many great waters fell from heaven. The first struck the earth about four miles away from me with a terrific force, with tremendous clamour and clash, drowning the whole land. I was so sore afraid that I awoke from it before the other waters fell. [...] So when I arose in the morning, I painted above here as I had seen it."⁵

⁴ D. Coxhead, S. Hiller, *Dreams. Vision of the night*, Tames & Hudson, London 1990, p. 88.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 24.

Visual renditions of William Blake's visions did not always have a sophisticated form either. Such is the case of the drawing titled *A Vision: The Inspiration of the Poet (Elisha in the Chamber on the Wall)* c.1819–20. It was done in graphite and watercolour on paper and features a sketch of a square room where the only object is a closed form outlined by a tympanum and resembling an entrance to some ancient temple. Visible inside is a lamp suspended from the ceiling, under which sits a figure writing something on a desktop. This could be the eponymous prophet Elisha writing his prophecies, but also the artist himself. Right next to him, there is a blurred outline of a standing figure – a divine messenger who sends inspiration. William Blake repeatedly mentioned the “friends in Eternity”, who assisted him in his creative work. He included their depictions (for example the spirit of a flea) in his sketchbooks at the request of John Varley.

It seems that in later eras artists emphasised the message rather than the method of presentation in their renditions of dreams or personal visions. An example might be a drawing by the French artist Jean-Jacques Grandville, who, inspired by a dream, created a unique work shortly before his death. It was published in *Le Magasin pittoresque* in 1847. It features the author as a tragic hero and a victim of murder. Then, he has a vision of “the hand of justice”. Next, he is followed by an enormous eye, from which he escapes on horseback, into the sea, where he is eaten by a fish. The dream begins and ends with a vision of a cross. The representation is dark and chaotic and communicates the despair and confusion of the artist. The work was regarded as a harbinger of the loss of life of the author.

Since ancient times, imagination aids have been used for magical purposes, for self-improvement or simply for intoxication. Archaeologists found traces of poppies and cannabis seeds in Neolithic tombs⁶. In the third millennium BC, people from the Far East chewed betel, in the fifth century BC Herodotus wrote about Scythians using hashish, and valiant Vikings ate *Amanita muscaria* – fly agaric before the battle. Some anthropologists, such as Terence McKenna, argue that “a crucial element contributing to the evolution of our species was consumption of psilocybin, which acted as an ‘evolutionary trigger’. Its effects include sharpening the senses giving a feeling of control over one’s body, expanding awareness and dealing with atavisms”⁷. Belief in the power of substances that can transport us into different worlds is not only historically documented but it is also reflected in myths and fairy tales. One example is the theme of a magic potion which was believed to

⁶ K. Pytko, *Odmienne stany świadomości*, <http://hyperreal.info/node/10025> [15.01.2010].

⁷ Ł. Berezowski, *Transhumanizm i jego farmakologiczne perspektywy*, “Trans/wizje – pismo psychoaktywne”, issue 2/2012, pp. 65-68.

grant supernatural powers or ability to move to everyone who consumed it. Ambrosia – food of the Greek gods – was said to give immortality and eternal youth.

Cases of stimulating extrasensory images in order to create art were observed already in prehistoric art. David Lewis-Williams, a precursor of the new approach to Palaeolithic shamanic practices, believes⁸ that Western European caves covered in paintings, given their inaccessibility, unique atmosphere, and isolated nature, were a perfect place the emergence of for shamanic visions, which were subsequently painted on the cave walls. In the 1980s and 1990s, along with another anthropologist Thomas Dowson, he published articles based on the study of cave art created under the influence of narcotic substances by two primitive cultures from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (the San Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert and the Coso Shoshone from the Great Basin in California). On that basis, the authors demonstrate many similarities between the analysed paintings and drawings and the sign language used by shamanic artists from the Stone Age. The anthropologists distinguished two types of images that appear in three stages of the substance influence: neurologically conditioned – entoptic ideas (visual impressions the source of which is the human nervous system) and psychologically and culturally conditioned – hallucinatory images.

In the first stage of trance, phenomena entoptic appear, also known as phosphenes. These take geometric shapes, such as points, zigzags, parallel lines, circles, grids, meanders, as well as branched forms resembling neurons. These elements are brightly coloured, they tend to flicker and move, zooming in and out. With one's eyes open, just like eidetic images, they are projected onto the watched surface and move with the movement of the eyes. In addition to psychoactive substances, they can be induced by hyperventilation, electroshock, sensory deprivation, or rhythmic movement. This type of representation can be found in many prehistoric monuments, such as the Llolin cave in Spain, or *grotte de Rouffignac* in France.

The second stage of the vision involves rationalising geometric shapes, which are converted to real items conditioned by emotions, beliefs and needs – for example a person who is thirsty may interpret a luminous circle as a cup full of water. Contemporary research on LSD confirms the occurrence of this stage. Stanislav Grof in his book *Realms of the Human Unconscious. Observation from LSD Research*⁹, presents a series of drawings from this phase. In the works drawn by respondents who took the appropriate dose of

⁸ J. Clottes, D. Lewis-Williams, *The Shamans of Prehistory: Trance and Magic in the Painted Caves*, Harry N. Abrams, New York 1998, pp. 36ff.

⁹ S. Grof, *Realms of the Human Unconscious. Observation from LSD Research*, Independent Publisher Book, Chicago 1994, p. 62ff.

LSD, researchers observed a gradual transformation of the actual form of a tower into an illusory form resembling an owl. Observed sideways, the two faces of the clock placed on the tower slowly turn into round eyes of an owl, and the geometric outlines of buildings gradually lose their sharp angles and eventually transform into the organic shape of a bird. Based on the rock art findings from the Palaeolithic era, such as paintings, carvings, or figurines, it is believed that the elements characteristic of this stage mainly took the form of small creatures, such as a swarm of bees, but also representations of animals with entoptic or geometric fragments.

The third stage in altered states of consciousness can be achieved after the so-called transition, which takes the shape of a vortex composed of geometric representations of the first phase, at the end of which light is visible. A painterly or sculptural visualisation of that moment may be representations resembling spirals or concentric circles, many of which can be found in prehistoric art. After exiting the tunnel, the person in trance finds themselves in a real tangible world full of strange characters and objects. They may think that they are a bird, a fox, or another animal. Paintings and engravings of polymorphous beings, such as a man with the head of a lion, or a buffalo with a man's head from the rock shelters of the Stone Age, may also support the hypothesis of North African researchers. An example might be the polymorphic figure from the cave in Trois-Freres, France, resembling a deer but with human arms and legs. Whether it is just a shaman dressed in deerskin or a vision of the third stage of a narcotic trance, it is difficult to answer, but the presence of similar representations in this state of mind is confirmed by contemporary artists-shamans. Peruvian shaman Pablo Amaringo shows in his paintings visions caused by ingesting *ayahuasca* brew. His paintings are characterized by features typical of the art of the Shipibo Indians: multi-coloured diversity, using both geometric and figurative motifs, and *horror vacui* composition in which the entire area is covered with patterns. In his 2004 work entitled *Machaco Runa*, in the lower part the author depicts the title Machaco Runa – a man who has reached the extrasensory dimensions. He assumed, as the author of described it himself, the form of a snake with the head of a man. The master pictured in this way treats a man depicted above. He is surrounded by several spirals which have the power to heal the sick¹⁰.

In the Romanticism era, mind-altering substances became more often associated with artistic creativity. The issue of aiding imagination was one of

¹⁰ Pablo Amaringo, opis obrazu *Machaco Runa*, http://yashpal.com/webstore/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=2_3&products_id=264&zenid=tg11pavje1dq87m4ecalupgeb5 (04.05.2014).

the major topics covered by the Romantics. The concept of a close relationship between imagination and art was presented by the German poet and writer Novalis, who argued that imagination is not just one of many components of genius, but the most important creative force. The French poet and critic Charles Baudelaire, on the other hand, called imagination “queen of poetic talent”. According to a popular view at the time, in order to animate the creative talent one should seek ways to aid imagination. The turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth century marks the beginning of mass-scale import of opium from China, initially used as an anaesthetic. From doctor’s surgeries, it found its way into the hands of scientists, aristocrats and artists. It was quickly discovered how dangerous using the “amplifiers” imagination can be. In his *Les Paradis artificiels*¹¹, Baudelaire appreciates the “power of increasing genius” and “otherworldly visions” caused by wine, hashish and opium, but at the same time emphasising their “evil power of addiction” (in 1849, his “spiritual brother”, Edgar Allan Poe, died as a result of abusing wine).

In the twentieth century, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (“Witkacy”), like the Romantics, looked for ways to aid imagination in narcotic sessions. To him, the vision was more important than the euphoric state. The artist emphasised that a man, unable to bear the “metaphysical monstrosity of existence”, has used mind-altering substances for centuries. Witkacy presented many interesting theories and descriptions of narcotic sessions in a book entitled *Narkotyki – niemyte dusze* [Narcotics – unwashed souls]. The artist felt that even popular stimulants, such as tea or coffee, can alter consciousness. This is consistent with studies conducted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by a German toxicologist Louis Lewin. In his publication *Phantastica, Narcotic and Stimulating Drugs*¹² the author presents a classification of substances altering consciousness. According to the study, there are four categories: hallucinogens causing visual, auditory, and other hallucinations (such as mushrooms, LSD, mescaline, cannabis, henbane, etc.), intoxicating agents (alcohol, chloroform, ether, gasoline, etc.), substances of hypnotic effect that cause stupor and dizziness and act as soporifics (opium, heroin, mandrake, Kava-kava¹³, sedatives, etc.), and mental and / or physical stimulants (coffee, tea, cocoa, coca, kola nuts, betel, tobacco, amphetamines, etc.).

¹¹ Ch. Baudelaire, *Les Paradis artificiels*, Citadel Press, New York 1994.

¹² Quoted in: R. Rudgley, *The Alchemy of Culture: Intoxicants in Society*, British Museum Press, London 1993, p. 4.

¹³ Kava-kava – a drink from the root of *piper methysticum*, a climbing shrub cultivated on the islands of the Western Pacific.

Witkacy tried to systematise his visual experiences. He distinguished four stages peyote sessions. The first is characterized by a sharpening of sensory experience accompanied by a slight distortion – the artist called the form he saw “living arabesques”, which often had a three-dimensional character. The next stage is the zone of memory and analysis, the so-called Freudian level, during which Witkacy vividly saw his own advantages and disadvantages. An example of the visualization of these phenomena could be part of his image *Creation of the World* (1921-1922). The central figure is a naked woman, probably the biblical Eve. Her head is touched by God, depicted as an old man in white robes, presented against the background of the Garden of Eden. Depicted below is Satan, accompanied by four creatures, perhaps condemned souls. In their vicinity, there is a pair of animals resembling cats that eat red fruit from plates – an eternal symbol of fertility and sensuality. Semantic coherence of these elements is reinforced by highlighting the erotic appeal of the woman. In the upper right corner there are three figures, one holding a bottle. These are personifications of alcoholism, smoking tobacco and drug addiction. Below, a frog offers them a pearl, a symbol of the human soul. The third stage of peyote session is the zone of psychedelic memory with symbols of the universal character: a singular cosmogony with visions of the formation of the universe, the Earth, and humankind, during which the artist undergoes numerous metamorphoses – he is a Pharaoh, king of snakes, he participates in the ritual myths. Witkiewicz’s visions often feature mythological figures. An example might be a 1929 pencil sketch showing a man with the head of a bird. This picture is typical of the ancient Egyptian representations or shamanistic sessions. Witkacy defined the fourth stage as an integrating zone, during which the mystery of the first principle and symbolism of things of the highest and final order are revealed¹⁴.

In the context of issues of the relationship between art and extrasensory images, Witkiewicz’s remarks seem to be particularly valuable since he speaks not only as a philosopher and theorist, but also as a practitioner of arts. He treats art and imagination as separate and autonomous zones, but he also takes into account their interdependence¹⁵. Witkacy emphasises that art draws upon imagination, but imagination also benefits from art.

Witkacy notes that in the first case the point is to record a specific structure in art, one which the artist experiences in his mind and which he then wants to save in his work. Thus, imaginative vision is followed by a painterly vision, which consists in stopping the imaginative visions

¹⁴ S. I. Witkiewicz, *Narkotyki – niemyte dusze*, PIW, Warsaw 1975, pp. 117-151.

¹⁵ W. Sztaba, *Gra ze sztuką. O twórczości Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Krakow 1982, pp. 145-170.

(metaphysical sensation) and making them a painting to be contemplated. Such a painting is subject to the Pure Form principle, relating to the painting surface. Witkacy also argues that the old styles in the art would not have been possible without visions. Therefore, he distinguishes two trends in art, which in his opinion grew out of peyote imagination: the first trend includes the art of Egypt and Mexico, and the second – art from China, India and Persia.

A similar problem of capturing extrasensory images was noted by the Surrealists in the twentieth century, albeit activating imagination in a different way. Salvador Dali's paranoid-critical method and the use of the phenomenon of psychic automatism were to "compel inspiration" – the goal was to "capture the image as one pins down an insect"¹⁶ Also in the works of other Surrealists visions and memories are intertwined with one another – passive and active imaginations are inextricably linked. An example would be a painting by Max Ernst *Woman, Old Man and Flower Femme* from 1923-1924. The vision is communicated in a female figure facing away, with transparent arms and torso, and with her head adorned with a huge hat in the shape of an opened fan. The figure of a man with the face of a monkey holding in his hands a miniature figure of a woman can be seen as a reference to Darwinian evolution – the presentation can also be associated with the film *King Kong*, although it was not made until ten years later.

Inspired by psychoanalytic ideas of Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, Surrealists introduced dreams, daydreams, and visions into their paintings. Called "copyists of dreams"¹⁷, artists following this trend were aware of the problem of presenting extrasensory images in painting. It was the first of all about capturing the "dream-lightning". In his text published in *Minotaur* (No. 3, 1934)¹⁸, sculptor Alberto Giacometti wrote that for many years he had only worked on sculptures that appeared ready in his mind. However, people were aware that the artist's work on the form of his work in some way interfered with the effect of dreams.

Surrealists distinguished three types of relationships between art and products of the imagination¹⁹. First, imagination frees man from rationalism and activates the creative forces. Second, it becomes an area of artistic experiments and third, imagination not only inspires art, but it is objectified through it.

Art draws from imagination, but there is also the opposite direction – extrasensory images can be complemented by works of art. At the beginning

¹⁶ R. Passeron, *Encyklopedia surrealizmu*, Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warsaw 1993, p. 71.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 70.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 71.

¹⁹ J. Górniewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

of the eighteenth century, the English writer and journalist Joseph Addison insisted that art develops the imagination: “poetry acts directly on imagination”²⁰. Witkacy, in contrast, insisted that imagination feeds on the imagery developed on the basis of painting, sculpture and architecture. For example, in Witkiewicz’s visions, the background of unfolding events were often works of art from different eras. According to Witkiewicz, imagination is the source of art and at the same time its effect.

The influence of art on the imagination was also emphasized by other philosophers. According to a theory presented by the American writer and philosopher Aldous Huxley in his book *The Doors of Perception. And Heaven and Hell*, works of art have the power to transfer the mind to the world of vision. Referring to the concepts of C.G. Jung, Huxley argued that works created by artists can transfer the viewer to “the antipodes of the mind” – as he described the zone of the collective unconscious generating archetypal symbols. The philosopher pointed out that visions derived from these regions can be achieved by consciously contemplating objects that have the power to transpose. Anything in the nature or a work of art that resembles objects found in the “antipodes of the mind” is capable of inducing visions. These include, for example, precious stones, which are brightly coloured, or luminous materials such as glass or marble, as they “[...] are precious because they bear a faint resemblance to the glowing marvels seen with the inner eye of the visionary”²¹. Vision-generating materials today have a smaller scope of impact – modern technology provides a countless number of such items, and, as the author writes, of “familiarity breeds contempt”²².

According to Huxley, transposing works of art should contain²³ items of vivid and luminous colours, whose effect is further enhanced by dark background or shadow play. Fragments emerging from the darkness can shine otherworldly light. An example of the first type of works can be part of Grünewald’s *Isenheim Altar* of 1515, depicting the Ascension. Hovering over the grave and depicted on a black background, the figure of Christ is emanating with unique light. The same applies to the work of contemporary American artist Alex Grey, which are created under the influence of visions caused by meditation, shamanic techniques, and hallucinogens. His psychedelic paintings are characterized by a remarkable luminosity. They are composed of translucent, decorative elements of pure, vivid colours that often, like in a kaleidoscope, form concentric, extremely complex figures.

²⁰ J. Addison, in: J. Górniewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

²¹ A. Huxley, *The Doors of Perception. And Heaven and Hell*, Fontal Lobe Publishing, 2011, p. 64.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 46.

²³ *Ibidem*, pp. 117ff.

These forms are not merely decorative, they symbolize the subtle energies of the body. Grey's representations are not only a record of vision, but also the message of the truth about human existence. The artist says that by using the metaphor of transparency he refers to the process of becoming transparent for the holy dimension²⁴. As the contemporary American philosopher Ken Wilber writes, "Alex's work, as any transcendental art, is not merely symbolic nor based solely on imagination. It represents a direct invitation to know and realize a deeper dimension of our own being."²⁵

In contrast, dark backgrounds frequently encountered in the Baroque, when artists followed the principle of "setting gems" involving surrounding shapes with darkness. Only their luminous fragments emerged from the shadows, emphasizing local colour. Such works include paintings by the French painter Georges de la Tour, for example *The Newborn* from 1644 to 1649. The composition features three figures whose contours disappear in the darkness. The artist applied the technique of colour luminism in which the play of light and colour intensifies the drama and mystery of the representation. At the same time, the painter used another technique of composition popular in the period of Mannerism and the Baroque: *maniera tenebrosa*²⁶, in which the contrast of the dark background and bright parts lit by an invisible candle intensifies the transposing effect of the image.

According to Huxley, heroic figures depicted as stationary also have the power of transferring into altered states of consciousness. Looking at them calms the viewer and forces him to contemplate because movement and action are natural to everyday reality. William Blake called such figures "Cherubim". They are content to only exist, not doing anything. They include figures of Egyptian gods and pharaohs, and representations of Madonna or Buddha.

The vision-generating power is also found in views of beautiful landscapes, but only seen from far away or very close. Average distance is typically human. Vast landscapes emanating silence and emptiness are characteristic of the antipodes of the mind. Such themes were used to present paradise, a spiritual space in which the highest beings and the blessed reside. An example would be the painting by Cranach *Paradise* dated 1530 showing the first parents in the wide expanse of the Garden of Eden. Visible on the horizon are inaccessible, rocky formations, calm surface of a lake, and distant

²⁴ Alex Grey, *Galeria świata buddyzmu*, <http://www.buddyzm.com.pl/?k=&e=&s=&app=15&menu=2&info=1> (01.07.2014).

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ *Maniera tenebrosa* (tenebrism) – composition technique involving the application darker shades in the background and contrasting them with sharply lit fragments of figures and objects in the front.

woods. At the same time, objects of nature seen from a close distance are reminiscent of the “living geometry of the Other World” Such representations appeared for the first time in impressionist paintings – Monet’s *Water Lilies* at the late nineteenth century are a perfect example. Huxley also pointed out that both distant and close representations of nature draw the attention to the general laws, in the face of which individual needs and concerns are not relevant.

Marginality of art created under the influence of extrasensory images can also be considered in terms of the concept of Carl Gustav Jung, who distinguished two kinds of art: a psychological and visionary. As he writes, the gulf that divides them is as great as the one between the first and the second part of Goethe’s *Faust*²⁷. Psychological, symptomatic art may include a large number of works²⁸, which are derived from individual experience and are based on easy to understand psychological content, such as passion, beauty, and horror of the human condition. Visionary, symbolic art is less popular because it grows out of the collective unconscious, and its experience is “it is something strange that derives its existence from the hinterland of man’s mind, as if it had emerged from the abyss of prehuman ages, or from a superhuman world of contrasting light and darkness. It is a primordial experience which surpasses man’s understanding and to which in his weakness he may easily succumb. The very enormity of the experience gives it its value and its shattering impact. Sublime, pregnant with meaning, yet chilling the blood with strangeness, it arises from timeless depths; [...] the primordial experiences rend from top to bottom the curtain upon which is painted the picture of an ordered world, and allow a glimpse into the unfathomable abyss of the unborn and of things yet to be. Is it a vision of other worlds, or of the darkness of the spirit, or of the primal beginnings of the human psyche? We cannot say that it is any of none of these.”²⁹ Affected by these experiences, the work of visionary art is created regardless of the will of the artist, who becomes only a tool in the hands of forces unknown to him. The effect often provokes shock, aversion and disgust even in its very creator. Jung also points out that artists frequently adopt a passive attitude to images from the unconscious, which consists only in reproducing them, without involving styling factors³⁰. This is because, contrary to popular belief, artistic excellence of the works of a given artists usually lacks psychic wholeness. Only a few are able to perfect both their personality and their works.

²⁷ C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Literature*, in: *Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 15: Spirit in Man, Art, And Literature*, Princeton University Press 1971, p. 141.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 141-142.

³⁰ J. Jacobi, *The Psychology of C.G. Jung*, Yale University Press, London 1973, p. 43.

Current trends in the arts tend to ignore extrasensory sources. Leading artistic trends of today highlight the critical involvement of artists in society. Although there are artistic and religious practices that provoke altered states of consciousness (Kim Sola, Marina Abramović, Almagul Menlibayeva, Alex Grey, Pablo Amaringo, Nemo Boko, Ulay, Pawel Althamer [peyote sessions]), but they are not dominant. According to some theorists, religion and art, expression and contemplation should be clearly separated. The contemporary, and possibly earlier marginalization of extrasensory images is also related with the order of activity imposed by society. While the art is expected to participate in the implementation of political and religious objectives and educate in a manner consistent with the collectively adopted values, it should not leave the sensory-rational-emotive realm. From this point of view, experiences described herein may be considered unnecessary and even harmful, but in the context of creative experiments the importance of their role for self-knowledge is emphasized. They also have somewhat of a remonstrative nature. As Marcin Wieconkowski writes in an article titled *Kultura zachodu głównym wrogiem ekstazy* [Western culture as the main enemy of ecstasy], “[...] if through ecstatic experience we gain a direct experience of perception, rules imposed by politicians or religious leaders will be rejected.”³¹

*Translated by
Katarzyna Gucio*

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³¹ Marcin Wieconkowski, *Kultura zachodu głównym wrogiem ekstazy. Rozmowa z Johnem P. Allenem „Dolphinem”*, „Trans/wizje – pismo psychoaktywne”, issue 4/2012, pp. 115-120.

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OBRAZY POZAPERCEPCYJNE: MARGINES CZY ISTOTNY NURT SZTUKI EUROPEJSKIEJ? (streszczenie)

Celem artykułu jest próba odpowiedzi na pytanie, czy dzieła sztuki powstające pod wpływem obrazów pozapercepcyjnych, można uznać za margines sztuki europejskiej. Autorka zwraca uwagę, że w naszej kulturze zainteresowanie tym rodzajem inspiracji twórczej uzyskało istotne znaczenie dopiero od XIX wieku. Następnie omawia różne przyczyny powstawania odmiennych stanów świadomości i kolejne etapy transu, podczas którego pojawiają się obrazy pozapercepcyjne. Koncentrując się na dziełach sztuki, których źródłem były tego typu wyobrażenia, powołuje się między innymi na koncepcje David Lewisa-Williamsa, Stanisława Grofa, Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza, Aldousa Huxleya i Carla Gustava Junga. Tekst kończy refleksja dotycząca współczesnego znaczenia twórczości o źródłach pozapercepcyjnych. Autorka podkreśla kontestacyjny charakter tego typu sztuki oraz jej rolę samopoznawczą. Uważa, że obrazy pozapercepcyjne rozszerzają nasze pojmowanie osobowości i pozwalają wyjść poza krąg problemów narzuconych za pośrednictwem mediów przez polityków czy przywódców religijnych.

Słowa kluczowe: wyobraźnia – odmienne stany świadomości – sztuka wizjonerska – obrazy pozapercepcyjne w sztuce – transponujące dzieła sztuki.