

EDITORS' NOTE

The problem of borders/boundaries in art history, both ancient and modern, recurs in various guises and meanings. A border as a dividing line, structuring political, national or regional geography, is often an object of conflict that translates into both artistic practices and discourses that attempt to systematize and qualify art created in a given area, thus influencing artistic geography. Art often constitutes an attempt to answer or problematize borders on the grounds of cultural, economic, racial, etc. differences. This is the subject of numerous artistic and exhibition projects dealing with, for example, the US-Mexican or Israeli-Palestinian borders (border art) but also the questions of social and cultural divisions, artistic geographies or even boundaries within the domain of art and culture. Moreover, an urgent factor which forces us to rethink the problem of borders and identity in the context of both art of the past and the present is the ongoing war in Ukraine. An example of a relevant project which was an immediate inspiration for us to take up this subject was "About Sharing. Art on the (Polish-German) Border", an exhibition curated by Marta Smolińska and Burcu Dogramaci, which took place in 2023 at the National Museum in Poznań. We are thankful and indebted to Marta Smolińska for her invaluable advice during the earlier stages of conceptualizing the main theme for this issue of *Artium Quaestiones*.

A border can also be viewed more abstractly, as a boundary, a line that delineates structures and systems of practices and discourses that seek to define identity, to classify and to create hierarchy. Delimitations of this type characterized modernity (modernism) in the broad sense of this term. They were, however, eventually challenged by postmodern (poststructuralist) thought and post- and decolonial studies that favored the porosity and fluidity of previously constructed, but often taken for granted, divisions, and thus of identities and their associated systems of meaning and value. The undecided nature of a border (a division, boundary or a frame), and, more broadly, of the relationship between the hierarchically established center and the margin, was discussed long ago by Jacques Derrida in terms of parergon, with theorists such as Gilles Deleuze introducing conceptual constructs that invalidated borders/boundaries as lines of division altogether. These revaluations clearly pointed to the im-

possibility of sustaining thinking about borders as impermeable lines—physical and conceptual—demonstrating the necessity of thinking of them as fields of difference, interpenetration, hybridization, a zone that can be both conflictual and highly productive and creative. This is also a perspective offered in William J. T. Mitchell's article *Border Wars*, which is translated into Polish in this issue: border wars take place at the juncture of delineated entities, whether they be actual national borders or alleged divisions between system of signs, such as words and images; these border wars take a boundary as both a point of reference and its *raison d'être*, at the same time clearly demonstrating that they have always already been arbitrary, porous, permeable. Hence, Mitchell proposed that the activity around various kinds of divisions and/or caesurae should be discussed in terms of translation and convergence, revealing transformative, interactive, productive and analogical dimensions of "border wars".

This very aspect is taken up in a different way in a paper by Mieke Bal, where she argues that "The point of making (always provisional) distinctions is not to produce borders as fixed and permanent dividing lines, but to demonstrate the dubious, unstable, and constantly changing existence of such divisions". Bal starts with a memory of her late friend and colleague Inge E. Boer, and her insightful work on boundaries in cultural analysis, the issue of undecidability of the inside and the outside, and the sphere of the in-between—a boundary as an obstacle but also as space of exchange and interaction. That leads her to reflect on the issue of social boundaries, the political as a "dimension of antagonism" (C. Mouffe) and other aspects of divisions, transgressions and negotiations in an in-depth, multifaceted analysis of her own video *Don Quijote*.

In another theoretically rich and provocative article, Jörg Scheller reconsiders the popular and too-often-taken-for-granted idea and practice of the dissolution of boundaries in contemporary artworld. Having outlined the premises of the critique of modernist autonomy of art and distinctions it involved, Scheller brings to our attention cases and perspectives from which, in contemporary geopolitical conditions, a reconstitution of boundaries and distinctions may actually—and paradoxically—contribute to the vaunted freedom to move, transgress and be ethically responsible. It is the boundaries, Scheller argues, echoing Rosalind Krauss' recent reflection on the necessity of operating within a set framework, that generate knowledge, including knowledge about how to overcome them and how ambiguous they are.

Exhibitions are events and spaces which operate with a dialectic of drawing and crossing boundaries, whether geographically, stylistically or conceptually. Gabriela Świtek's contribution is a case study of one dimension of exhibition practice: travelling exhibitions, which, by definition cross borders, not only of states but cultural and political boundaries. Świtek limits her discussion to ex-

hibitions from what is today called the global South, which was shown in Warsaw in the 1970s at what is now Zachęta National Gallery of Art. She analyzes one of them thoroughly: *Contemporary Indian Art*, taking into account diverse aspects of its presentation and reception in Cold War-era Poland, looking for related ramifications for art history in the early postcolonial era of that time.

Cartography as a form of visualizing not only geo-political borders but notably a portrait of migration is one of the key issues for border studies, in which a border as a thin line on the map is comprehended as a placeholder for complex structures, such as vast technological surveillance systems. Following this principle, Anna Sejbæk Torp-Pedersen studies a flow-map of migration made by the French civil engineer Charles-Joseph Minard in 1862, described in the article as a 'mobile subject'. This example allows her to point out an essential "cartographic anxiety," that is, "the fear of unstable boundaries and criticism of objectivity in geographic studies", which is a key issue for critical cartographic studies today.

On the other hand, Sasha Rossman's object of investigation is not only a map as a picture but also as a material object. In the case study of the very special material form of a map that is seen in a *pietra dura* table manufactured at the royal Gobelins workshops (Paris) in 1684, the scholar describes how the historically evolving concept of borders manifests itself in material culture. As a result, the analysis of a specific map table, located in a specific historical moment, enables us to understand how the map became a part of "collaborative practice of understanding the world, and one's place in it, in terms of bounded perimeters".

Scarlett H. Strauss, in turn, addresses this issue by pointing out the geopolitical and cultural distinctions between centers and peripheral territories. Taking into consideration representations of walled towns between Florence and Siena from the late 14th to the early 16th century, she scrutinizes the way of conceptualizing and understanding towns embodied in their models. In those models held by saints, Strauss reveals changes of ownership, power relations between artist and patron and, last but not least, between a dominant city and a subject town. All the articles mentioned above, based on historical studies, raise awareness of the dynamic connections between epistemological, political and aesthetic issues, which all together must be taken into consideration when rethinking today's borders and their determinants.

We hope that the articles included in the thematic section will not only contribute to current reflections on borders/boundaries in the context of art and art history, but also raise issues that will be pursued and developed in the future.

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