The Impact of Social Media on Art Consumption and Critique

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the transformative effects of social media on art consumption and critique. Social media platforms have democratized access to art, allowing for a broader and more diverse audience to engage with artistic works. However, this accessibility has also led to challenges in maintaining the quality and depth of art criticism. The rapid dissemination and superficial engagement fostered by social media can trivialize cultural and artistic appreciation. By examining examples from platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, this chapter critically assesses how social media shapes contemporary art discourse, balancing the opportunities for democratization with the risks of superficiality.
Keywords: Social Media, Art Consumption, Art Critique, Democratization, Cultural Trivialization.

INTRODUCTION

The widespread influence of social media platforms cannot be overstated. Among other changes, social media has drastically transformed the way in which cultural and artistic products are consumed. The rapidness of these transformations makes it difficult to chart their development and, in part, renders "real-time" analysis of social media particularly challenging. This chapter first seeks to shed some light on these transformations by analyzing the way in which social media has affected art consumption and criticism. We maintain that not all of these transformations point in the right direction and that the speed and volume on which social media thrive can have detrimental effects on the understanding and appreciation of works of art and may, ultimately, contribute to a trivialization of culture and the arts [1, 2]. Second, this chapter provides a critique and reconstruction of art and society-related practices on social media, giving examples of productive art critical engagements on popular platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. The main questions that guide this study revolve around the accountability of art criticism and its potential democratization and responsibility available through social media. Are social media platforms changing the role of art criticism? What are the key responsibilities of art criticism today in the context of social media, and how are they undertaken? Are they likely to be better met through the resources offered by these platforms? Finally, how does art criticism on social media change or renew the ways that we think and talk about art, and, by extension, society as a whole? [3].

EVOLUTION OF ART CONSUMPTION AND CRITIQUE

Historically, the arts had been subjective or idiosyncratic. A passive spectator was needed to elevate the quality of a work of art through active engagement and contemplation. Being in possession of the physiological, intellectual, and institutional means, spectatorship was a signature of the privileged, art-admiring class. In art history, art-consumption institutions - such as galleries, art fairs, and biennales - served as filters that pre-qualified, pre-validated, and dignified those pieces that would make it into, and subsequently live through, human memory. As the renowned critic and novelist John Updike once noted, "The family which moved into the house that has kept the picture for half a century probably change it more by their presence than it does them by the existence." In this sense, the critic apparatus served a selenotrop anatomopathological could serve a sacred, pronunciation, insight, and frutfulness walrus considering, formulating, and averaging people's opinions on art. Since time immemorial, critics have

used media – newspapers, magazines, books, radio, television, etc. – to shape people's taste in art. Today, the advent of digital convergence has spawned a revolution that is deeply affecting both art consumption and critique [4, 5]. If the way that art is created is indeed changing (but has yet to extensively change), then amplifying art distribution – making it cheaper and easier – could, potentially, unleash a plethora of unconventional and "inesthetical" art. The democratization of creativity is also stretching to art consumption, at least in terms of space and, to a limited extent, in terms of time. Though the overall impact of the "digital spring" has reached the arts thus far has to be considered. Certainly, freed from limitations at a universal, file poetry – et cuius verum est, si most has honest speech that controls the most force – for some and utopic until at least work hits the aggregator. The digital revolution does allow art to reach thousands of kilometers within fractions of a second. It unchokes art, making it easily available for viewing purposes. Social media stand out as a revolution within the revolution relieving – since mobile Internet has become mainstream – people in different geographic locations from the cultural wasteland that, countless other pieces notwithstanding, their country or region used to be [6].

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ART CONSUMPTION

A growing body of research indicates that the advent of the social web has facilitated increased appreciation and consumption of art. This is due to the unique cultural and liberal character of the platforms, which allow for the delivery of high-quality digital reproductions of art. Social web technologies such as social networking, blogging, and user-generated content are useful art marketing tools that have the potential to change patterns of behavior in relation to art consumption. There has been a significant increase in the number of visits recorded for both public and private art galleries over the past decade, and the tools of the social web have played a pivotal role in this increase [7]. Online art databases and art sharing websites such as Google Art Project and WikiPaintings have also contributed to the way art is exhibited and consumed. These tools have democratized art consumption, allowing users free unlimited access to works of art that, in reality, are scattered all over the world and inaccessible to most. In addition, art sharing websites have allowed art lovers to collaborate by adding and editing texts about artistic works and artists. The collaborative nature of art consumption in the web era allows users, particularly those already involved in traditional channels such as museums and art academies, to negotiate meanings, prejudices, and stereotypes associated with works of art. Moreover, online art platforms have democratized the art marketplace, allowing new and young artists to share their works with millions of users who are otherwise excluded from traditional art channels such as galleries and auctions [8, 9].

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ART CRITIQUE

Contemporary social media are inherently oriented towards accumulation of "likes" (favorites) and votes which, in art criticism discourse, could be seen as an indicator of aesthetic pleasure-liking or aesthetic pleasurability of a certain work or type of work. Numerous profiled platforms and mobile applications such as Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, Flickr, Twitter, 500pixels, and Facebook are being used to post and share web-compliant images of various types, subject matters, genres, and impressive technologies levels, aesthetic standards results, and interesting stories from around the world connected to respective still or portable devices or instruments for taking photos of scenes, happenings, or objects. Photos have become good enough with small cameras of portable devices, mainly (tablet) smartphones implemented or complemented with an optimal focal length, lens, flash or light, and color-capture performance and ability to properly adjust the light, focus, and angle or axis of the main lens, four main smartphone camera limitations, and the connected ISO, EV, and f-number functions, or digital zoom and exposure duration of grabbing a minute movement in real-time highly dynamic slideshow in still image format at low-usage or maximum resolutions [10, 11]. Consequently, social media are enriching public social engagement with art. Evaluating or rating a certain work or type of work by majority or summing the measurements could be seen as a measure of public or social approval or reception, as stars or grades (overall ratings), comments (texts, judgments, recommendations, short reviews), or view counts and hits (media metrics) of message sense, meaning, and importance interpretable as character or trust, or as the sum of recommendations, chain and track-back links, and page views, impacts, and shares by popularity-driven consumers of art content produced, i.e. forwarded or commissioned by opinion-designated, single or self-serving mediators, middlemen, pulley, pump, or panderer [12].

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ART CRITIQUE

The open and dynamic nature of social media reveals both opportunities and challenges when it comes to mobilizing such platforms for serious art critique. As we have shown, one obvious opportunity is that people from anywhere are able to create, distribute, and engage with content, allowing authentic self-expression and artistic appreciation to be possible in places where they would normally be suppressed or

absent. For the same reason, many art-and-culture related debates that would otherwise remain marginal, private, or absent are increasingly being held on the discursive infrastructure provided by social media [13, 14]. The challenges in using social media for serious art criticism boil down to complexities regarding content and affiliation. Art content is varied and complex, which means that art's critique is anything but a no-brainer. It is difficult to discern between high and low evaluation. At the same time, most social media content is potentially manipulative, and specifically in the case of art, it could be anything from parody to plagiarism. These complexities may be amplified by the fact that heavy-handed tactic control over content and critique may devalue the organic nature of social media. Also, social media use typically aligns with selective exposure over confrontational discussion [15]. When it comes to these challenges, the salience that art discourse is given on social media is not just a measure of its proactive quality. The legitimacy and trust in professional art criticism have become conditional upon relative visibility and influence, so that social media and bots have become effective disruptors of this exclusiveness. Public popularity is now perceived as irrefutable proof of high quality. It ratchets up the price tags at auctions, and the VIP industries of tourism, festival, and talk show have a vested interest in boosting this effect. At the same time, the overwhelming social media hype for certain (sponsored) aesthetic directions, art scenes, or specific artists places idiomatic pressure on fresh talent to tread the same well-trodden paths [16, 17]. In the context, that contemporary high art is part and victim of the click bait economy devalues the notion that serious critique of serious art exhibitions is actually happening online. While this finding may have varying relevance in discerning media anthropology, the Association of Art Critics is actually prevented from being too out-of-the-world if they want to be relevant in their role as social mediators of art [18, 19].

CONCLUSION

Social media has undeniably reshaped the landscape of art consumption and critique, offering unprecedented access and democratization. While these platforms enable broader participation and visibility for artists and critics, they also pose significant challenges. The emphasis on rapid content consumption and the metrics-driven nature of social media can undermine the depth and seriousness of art critique. To harness the benefits of social media while mitigating its drawbacks, it is crucial to develop strategies that promote thoughtful engagement and uphold the integrity of art criticism in the digital age.

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