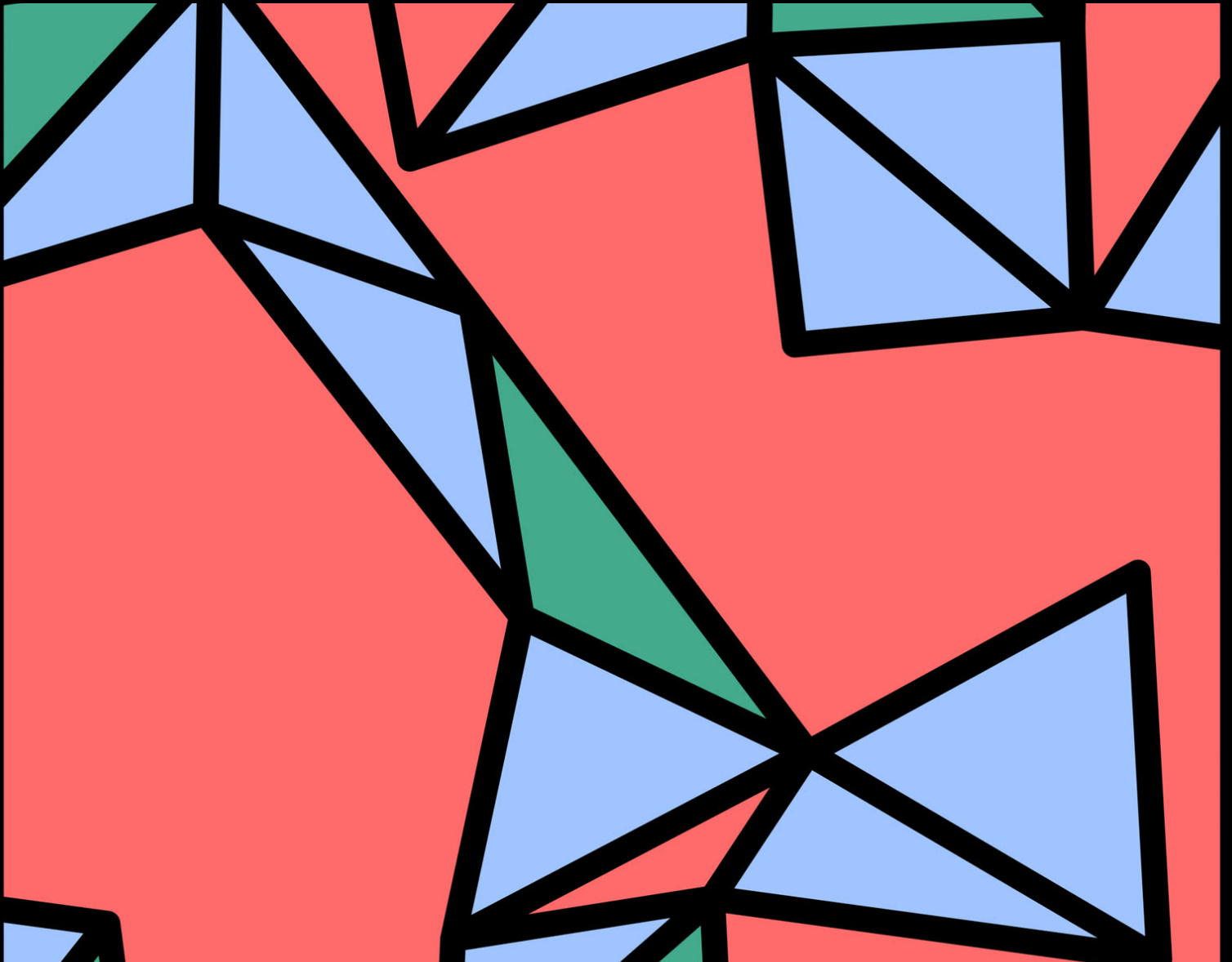




JUDGEMENT, TOO, IS A POSITING

TRANSPARENT ART JURY

Reflecting on judgement and making it explicit

TOBIAS POST

Artista · Arte luminosa digitale · Pittura · Progetti curatoriali

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It is not only the work that is a positing. Judgement, too, is a positing.

A frequent reproach levelled at present-day image production is that it reproduces existing aesthetic patterns instead of developing an independent position. Particularly in the context of social media and artificial intelligence, visual languages often arise through the repetition of forms, motifs and attention-seeking strategies that have already proved successful. Images orient themselves to established viewing habits because these promise visibility.

The criticism is not directed against beauty, accessibility or success. The charge of decorative art does not refer to a particular aesthetic property of a work. Rather, it rests on the assumption that aesthetic decisions appear not as a reflected position but as an adaptation to existing expectations.

Reflection thereby becomes a central yardstick. Art is expected to question its preconditions, to make its decisions consciously and to make its own position recognisable. The criticism is directed less against the result than against the absence of any recognisable engagement with the conditions of one's own work.

It is precisely at this point, however, that a further question arises. Does this demand apply only to the work? Or does it also apply to the assessment of the work?

Anyone who describes a work as decorative, relevant, contemporary or of high quality has already made a decision about which forms of artistic practice should count as significant. Such judgements do not arise without preconditions. They rest on particular criteria, concepts of art and ideas about what art is and what it should achieve.

The demand for reflection, however, is often directed only at the artistic work, not at the conditions under which it is assessed.

This is precisely where the Transparent Art Jury begins.

Its concern is neither to defend decorative art nor to reject institutional art. Its starting point is rather a simple consequence: if reflecting on one's own preconditions counts as a mark of quality in art, why should it not also count as a mark of quality in its assessment?

For it is not only the work that is a positing. Judgement, too, is a positing.

Every artwork decides on particular forms, materials, themes and references. It takes a position and thereby enters into relation with cultural, social and historical contexts. But a judgement, too, decides on particular criteria, questions and views about which artistic positions deserve attention.

Neither works nor judgements arise in a vacuum. Both rest on preconditions. Both are shaped by perspectives. Both draw distinctions.

It does not follow that all judgements are arbitrary. Nor does it follow that juries should lose their ability to decide. Selection remains necessary. Different ideas of quality will continue to exist.

The question is therefore not whether assessments are made. The question is whether the preconditions of a judgement are reflected upon and whether this reflection becomes comprehensible. Transparency is not an end in itself. It is the consequence of a preceding reflection. Anyone who reflects on the preconditions of a judgement must also be able to name them.

Most jury procedures concentrate on disclosing the artistic work. Artists show their works, concepts and positions. The conditions of their assessment, by contrast, often remain in the background. What becomes visible is the result of a decision, but not the frame of reference within which it was reached.

This creates an asymmetry.

Art is required to reflect on its preconditions. The preconditions of judgement often remain unspoken.

Someone who receives a rejection knows the result, but not necessarily the perspective from which it came about. The judgement thus easily appears to be a general statement about the value of a work, even though it was in fact made within particular criteria and assumptions.

The Transparent Art Jury therefore proposes disclosing the preconditions of assessments. Not in order to relativise decisions, but to make their context comprehensible.

A decision does not lose any of its binding force as a result. It no longer

appears, however, as a judgement of quality seemingly free of preconditions, but as an assessment within a named frame.

This concerns not only the structure of a procedure. It also concerns how artistic work is treated.

Anyone who submits a piece of artistic work is not merely presenting a result. What becomes visible is a position. Behind a work there are often years of engagement, experimentation, doubt and development. Decisions about art are therefore perceived differently from decisions in purely administrative procedures.

Rejection is part of art. Different views, interests and ideas of quality can be neither avoided nor dissolved. What matters, however, is whether it remains comprehensible what a decision refers to and what it does not.

A comprehensible justification does not change the outcome of a decision. It does, however, change how it is understood. It makes visible that a rejection does not necessarily mean dismissing an entire artistic position, but is the decision of a particular panel within a particular frame of reference.

This also changes the relationship between jury and artist.

The jury remains able to decide. It retains its responsibility and its curatorial freedom. At the same time, the standards of its decisions become visible and thus themselves become the subject of possible discussion.

The Transparent Art Jury therefore sees itself not as a counter-model to the jury, but as a further development of its claim. It transfers the demand for reflection, which contemporary art often makes of works, to the procedures by which they are assessed.

Its aim is not to abolish selection. Its aim is to reflect on and disclose its preconditions.

For a jury bears responsibility not only for the works it selects. It also bears responsibility for the way its decisions can be understood.

A good jury is therefore distinguished not only by which works it selects. It is also distinguished by how those not selected come out of the process. It is not only the work that is a positing. Judgement, too, is a positing.

Anyone who judges art should therefore reflect on the preconditions of their judgement and disclose them.

Not in order to dissolve differences.

But to make visible the conditions under which these differences arise.

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