

# “FROM MUSEUM WALLS TO FACEBOOK WALLS”\*. A NEW PUBLIC SPACE FOR ART

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The ‘museal’ approach to art has been attacked from many angles in the last decade; the main issue raised by most of these attacks was that such an approach would promote a certain idea of art which has little to do with real-life or the layman’s interest. Some artists have protested by stepping out of the museum space with projects deliberately designed as non-museum items [performance, land-art, public art etc.]. Art, however, is always meant for a public, so, as an “unfortunate” consequence, those artists who wished to become famous were not able to avoid certain art institutions, such as museums, galleries, curators or critics. Until now. The internet, especially Facebook, provide genuinely new options/

opportunities for the virtual display of art pieces, an option that artists are eager to take advantage of. In the following, I will present the process of expansion of the public artistic sphere, I will attempt to show why Facebook serves well as a public artistic arena, and finally, I will present some salient Facebook-art-projects. The presented projects will include works by a street artist (Banksy), a performance artist (Gusztáv Útő) and a graphic designer (Dan Perjovschi). These three artists are intrigued by current social issues, which are usually reflected in their works, also they all wish to spread their messages to the widest possible public. One of their favorite channels is the Facebook Wall.

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**KEYWORDS:** *fine art, street art, public art, Facebook*

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\* The title of Romanian artist Dan Perjovschi talk at Onassis Cultural Center Athens, 10 march. 2014, and of the exhibition at Zurich 8 may 2014.

## 1. From museum walls to the city walls

When we think of art, or more specifically the fine arts, paintings will most probably first come to mind, and even more probably, paintings that hang on museum walls. Artworks which are meant to be hung on walls are not a permanent form of art: in order for the museums to be established the way we know them today, first the painting had to descend from the walls – mainly church walls – which happened throughout the years of the renaissance, when painters began painting on different surfaces [wood, canvas etc.] which could be framed and handled as moveable objects. The mural is not an independent genre of the fine arts: given that they are painted on walls, the walls themselves determine the painting, its surface, and the light that strikes it, numerous aspects regarding the viewing environment. When paintings were detached from the walls and framed, the exhibition options broadened.

The gradual spreading of the framed painting is relevant for another reason too: because it reflects the process leading to the idea of the independent art that is systematically analysed by Kant in his *The Critique of Pure Reason* [2000]. Traditionally, artwork [painting, statue, relief, building] was subordinated to some non-artistic function. Murals decorated the walls of churches, reliefs were put on buildings, statues symbolized gratitude towards gods or heroes etc. The idea of the artwork created to stand on its own was established at the end of the eighteenth century. Kant gave us the most crystallized formulation of autonomous art: since art belongs to the realms of beauty, which should be distinguished from the values of good or pleasant, it follows that beauty should not be determined by rules from outside of its own. Fine art should only be regulated by the rules of the genius, because “genius is the talent [natural gift] that gives the rule to art” [Kant, 2000, p. 186].

As a consequence, the freshly autonomous art, which now was valued solely for aesthetic reasons, could be invited into the museum, where only its own intrinsic rules applied – or at least, were supposed to.

The concept of museal art was even more strengthened by Hegel, who believed that art was a realization of the absolute spirit. Until then, art was valued from an individual perspective, but due to Hegel’s contribution, the lenses needed to be adjusted for a much higher sphere. He claims that art, not unlike religion or philosophy, is determined by the history of humanity and is one of the most prominent manifestations

of the self-recognition of the spirit: "art belongs to the same province as religion and philosophy", i.e. "the realm of fine art is the realm of the absolute spirit" (Hegel, 1975, p. 94). As such, all generations have the obligation to maintain art in its value. Museums would collect the salient artworks of the nation, moreover, of humanity, conserve them and their distinctive aura, categorize, analyze, study them and keep the unworthy masses to get too close to them.

Art, now driven into the museums, thus made it possible for the interested to view the pieces of their choosing. When paintings were mere dust holders in mansions of the wealthy collectors only a few selected people were lucky enough to lay their eyes on them. But museums are open for the public, and, given their ideological function, they display reflections of the nation, they are usually maintained from the state budget.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the institution of the museum was highly criticised. Firstly, by pragmatist philosophers, who believed that this institution reflected most obviously the separation of art from real-life. John Dewey, when defining art as experience in his work entitled *Art as Experience*, claims that museum and galleries do not build a relation between art and life, but rather separate the two even more. The idea of art separated from life was affirmed by "the development of the museum as the proper home for works of art, and the promotion of the idea that they are apart from the common life" (Dewey, 1980, p. 8).

Secondly, the museal practice seemed to conserve the view claiming that art should be approached only with detachment and "pure gaze," something that is not our natural attitude that is with us from birth, but is a perspective solely open to the cultural elite: "The «pure » gaze is a historical invention linked to the emergence of an autonomous field of artistic production, i.e, a field capable of imposing its own norms on both the production and the consumption of its products" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 3). The museum represented Taste with a capital "T" itself – but this taste is in no way simply an aesthetic standard independent of social factors: "Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they made, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 6). In this sense, the museum is an antidemocratic institution that widens the social gap.

Furthermore, though museums are supposed to select the pieces according to objective criteria and artistic evaluation, they always represent some particular group [the nation, the class, the generation etc.]. Thus, the museum does not just simply strengthen the political elite, but – unconsciously or unwittingly – follows a Eurocentric, exclusivist policy.

Therefore, those artists who recall Kant’s lecture about “disinterested and free liking” and that the artist gives rules to art, strive to maintain their freedom so precious for their artistic existence. They try to protect their freedom not just from social and political institutions, but from institutions of the art sector as well. This leads to the arrival of artistic forms which could not be fitted in-between museum walls: performance art, different forms of land-art, public art, mail art etc.

Unfortunately, the situation of projects outside the museum sphere is not quite clear from the perspective of their availability. On the one hand, the Pont Neuf wrapped by Christo and Jeanne Claude was seen by anyone who walked beneath it. The piece was temporarily available to the public, for two weeks only. However, it could be seen by anyone, regardless of “cultural capital” or “educational capital” [Bourdieu, 1984], whether she was familiar with art history, aesthetics, or whether she was part of the “discourse of reasons” about art [Danto, 1992, p. 39]. It is not certain that more people see the pieces this way than if they were displayed in the museum for many months, but we can tell for sure that this way the public is not determined by their social class – i.e. from a qualitative perspective, art presented outside museum walls is everyone’s, or more precisely: anyone’s.

## ***2. Art institutions on Facebook***

Just as museums have proven to be a step forward for the art-seeking public as opposed to private collections, the mechanical reproduction of art [which Walter Benjamin was so intrigued by] presents another advantage for the public, on a par with those technical processes that enable art pieces to be known to the public by creating high quality “reproductions”: coloured photography, photocopy, digital photography. Naturally, encountering a copy of the real piece does not provide the same sort of experience as an encounter with the original: the true aura, perception of the piece can only be experienced by directly experiencing the piece itself. On the other hand, it is indisputable,

that the widespread of the internet has facilitated the encounter with the wider population which would not have the opportunity to visit different museums of the globe, just to see the original pieces of art.

Though, in the case of traditional artworks [such as an impressionist painting or a statue by Hans Arp], it is unquestionable that there is a major qualitative difference between a direct encounter with the piece and seeing an online replica of it, in the case of twentieth century art, there have been numerous changes that have obliterated most part of this incongruence thus making the difference between the two experiences less relevant. First of all, I refer to works that follow Duchamp by not relying on manual dexterity, but rather brain skills. It is quite hard to prove that Duchamp's groundbreaking piece *The Fountain*, presents more value in its material reality, than through a reproduction of it [especially since the one we can see in MOMA is not even the real piece, but a replica of the original].

Museums themselves have recognized the potential lying in the internet: a great number of them have uploaded some parts of their collection to the internet.

Facebook has done great deal of changes in the way the internet works as a public art sphere. Though it was created with the goal to facilitate interpersonal communication, Facebook functions more and more as a real public locus, with the advantage that the users can decide whom they share this public sphere with. By allowing the sharing of pictures, Facebook speeds up the visual turn. Obviously, Facebook is not just a book of faces, but also a book of all sorts of pictures and images, and this way it also becomes a book of distinguished visual works of art.

## 2.1. Museums and galleries

Facebook provides the opportunity to create not only individual profiles but group or institutional pages as well. Facebook profiles can be created for institutions or for temporary or permanent communities, thus opening up a public sphere for their members who are joined by their shared interest in the topic. Institutions are eager to take advantage of this opportunity and promote themselves and their projects. The art world has also "moved" to Facebook: museums, art galleries have their own Facebook page. Institutions of the art world are active users of Facebook: they use it to get in touch with potential visitors who are potentially interested.

It is worth to compare the number of people who actually visit museums and the ones who do so only virtually. In the following, I will compare data from 2012 about the number of visitors of well-known museums who went there in person with the number of Facebook Likes the museums got (though perhaps these sites have more visitors, who did not leave their virtual footprint on the Facebook walls):

MUSEUM	Visitor number in 2012 <sup>2</sup>	Rank in 2012	Likes June 2014
Musée de Louvre [Paris]	9.72 million	1	1.300.000
Metropolitan Museum of Art [NYC]	6,11 million	2	1.100.000
Tate Modern [London]	5,3 million	4	675.000
Centre Pompidou [Paris]	3,8 million	9	405.000
Musee D'Orsay [Paris]	3,6 million	10	208.000
MoMA [NYC]	2.8 million	14	1.600.000

In 2012 Musée de Louvre [Paris] had the largest number of visitors: 9.72 million, followed by the Metropolitan Museum of Art [NYC] with its own 6.11 million, Tate Modern [London] is ranked 4th with its 5.3 million. Center Pompidou [Paris] is placed 9th: 3.8 million, and the 10th is the Musee D'Orsay [Paris] with its 3.6. MoMA was only placed 14th with its own 2.8 million. This ranking fits almost perfectly with the ranking of the virtual viewers, with one exception: the MoMA's Facebook page got the biggest [virtual] visitor number; the number of its Facebook likers almost matches the number of actual visitors. We would probably need to do some further investigations in order to find the cause of this "anomaly." At first glance, it seems like this phenomenon stands to reflect that the MoMA's public is constituted mainly by a technologically proficient generation. Also, we should not forget that it is one of the most expensive museums, with entrance fees that most art lovers could not afford easily, while staying in touch online costs next to nothing. The same source also tells us that 7 out of the 10 most visited exhibitions in New York were organized at the MoMA.

The number of Facebook visitors is also high in the case of sites of famous art galleries: the two historical rivals, Sotheby's and Christie's, are almost tête-à-tête, with 94.000 and 89.000 Likes respec-

<sup>1</sup> THE ART NEWSPAPER SECTION 2 Number 245, April 2013. <http://www.theart-newspaper.com/attfig/attfig12.pdf>

tively, but they are both underachieving compared to the much more dynamic Saatchi which has 333.000 Likes. What is more, Saatchi has been ranked 14<sup>th</sup> on the list of arts/humanities websites according to likealyzer.com<sup>2</sup>.

Museums and galleries promote their own projects first of all: preparing exhibitions, vernissages, auctions, different events (night of museums, museum-education). Similar events are publicized on Facebook: news about the opening or the participants, photos of the event and the displayed objects, sometimes even videos or press articles about the event are posted. The more active Facebook pages implement other strategies as well, in order to keep in touch with the virtual public: competitions (for example, the Budapest based Ludwig Museum posted photos of works and asked the public to comment which artist it belonged to, or drawings of buildings inspired by the particular style of a certain artist and the public had to guess who), they commemorate significant dates in connection with famous artists by posting a photo or a quote, what is more, in such cases, Saatchi promotes its own artists who work in a similar style to that certain artist. The extremely dynamic photography museum, the Mai Manó Ház, posts pictures from its collection, topical pair of which can be viewed on the museum's blog, thus guiding the visitor to further parts of its online surface, and after every week they post the picture that received most Likes. Such creative ideas that go beyond the usual promotional techniques (posting news and pictures) bring the online surface alive and, most of all: boost the number of visitors. This type of creativity proves to be quite useful: the Ludwig Museum has 5 times more, and the Mai Manó Ház has 4 times more likers than the traditional Hungarian museums (the Hungarian National Gallery and the Hungarian Museum of Fine Arts).

The majority of museums prefer to categorize their online images into albums. Quite significant differences can be observed regarding their timeline use: the most active from this point of view is the Met (with more than 1700 pictures on its timeline) and the Tate (with more than 1200), most of the other museums have around 1000 pictures on their Facebook page. The Mai Manó Ház is particular in this respect too, with its more than 4000 posted photos.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://likealyzer.com/statistics/facebook/likes/category/Arts-humanities%20website/page/1>

## 2.2. Artpromoting pages

As we have become more and more familiar with the science promoting genre, we can safely say that a new genre, art promoting, has become more and more popular, responding to a growing demand of the public to get acquainted with the world of art.

The appearance of artistic Facebook pages independent of any museum or gallery is a quite interesting development; many of these have appeared as a result of private effort, but their dynamic presence has brought hundreds or thousands of fans. Such would be Art Sheep, with its more than 200.000 fans. From the Romanian palette it is worth mentioning the Modernism Punct Ro, which is maintained by an online journal. It has proven to be one of the most active Facebook pages, they upload quite a number of pictures to their timeline – currently they have exceeded 6400 – from the pages I have looked into, only Art Sheep has been able to outrank it with its more than 10.000 pictures uploaded to their timeline. Such a quantity of artistic produce that a common Facebook user can encounter on the web, cannot even be compared to the number she would be able to experience in an “off-line” museum. If someone relies only on direct, real-life experience, even if she stands on the streets of New York, the centre of the global art world, she would still be able to experience only a fragment of the amount that is available on Facebook to the common user.

## 3. Artist-pages

Though many prophecies have been made about the death of Facebook, in 2013 it reached 1.1 billion users, and what is even more interesting, the most dynamically growing demographic of users is of the generation between 45 and 54. A growing interest is manifested by the adult, active population, and as a consequence, the number of those who are not just using Facebook for dating and getting to know people, but desire to share information and opinions about social and cultural issues. In other words, Facebook is turning from the reflection of the user to the reflection of society.

This process comes in handy for those artists who desire to spread their social message: with the help of Facebook they are able to reach a big number of viewers. In the following, I will present three artists, who promote their socially-sensitive works with the help of Facebook.

For the presented artists, the transmission of their social message is very relevant, so it becomes obvious that they would post their work on Facebook.

## Banksy

First, let us take a look at the world famous street artist, Banksy's page. In his case, the pieces are not taken off from the museum walls, but from the street walls and posted to his Facebook wall. His work is also deemed 'guerilla-art,' because he makes stencils on buildings or bridges in secret without permission. He keeps his identity secret – a huge accomplishment, given that he is world famous and auction houses keep track of his work. He uses the stencil technique so that his works are done quickly, since his status as an artist is not clear for everyone, for example, the police: if he were caught, it is quite probable that he would not be charged any differently from a graffiti spraying youth – i.e. he is risking jail with his projects.

Banksy's relation to Facebook is quite tricky: there is a page with 12.000 Likes since 2014.03.03., that promotes his works, but evidently, it is not managed by himself [see the post from the 16 April: "It's disgusting people are allowed to go around displaying art on walls without getting permission': Banksy uses tongue-in-cheek statement to say exhibition of his art has nothing to do with him."]. Furthermore, there is another page with 80.000 Likes, also unrelated to Banksy, even though it's called Banksy FB Revolution.

Then there is a Banksy Facebook page with more than 3.1 million Likes. Here, his works are posted in high definition without any kind of commentary. We cannot tell, whether Banksy himself is behind this page or not. This statement is available on his official page: "Banksy is not represented by an art gallery, is not on Facebook and has never used Twitter."<sup>3</sup> However, the viewership of this page is quite impressive: by itself, it has obtained more fans than the very prestigious MoMA, Louvre, Met or Tate. Obviously, Banksy is a huge star in the art world, but it is still very impressive that he was able to reach such a number of fans.

*His works reflect his critical attitude towards different aspects of society using humour and irony. It seems like he is a natural born rebel, who finds joy in standing against all types of power structures, be it*

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<sup>3</sup> <http://banksy.co.uk/faq.asp>

*the Queen of England represented as a monkey, kissing policemen, or the policemen, who use pink fluffy toy dogs with muzzles in their police investigations instead of police dogs, or soldiers being [strip]searched by a little girl. His mascot is a rat, he usually represents children, thin girls, people living in poverty, anyone, who is a potential victim of the power, and his works are usually created with great empathy for these characters. By replacing the objects related to the oppressing power with household objects, he is able to neutralize violence, oppression and defencelessness [see the replacement of guns with bananas]. In his works, the symbols of power and oppression become a laughing stock for us, they are no longer harmful or terrifying.*

*He does not spare his own kind – art and the art world – either, or maybe he criticizes this the most. He prefers to put his ideas in neighbourhoods inhabited by the lower classes, and the community of his choice views his works as presents from the artist. He chose an artistic form which is not easy to digest for the art world – scratching down a spray painted figure from the walls of slums and taking it into the museum or the gallery can prove to be quite tough. The art world proved to be insatiable, nonetheless: in 2007 Sotheby's sold a Banksy for more than 100.000 pounds. At the same time as the auction, Banksy uploaded a graphic work to his page about the auction, in which the framed painting being auctioned spelled the following: "I can't believe you morons actually buy this shit."*

One of his most appealing projects against the mercantile art world was his street vendor action on the 13 October 2013 in New York. The project was taped and the next day Banksy himself spoke about it on his website. He set up a stall with the inscription spray art on it in Central Park and he began selling his original, signed works for 60 dollars each. The video about the event is available on YouTube: the vendor is trying to sell the pieces for hours, but no one is even remotely interested in them. Eventually, a lady buys two pieces after beating down their price to half of the original. By the end of the day he is able to sell 8 pieces out of the 20. Someone bought four pieces to decorate their freshly bought house. Quite probably, the buyers have never even heard of him – they might not have ever become aware of the value of their new décor items. It is not a coincidence that Banksy chose New York, the most dynamic city of the art world, with famous art galleries such as Sotheby's, as a location for his project. The artist who sells his works worth fortunes for only 60 dollars is obviously rebelling against the economically driven art market. Another of his usual tar-

gets is the museum itself, and the works canonized by art institutions. He managed to smuggle in a Mona Lisa with a smiley replacing the Gioconda's well-known original smile. He smuggled a portrait of a woman wearing a gas mask into the Metropolitan Museum. He reinterprets historical paintings, where serious baroque gentlemen make obscene gestures, or gaze at us seriously with a cake flattened over their face, a cleaning lady sweeping the dust behind the art world's superstar, Damien Hirst's dotted surfaces, he crops out figures from well-known paintings and places them on the frame as if they were taking a cigarette break etc. Maybe exactly his anti-authoritarian attitude and his almost reckless rebellion against any sort of power is what makes Banksy so appealing to the masses and helps him obtain so many followers. It should not be left unmentioned that not being able to actually experience his pieces in flesh and blood does not take away much from their value: the photographs portraying his works provide quite sufficient guidelines regarding the quality and, especially, the message of the works. If we decided to set off on the streets of London or New York searching for "a Banksy," we would have a much harder job than simply browsing through his albums on Facebook.

### Dan Perjovschi

Dan Perjovschi is a well-known Romanian artist, he had individual exhibitions in the Tate Modern in 2006 and in the MoMA in 2007. His primary media are drawing and graffiti, he works in situ on his exhibitions: he "decorates" the walls of the museums or galleries with his drawings, so his exhibitions are always temporary and bound to the relevant location. His drawings are usually constituted by elementary figures and words which come together to represent social ideas. His drawings reflect on current phenomena, so familiarity with the current cultural and political context is usually necessary in order to grasp his message.

Perjovschi is present with a personal page on Facebook since 2009, which reached the maximum 5000 friends quite fast, so he created a new page on the 2 September 2011. The "About" section of this second page says: "My artist page. Everybody welcome." Both pages are obviously run by himself, but they are not strictly artistic pages – he does not only use them to promote his own works. On the first page we find texts in Romanian, with his personal commentaries. While he posts more or less personal photos [about the streets of Bucharest, a garden gnome etc.], he also posts about his current exhibitions or, in the last

few months, drawings about the Ukrainian Crisis. On this page, the artist himself posts commentaries and communicates with the visitors. The other page is more official; his works are presented in English or simply posted without any commentaries. He follows topics such as: the Ukrainian Crisis – with special attention to the Russian reactions, the Rosia-Montana case<sup>4</sup>, and issues related to the European Union.

He uses Facebook very consciously to promote his art and his beliefs. In a 2013 interview [Stefan, 2013] Perjovschi said the following: “For some time, I have been sliding from the institutional wall to the walls of Facebook. I found it to be an interesting space. Here, my drawings mean something beyond ‘art.’ I can have a more objective and precise look at the events I comment on.”

In this interview he also speaks about the environmental protest movement related to the preservation of Rosia Montana. He uploaded his works relating to Rosia Montana to his Facebook page, which the activists downloaded, printed on their banners and their T-shirts. The artist’s reaction to this was the following: “Excellent! I really feel I have a role.” He does not find this a copy-right issue, but he would definitely sue if somebody started selling the T-shirts for money. Perjovschi does not desire to leave/abandon the museums completely, however, he finds Facebook to be a very important “public space”: “Somehow my drawings found a new and more truthful life. There is something very artificial about the white cube. I want my drawings to be free and active. If people identify with them, I am so very happy.”

This type of presence could be called “Facebook activism”: Dan Perjoschi has been doing it for three years and one of its advantages is that we cannot only see traditional drawings by him, but also digital ones, which he posts immediately onto his Facebook wall. Thousands of his friends and followers comment and share the images, thus creating a public place for sharing opinions and thoughts – something that is otherwise rare in the Romanian society. Perjovschi’s Facebook page is a distinguished space for the artistically supported social activism.

## Ütő Gusztáv

*Ütő Gusztáv* is a painter, graphic-designer, a committed performance artist, a professor at Partium Christian University. He joined

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<sup>4</sup> Political activities against the Rosia Montana cyanide gold mining project, a protest with impressive dimensions.

Facebook relatively early [24 July 2008], and has been very active since. His Facebook page is not explicitly an artist-page: a great number of his posts relates to his family, or to his homeland, Székely Land [landscapes, buildings, traditional medicine etc.]. From the beginning of his Facebook presence, lots of his posts promoted his artistic activity, international performances and his teaching work. He started using Facebook as a surface for artistic-political activism in 2011. One of his major interests is the autonomy of Székely Land, one of the most heated topics of Transylvanian politics. He makes a wooden board with the inscription „Székelyföld – Ținutul Secuiesc – Székely Land,” and he posts photos of himself holding the board alone or joined by others in different contexts. His profile picture also represents him holding the board at Lake Szent Anna – a symbolic place for the székely community. Furthermore, he paints traditional old szekler Hungarian runic scripts on the Székely flag, he takes a photo of the flag and posts the photos to his wall. He uploads photos of his performance, in which he bound the above mentioned board to a surface covered with pebbles that spell out “Autonomy,” and when the board is lifted, the pebbles fall to the ground. He paints the Székely flag, with the sun and star, and he writes the same word “Autonomy” with yellow on a dark blue background, thus, alluding once again to the colours and structure of the Székely flag. This image is so strong in its simplicity that it could easily turn into a meme if it were not so connected to a regional context. He crops the shape of a moon and a star out of a piece of plywood shaped as a flag, and posts photos of this “flag,” with the cropped out parts being lighted by natural sunlight. As his Facebook wall gives space to the artistic and the personal alike, it is no wonder that he shares his flag and board projects with his wife and children, who often appear on such photos together with the artist.

Even though Ūtő Gusztáv’s Facebook wall does not seem as deliberately artistic as in the case of Perjovschi, it is a very important means of expression for the artist’s social and political message and his artistic activism. He expresses important social messages in a condense form, as an image, so the message gets almost burnt into the memory of the visitors much more effectively than a simple text. Ūtő Gusztáv’s pictures, similarly to Dan Perjovschi’s, are often used by activists, fighting for the autonomy of Székely Land.

#### **4. The distinctive characteristics of the artistic world of Facebook**

The virtual world of Facebook duplicates reality, in a way. People have “moved” parts of their lives to Facebook, similarly to some companies. It is no wonder that the presence of the art world on Facebook is also strong. Relying on the three cases presented in this paper, we can identify the following characteristics of the Facebook art space:

a. Presence on Facebook cannot be neglected even by the leading international art institutions [museums, galleries, auction houses]. After analysing the relevant cases we can see that the institutions which are more popular in real-life are also more popular virtually: they have a bigger number of Facebook followers. It would be worth trying to analyze with quantitative methods the connection between actual visitor numbers and Facebook visitor numbers.

b. Pages promoting pictures or images of artworks on the internet become popular quite fast. Pictures posted by such pages are shared by the followers, thus making some of the photos go viral, which could lead to users seeing the same image on many different Facebook pages on the same day. It is also due to the viral aspect that images can become famous over night, but they can also become yesterday’s news in the same way, disappearing in the cyber-ocean of forgotten content of Facebook. According to different sources<sup>5</sup> 200 or 350 million uploads occur on Facebook daily, also, according to their estimation, around 90 billion pictures are currently on Facebook. Quite probably, only a fraction of these are dedicated to art, but still, getting in contact with such an amount of visual data could not even be imagined before the existence of the internet, and what is more, before Facebook – the largest photo-sharing site today.

c. Facebook has also strengthened the world’s “global village” [McLuhan, 1962] character. Geographical distances play non ever increasing role in our lives given the possibility of being in the same cyberspace, whatever our geographical location might be. Maintaining contact does not depend on geographical proximity anymore, what does count, though, is internet availability. On the other hand, this virtual global village of Facebook works more as a “regional village”: the content that I as a user see on my wall is usually something or someone

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.quora.com/How-many-photos-are-uploaded-to-Facebook-each-day>

I am interested in the first place, I will join or follow the page or user because of my interest in them or their works. This way, it is much more probable that the relevant artistic content would reach those who are interested in art in the first place and their web of friends. Maybe this interest-filter explains the popularity of art-promoting sites.

d. Artistic activism, one of the most distinctive characteristics of the Facebook art space

The Facebook pages which go beyond merely presenting the works of the artist have proved to be more interesting. Since the birth of the avant-garde one and a half decade ago, numerous artists have tried to contribute in some way to the engineering of society, but this seemed quite hard due to art being entirely separated from daily life. Facebook presents great opportunities for those artists, who do not fancy maintaining the sacred sphere of art separate from the mundane daily routine. It also proves useful if they desire to spread their message to the widest possible public. Actually, we cannot really imagine a more useful means for this task than Facebook: any message can be shared in an instant and almost free of charge with three million people [the number of Banksy's followers]. This way, artists can organize their own exhibitions, or present their own selections, in their own way. The reaction of the public is also instantaneous: from the fraction of a second necessary for clicking on Like or Share, to the somewhat more time we need to comment, we can express our opinions right away, and getting an immediate response to their works can be quite motivating for the artists. Artists have probably never been closer to their public. Furthermore, the works of the artists we are dealing with do not lose significant aesthetic value by being digitalized to fit the virtual sphere. Furthermore, these artists do not really care about copyright issues: they usually accept others sharing their works, or they feel pleased when activists use their creations to promote their chosen message.

Facebook functions as a huge picture storage device, and if we take in consideration the number of artistic products uploaded, it also functions as a global museum. Thus, art comes closer to those who are geographically further away, or who are not part of the cultural or artistic elite of society. It seems that today it is not that much the public, who goes to museums in order to encounter art, but that a huge virtual museum moves into our living rooms via our computers. Older and newer artworks are hanging on our walls. On our Facebook walls.

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