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CREATIVE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN WORD AND IMAGE IN MODERN VISUAL CULTURE

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The paper deals with creative interactions of text and image in the works of various artists who represent realistic or even a photorealistic style: Belgian surrealist René Magritte; the father of conceptualism Joseph Kosuth; and Lithuanian artists - photorealist Algimantas Švėgžda and contemporary voung painter Konstantinas Gaitanži. The author discloses how text and image interact in the works of these artists, points our reasons which cause attractiveness of their works for philosophical interpretation. Different variants of the interaction of word and image are disclosed: the word and the image could deny and at the same time confirm each other (Magritte's This Is Not a Pipe); word becomes the founder of the image (Kosuth's One and Three Chairs); word extends both reality and its image (everyday things in the works of Švegžda); both words and images create fictional, non-existing reality (Gaitanži's Dead Rock Star). Finally, however the word and images interacted, the word could help developing a material being of the pictured object. In the discussed cases, word becomes an assumption and condition necessary for creative dispersion of the image.

Keywords: culture, creativity, fine arts, image, text, visuality, word.

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Introduction

Paper devoted to interesting and little analyzed topic of interaction of text and image in modern and contemporary painting. This research is based on comparative, hermeneutical and phenomenological methods which are considered as the most suitable for detailed analysis of selected topic. The interactions between text and the image could be a grateful ground for various creative interpretations. They are artfully applied in intellectual and philosophical works of Belgian artist Magritte and Lithuanian artist Švėgžda. What determines that the works of these artists attract philosophers? How a philosopher could "read" artist's picture? What can their images tell us? Answers to these questions could be unveiled through analyzing relations between image and text. Therefore, let us see how artist can play with various forms of dissonance between the word and image, how naming and entitling could extend the limits of plastic language. Many 20th century artists looked for solution which could surprise, even shock the spectator, force to focus on their work and remember it for a long time. One of the ways of visual expression that creates such tension, is a dissonance between what the spectator expects to see and what he sees. Let us see how the artist can play with various forms of dissonance between the word and image.

Contradiction between word and image: Magritte's This Is Not a Pipe

A piece of painting could be closely related not only to visual, but also to the verbal signs – both the image and the text could be important part of it. Some paintings of Magritte (1898–1967) consist of original and multidimensional relations of text and image. Exactly this topic caused long-term friendship between him and the French philosopher Michel Foucault – they were in an active communication, often debated and together examined a relation between word and image, between the thing and its depiction, were sincerely interested in each other's creative heritage. Foucault was interested in Magritte's art, especially series named *This Is Not a Pipe* (1929), which inspired him to write an essay with the same title devoted to the analysis of Magritte's creation. Magritte also was interested in Foucault's ideas, had read his texts, particularly essay "Words and Things" ("Les Mots et les Choses") (Foucault 1966). Probably Magritte was attracted by Foucault's tale to avoid dogmatism – instead of theorizing and stating, philosopher simply describes a phenomenon of art work (Podoroga 1999: 101).

Series of Magritte pictures, which attracted attention of philosophers is very simple: the painter depicted just an ordinary pipe and a note (text) denying it. Somehow this work reverses traditional relations of image and speech, because words, which are *written* next to the pipe, are *painted* themselves. By this way the words in these pictures turn into images themselves. Therefore they rather prolong the message than illustrate or supplement it. Two different discourses – the pictured object (image) and its title (naming) obviously confront (contradict) each other. Such contradiction makes artwork more interesting, because the image of the pipe itself is clear and banal, like an illustration from schoolbook. Deconstruction of traditional system makes these pictures paradoxical and ambiguous: we are used to see texts and notices that correspond and prolong each other. Whereas Magritte depicts a well-known object (pipe) and a text that denies this object. However, do really text and image in these works contradict with each other?

Analyzing this question brings us to the image modus of being and its relation to reality. We know that an image is not identical to its prototype. But how does the being of an image differ from the being of its prototype? The difference of image and prototype was gracefully defined by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, stating that "image is not a copy, optical illusion or another thing": "The animals painted on the walls of Lascaux are not there in the same way as the fissures and limestone formations. But they are not elsewhere" (Merleau-Ponty 2004: 296). The pipe in Magritte's work obviously is not in the same way as the oil paints and canvas are there. Thus, a rhetorical question arises: is not the artist, confirming that the painted image is not a pipe, exactly right? After all, the inscription It Is Not a Pipe is directed towards the image of reality. And reality itself and its image are not identical. We cannot say that lines, and chromatic spots depicted in painting are indeed a pipe (tool of smoking). Therefore it can be stated that the image of pipe indeed "is not a pipe". For this reasons Valery Podoroga says that "the real pipe, as the tool of smoking, is not named *vet*, and the named image is *already* not the pipe" (Podoroga 1999: 112). Thus, the artist and philosophers can agree that "it is not a pipe".

Even in the front of assemblage with attached real pipe, probably we will be able to repeat the same sentence, that "it is not a pipe". Anyway, sprayed with paint and fixed to the background of the artwork the pipe will lose its real function (to be a smoking tool) and becomes the element of art work. Loss of function transforms utilitarian object into something else, perhaps the image of itself, and by this way causes a loss of title. With the help of such works, Magritte destroys the difference between the affirmation ("it is a pipe") and its denial ("it is not a pipe"), opens ironic, ambivalent, direct and pre-reflective relation with reality.

In the work The Two Mysteries (1966), Magritte creates a more complex interpretation of pipe, a kind of reflection of his previous works. There are two pipes depicted on canvas: in the right lower corner there is a blackboard with the image of a pipe and it denying text, and outside there is another pipe obviously bigger than entire blackboard. The first pipe is limited by the board's frame, and the second one freely flutters in the space. We have the impression that inscription that contradicts the image could be erased at any moment (or the image, which does not fit to the inscription at all). Foucault suggests readers to imagine a teacher standing next to this "blackboard" and explaining that "it is not the pipe but its picture". But postmodernism refuses unambiguous definitions thus in the imaginary classroom above the blackboard and the teacher explaining the meanings, there suddenly above the head of teacher emerges a second pipe, and the students laugh and shout: "a pipe, a pipe". No one is listening to the teacher when he is repeating "and yet it is not a pipe", though he is right: "the pipe floating so obviously overhead <...> is itself merely a drawing (Foucault 1983: 29–30). The thing and its naming could only meet in discourse (in conceptual interpretation, in artist's creative gesture), and not in the reality itself. In The Two Mysteries the word shows non-identity between a real thing and its image, and at the same time it establishes the image itself.

Word as the founder of image: Kosuth's One and Three Chairs

Words can both – question status of image, or establish image itself. The later approach could be seen on the famous Kosuth's (b. 1945) work *One and Three Chairs* (1965) which consists of a real chair, a photograph of the chair and the enlarged encyclopaedic description of the chair – particular diagram and instruction of the work. This work highlights relation between language, picture and referent. It rises and problemiszes relations between object itself, it is visual and verbal references as well as the semantic background of the name.

Such a theoretic and conceptual base of the work is non-accidental and illustrates tendencies of its times: in the middle of the 20th century the importance of theoretical, conceptual background started to replace such aspects of artistic creation as technical, mastery skills, subject and material used for artwork. *One and Three Chairs* was produced in a world where any "leading or serious artist could be expected to have had some sophisticated knowledge and reflective understanding of the tradition in which he or she was working" (Wilde 2007: 131).

This work provokes various questions: What is the status of the "real" chair, its photography and description? How are they different and where they are similar? And which chair is the "real" one? Kosuth's work emphasizes a problematic relation between the object and its image as well as naming. Demonstration of a chair, its photograph and encyclopaedic description, raise question about what is more real – a thing, its image or description. Prototype and its image must have something in common – only then the second one can be recognized as the image of the first one. Kosuth argues that the most real one is the naming – encyclopaedic description of the chair (definition) – as thanks to it, a chair becomes what it is. Such approach shows obvious Ludwig Wittgenstein's influence – this philosopher also analyzed image-naming relations, and concluded that the main one is a logic view, or a name). "What every picture, of whatever form, must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it at all – rightly or falsely <...> "The logical picture can depict the world" – says Wittgenstein (2009: 34 [2.18–2.19]).

It is a turn towards a platonic world of ideas where the idea (name of the thing, definition) are earlier and more real than the thing itself – various chairs could exist in the world but all of them are momentary, imperfect and insufficient to themselves (Plato 1997: 131). Thus encyclopaedic definition of a chair is something like a Platonic ideal chair – prototype and source of all real chairs, which are different, accidental and not important at all. To stress unimportance and accidental status of physical object in every exhibition Kosuth demonstrated a different model of chair and accordingly a photo of different chair. Sometimes he used a table or a bed instead of the chair, and accordingly named the work *One and Three Tables, One and Three Beds*, etc. With this series of artworks he argued an idea that the most important is the title of the thing, an idea, or conception of art work. The value in Kosuth's creation is "its idea in the realm of art, and not the physical or visual qualities seen in specific work" (Wittgenstein 1963: 81).

The base of the artist's creative expression is a word, title, definition. The thing and its image are secondary, no more than a simple "analytic prepositions". This means that artist's creativity and originality are determined by his ability to notice and use the concepts, words and titles. Kosuth justified the idea that artist's expression spread itself in the level of concepts and ideas, and definition of art becomes art itself. This is the way the word and image become tautological. Therefore Kosuth states that without its text the work of art is meaningless. Such correlation between the sign (language) and visual representation (context) brings Kosuth to the conclusion that art will replace philosophy, if it has not already, because contemporary artists know enough about the word to make the assumption that traditional philosophy demands (Kosuth 1991: 35). Thus word (name) becomes a founder of the image, a condition that enables the image to be itself. With such conceptual works Kosuth shows that an artistic creation and its product (an image) correlate with the word and naming.

Word of continuation of reality and its image: metaphysics of things in the creation of Švėgžda

We have seen that the word could both – negate or establish an image. But in some cases the world appears as a simply prolongation of image. Such approach is obvious in the works of Lithuanian painter's Švegžda (1941–1996), one of the most prominent 20th century Lithuanian painters, graphics and drawers. His pictures show usual, daily things because the titles of these pictures just name depicted objects – images and inscriptions simply prolong each other. Such everyday things are perhaps most obviously depicted in Švegžda's photorealistic paintings from 1980s: old shoes painted in Vincent van Gogh's style (Boots, 1980); old, used jeans hung on the rope (Jeans, 1978); furniture (Chair, 1977; Orange Chair in the Electric Light, 1979), etc. Everyday objects have something particular, even metaphysic – they remain not simple tools but mysterious things themseves. Interesting example of metaphysic of things is disclosed in Švegžda's work *Green Box* (1979) – depicted wooden table probably stands in the studio of the artist (because there are many traces of painting and other painter's gadget on this table), and a green box is put on the middle of the table. In the picture Green Box (1979), the objects are painted precisely and look indeed realistic. The fact that this is not a photograph is just suggested by white background which represents both room for floor and walls.

The titles of the pictures such as *Chair*, *Green Box* and *Jeans* do not try to discuss with depicted objects – they simply name them. Everyday things are painted and their names just repeat that banal fact. We all know how a pair of jeans, old chair or cardboard box supposes to look like. We often use such things – when we dress, we take out jeans from the wardrobe; when we want to sit down, we look for a chair, etc. Picturing of such casual, everyday things and their naming seems to be very banal. Nevertheless, works of Švėgžda far away are not banal. What does determine their uniqueness? Perhaps tangible materiality of these things: simple, ordinary jeans or a chair in his pictures unclose themselves in all their authentic being. In our every day

life such things are usually seen from practical, utilitarian point of view, thus they are perceived just as tools. In the art work such simple, everyday things, according to Martin Heidegger, overstep their, as tools (instrument) being and disclose themselves in their most authentic being. "The equipmental being of the equipment consist indeed in its usefulness. But this usefulness itself rests in the abundance of an essential Being of the equipment" (Heidegger 1977: 163). Heidegger such reliability found in van Gogh's paintings with the peasant shoes. We can find it in simple, used everyday things depicted in Švėgžda's paintings. Abstract, minimalistic background in such paintings leave an relatively undefined (especially if viewer will suspend social context) context where these his carefully painted shoes, jeans, chairs or boxes appear there is nothing around these things which could help to understand what they are used for. Nevertheless, old, worn shoes and discoloured jeans with stretched knees tell us about daily life of the people who use them, about their reality in under Soviet repression, longing of freedom, western lifestyle etc. Realistically depicted things have various traces of everyday usage and it makes them more authentic. The artist gives attention to one main object - there is nothing what is not necessary.

Such minimalism and meditative approach is especially clear in the latter period of Švėgžda's creation. The name of painted picture series (*My Japanese Garden*, 1987; *To the Shepherds of Tibet*, 1991–1993; *Green Apple on Blue Background*, 1994) says more than we could see on the picture. The image here expresses the principles of non-finito and unspeakable which are typical to Chinese and Japanese aesthetics – *My Japanese Garden* is represented by several vegetables – in every painting in the middle of the empty space there is only one small persimmon, lemon, pomegranate, onion or garlic. Thus the title covers more than image, and the image does not exhaust the title, only a small part of what the title supposes is painted.

Švėgžda's paintings with apples emanate with a subtle magic of things and remind us of Magritte's canvas The Apparition (1928), where human silhouette and five shapeless, colourful spots marked with various words ("weapon", "chair", "horse", "cloud" and "horizon") are depicted. Reality of these pictures is determined by clear and definite lines and shapes that separate one form from another and a thing from its background. In Magritte's paintings "voluminous masses, stones or menhirs whose shadows stretch forth on the ground beside that of the man. These "word-bearers" are thicker, more substantial than objects themselves" (Foucault 1983: 39). The objects just began to get their primary shapes - unclear triangle, rectangular and an "undermined" figure which would have to symbolize the horizon, horse and weapon. Thick and at the same time clear white space, in which appears on Švegžda's paintings probably remind of a great Taiji, in which opposites of *yin* and *yang* stay in a harmonious unity. White space has no defined identity or name therefore, it could take any name it wants. If, in general it needs to be named... Thus we could say that such a white background is like a kind of "pro-saga" - alive, not yet articulated and named language, with the help of which Heidegger tries telling such essential words as Logos or Dao "as a key term in the service of thinking. As such a key term, it can no more be translated than the Greek Logos or the Chinese Dao" (Heidegger 2002: 36). Such words have no name yet and it is not easy to understand them because there always remains something unthought. Heidegger tries to approach to such unarticulated words (pro-saga) in a poetic language which is related to *gelassenheit*, something unspoken and contra-framed to objective, computerized thinking and scientific slang (Heidegger 1966: 46).

Heidegger argues that the Path leads through Saga (in Greek *Sage*), which is an essential language unit, mysterious "emanation of silence" and symbolizes the sense of Being (in German *Sinn des Seins*). Therefore, looking through the prism of Heidegger's ideas, Magritte's *The Apparition* and Švėgžda's *Apple* penetrate into the sense of being, and it is accompanied by still not shaped "words-porters" or a prosaga. In such space there settle multi-meaningfulness and uncertainty. Thus a white colour on artworks background could become the horizon of anything and take any name. The artist can name them anyhow.

This is how artist's "way towards the horizon" becomes the way through Dao paths or what Heidegger calls going the ways of woodcutters (in German *Holzwege*) that lead towards unknown, beforehand unpredictable place. Through such a difficult-to-pass forest path or snowy field one has to move particularly slowly, before it is necessary to remove an obstacle before each step, clean the path, create it by oneself, and identify self with created path.

Such path does not exist *apriori*, it emerges every moment when someone goes through it. On the other hand, this is the way of thought which leads somewhere, but that indefinite "something" is never a final aim but rather a permanent creative process. It is an indirect language, a silence, which, according to Merleau-Ponty, is the only one true speech (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 44). The pictured things sometimes do not have any particular formed shape, in other cases, they have an emphatically realistic shape – anyways, they highlight the fact that reality is prior to its image or reflection that cannot manage without the titles. Such approach determines that artworks become more authentic and suggestive.

Words and image as the founders of non-existent reality: Gaitanži's Dead Rock Star

On interdisciplinary project of Gaitanži (b. 1977) *Dead Rock Star* (2008–2010) the painting and video-installation are involved into the same game with the text and image. In video-performance (which represents verbal approach) the context of the work is presented in the form of dialogue where are explained and connected particular pictures. Dialogue is about mysterious character, a legendary guitarist called Zed Kowalski. But this character is totally fictive, thus, not the image nor the text does not correspond to reality and just remain the products of artist's creation. Therefore, participants of the performance, after mentioning that many silly legends have been created about this hero, create them further and remember "silly death of Zedas", when the artist "just mixed whisky with sleeping-draught and was strangled with his own vomit". In artist's creation meaningful is the motif of young, tragically dead artist that opens the fragility and futility of the existence.

In the series of four pictures words and image prolong and supplement each other in depicting non-existent, fictive reality – in one picture we can see a couple of young people standing in the background of stylized mountain landscape and inscription painted in printed letters *Zed and his long-term girl-friend Janet, Nevada, 1973* (2008–2010) (Fig. 1). In other picture, in the background of a similar mountain landscape, we see two men greeting each other and a part of an science fiction style machine, and the inscription *Zed Kowalski meets Anton Szandor LaVey* (2008–2010) (Fig. 2). The trip to Los Angeles of fictitious character and his girlfriend is presented as a prototype according to the motives of which Hunter S. Thompson has written his famous novel *Fortune and Love in Las Vegas* (indeed, Thompson's novel *Fear and Hate in Las Vegas* (2008–2010) is quite similar in its topic and mood to the reality of Gaitanži's lyrical hero – fictive person named Zed Kowalski). The artist offers a postmodern game with inadequacies between different words and contexts and with the design of fictitious reality, for what the author subordinates both – the words and the images.

The project *Dead Rock Star* shows contemporary culture conflict between human and before-human or post-human. On one hand, the main hero of the project is "human, too human" (according to Friedrich Nietzsche), and on the other hand – he remains Nietzsche's prototype of overman, a creator of future values. Only as a human one could be described by everyday rational language and words. On the technical level, such synthesis of human (verbal) and post-human (non-verbal) discourses opens in the interaction of intellect of artist and computer: sketches are processed by computer therefore lines are perfect, untouched by hand vibration, artist's psychology and other human factors. On the other hand, in the last stage, the paintings are painted by hand – by this way some personality and subjective look is returned to them. On the level of the correlation of word and image, human world is represented by Logos, naming, conceptualization, and post-human world is represented by an image which at the same time prolongs and denies a verbal approach. Both word and image in this case create a fictitious reality.



Fig. 1. Konstantinas Gaitanži. Zed and his longterm girl-friend Janet, Nevada, 1973 (2008–2010)



Fig. 2. Konstantinas Gaitanži. Zed Kowalski meets Anton Szandor LaVey (2008–2010)

Such invasion of verbal approach emphasizes intellectual background of the work: by creatively playing with the concepts of images and words, the artist appeals rather to the intellect and mind than to the emotions. On purpose of entering into this "intellectual game", one needs to have some knowledge of context – it is a postmodern game with quotations, paraphrases, cultural contexts. Therefore, the author does not try to be attractive or understandable to the public.

Thus, the words inscribed (pictured) on the painting itself more clearly than just a name of the painting extends the image and in this case opens it as a fictive product of creative imagination. This is how the artist looks for a new relation of things (or images) and words (or their names), deals with those aspects of language and things which remain unnoticed (hidden) in our everyday speech. Words as if give life to images and are able to manage them. We can change the words, replace them, thus the meaning of the work will change accordingly. In this aspect, the project Dead Rock Star can be compared with Magritte's painting The Art of Discourse (1950), in which monumental words-things overpower human figures with their magnitude and weight. Stony wall of words-things is built with huge stones that are carelessly put on each other and that make letters REVE (Dream). Before letter R Foucault suggests writing letters T or C and to create new words - TREVE (Truce) or CREVE (Breakdown), which would be able to manage massive, chaotic things-stone "as if all these airy, fragile worlds had been given to power to organize the chaos of stone" (Foucault 1983: 37). The symbol of dream in this work perhaps emerged not accidentally – after all, exactly in this dream people unclose to the flow of consciousness and admit the words of other world into the unconscious. In Gaitanži's project a fictitious, assumed reality is demonstrated and raises associations with a dream or just vivid imagination.

Conclusions

Various levels of correlations between text and image could be seen in analyzed artwork: 1) the text can negate image or emphasize that image and its prototype are not identical (Magritte's It Is Not a Pipe); 2) the text can establish both image and its prototype (Kosuth's One and Three Chairs); 3) text can simply name the image (Švėgžda's Jeans); 4) it could extend the image (Švėgžda's My Japanese Garden); or 5) together with the image text could create fictive reality (Gaitanži's Dead Rock Star). In Magritte's series It Is Not a Pipe, the image and inscription do not contradict each other, because painted image of a pipe is not indeed the pipe. Also we can say that in the works of Magritte, Švegžda and Gaitanži, the correlation between the text and image is not hierarchic – in postmodern art all hierarchies usually disappear. But in Kosuth's creation we can see a rather hierarchic relation of text and image, because the description of the chair becomes primary and more important than both – real chair and its image (photograph). Nevertheless, both Kosuth and Magritte separate the things and the objects: the things are primary, real and nameless (without titles), the objects are named and need a titles. The artist operates those objects the picturing of which has to be supplemented with the title. Artists tend to look for *unexpected* decisions with the help of which the viewer's tension can be raised. In modern con-

ception of artistic creation such a surprise and ability to astonish become one of the basic aesthetic categories. On purpose of raising tension, one can creatively use different means of expression – one can raise conflict between the image and reality or raise inadequacy between the one that the spectator would hope to see and the one he sees. Therefore, artists like picturing things in unusual for them places, for example, human figures in Gaitanži's series *Dead Rock Star* are depicted in the Nevada desert full of cactuses, in Magritte's works things usually are placed in strange places which are not typical for them, in Švegžda's series My Japanese Garden we do not see any garden details – in each picture, in a empty background, only one small vegetable is pictured, and the conflict of image and word is not risen (there are no words in painting). Pictures, analyzed in this paper, disclosed polysemous relation of the text and image that escape any strict definitions and hierarchic structures and establish typical for postmodern culture relation between things. Thus, such artwork becomes an open and grateful ground for philosophical interpretations. Beside authors analyzed in present paper there are many others painters who fruitfully analyzed relations between text and image. Among them also mentioned are female authors, especially prominent Lithuanian painter Laisvydė Šalčiūtė. However for analyzes and interpretation of her creative heritage most suitable could be sociological, particularly gender approach based on philosophers such as Susan Sontag, Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler, but such a methodological approach eminently overpass limits of the present paper. Gender oriented studies is not aim of this paper but hopefully it could be an object of future investigations.

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KŪRYBINĖS ŽODŽIO IR VAIZDO SĄVEIKOS MODERNIOJOJE VIZUALINĖJE KULTŪROJE

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjamos kūrybinės teksto bei vaizdo sąveikos ir parodoma, kad jas įdomiu kampu atveria dailininkai, pasirinkę realistinį ir fotorealistinį stilius. Nagrinėjami belgų siurrealisto René Magritte'o, konceptualizmo tėvo Josepho Kosutho, taip pat lietuvių dailininkų Algimanto Švėgždos ir Konstantino Gaitanži darbai. Svarstoma, kaip, pasitelkus drąsias kūrybines interpretacijas, šių dailininkų kūriniuose sąveikauja tekstas ir vaizdas, kuo jų kūryba yra patraukli filosofinei interpretacijai. Išryškinami skirtingi žodžio ir vaizdo sąveikos variantai: žodis ir vaizdas vienas kitą neigia, tačiau sykiu jų tariamas priešiškumas anaiptol toks nėra (pavyzdžiui, Magritte'o serija *Tai ne pypkė*); žodis tampa vaizdo steigėju (Kosutho *Viena ir trys kėdės*); žodis pratęsia tiek tikrovę, tiek jos atvaizdą (kasdieniai daiktai Švėgždos drobėse); tiek žodžiai, tiek atvaizdai kuria fiktyvią, neegzistuojančią tikrovę (Gaitanži *Negyva roko* žvaigždė). Galiausiai parodoma, kad kaip besąveikautų žodis ir atvaizdas, žodis gali padėti išvysti atvaizduoto objekto daiktiškąją būtį. Aptartais atvejais žodis tampa prielaida ir sąlyga kūrybinei vaizdo sklaidai.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: kultūra, kūrybiškumas, vaizduojamasis menas, atvaizdas, tekstas, vizualumas, žodis.

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