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Dimensions: 2.5 × 3.5 × 2.4 m

The Luncheon on the Grass

Contact with nature increasingly occurs through socially mediated factors that shape the ways in which it is perceived and processed. At the same time, the process by which humans assimilate nature exerts a fundamental influence on the formation of their environment and affects the functioning of both individuals and collectivities. It is responsible for shaping patterns of social behaviour, that is, culture. This process, however, does not unfold independently of the conditions that structure it. Rather, it is determined by the economic base – the distribution of productive forces. Consequently, the contemporary system founded on capital accumulation becomes the principal driver of the subordination of nature. This system shapes human space, establishes the rules governing its use, and directs the ongoing processes of its transformation. It also influences the formation of fundamental life functions, such as consumption, procreation, and maturation. It has a tangible effect on the polarisation of society and thereby determines the privileging of specific groups that possess the capacity to shape the human environment. This process encompasses both negative aspects – closely associated with the mechanisms of capital accumulation, such as the externalisation of production costs leading to environmental degradation and the displacement of responsibility onto society as a whole – and seemingly positive aspects, manifested in attempts to impose ecological patterns of behaviour. These patterns, however, are largely directed towards the affluent segments of society, both locally and globally.

The system based on capital accumulation, which is responsible for transforming both society and nature, frequently undergoes processes of radicalisation, resulting in the deepening of inequalities and the intensification of binary social divisions. Consequently, a range of defensive mechanisms emerge that enable groups interested in maintaining the *status quo* to preserve it. One such mechanism is the construction of false ideologies, including the concept known in economics as ‘trickle-down economics’, according to which increases in the incomes of wealthy individuals indirectly improve the economic

situation of poorer groups. Empirical evidence demonstrates, however, that this mechanism operates in the opposite manner, as observed by the Nobel Prize laureate in economics Joseph Stiglitz¹, among others. His analyses indicate that the objectives of different social groups are fundamentally divergent, thereby precluding the possibility of mutual benefit.

The growth of social inequalities is often grounded in the perceived absence of viable alternatives to the dominant economic system, within which social elements have become deeply embedded, producing a shared rationality that structures social relations. A significant consequence of the contemporary expansion of the global market is the process of globalisation, which contributes to the standardisation and mutual interpenetration of social behaviours. As a result, generalisation and universality have become defining characteristics of contemporary art, science, political economy, and industry. In the field of art, this process is reflected, among other ways, in attempts by theorists to construct an 'artistic map' that largely corresponds to the map of core and peripheral regions determined by economic forces.² Western culture imposes modes of evaluation and models of creative practice on a global scale, as noted by Piotr Piotrowski³, among others. Artistic practices emerging in semi-peripheral and peripheral contexts typically adapt to trends established in the core, resulting either in processes of cultural self-colonisation or in the emergence of further variants and transformations of patterns shaped elsewhere – by the hegemon. Consequently, one of the fundamental premises of culture operating in semi-peripheral contexts becomes a consciously undertaken process of assimilation that takes into account regional specificity and historical conditions while simultaneously engaging with universal values – values essential to the processes of individual humanisation and collective socialisation.⁴

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¹ Joseph Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future*, New York: W. W. Norton, 2013.

² For more on this topic see: Giorgio Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times*; Fernand Braudel, *Civilisation and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century*, vols 1–3; Immanuel Wallerstein, *The End of the World As We Know It: Social Science for the Twenty-first Century*; and Jan Sowa, *Fantomowe ciało króla. Peryferyjne zmagania z nowoczesną formą*.

³ For more on this topic see: Piotr Piotrowski, *Globalne ujęcie sztuki Europy Wschodniej*, Rebis, Poznań 2018.

⁴ György Lukács, *The Ontology of Social Being*, vols 1 – 3, London: Merlin Press, 1978.