

Evaluation in Interaction: The Pragmatic Approach to Artistic Judgement

Kamila Lewandowska 

The Aleksander Zelwerowicz National Academy of Dramatic Art in Warsaw, Poland

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to discuss the pragmatic approach to studying artistic evaluation. The paper engages with recent literature and examines current trends in research on amateur and expert artistic judgement, arguing that the pragmatic scholarship has much to offer to the sociology of art and culture. It demonstrates the growth of qualitative research inspired by interpretivist approaches and symbolic interactionism, highlighting the main areas of researchers' interest, such as (1) (Social) interaction between evaluators and artistic objects, or (2) Pragmatic rules and the situational character of artistic evaluation. This paper also identifies research gaps and provides directions for future research.

Kamila Lewandowska, Assistant Professor at the A. Zelwerowicz National Academy of Dramatic Art in Warsaw. She is a holder of the Outstanding Young Researchers scholarship awarded by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. She leads a research project titled "Between Art and Research: The Evaluation of Creative Arts in Performance-Based Research Funding Systems," funded by the National Science Centre, Poland. Her research interests focus on the evaluation of art and research in public sector management.

Contact details:

Akademia Teatralna im. A. Zelwerowicza w Warszawie
ul. Miodowa 22/24, 00-246 Warszawa
email address: kamila.lewandowska@e-at.edu.pl

There has been a growing interest in evaluation among sociologists, manifested in the proliferation of studies in very diverse empirical fields. Since performance evaluation has increasingly pervaded many aspects of social life, including public policies, organizations, and markets, it has become a major issue for social scientists, leading to the emergence of a new subfield called "the sociology of valuation and evaluation (SVE)" (Lamont 2012a). Within this field, a number of scholars have examined mechanisms of classification and measurement that sustain hierarchies – such as commensuration (Espeland and Stevens 1998), quantification (Espeland and Sauder 2007), or standardization (Timmer-

mans and Epstein 2010) – and analysed the impact of public sorting processes on communities and organizations. A different line of work has focused on the practices of evaluation (Lamont 2012a) and investigated evaluative activities, techniques, and devices, including evaluation criteria, procedures, settings, or the role of interactions in group judgement-making. In particular, there has been a considerable growth of research on scientific evaluation and peer review, shedding new light on the norms of fairness and rules of behavior in expert assessment (e.g. Langfeldt 2004; Lamont 2009; Huutoniemi 2012).

Among many different sociological subfields where valuation and evaluation are systematically explored, economic sociology and cultural sociology (including the sociology of the arts) have experienced particular growth in recent decades (Beljean, Chong, and Lamont 2015). While *valuation* has become a central topic in economics-oriented sociology (Hutter and Stark 2015) – focusing on the valorisation of unique and incommensurable products (music, fine wine, artwork, etc.) (Karpik 2010) – *evaluation* has been associated with the work of critics, experts, or connoisseurs, i.e. people who possess the “license to judge” (Lewandowska 2019) and evaluate the work’s quality, and as such has stood prominently within the sociology of culture and the arts. Under Pierre Bourdieu’s influence (1993), researchers of evaluation have long been interested in the question of legitimacy, expert power, and symbolic capital, studying the role of critics and specialists as “gatekeepers” who establish the standards of quality in artistic fields. With the spread of Bourdieu-inspired cultural sociology all over the world (Lamont 2012b), the question of evaluation in the cultural sector has gained considerable interest and has been tackled from an increasing number of perspectives.

In recent decades, some new perspectives on evaluation have received attention of scholars and encouraged new developments in the field of SVE. In opposition to Bourdieu, scholars in Europe (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006) and the United States (Friedland and Alford 1991) have highlighted the existence of plural and parallel grammars of worth and evaluation logics. Work by Boltanski and Thévenot – particularly influential for the sociology of art – emphasizes the plurality of evaluation criteria and analyzes the ways in which people refer to different logics (e.g. market logic, domestic logic, civic logic) to justify their positions. Many sociologists of art drew inspiration from this work, including Nathalie Heinich, who studied the plurality of logics underlying judgments in decision-making panels (1997), and Pascal Gielen, who used the notion of different “value regimes” (2005) to explain heterogeneous standpoints in artistic evaluations. Much less scholarship has engaged in studying how hierarchies are created and sustained through public systems of artistic evaluation. Examples include the analysis of quantification and expert assessment of the arts within performance-based research funding systems – the “implicit” form of artistic evaluation (Lewandowska and Kulczycki 2021).

Beyond the scholarship mentioned above, there has been a dynamic and productive growth of studies focusing on the micropractices and sub-processes of evaluation. Considered to be “pragmatic” (Heinich 2012) or “post-Bourdieuian” sociology of art (Beljean et al. 2015), this line of research owes much to symbolic interactionism, which emphasizes the creation of meanings through communication and reciprocal influence of persons and objects (Mead 1932; 1934; Blumer 1969). Drawing on the symbolic interactionist perspective, sociologists have been involved in the “close-up and inductive empiri-

cal analysis” of evaluative processes (Beljean et al. 2015:46), focusing on real-life practices instead of social categories or distinctions. The prominence of this approach and the energy involved in its development suggest a shift toward more practice-based sociology of art.

The aim of this paper is to shed light on this new sociological perspective by discussing recent empirical work on artistic evaluation. First, the paper analyzes the shift from the critical to the pragmatic sociology of art and highlights the key tenets of the latter. Second, it offers a discussion of research that has made an important contribution to our understanding of the processes of artistic evaluation. The concluding section suggests directions for future scholarship.

From the critical to the pragmatic sociology of art

For a long period, sociology of art has been driven by the so-called “critical” approach (Heinich 2010), which aims at demonstrating the collective nature of artistic activities (Becker 1982) and social determination of the artistic value and taste (Bourdieu 1984). In this approach, sociological research focuses on revealing that – behind the creation, genius, and the work itself – there are social conventions and mechanisms of discourse production that make an object appear to be a work of art. This critical sociology deals with what Hennion and Grenier (2000) call a “false consciousness syndrome” – a putatively false belief in individual talent and intrinsic values of artistic products. From the critical perspective, artistic value is not inherent to an object, but to a social construction, the issue of group distinction or identification. A sociological analysis is “an act of unveiling which leaves the king naked” (Hennion

and Grenier 2000:348) by putting under scrutiny the practices and identities of intermediaries – professions, organizations, markets, etc. – who attach value to cultural productions, at the same time upholding public belief in the alleged autonomy of art.

The role of intermediaries and evaluation processes in structuring the social space has been one of the central concerns of cultural sociologists. By asking “Who creates the ‘creator’?” (1980) Bourdieu spotlights the practices of the authorities of legitimation (1993) and conceptualizes artistic value to be a result of social games between the “makers of the work of art” (1980:265). For Bourdieu, an evaluation of art is a production of belief, both in the value of the work and the judgement of the arbiters of taste. Artistic objects and their users are reduced to vehicles of social categories (status, identity, or distinction), and sociological work focuses on the latter, leaving the art object and artistic experience outside the scope of its analysis.

Under the influence of Bourdieu’s work, many present-day sociological studies follow the critical line of reasoning and emphasize the importance of evaluators in cultural consecration and legitimation (Lizé 2016). Key to these studies is the conviction that the social characteristics of intermediaries play an important role in how and what they evaluate, and, therefore, artistic value is socially conditioned and structured (e.g. Janssen 1997; De Nooy 1988; 1999; Guiffre 1999; Gemser, Leenders, and Wijnberg 2008; Cattani, Ferrari, and Allison 2014; Pénet and Lee 2014). In contrast to Bourdieu, Becker (1982) considers artistic evaluations from a more symbolic interactionist perspective and posits that value-making is an *activity* performed collaboratively by members of an art world. Artistic principles and theories that underlie evaluation are developed collectively by

specialists (critics, aestheticians) and used by members of the art world to legitimate artistic work. For Becker, artistic value is not as much determined by social dispositions of evaluators as it is a product of interactions between actors tied into a set of direct relations by conventions – common artistic principles and beliefs tacitly shared by the participants of an art world. Members recognize and learn conventions implicitly: through experience, observation, or embodied cognition. Because conventions guide choices of art world's members and structure artistic practice, individuals who interact with each other develop relatively stable patterns of relations. At the same time, artistic evaluation takes the form it does in a particular situation because of many circumstantial decisions made by artists and intermediaries during interactions. Therefore, Becker's interactionist concept of art world integrates the more deterministic perspective that emphasizes patterns of relations structured by conventions with a more pragmatic, non-prescriptive approach highlighting emergent forms of practice and organization (Gilmore 1990).

The work by Becker has proved very fruitful, significantly improving our understanding of how artworks emerge at the pragmatic and collective level. However, it was the trend that appeared in the French sociology of the 1990s – associated with the work of Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) – that gave rise to what scholars came to call the “pragmatic sociology of art.” “Pragmatism” refers both to the American philosophical tradition and linguistic pragmatism, which analyzes the effects of context on meaning (Heinich 2012). Unlike the critical approach that sees cultural practices and choices as mere expressions of social status, the pragmatic sociology of art inspired by Boltanski and Thévenot has investigated how people mobilize different

socio-cultural registers of evaluation (“orders of worth”) to justify their choices and actions. This approach has been advanced especially by Nathalie Heinich, who conducted studies of artistic intermediaries, such as contemporary art purchasing commissions or heritage expert panels (2007; 2011). To unveil the criteria of judgement that underlie artistic selections, Heinich investigates values that are both privately-held by intermediaries and produced during group evaluations. Through field observations of expert panels and interviews with evaluators, she registers how people justify their particular choices and engage in argumentation to defend their points of view. Instead of directly interrogating participants about the “criteria of evaluation,” she asks them to describe particularly difficult situations and problematic cases (because the analysis of crisis “tells us a lot about social norms” [Heinich 2015]) and derives the respondents' value logics from how they explain and rationalize their decisions and judgements. In this fashion, she reveals the “axiomatic structures embedded in judgements expressed by social actors” – their value orientations, beliefs, and evaluation criteria (Heinich 2015).

By shifting the attention from social positions of evaluators to their personal values, Heinich has been able to develop a sociology of art that points to the situational and practical character of artistic experience. At the same time, by considering evaluation as governed by value systems, her approach is a continuation of previous sociological efforts to explain social action using mental structures that determine its course (habitus, conventions, norms, internal logics). Although this perspective seems to dominate the sociology of art, most recent developments in this field show a growing interest in a different approach – the sociology of artistic micro-practices. This new sociological movement focuses

on “the practical operations through which culture is put into action” (Acord and DeNora 2008:226) – the ways in which people actually interact with, interpret, and make use of the arts in real time. Rather than seeing artistic evaluation as a process regulated by habitus or conventions, which “function as black box into which sociologists dump all unexplained things” (Acord 2010:451) “microsociologists” of art explore mechanisms and actions (how people interact, both with each other and artistic objects) through which evaluation and meaning-making actually take place. From this perspective, the new sociology of art aims at “highlighting local and often haphazard sense-making practice rather than tacit mastery of a normative cultural code” (Acord and DeNora 2008:234). The arrival of this approach has been described as a “performance turn” (Eyerman and McCormick 2006), as it considers artistic experience to be a performative social practice in which practical circumstances of action play a decisive role in how artistic judgements are formed and expressed.

Key to the new microsociological approach is that it expands the sociological analysis to incorporate the content and meaning of artworks. Traditionally, sociologists of art have left the analysis of art objects aside, considering it as something that pertains to art history and criticism, not sociology (Eyerman and McCormick 2006; Acord 2010). Artistic objects have been reduced to social markers, “mere proxies of other social variables” (Beljean et al. 2015:42), or considered as cultural resources and “toolkits” upon which people can draw to construct different strategies of social action (Swidler 1986) (for example, a teenager might use popular art forms, such as industrial metal music, to express his/her individuality within the family). The dominant sociological approach treats the meaning of artworks as

an “epiphenomenal outcome of the process of production itself” (Eyerman and McCormick 2006:2), not as something that emerges in the interaction between the work and its viewer. In contrast to this approach, the new sociology of art “brings objects back in” by acknowledging their performative capacity and context-dependent particularity (Beljean et al. 2015). The point of this work is not to return to the pre-Bourdieuian cultivation of the “charismatic ideology” and the belief in the intrinsic value of the artistic oeuvre. Rather, it is to recognize that art perception and art-making are performative actions, and that it is *in the interaction with art objects* that people’s tastes, judgements, and appreciation habits are redefined and transformed. Under the influence of symbolic interactionism, the new sociological research does not analyze artistic object in the manner assumed by art historians – who focus on content and meaning as given, inherent to the object, or informed by cultures and societies – but, rather, it explores the ways in which meanings and judgements emerge in real-time communication (Vom Lehn, Heath, and Hindmarsh 2001).

The turn toward micropractices and materiality in the sociology of art was mainly inspired by theoretical developments in the neighboring fields. Sociologists of art have built in particular on science and technology studies (STS), including research on the practical and material dimensions of knowledge production. Within this field of research, ethnographers who examined laboratory routines of scientists (e.g. Knorr-Cetina [1999], who focused on molecular biology and high-energy physics) have shown that scientific knowledge emerges from an interplay between cognitive-evaluative frames (epistemic cultures) and materiality (how objects mediate action). Instead of seeing material objects as mere results or records of human actions, those studies have high-

lighted the role of non-human actors in interaction, as well as the interdependence of cognitive and material components of knowledge-making. The agency of material objects was further conceptualized by the actor-network theory, which provided the term *actants* to describe all non-human entities that can be granted to be the source of an action (Latour 1996). As actants, material objects can influence and enable action – not because they “cause” action in the literal sense, but because they provide opportunities for perception and/or action (Acord and DeNora 2008). This perspective has been enhanced by sociologists of art who proposed that the agentic power of objects lies in their capacity to “lend themselves to,” or “afford,” uses (DeNora 2003:28). As Acord and DeNora argue, “It is through their access and use that [objects] can be understood to enable forms of activity. It is through the intersection of a dancer’s movement and the given choreography that an interpretation of the scene, and the ballet, is aroused” (2008:228).

By recognizing the agentic power of objects – their capacity to influence practices and shape human activity – these studies have elucidated the concrete “pragmatics” of art-making and taste, providing useful tools for the new sociology of art (Griswold, Mangione, and McDonnell 2013). This line of work has powerfully contributed to research on artistic evaluation, traditionally concerned with all-encompassing and often sociologically vague types of intermediaries (institutions, professions, organizations), by turning sociologists’ attention to more realistic and physical processes of mediation in action. Unlike “intermediaries,” typically used by sociologists for deconstruction purposes, “mediations” are of pragmatic status (Hennion and Grenier 2000) – one studies them not to *expose* anything, but to better understand the interplay between multiple

devices and procedures of art-making, physical features of an artwork, and techniques and rituals of perception within which specific value judgements become associated with particular works of art.

The pragmatic approach to artistic evaluation – examples from the field

New works in the sociology of the arts offers empirically-oriented studies investigating artistic experience “in action.” They are based on methodologies that allow detailed, qualitative, and inductive analyses of evaluative practices. Informed by the symbolic interactional perspective, the pragmatic sociology of the arts puts emphasis on (i) (social) interaction between evaluators and artistic objects, and (ii) the pragmatic rules and the situational character of artistic evaluation.

(Social) interaction between evaluators and artistic objects

Focusing on ordinary activities and circumstances in which people experience artistic objects, the current sociology of art demonstrates that artistic evaluation is an interactional achievement. Instead of building upon theoretical models of art consumption or socially-deterministic concepts of dispositions, sociologists engage in studying “practical aesthetics” (Heath and Vom Lehn 2004) – the actual ways in which people come to appreciate works of art. Through observations and interviews with participants of evaluation processes, they pinpoint small-scale actions, words, and gestures that mediate group and individual assessments. In opposition to the view that aesthetic judgment is primarily a cognitive or mental construct, these studies highlight the role of situated and *ad hoc* conditions in which judgments are made, including the material-

ity of objects, the physical presence and behavior of other people, the characteristics of settings in which the perception takes place, etc.

One of the topics studied by the new sociology of art is how verbal, para-verbal, and non-verbal communication mediates aesthetic evaluations. The process of communicating artistic judgements is by no means trivial. Researchers demonstrate that even professionally-trained critics often find it difficult to verbalize their judgements and, in order to convey their opinions, they use bodily gestures and vague expressions – “container words” (“it swings,” “it works,” “it feels right,” etc.) (Abbing 2002) – referring to locally shared and intelligible standards. This has been observed across different artistic fields. For example, in his study of jazz auditions, Nylander (2014) looks at how jury members make and justify their selections of candidates for music school programs. He shows that in their justifications, experts revolve around the question of whether the candidate “does something,” and they use bodily gestures such as “finger-snapping” to recreate performances of successful applicants (Nylander 2014:79). The vague and abstracts notions of “musicality,” “personality,” or “artistry” play a much more significant role in evaluations than more objective competencies, such as technical skills or harmonic knowledge. Moreover, instead of comparing music performances against high-quality standards, the judges use negative referents and evaluate candidates in opposition to what they frame as “epigones” (conventional and unoriginal musicians) or “heretics” (eccentric and rule-breaking). Research in other artistic fields seems to support this finding. Focusing on the literary field, Merriman (2017) also recognizes that experts draw on shared conceptions of bad (instead of good) work to evaluate artistic

productions. Through the observation of an editorial board’s meetings during which experts select stories for publication, the researcher finds out that humorous talk about what panellists consider as “bad fiction” allows to produce shared evaluation standards and is a source of social interaction. The exchange of witty and negative comments about the “amusingly bad” material establishes power hierarchies in the group, as the most sharpened-tongued members are usually those who enjoy the highest group status.

Studying visual arts, Acord (2010) offers a neo-phenomenological analysis of contemporary art curators. She examines how they go about creating meanings and evaluating artworks in the practical and physical process of exhibition installation. Her analysis shows that exhibition production is a situated decision-making process that involves mixing and matching different elements of artworks in the gallery space, and evaluating whether the particular combination “feels right.” When curators and artists discuss installations, they use “container words” and gestures to achieve mutual verification of their perceptual abilities and convey their shared understanding of the embodied codes and conventions.

The above-mentioned studies concern expert evaluations, but much pragmatic-sociological work has been dedicated to more “ordinary” users of culture. Specifically, there has been a growing interest in how museum and gallery visitors experience artefacts in daily circumstances, and how those circumstances affect their perceptions and judgements. Scholars have examined how physical constraints of exhibitions, as well as the presence of other people (their bodily orientation, gestures, and talk) influence the ways in which artistic content is encountered and received. For example, Bruder and Ucok (2000) an-

analyze talk and discussion among visitors to an art gallery. The analysis of conversations demonstrates that evaluative statements – expressions of (dis)like, appreciation, or criticism – are the essential part of people’s interactions in art spaces and that evaluations are interactive accomplishments, as they arise through communication. Adipa (2019) explores the role of interaction in evaluation at “talking events” (exhibition openings, talks by artists, etc.) and illustrates how both the behavior and the talk of other people frame the lens through which one sees art. Her case study shows that, for example, suggestions of strangers to “stand farther away from the piece,” or critical comments accidentally overheard during a gallery visit, can re-direct people’s physical and cognitive orientations, leading to a reevaluation of one’s reactions to objects and artefacts.

While some authors focus primarily on verbal communication between museum visitors, others take a more holistic approach and investigate how different elements of socially-organized artistic experience – i.e. talk, visual orientation and, bodily conduct of participants (including visitors’ companions, strangers, or museum staff) – as well the materiality of the exhibit and the space all condition the ability to experience and appreciate art. Drawing on video-based field investigations and ethnographies of social interactions in museums and galleries, Heath and Vom Lehn (2004) analyze how visitors accomplish collaborative evaluations through practical action (also see Vom Lehn et al. 2001). They offer many examples of how visitors shape each other’s orientations to paintings or artefacts, and encourage one another to look at and react to objects in particular ways. In the fragment cited below, the researchers analyze how two women, Annie and Freda, examine a display of 18th-century porcelain at the Victoria and Albert Museum:

Freda begins by explaining what she is trying to find in the cabinet. As she says “I was trying to see . . .” – she points to a particular object in the display cabinet. The gesture is momentarily held over the surface of the cabinet and Annie moves closer, but does not immediately turn towards the object. Freda slightly orients towards Annie and, finding that she is not looking at the object, transforms the projected course of her utterance. She refashions what she is about to say, turning it into a question: ‘You’ve seen these called Bellarmine Jugs?’ rather than a statement. With the restart, she thrusts the gesture back and forth towards the object, providing Annie with a more specific reference and encouraging her to look at the object. With the thrusting gesture, Annie turns and looks at the jug. (...) Moments later, Annie turns away from the jugs, looks down, and moves to touch one of the porcelain fragments on the shelf below. Freda notices the gesture and immediately grasps the very object that Annie has tentatively approached. Annie takes hold of the adjoining fragment and comments ‘Yes all these bits, isn’t that good?’ (Heath and Vom Lehn 2004:47)

The fragment demonstrates that participants’ bodily and visual conduct serves to establish the mutuality of visual alignment and provides resources through which the object is discovered, examined, and evaluated. In a similar vein, Steier, Pierroux, and Kränge (2015) investigate episodes from a national museum where groups of visitors interact with different art objects; the authors illustrate how talk and movement both facilitate collaborative meaning-making and evaluation. They trace how two friends, Wendy and Rita, examine *The Thinker* by Auguste Rodin with the use of gestures to direct the friend’s attention to particular elements of the sculpture (hands, the chin, etc.), thus collaboratively producing interpretations and evaluating the artist’s skills in communicating the meaning:

Wendy's comment that *The Thinker* "doesn't appear to be thinking" opens the meaning of the work to different levels of interpretation. (...) Rita, in turn, focuses on the figure's chin to construct an interpretation that he *is* thinking [emphasis added]. When Rita attends to the figure's chin in this process of evaluation, she employs a series of embodied and gestural acts (...). She moves directly into a posing gesture by bringing her hand to her own chin to mimic the pose of the figure. In forming this pose, she is able to construct a representation for her friend of what thinking should look like. (Steier, Pierroux, and Krange 2015:32–33)

By providing rich descriptions of the interactional dynamics taking place in art spaces, these studies demonstrate that the ways of seeing art are constituted mutually and in an ongoing exchange and negotiation between participants. They also underline the role of non-human agents by showing how the physical characteristics of objects and environments shape people's perceptions and actions. In their study of gallery visitors, Griswold and colleagues argue that artistic experiences are determined by relationships not simply between people and artefacts, but, rather, among "physical, spatial, textual, and temporal factors" (2013:351) that mediate the encounter of people and art objects. The authors provide an example:

If an exhibition's audio-guide features an extensive discussion of a particular work, visitors with the guide congregate around that work as they listen. Their clustered bodies impede other visitors from viewing the work, thereby producing two rings around the art object: a temporarily stable inner ring of people who are experiencing the work in some depth and a shifting outer ring of those who are catching only fleeting glimpses. Neither the characteristics of the visitors (demographic, prior experience with art and/or with

museums, motivations for coming to the exhibition) nor the characteristics of the object will predict this; it is a material outcome produced by the relationship of bodies in space, a relationship itself produced by words (the audio-guide) and the object (size, fixed position, importance attributed to it). (Griswold et al. 2013:351)

Physical location – that natural and built environment in which the object is shown and where evaluations are formed – also matters. Babon's (2006) analysis of people's reactions to urban sculptures emphasizes the role of context (the sculpture's relationship to the environment) in individual and public (press) evaluations. She demonstrates that art in urban spaces is assessed primarily in terms of how it interacts with the environment and resonates with the identity of place. In line with Griswold et al., she underscores the multiplicity of actants in human-art encounters, adding to the general understanding of how materiality informs action.

Pragmatic rules and the situational character of artistic evaluation

An important constraint on evaluation is how experts define judgement criteria and rules that govern the evaluative process (Lamont 2012a). Sociologists have shown that evaluators in cultural fields adopt the pragmatic approach to evaluations, i.e. instead of relying on a fixed and consistent set of quality standards, they define the quality of a piece in relation to other productions being evaluated (Lamont 2009). They also give priority to different points of reference at different times, as the selection of criteria depends on the features of productions under consideration. This evaluative approach is clearly at odds both with the "charismatic ideology," which emphasizes intrinsic qualities of art, and the critical

sociology of art, which privileges social factors (status, race, gender, etc. of evaluators, artists, etc.) and conceptualizes them as the determinants of evaluative choices.

Those sociologists of art who work with the pragmatic perspective (be it explicitly or implicitly) have investigated the criteria and rules of evaluation in different contexts, ranging from expert panels to individual critics and amateur consumers. In their study of panellists from a theater competition, Lewandowska and Smolarska (2020) find that the rules and norms that experts feel obliged to obey are not defined *a priori* but emerge when groups coordinate themselves in the deliberation process. What feels to them as fair decision-making is defined through the lens of practical concerns of the evaluation process, including the fact that they need to reach an agreement within a short span of time and that they have a limited number of prizes to award. Panellists think strategically rather than idealistically about their work, and hold the pragmatic understanding of group democracy. The criteria of evaluation are neither formalized nor universal – each production is assessed with the use of categories that experts consider relevant to it (see Lewandowska 2020). The criteria change over time, as reviewers evaluate performances with reference to those seen before, and discover new dimensions of comparability.

Pragmatic rules of evaluation are not restricted to group judgement-making. Chong (2013) demonstrates that literary critics engage in different strategies to assure the validity of their opinions and sustain their desired self-concepts as fair reviewers. Her study highlights different factors that critics take into account (e.g. whether or not to review a book by someone they personally know) in order to achieve and maintain the reliability of their judgements.

Hanrahan (2013), in turn, reveals the situated nature of evaluative rules and criteria in music criticism. Drawing on interviews with critics, she concludes that music reviewing is a combination of an analysis of the work's properties, its contextualization within the existing musical canons, and communication of the personal experience of hearing the music. This characteristics suggest that artistic evaluation is not really about the application of prescriptive aesthetic categories that guide cognitive processing. Rather, a critic's reactions to artwork's singularities play a leading role in how art is experienced and perceived.

The situational character of artistic experience has also been studied by scholars focusing on amateurs. A growing body of research has acknowledged everyday circumstances in which people e.g. listen to music or watch television, and has brought attention to different forms of practice and engagement involved in those activities (Heath and Vom Lehn 2004). Particularly useful here is Hennion's theory of attachment as well as his studies of amateur music lovers (2001; 2007). Hennion disagrees with the view that people's tastes and listening practices simply reflect their social categories. Instead, he emphasizes the performative aspects of taste and evaluation, i.e. the fact that amateurs engage in various "strategies for personal listening" which allow them to appreciate music, create attachments, and be "taken over" by a musical piece. These strategies include various ways in which people prepare their bodies and minds for perception: how they use media (radio, discs, concerts, etc.), arrange spaces for listening, and put themselves in the right frame of mind to enable moments of intense concentration and passion. By focusing on those rituals, the author highlights the embodied processes in which people and objects coproduce one another; music

moves and transforms the listener, while the listener shapes the environment for the musical experience.

Along similar lines, Benzecry (2011; see also Benzecry and Collins 2014) examines how opera fans enact various “microtechniques of listening” and self-train themselves to achieve a deeper experience of music appreciation. He observes how opera fanatics engage in a range of consumption micropractices, including bodily self-absorption and self-cultivation (e.g. closing their eyes and tuning out the surrounding), and how they achieve collective attunement by taking part in group rituals and experiencing affective reactions in close resonance with others. The basis for these practices is the local community of opera fans rather than an external macrosocial structure (as the critical-sociological theory would suggest).

The process of becoming an opera lover is interactional and takes place through practice, as new opera fans take into account the gestures and talk of experienced admirers, and compare other’s responses and evaluations to their own.

Personal reactions to the singularities of artistic objects also play an important role in group identification. In her study of erotic arts clubs, Wohl (2015) finds that members confirm or deny feelings of group belonging on the basis of aesthetic evaluations. Her study shows that people feel attached to those who share their reactions to particular characteristics of artworks and distance themselves from those who judge art differently. Commonalities and distinctions are discovered and sustained through face-to-face evaluations of aesthetic objects, strengthening or weakening feelings of group belonging. Rather than being about social origins of evaluators, it is the

situated process of judgement-making that bounds and constitutes social groups.

Conclusion

While many new paths of the pragmatic research on evaluations are still emerging and it is premature to try to define its boundaries, there are some common features shared by the studies discussed in this review. Firstly, they are based on qualitative, interpretive approaches. Inspired (sometimes implicitly) by symbolic interactionism, they explore how meanings, interpretations, and evaluations are being created and change through interaction. This review has demonstrated a broad array of settings and circumstances in which interactionist judgement-making takes place. Pragmatic sociologists have investigated various types of evaluators, from art critics and panel experts who define and negotiate evaluation criteria collaboratively, to “ordinary” museum visitors forming judgements through verbal, para-verbal, and nonverbal exchange. Secondly, research presented in this paper rejects the objectivistic and structuralist perspective of critical sociology, which considers artistic taste as a measure of socio-professional status according to predefined categories (Hennion 2001). At the same time, it is not relativistic; as Fine puts it, “while a pragmatic approach denies that anything necessarily goes, it examines outcomes without presuppositions” (1993:66). The pragmatic sociology of art aims to be mostly descriptive and analytical, and refrains from normative statements, breaking with Bourdieu’s essentially critical “sociology of domination” (Heinich 2012).

The field of research into artistic evaluation has been growing dynamically, but there remain important gaps in literature, which should be ad-

dressed in future investigations. A number of significant evaluation constraints have not been examined in depth so far, such as evaluators' self-identities, i.e. how they understand their social roles and act to verify their ideas of who they are (Stets and Burke 2003). Related to this issue is the question of emotional work. Researchers have demonstrated how emotions are performed and managed in group evaluations (Lamont 2009), but little is known about how these mechanisms work in artistic fields. Finally, there is much work to be done in what Fine (1993) calls the "macrointeractionist" research. Symbolic interaction is typically viewed from a micro-sociological perspective focusing on face-to-face interactions as opposed to

macro-sociological issues: systems, organizations, institutions, etc. (Becker and McCall 1990). Becker's (1982) idea of art as a "collective activity" made it possible to bridge social interaction and social organization, but much remains to be done in order to understand artistic evaluation from a macro-level interactionist perspective. This issue could be addressed by studying public systems of evaluation in the artistic sector as well as "the effects of webs of meaning and culture" (Fine 1993:79) those systems are grounded in. Since meanings and cultures emerge from small-scale negotiations, many large-scale systems can ultimately be viewed as interaction systems and studied from the symbolic-interactionist perspective.

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Ewaluacja jako interakcja. Pragmatyzm w badaniach ocen artystycznych

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu jest omówienie pragmatycznego kierunku w badaniach ewaluacji artystycznych. Praca opiera się na pogłębionych studiach literaturowych i analizuje najnowsze trendy w badaniach nad amatorską i ekspercką oceną artystyczną, a także pokazuje użyteczność podejścia pragmatycznego dla socjologii kultury i sztuki. W artykule omówiono badania jakościowe czerpiące z paradygmatu interpretatywnego oraz interakcjonizmu symbolicznego i zidentyfikowano główne obszary zainteresowań socjologów pragmatycznych, między innymi (1) społeczne interakcje między ewaluatorami i obiektami artystycznymi, (2) pragmatyczne reguły i sytuacyjny charakter artystycznych ewaluacji. Ukazano ponadto luki w literaturze i zaproponowano kierunki dla przyszłych badań.

Słowa kluczowe: ocena artystyczna, interakcja, pragmatyzm, interakcjonizm symboliczny