

Media Arts and the Problematic Relationship to Fred Forrest's Aesthetic Theory: A Critical Study

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Abstract: This study examines media arts and their dialectical relationship with the aesthetic thought of the French artist Fred Forest, which is based on the concept of "aesthetics of communication", considering the influence of modern information and communication technologies on contemporary artistic practices. The study adopts a historical, analytical, and critical approach to observe the qualitative transformations affecting the roles of both the artist and the viewer, as well as the ways in which artworks engage within temporal, spatial, and virtual frameworks. The results show that media artworks prioritize interactive and sensory pathways, embedding the artistic process within a dynamic system of symbolic communication, which gives rise to a hybrid and procedural aesthetic, considered one of the most prominent features of art in the digital age.

Keywords: Media Arts ; Fred Forest ; Aesthetics of Communication ; Digital Technologies.

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Introduction:

"Art is the ultimate communication technique."

- C. Oldenburg -

The advent of media arts has profoundly marked the contemporary art landscape by integrating Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) into the creative process. These new forms of artistic expression do not simply use technology but question its symbolic, social, and aesthetic scope. In doing so, they redefine the roles of the artist, the artwork, and the viewer, and challenge the aesthetic paradigms inherited from the old art system. In this context, the aesthetic thought of the French artist and theorist Fred Forest, articulated around the concept of "the aesthetics of communication," represents a suitable conceptual framework for understanding the challenges of artistic creation in the digital age. Far more than a mere artistic movement, it represents a fundamental shift in the way we conceive of art as a space of interaction, even co-creation, between the artist, the artwork, and the viewer. Adopting an analytical and critical methodology, this study explores the dialectical relationship between media arts and Forestian thought, examining how interactive and participatory devices contribute to the emergence of a decidedly hybrid aesthetic that is both sensory and technological. The research also proposes to demonstrate, from procedural and conceptual perspectives, how media art is defined less as a static artifact for contemplation than as a living process of communication, combining creation, technology, and human experience.

To situate this study within a broader body of work on the transformations of artistic creation in the digital age, it is necessary to mention the main studies dealing with the "aesthetics of communication," as well as the media practices that stem from it. Reviewing these earlier studies allows us, firstly, to confirm the relevance and foresight of Fred Forest's thinking, and secondly, to highlight the aesthetic and conceptual scope of media arts in the contemporary artistic landscape.

Indeed, Mario Costa's philosophical analyses (Costa, 1994 - Costa & Forest, 2011) on the aesthetics of technology have

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shown that digital devices, by promoting an aesthetic based on dematerialization, immediacy, and connectivity, profoundly impact our sensibilities. Along similar lines, Michael Leruth's studies exploring the liminal and aesthetic dimension of Fred Forest's online art (Leruth, 2004) and analyzing his artistic approach and media activism (Leruth, 2017), as well as his interview with Forest (Leruth, 2006), confirm this prevailing view. By emphasizing the central role of media, information, and interaction, they highlight the viewer's contribution to the production of meaning in the artwork. Current research reveals that the fundamental principles of Forest's "aesthetics of communication" resonate today in network-based experiences, "real time" (Couchot, 2007), immersion, and viewer participation. In doing so, they extend, without being limited to, the thinking of "relational aesthetics" developed by Nicolas Bourriaud (Bourriaud, 1998), where communication and social interactions constitute essential components of creation.

I. Media arts and their impact on artistic tradition

As many artists and theorists agree, media arts refer to forms of artistic creation, however diverse, that utilize new information and communication technologies (ICTs). However, it is not the use of technology per se that distinguishes media arts from other art forms. Indeed, today, many artistic practices incorporate, in one way or another and to varying degrees, technologies of varying sophistication. This situation is explained by the fact that the history of technological innovations has often intersected with that of art, to the point that one cannot be considered independently of the other. The term "technoculture" derives its relevance precisely from this dual genealogy. This term tends to encompass, under a single dynamic, the transformations of telecommunications, new relationships to space and time, as well as the linguistic, epistemological, and philosophical shifts resulting from the hybridization of our systems of thought with constantly evolving technological sophistication. Therefore, a question

arises: what specific practices can rightfully be grouped under the umbrella of media arts?

To answer this, one need only observe that with these practices, the focus on the artwork—understood as the final result—tends to diminish in favor of increased engagement in the “creative process” and a greater appreciation of the various actors involved in the artistic experience. In other words, both the medium and the technological apparatus gradually fade into the background, giving way to the correlations and interactions generated by these new artistic arrangements. This *modus operandi* has manifested itself in numerous configurations and across diverse fields: from computer image processing and animation (computer graphics, network arts) to Virtual Reality (VR), from electroacoustic music to robotic sculpture, including video and all photonic arts (holography, copying, etc.). Thus, the hypothesis we are putting forward here is that these new forms of media art are precisely those which, today more than ever, primarily structure our presence in the world and crystallize our representations. This phenomenon was already diagnosed by Fred Forest¹ as early as 1985, as evidenced by this passage: “Armstrong’s first steps on the Moon, followed on the cathode ray tube by hundreds of millions of viewers, replenish our emotions as contemporary humans more than the smile of the Mona Lisa or the brushstrokes of Leonardo da Vinci could today.” Nevertheless, like so-called traditional or inherited arts, these new forms of media art give a central place to the world of the image. However, it is important to emphasize that their relationship with classical forms is sometimes problematic, sometimes convergent. In certain exemplary cases, the interferences between these two artistic regimes are so close that the transition from one to the other becomes almost imperceptible. The methods and strategies of interference are, in fact, multiple: they range from borrowing techniques or

¹ F. Forest, « Manifeste pour une esthétique de la communication », in L. Poissant (sous la dir. de), *Esthétique des Arts Médiatiques*, T. 1, Sainte-Foy (Québec), Ed. Presses de l’Université du Québec, Coll. « Esthétique », 1995, p. 29 (Translation is the author’s own). Article originally published in + - 0, no. 43, year XIII, Brussels, October 1985.

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styles simulated by computer software to the integration of electronic elements within a classically crafted work.

This leads, consequently, to a completely renewed relationship with the cognitive reception of the work. Indeed, instead of maintaining the viewer in the traditional role of a more or less admiring observer, the images specific to media arts now offer them the possibility of intervening, even participating directly—on the interface—and/or instantaneously—in “real time”—in their creation. The viewer-observer is thus transformed into a viewer-participant. As Edmond Couchot¹ so aptly puts it: “The image is capable of responding to the viewer, who has become more than just a spectator. This response can be immediate [...] and take the form of a kind of dialogue, a conversation between the image and the one who looks at and manipulates it. Hence the technical term conversational or interactive image, or, more generally, dialogic image.” “For her part, Anne-Marie Duguet² places equal emphasis on this new dimension of the image when she states: “Video, for example, has largely contributed to transforming the traditional status of the image, the image that we contemplate, the image that we respect. It has broken this respect, essentially through electronic manipulation. The Surrealists and Dadaists had already done this with collage. This was one of the first attempts to break the unity of the image and to intervene in it. Electronic manipulation thus facilitates this entire activity of dislocation: the idea of an image that can be manipulated, an image with which we interact.” Differential in nature—in that they differ in more ways than one from the traditional fine arts system—media art works are often described as hybrid, because they proceed through the mixing

¹ E. Couchot, « La mosaïque ordonnée ou l'écran saisi par le calcul », in *Communications*, Vol. 48, N° 1, 1988, p. 79 (Translation is the author's own).

² A. -M. Duguet, « L'image électronique et la synthèse impure », in L. Poissant, (sous la dir. de), *Esthétique des Arts Médiaiques*, T. I, Sainte-Foy, Presses de l'Université du Québec, Coll. « Esthétique », 1995, pp. 175-182 (Translation is the author's own).

of media." Moreover, they seem to outline the contours of a new aesthetic, understood as a philosophical apprehension of the sensible, now designated as "the aesthetics of media arts."

In truth, this expression is a legacy of the aesthetic positions formulated and developed in the mid-1980s concerning the status of new images. The entire "image continent" was thus revisited to ensure a shift from thinking about the image to thinking about the visual, and eventually to an image of thought. This was clearly Alain Renaud's¹ intention when, in the mid-1980s, he convened a think tank around the "digital imaginary".

The emergence of this new aesthetic, in turn, raises the question of the artist's status. Several texts offer, if not a definition, at least a portrait of the contemporary artist, of their interaction with the technologies they shape and which, in turn, shape them—as Marshall McLuhan² had already noted. But on closer inspection, this aesthetic also falls within the continuity of the "aesthetics of communication" developed by Mario Costa and, above all, by Fred Forest.

II. Interferences with Fred Forest's "Aesthetics of Communication"

The two aforementioned artists, Mario Costa and Fred Forest, founded the *International Research Group on the Aesthetics of Communication* in Salerno in 1983. This group was a continuation of what was known as the *Sociological Art Collective* (1974–1980). It is worth recalling that sociological art refers to an artistic movement—and, more broadly, a method of artistic research—that emerged in the 1970s, aiming to explore the relationship between art and society. In contrast to practices focused on the artifact, this movement is more interested in communication processes, social dynamics, and cultural structures. Initiated by artists and theorists such as

¹ Cf. A. Renaud, « Le visible et l'imaginaire numérique », in L. Poissant (sous la dir. de), *Esthétique des arts médiatiques*, T. 1, Sainte-Foy, Presses de l'Université du Québec, Coll. « Esthétique », 1995, pp. 225-241.

² Cf. M. McLuhan, *La galaxie Gutenberg : la genèse de l'homme typographique*, trad. de l'anglais par J. Paré, Paris, Ed. Gallimard, Coll. « Idées », 1977.

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Hervé Fischer, Fred Forest, and Jean-Paul Thénot, it marks a major break with institutional or institutionalized art, emphasizing interaction, participation, and the engagement of the viewer, which have become the defining characteristics of contemporary artistic experiences. It should be added that in the weeks following the creation of this group, numerous artists and theorists joined, including Roy Ascott, Jean Claude Anglade, Roberto Barbanti, Stéphan Barron, Bure Soh, Marc Denjean, Eric Gidney, Jean Pierre Giovanelli, Philippe Hélary, Nathan Karczmar, Derrick de Kerckhove, Tom Klikowstein, Jean Marc Philippe, Wolfgang Ziemer Chrobatzek, and others.

Concurrently with the publication of the *Manifesto of the Aesthetics of Communication*, Fred Forest completed a thesis on Sociological Art and the "Aesthetics of Communication," the defense of which, in 1985, was transformed into a video performance. It is important to emphasize that this renowned *Manifesto* had the merit of presenting the essential theoretical foundations of these new forms of media art.

The aim of Fred Forest's "aesthetics of communication" and performance-actions is to show how new communication and data transmission technologies (the "information society") are altering our relationship to reality, time, and space, introducing notions such as ubiquity, immediacy, "real time," remote action, and networks. This movement, which initially provoked considerable antagonism¹, raises questions related to our perception of time and space, to art considered as a model of simulation in the face of power—the "aesthetics of communication" being situated beyond the commercial and institutional systems of art—as well as to reality understood as symbolic and aesthetic activity, ultimately advocating an aesthetics of relationship and exchange. As Fred Forest² himself

¹ "This option confounds those who adhere to a fixed aesthetic conception, who are unable to grasp the articulation, however obvious, between this type of practice, the concept of art, and the relationship with a changing society" (F. Forest, « Manifeste pour une Esthétique de la communication », *op. cit.*, p. 38) (Translation is the author's own).

² *Ibid.*, p. 38 (Translation is the author's own).

emphasizes: "I have always considered the field of social activity as the area that could be expanded and explored with the help of new communication technologies." [...] Art is an attitude, a way of positioning oneself in relation to things, rather than a thing itself! There is an aesthetics of behavior, an aesthetics of gesture, just as there is an aesthetics of the object. We must now reckon with a new category: the Aesthetics of Communication." To this, Pierre Moeglin¹ adds: "In this endeavor, the experience of communication and that of aesthetics are closely intertwined: re-enchanting communication is not simply about seeing and making visible its sensory aspect, so full of opacity and unpredictability. [...] It is equally, conversely, about seeing and making visible the dimension of communication at the heart of every aesthetic experience."

The aesthetics of media arts incorporates all the practices and principles promoted by the "aesthetics of communication." However, it differs from the latter in several aspects, notably by maintaining practices that produce objects—in robotic sculpture and holography, for example—and by pursuing research in the field of imagery, to which it dedicates significant space through photonic and digital processing. Media arts also aim to rehabilitate touch, smell, and, potentially, taste, sensory experiences often neglected by classical art; however, this does not entail the exclusion of the visible, which remains crucial. These exchanges, developed in a multisensory mode, encourage the blurring of boundaries between the real and the virtual, the rational and the sensory, but also between the individual and the collective.

Furthermore, communication intervenes at three distinct levels in the artistic phenomenon: the production of the work, its reception by the viewer, and the establishment of connections between viewers and artists. At one level, it structures artistic production by connecting the artist to the potential viewer through the artist's anticipation of how the

¹ P. Moeglin, « Réenchanter le monde. Ce qu'il y a d'esthétique dans la communication et réciproquement » (Translation is the author's own), in *Web Net Museum* : http://www.webnetmuseum.org/html/fr/expo-retr-fredforest/textes_critiques/auteurs/moeglin_fr.htm

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work will be received. At a second, more contingent level, it concerns the actual fate of the works and their reception by viewers, in the sense of transmitting a message or raising public awareness. A third level emerges upon analysis: a level of communication so fundamental that it allows us to relativize or excuse the shortcomings of the second level. Kant was undoubtedly one of the first to perceive this decisive dimension of aesthetic feeling, which transcends the emotion experienced in the face of an object's "aesthetic qualities."

In what follows, we will attempt to identify three points of correspondence, which seem to me the most compelling, between, on the one hand, the aesthetics of media arts and, on the other hand, the aesthetics of Fred Forest. The first point is entitled "Intervention on Reality as a Symbolic and Aesthetic Activity," the second "New Contemporary Sensibility," and the third "Production of Meaning." These themes are in fact inspired by those proposed by Fred Forest with the aim of establishing the conceptual framework of his *Manifesto*

II.1- Intervention on reality as a symbolic and aesthetic activity

Today, the field of information and communication opens up almost limitless avenues for artists, who are now called upon to invent art forms specific to these new environments. Aesthetics seeks its new domains of choice elsewhere than in the embodiment of the visual sign. No longer able to pursue its action exclusively through representation, the artist now intervenes directly in reality, that is to say, it pursues its symbolic and aesthetic activity using means radically different from those employed until now.

In his famous *Manifesto*, Fred Forest establishes a rather explicit correlation between reality and communication. According to him, it is communication itself that, in a sense, creates reality. It is not a simple operation of information transmission, but both the place and the instrument where reality is shaped. The goal of artists has always been to allow us to perceive reality "differently," which amounts to producing

another reality. If communication generates reality, then the proliferation and diversification of communication devices that characterize our society constitute determining factors in the shaping of our contemporary reality. In other words, those who engage in communication are, in a certain way, producers of reality. Forest puts it clearly: "This amounts to asserting that those who have access to communication technology have the ability to model reality"¹. In the communication societies in which we live today, "communication is not simply an operation of transmitting information [...]. It is much more: both the very place and the tool where reality is forged"². It is precisely in this realm of metacommunication that the contemporary artist is called upon to intervene.

"The aesthetics of communication" thus proposes to directly transpose the sensory principles observable in the evolution of our environment to the very functioning of art, considered no longer as a collection of isolated objects, but as a relational catalyst. Works, data, and artistic systems must be understood as integrated wholes, irreducible to the sum of their materialized parts. For Forest, art can no longer be conceived outside the concept of systems theory. Fields such as cybernetics, information theory, game theory, and decision theory become natural resources for artists attentive to the typologies of their time. Forest³ states it clearly: "Repositioning art today within the systems situated at the various levels of organization of reality, by breaking down disciplinary barriers, seems to me a necessary and inevitable task. The artist, in our society, inhabits a multiplicity of specific spaces and times." His life and activity are made up of a complex network where everything circulates in all directions on patterns of diversified connections".

The communication artist, a producer of symbols like the traditional artist, nevertheless explores other territories and invests in new fields of intervention. No longer confined to

¹ F. Forest, « Manifeste pour une Esthétique de la communication », *op. cit.*, p. 52 (Translation is the author's own).

² *Ibid.*, p. 52 (Translation is the author's own).

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37 (Translation is the author's own).

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institutional spaces and circuits intended for a predefined public, they shift their production to other spaces and other communication channels. This leads to a networking of individuals, who have become *net personas*, partners in a new type of experience. Similarly, "[t]he practice of Sociological Art has always paid close attention to communicational problems"¹. By introducing their own signs into mass media (newspapers, radio, television, telephone, etc.) and juxtaposing them with those of society, the communication artist acts upon the space of their time: the space of information. Forest² specifies: "They [the artist] compose given configurations, more or less complex networks in which they position multimedia means of transmission and reception, which they organize into interactive systems." He animates these systems. The communication artist becomes a kind of information architect. He engages in processes within an interactive, participatory relationship with interchangeable partners".

Depending on the chosen framework, the communication strategy involves choices of media, timing, and organization based on the objectives pursued. The message is thus expressed in diverse forms, mobilizing a variety of media whose relevance depends on the context. Media arts open up new dimensions of time and space.

In terms of time, we now speak of "real time," "uchronic time" (Couchot³), the universal present, abstract time, deferred time, fixed time, or processual time. In terms of space, notions such as immateriality, virtual space, telepresence, tele-action, multisensory space, and cyberspaces are emerging. We also discuss processual interventions, multimedia installations, interactive devices, and forms of critical lucidity, which

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31 (Translation is the author's own).

² *Ibid.*, p. 44 (Translation is the author's own).

³ Cf. E. Couchot, « Temps de l'histoire et temps uchronique. Penser autrement la mémoire et l'oubli », in *hybrid. Revue des arts et médiations humaines*, N° 1, 2014, *Patrimoines éphémères* : <https://hybrid.univ-paris8.fr/lodel/index.php?id=179>

profoundly redefine the coordinates of contemporary aesthetic experience.

II.2- New Contemporary Sensibilities

The growing proliferation of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) has fostered the emergence of a new way of life. Indeed, the *homo numericus* embodied by contemporary man seems immersed in a dense and complex network of interferences where everything is interconnected and nothing is truly external. This configuration, which has become central to daily life, has ultimately transformed our shared artistic sensibility. As Forest¹ writes: "What constitutes 'the work' is no longer its material support or its visual, pictorial representation, but precisely what is not perceptible to our senses while being perceptible to our sensibility."

In a world where technologies function as extensions of our sensory organs—mediating all our relationships with others and with the environment—media arts become the privileged revealers of the sensibility of our time. It is inevitable that this sensibility will be reconfigured through contact with these practices, and that our modes of relating will be transformed as we move through spatio-temporal parameters that are now fluid and unstable: "Contemporary sensibility is being shaped through multiple channels by multiple media"². Consequently, a certain conception of art "in itself", which previously prevailed, is profoundly called into question.

Thus, works of media art no longer fall under the regime of representation in the same way as painting, or even photography or cinema. In other words, these images no longer represent according to the classical model—painting being, for Alberti, that "open window onto the world." Their inscription in hypermedia or virtual reality devices confers upon them a completely different value and, ipso facto, a fundamentally different status. Rather than representing, these images produce events, to borrow Edmond Couchot's phrase. They

¹ F. Forest, « Manifeste pour une Esthétique de la communication », *op. cit.*, p. 29 (Translation is the author's own).

² *Ibid.*, p. 35 (Translation is the author's own).

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nevertheless participate in the construction of new facets of reality, by deploying and multiplying the facets of what we have identified as "real" since the Renaissance.

Furthermore, these images are no longer traces in the traditional sense of the term, as Alain Renaud¹ explains very well: "Painting is the trace, the hand-to-hand combat, an image of the world. [...] Computer or digital images are no longer traces. Even when an image is captured by a camera, which of course records the image, what it gives us back, if it's digital, are pixels. We've moved, in a way, from a procedure of inscription on bodies to a procedure of inscription in computer language. It's the first tool in human history that ceases to work mechanistically and begins to work logically".

In truth, media arts are at the heart of the changes that have profoundly affected our social lives for the past century. This has resulted in a proven and unprecedented transformation of our physical, technological, psychological, and other environments, and consequently, of our mental representations, in light of a constantly shifting reality. So much so that Fred Forest² suggests "a permanent updating of our perceptions to understand the world in which we live".

From this perspective, the artist is an engaged witness to the adventure of their time. They cannot ignore or escape the radical transformations that permeate it. Their status as an artist places them before the imperative necessity of grasping its meaning and formulating its languages. Their aim is to repurpose new instruments of knowledge and action to broaden the horizons of our perception, our sensibility, our consciousness, in order to renew our codes, our way of seeing, feeling, and understanding.

Similarly, they reintroduce aesthetics, as a system of signs, symbols, and actions, to its original anthropological function.

¹ A. Renaud, « Le visible et l'imaginaire numérique », *op. cit.* (Translation is the author's own).

² F. Forest, « Manifeste pour une Esthétique de la communication », *op. cit.*, p. 35 (Translation is the author's own).

The word "artist" itself requires adjustments in a changing society like ours: the roles, means, and sensibility it designates are constantly evolving. This term must be freed from the ideological connotations that still bind it to a romantic and anachronistic vision of art.

To meet the interdisciplinary demands of many media art productions, artists readily collaborate with specialists from other fields (computer scientists, engineers, electronics engineers, etc.) as well as with creators from other disciplines (music, video, computer art, etc.), a collaboration made possible by new technologies. These multidisciplinary teams also contribute to changing the status of the artist, as the various stages of creation become a collective endeavor within groups where each member plays a vital role.

II.3- Production of meaning

The production of meaning, in general, constitutes both the justification and the *raison d'être* of all artistic activity. The "signified"—in the sense of Hjelmslev's communication theory—or "aesthetic stimulus," to use Forest's terms, cannot be isolated from a context that mobilizes the personal, even intimate, dispositions of each recipient: cultural, religious, educational, historical, social, or environmental data. The plethora of information that makes up the human universe compels us, within the multitude of signs that assail us, to select certain ones from which we construct—we emphasize this point—our own reality, our own being-in-the-world. While this general rule applies to all works of art, it becomes explicit in the communicational practices developed by certain forms of media art.

In the sphere of media arts, specifically, the communication artist disseminates signs toward a recipient that could be described as cosmopolitan. It is up to the recipient to locate these elements, identify them, mentally connect them, and ultimately recognize them as a meaningful system. In other words, it is the receiver—or more precisely, the "spect-

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actor"¹—who must reconstruct, through an interpretive process, their own system of meaning from the transmitted elements. They must choose how to read the information, developing an interpretation based on the signs—or even clues—presented to them. Michel Serres refers to this as "deciphering messages." Only at the end of this process can they be granted the ultimate reward: "aesthetic bliss"² !

At the same time, the receiver becomes de facto a "receiver-transmitter" (according to Jakobson's communicational terminology): this is what we call here a "transactional meaning." In this regard, Derrick de Kerckhove's³ remark is illuminating: "If alphabetic culture made us, in a way, 'resistances,' in the electrical sense of the term, as a place for retaining information for the constitution of knowledge, today we have become 'transistors,' which, on the contrary, accelerate the energy of information in its transfer."

That said, it frequently happens that the work refers only to itself: it is then autotelic. From this perspective of the "dematerialization and disintegration" of the art object⁴, we are dealing with a new type of work conceived as a combination of programmed information, successively reaching a cosmopolitan recipient. Consequently, there is a reduction in content in favor of a reflection on the typology of relationships between elements, forms, and materials. Praxis itself is presented as the signifying essence of the work. The goal remains communication, the analysis of the process, and the methodical examination of the constituent elements in their various combinations. In this sense, Virilio⁵ observes: "It is from this

¹ The term was coined by G. Dyens. This portmanteau term refers to the active role of the viewer who must intervene in interactive installations requiring more or less complex action.

² Cf. A. Chareyre-Méjan, *Expérience esthétique et sentiment de l'existence. L'indifférence du monde*, Paris, Ed. L'Harmattan, Coll. « L'Art en bref », 2000.

³ Cited in F. Forest, « Manifeste pour une Esthétique de la communication », *op. cit.*, p. 52 (Translation is the author's own).

⁴ Cf. F. Popper, *Le Déclin de l'objet*, Paris, Ed. Chêne, 1975.

⁵ Cf. P. Virilio, *La Machine de vision*, Paris, Ed. Galilée, 1988.

dematerialization of communication, through the dissociation of message and medium, cause and effect, object and its referent, that the symptoms of communicational modernity arise: acceleration and transnationalization of information networks, computerization of exchanges and other daily activities, derealization of the social bond and public space, and the increasing dualization of the community, subjected to a forced modernization that accentuates—rather than attenuates—the divide between those who decide and those who execute.” “For my part,” writes Fred Forest¹, “by taking this reflection further, we will tend to consider that the artistic message is all the more specifically artistic the more it is devoid of real content.”

Regarding contemporary communication, dominated by what is now called "all-communicational," the primacy of media structure over content is a fact emphasized, in all its forms, by McLuhan's work. One could even say that the content of communication sometimes becomes—paradoxically—communication itself. In this perspective, Fred Forest² says nothing different when he states: "All creation today stems from creativity in communication structures and their formatting, before stemming from their intrinsic content".

III. Results and discussion

The results of this study show that media arts represent a major epistemological break with traditional aesthetic paradigms, privileging process over product, relationship over representation, and participation over contemplation. This new reconfiguration draws its origins from the precepts of Fred Forest's "aesthetics of communication." Three major consequences emerge:

- Under the influence of Fred Forest's thought, media art is no longer defined as a simple technological extension of traditional art, but as a communicative process integrating new dimensions to the notions of time and space: "ubiquity," "real time," "telepresence," etc.

¹ F. Forest, « Manifeste pour une Esthétique de la communication », *op. cit.*, p. 51 (Translation is the author's own).

² *Ibid.*, p. 52 (Translation is the author's own).

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- *Homo numericus* now evolves in a space of symbolic exchanges, social interactions, and information flow, where sensory and cognitive perceptions are reshaped by a technological array, which has become a vector of sensory experience, redefining our relationship to others and to the world. Media works no longer simply represent the world, but explore it through evolving, interactive, and multisensory devices, translating into a fully-fledged aesthetic language based primarily on the concepts of flow and immateriality.

Meaning no longer resides in the work itself, but in a dialogic framework where the viewer, transformed into a "spect-actor," becomes a co-author of the creative process. This shift from an aesthetics of representation to one of relationship establishes communication as an essential component of art in the digital age. All of this brings about a profound paradigm shift: art is increasingly defined less by the materiality of the artifact than by the dynamics of participation and sharing. In this regard, Forest's thinking, articulated around "the aesthetics of communication," now serves as an essential framework for understanding new forms of art using immersive technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), Artificial Intelligence (AI)...

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the study reveals that the emergence of media arts constitutes a decisive turning point in the evolution of contemporary creation. By placing the notion of relationship at the center of the creative process, these media arts appear to extend the fundamental principles of Fred Forest's "aesthetics of communication." Described as an aesthetics of relationship and sharing, this aesthetic paves the way for an art in perpetual evolution, based on the interplay between technology, communication, and interaction. In doing so, it redefines the status of the artist, transforming them into a mediator of symbolic devices, and transforms the spectator into a "spect-actor" engaged in the production of the work's meaning. Thus, the "aesthetics of communication" represents an essential

paradigm for understanding the aesthetic stakes of art: it allows us to conceive of the artwork not as a finished or closed product, but rather as an open, interactive, and evolving system, emblematic of current artistic dynamics. As for Fred Forest, for whom communication is the raw material of art, he appears not only as a pioneer but also as a visionary whose creative thinking still guides the new paths of art in the age of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). This explains and justifies the increasingly compelling need to examine Forest's theoretical and artistic universe in depth and to identify its far-reaching repercussions on current artistic practices, which are constantly evolving.

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