## DOI: 10.31866/2410-1311.38.2021.245651 UDC 111.852:141.78:004

# AESTHETIC ASPECTS OF META- AND DIGIMODERNISM IN THE CONCEPT OF POST-POSTMODERNISM

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### For citation:

Humeniuk, T. (2021). Aesthetic Aspects of Meta- and Digimodernism in the Concept of Post-Postmodernism. *Issues in Cultural Studies*, (38), 65-75. doi: https://doi.org/10.31866/2410-1311.38.2021.245651.

#### Abstract

The purpose of the article is to study the aesthetic aspects of meta- and digimodernism in the concept of post-postmodernism; to reveal the capability of new systems of views to express and reflect the ongoing changes. The research methodology consists of comparative analysis and synthesis methods, which made it possible to identify the main features and key concepts of post-postmodernism. The historical and cultural approach made it possible to understand that modernity, in the process of its formation, denied all previous cultural experience, and postmodernity denounced its hypocrisy but did not offer anything constructive. The systemic method was used to understand the relationships in the system of the cultural environment since the metamodern already uses previous experience and traditions, not from the point of denial, parody and sarcasm, but respect. The scientific novelty lies in analysing the prerequisites that led to the change in the main paradigms of the 20th - 21st centuries (modern, postmodern) and the formation of postpostmodern. The article considers main aesthetic aspects, similarities and differences, mistakes and discoveries. Conclusions, It is established that a new concept of post-postmodernism is emerging. Rejecting the aggressive denial of previous experience, it absorbs all the best from modernism and postmodernism, which is its great creative power. From childhood, the new young generation of the post-postmodern era is immersed in the world of digital technologies and globalisation and can feel comfortable, at ease in the environment of permanent changes. Their new quality is the absence of fear of the need for changes in their own life and the world around them. At the same time, post-postmodernism is a concept of views on modern life, the formation of which continues to this day. It is in development, just like the world that created it, requires improvements and additions, which will accumulate as humanity continues to move forward.

*Keywords:* postmodernism; axiological pluralism; eclecticism; fragmentation; selfidentification; virtualization; Information society; digital technologies; a virtual reality; transsentimentalism

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# Introduction

After the First World War, which ended in innumerable casualties, a turning point in people's worldview comes in the world: the religious foundation and belief in the humanistic ideas of classical culture have noticeably shaken. A broad trend in art is emerging in the search for new meanings by contemporary artists. These studies respond to the crisis of old ideas that could no longer explain and reflect the changed realities. Modern, ignoring the past and all previous developments, was aimed at a long-term future looming far beyond the horizon, which can be achieved by squeezing the world's diversity into the narrow framework of a single universal picture of the Universe. Centralism, which triumphed at this time, subjugated the entire spiritual world of man, depersonalising it and adjusting it to general criteria. On this basis, radical ideologies and totalitarian states arose, which ultimately led to the unleashing of two bloody world wars. The onset of the crisis is changing society's outlook, requiring a new paradigm that could provide clear guidelines. Modernity is being replaced by postmodernism with diametrically opposed views, giving such a necessary feeling of freedom from everything that fettered the personality; however, the denial of all truths and the principles of deconstruction have increased the chaos and confusion in the minds of people. Decades of fatigue from the destructive theories of postmodernism have led to depression, loss of moral values and self-identification. The principle of duality is inherent in human nature, and at present, to save oneself, it is necessary to turn to the world with its bright side. Are the new post-postmodern belief systems — digi- and metamodernism — capable of expressing and reflecting the ongoing changes? Do they have enough conceptual baggage for this?

Analysis of publications considering contemporary processes occurring in the socio-cultural space, the study of the works of postmodern ideologists Frederico Jameson (1992), Jean Baudrillard (Kellner, 1989), Jacques Derrida (Biesta & Peters, 2008), Umberto Eco (1994), Zygmunt Baumann (2000), Jean Lyotard (1984), etc., appeared in the last two decades, theoretical works on post-postmodernism on metamodernism such as "Notes on Metamodernism" by R. van den Akker and T. Vermeulen (2010); "Digimodernism: How new technologies destroy postmodernity and change our culture" by Alan Kirby (2009) and a whole galaxy of scientists, who have proposed their approaches to understanding the present: the American social theorist Robert Samuels (2008), who formulated the project of auto-modernity, Billy Childish and Charles Thomson with their manifesto on remodernism (Academic, n.d), and a number of others lead to the conclusion about the existence in the cultural space of two main paradigms of the  $20^{th} - 21^{st}$  centuries and the gradual change from postmodern to post-postmodern. Among the Ukrainian scientists studying metamodernism as a cultural concept, it is worth noting T. Humeniuk (Humeniuk et al., 2021), I. Petrova (2020), T. Hrebeniuk (2018), R. Rusin (2015) and others. Didzhimodernism has not been studied so extensively: it is highlighted in the works of N. Zahurska (2019), N. Lapshina (2019).

# The purpose of the article

This paper aims to study the aesthetic aspects of metamodernism and digimodernism in the concept of post-postmodernism and to identify whether the new sysIssues in Cultural Studies 2021 • 38 • 65-75

tems of views of post-postmodernism — digi- and metamodernism — are capable of expressing and reflecting the ongoing changes.

### Main research material

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, modernist currents dealt a decisive blow to classical art. However, soon they also cease to satisfy the creators due to the ongoing changes in the outlook and attitude of the individual. Analysing the current cultural processes, particularly postmodernism, F. Jameson connects its emergence with the needs of reflection in a culture of new forms of social and socio-cultural life of society, economic and political structure.

The 60s of the last century are considered the beginning of the emergence of postmodernity, when youth antiwar movements, the struggle against the stereotypes of modernism, the desire to erase the boundaries between elite and mass art, the desire to turn everyday life into a bright holiday are widely unfolding in the United States. In the beginning, postmodernism, as an artistic phenomenon, arises in painting, architecture, sculpture, design and then spreads to music and literature. At this time, the art of pop art appeared, using a combination of ready-made objects or creating crafts from pieces of posters and advertisements, postcards, pictures from magazines printed on canvas, often with the addition of hand-made drawings. A peculiar trend in the pop culture of that time was the emergence of graffiti, which impetus to the mural development, which has found wide popularity. In the 1970s, the comprehensive penetration of postmodern art into Europe began. It was the heyday of deconstruction, which paved the way for the emergence of new aesthetics based on the principles of eclecticism and pluralism. In this phenomenon, the destruction of the universal artistic language occurred, replaced by an arbitrary mixture of languages, genres, styles of literature, architecture, painting, cinema, the boundaries between which were also erased. Such eclectic "mixes" formed the basis of postmodern aesthetics. W. Eco and his famous novels The Name of the Rose, Foucault's Pendulum, The Island on the Eve have become classic examples of postmodern literature and represent a mixed style with many quotes from sources with different historical roots, using painting plots and even scientific texts. At the end of the 1970s, postmodernism spread in the countries of Eastern Europe, after which in the 1980s it became a particular ideological trend based on a certain unity of philosophical and theoretical attitudes and methodological approaches, actively influencing various spheres of the social and humanitarian, political and spiritual life of society. Postmodernism is not a single style; it has many faces and does not have a clear ideological platform. It is instead a complex of directions, united by a common ideological position, sometimes conflicting with each other, but nevertheless, a number of features characteristic of postmodernism can be identified (Fig. 1): nothing unlimited freedom of the creator in choosing the methods of self-expression; a new look at traditional images and their use in numerous interpretations, remakes, ironic allusions; fragmentation instead of integrity; denial of all norms and traditions, hence the opposition to the established moral values of axiological pluralism; look at the world around us from different points of view, from the position of dialogue; the shocking nature of creativity, sometimes reaching a demonstrative scandalousness; irony and author's self-irony; hedonism, the task of which is to oust the tragic and ugly from the life of the individual, which inevitably leads to a superficial attitude towards the world; parody-ironic play with the original and the wide use of quotations as a method of artistic creativity; denial of high and low, fusion of high and mass culture, with an orientation towards consumer mass aesthetics; playful presentation of modern culture and attitude to life as a game; unprecedented penetration of art into the everyday life of a person.

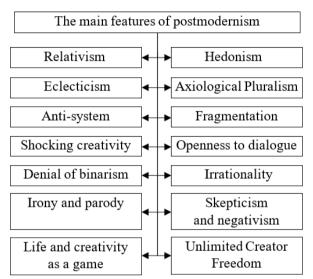


Figure 1. The main features of postmodernism

Traditional ideas about the integrity and completeness of various aesthetic trends, norms and criteria, and educational function are ostracised. The fundamental absence of a universal canon becomes its canon. Distancing itself from classical aesthetics, norms, and criteria, postmodernism does not conflict with it. Still, it uses its developments on a new basis based on eclectic and pluralistic aesthetic paradigms. Reflection on the Universe concept as chaos in the aesthetics of modernism in postmodernism turns into flirting with this chaos, which is declared the norm of human life.

But already in the mid-1990s, the situation is radically changing in society's economic, political, technological, socio-cultural, and spiritual lives. More and more scientists, philosophers, sociologists, and art critics conclude that the worldview and aesthetics of postmodernism have exhausted their potential and are unable to explain and comprehend the changed reality. In particular, Linda Hutcheon, a Canadian literary researcher and postmodern theorist, writes in her book *The Politics of Postmodernism*: "Postmodern is no longer there. It was a certain concrete historical epoch, and now we need a new language of description" (Hutcheon, 2004). The main emphasis of postmodernism was placed on the individual world of a person, when his vital needs were put above all, to the detriment of the interests of society. Pepsi's slogan — "Take everything from life" perfectly reflects the principle of the 2021 • 38 • 65-75

postmodern era. The fragmentation of the whole to the status of chaos, to which society and art were subjected, brought to the point of absurdity, denied the existence of such immutable truths as good and evil, good and bad, right and wrong, which inevitably led to hotbeds of high social tension in the world and social maladjustment of a person. Unprincipled eclecticism in art, built on mixing and parodying the semantic elements of the original, leads to a secondary nature and a loss of the integrity of the work. In the absence of aesthetic criteria of value in art, their significance began to be determined by the market — it was not for nothing that in the twentieth century, the words bestseller, blockbuster, hit, which often reflected not the artistic significance of a work, but their commercial success, became so widely used. Multicultural eclecticism did not unite people but led to conflicts. Suppose the main aesthetic aspects of modernity are focused on rationalism, harmony, social justice and humanism, belief in the transformation of the Universe and the power of the human mind. In that case, the aesthetics of postmodernism is the priority of the irrational principle, chaos, negativism, scepticism. And since a priori, everything is relative, according to the followers of postmodernism, evolution and absolute truth simply cannot exist, hence the pessimism, despair, inability to self-identity, loss of aesthetic guidelines, and distrust of reality ripening within the human community. Transforming society, man, culture demanded different tactics to reflect the changing realities since postmodernism not only turned out to be powerless in explaining the ongoing processes, such as globalisation, the formation of the information society and the emergence of its phenomenon — social networks, the emergence of a wide layer of scientific and technical specialists and managers, professionals in PR, mass media and advertising, transsentimentalism but also deepens all those contradictions that have accumulated over the past years. At the peak of the conflicts that have arisen, a new paradigm of the changed world begins to crystallise — post-postmodernism, the concept is also not homogeneous, including various representations that are consonant with the new language of describing the era.

A critical approach to the historical and cultural heritage of past years led to the conclusion that modernity, in the process of its formation, denied all previous cultural experience, and postmodernity, if it took it into account, then cynically altering it, pulled it into quotes, thus exposing the hypocrisy of the time, but moving away from it, not offering anything constructive in return. The tendency towards destruction and denial of the meanings of everything that exists gradually began to lose its popularity among artists and spectators. At this moment, a new paradigm called metamodern appears, which is looking for ways to overcome the distance and reconcile two such contradictory concepts, to restore the integrity of the world; it is no coincidence that the prefix "meta" means between. Previous experience, traditions are reevaluated and adopted, but not from denial, parody and sarcasm, but the position of respect.

The postmodern proclaimed the arrogance of one's the "I", in metamodernism turns into a search for the actual "I" and building healthy relationships with others, based not on opposing personal interests to the interests of others and society as a whole, but by returning to simple feelings such as care and empathy, understanding the interconnectedness of all that is, including the microcosm, man and the Universe, because nothing can exist in isolation, to a constant rethinking of what is the essence

of human existence. It is the essence of the new aesthetics of metamodernism — its fusion with ethics.

Hence the glorification in the works of the aesthetics of everyday life, in which beauty surrounds you from all sides: in the landscape outside the window, in events, people. The personality no longer wants to rise above other people or nature but seeks to become an integral part of the whole. Environmental disasters, which showed how fragile our world is, led to the question of the importance of preserving nature and building relationships with it not from a position of strength and superiority but through interactions. People of the present time have simultaneously received the romanticism of modernity, the freedom of postmodernism, and the moral principles of metamodernism, which help the processes of self-identification. However, the vulnerability of metamodernism lies in the fact that it operates only in the categories of culture and ethics, without considering the influence of digital technologies on life and the path of human becoming.

From the point of view of social progress, D. Bell (1974) characterises the present society as post-industrial, which at this stage has reached the informational stage. The rapid development of telecommunication and information technologies, which have improved the production, redistribution and transmission of information, ultimately led to the emergence of the Internet and created a particular communication space that satisfies the fundamental human need for communication. Internet users have the opportunity to carry out virtual interpersonal interaction in real-time, to distribute and consume the information they need through alternative sources of information, which are social networks, relatively free from the control of the state and ruling parties; create groups within the social network, taking into account common interests and voluntarily; to be involved in discussions on topics of interest to them, to express their opinion, to have the opportunity for self-expression; establish and run a business. The technologies of modern society have had such a significant impact on all spheres of human activity: economy, politics, education and culture that they have led to the emergence of the newest concept — digimodernism, which tries to explain, critically analyse and express in actual language the changes that have occurred in the world under the influence of computerisation and digital technologies and find an alternative to postmodernity. The German sociologist Gerhard Schulze described modern society as a society of experience, the main goal of filling your life with a variety of impressions, allowing you to live it intensely, brightly and deeply. This need was largely helped by the virtual world, which began to be perceived by a person not so much as a game, but as a rich creative life activity capable of giving vivid emotions. The individual's own mental interpretation of any work of art, thanks to specific influences, allows it to transform it while forming a new aesthetic experience materially. The integrity, rigid framework of the work is blurred, and already anyone who wishes makes their own adjustments, changing it from the inside. Even in the absence of personal bodily contacts, thanks to various gadgets, the user gets the opportunity to perceive the fictional world through all the senses, reaching a state close to affecting.

The virtual world embodies a dual meaning, an antithesis, so beloved by postmodernists: possibility and truth, fact and fiction. In "imaginary" reality, the signified concept disappears, being replaced by the term play, and the signifier — by an object that does not have a real form of being but is expressed in essence through a hyperreal image. The reality in the virtual world is not parodied but replaced, and the replacement persistently claims the status of the obvious. Post-postmodernism's simulacrum in post-postmodernism is replaced by an imaginary reality with its main specific feature — interactivity, meaning a dialogue connection.

The aesthetic aspect of post-postmodernism in the interpretation of digimodernism lies in the impossibility of existence in the virtual world of chaos, everything is perfectly ordered here, while anyone, due to interactivity, becomes the creator of a particular collective action and the realisation that you have put your hand to this causes satisfaction and pride, due to which the aesthetic boundaries of postmodernity are expanding. Numerous interpretations characteristic of postmodernism are replaced by the multi-action of those who want to realise it, the roles of creator and consumer, contemplator and participant, are mixed; this is the fundamental aesthetic novelty of post-postmodernism, which allows you to feel the world of creativity from the inside, and, thanks to the three-dimensionality of the image and tactile effects, immerse yourself in it.

However, the new opportunities provided by digital technology also pose serious dangers to art. The new facets and resources that opened up for the manifestation of creative potential began to ignore the basis of the product of creativity — form and content, directing all efforts to an external effect, in fact, replacing the image with a sign devoid of reflection and spiritual origin, turning the culture of the digital space, mainly, into a primitive one aesthetic point of view of the product.

At present, society is faced with the problem of an overabundance of information, often carrying the opposite meaning, while finding itself with an opportunity and the need for choice. The analysis and identification of the main characteristics of the emerging new paradigm — post-postmodernism instils confidence in the possibility of acceptance by society and people of its main provisions (Fig. 2).

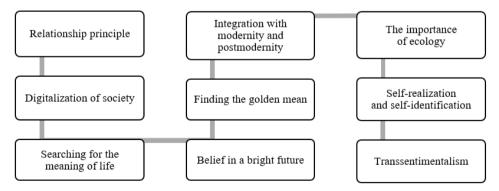


Figure 2. Key concepts of post-postmodernism

The countless crises of the last two decades, which have affected all spheres of society's life: political, economic, socio-cultural, ecological, have deeply rooted in the minds of people the idea of the world around us as unpredictable and unreliable, which led to internal protest and a desire to understand, organise and change it, 2021 • 38 • 65-75

making it comfortable for life. The era of deconstruction, irony, relativism and nihilism is coming to an end; we are witnessing a gradual revival of hope, sincerity, romanticism, a return to universal truths. Terrorism, endless local wars and revolutions occurring in different parts of the world, global environmental disasters, economic crises, a pandemic that has engulfed the world community, all of this plunges humanity into the abyss of depression and apathy. However, to maintain mental health, a person is constantly incapable of arriving in such a state. To preserve his "I" comes an understanding of the need to search for new landmarks. The world is slowly returning to the lost human values: freedom, goodness, happiness, beauty, while the phenomenon of modernity consists in their realisation in complementary spaces, both in real and virtual-sensual.

## Conclusions

The emerging new concept of post-postmodernism is not yet mature, but a start has been made to search for a way out. Rejecting the aggressive denial of previous experience, it absorbs all the best from modernism and postmodernism, and this is its great creative power. From a childhood immersed in the world of digital technologies and globalisation, the new young generation of the post-postmodern era can feel comfortable and at ease in the environment of permanent changes. His new quality is the absence of fear of the need for changes in his own life and the world around him. It is essential for them that what is passed off as truth corresponds to their inner truth, and only then will it be accepted. Of course, post-postmodernism is not a fully formed concept of views on modern life; it is in development, like the world that created it, requires improvements and additions, which, of course, will accumulate as humanity continues to move forward.

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# ЕСТЕТИЧНІ АСПЕКТИ МЕТА- І ДІДЖИМОДЕРНІЗМУ В КОНЦЕПЦІЇ ПОСТПОСТМОДЕРНІЗМУ

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### Анотація

Мета статті — вивчити естетичні аспекти мета- і діджимодернізму в концепції постпостмодернізму; виявити здатність нових систем поглядів виразити та відобразити зміни, що відбуваються. Методологію дослідження становлять методи порівняльного

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аналізу і синтезу, які надали можливість виявити основні риси і ключові поняття постпостмодернізму. Історико-культурний підхід дозволив зрозуміти, що модерн в процесі свого становлення заперечував увесь попередній культурний досвід, а постмодерн викривав його лицемірство, проте не пропонував нічого конструктивного. Системний метод застосовувався для усвідомлення взаємозв'язків у системі культурного середовища, оскільки метамодерн вже використовує попередній досвід і традиції не з позиції заперечення, пародії та сарказму, а з позиції поваги. Наукова новизна полягає в аналізі передумов, що призвели до зміни основних парадигм XX-XXI ст. (модерну, постмодерну) і становлення постпостмодерну. Розглянуто їх основні естетичні аспекти, схожість і відмінності, помилки і відкриття. Висновки. Встановлено, що зароджується нова концепція постпостмодернізму. Відкидаючи агресивне заперечення попереднього досвіду, вона вбирає в себе все краще від модернізму й постмодернізму і в цьому її велика творча сила. Нове молоде покоління епохи постпостмодерну з дитячих років занурене у світ цифрових технологій та процеси глобалізації і може комфортно й невимушено існувати у середовищі перманентних змін. Його новою якістю стає відсутність страху перед необхідністю до змін у власному житті і навколишньому світі. Водночас постпостмодернізм — концепція поглядів на сучасне життя, формування якої триває дотепер. Він у розвитку, як і світ, що його створив, потребує доопрацювання і доповнення тим досвідом, що буде накопичуватись з огляду на подальший рух людства уперед.

**Ключові слова:** постмодернізм; аксіологічний плюралізм; еклектизм; фрагментація; самоідентичність; віртуалізація; інформаційне суспільство; цифрові технології; віртуальна реальність; транссентименталізм

# ЭСТЕТИЧЕСКИЕ АСПЕКТЫ МЕТА- И ДИДЖИМОДЕРНИЗМА В КОНЦЕПЦИИ ПОСТПОСТМОДЕРНИЗМА

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#### Аннотация

Цель статьи — изучить эстетические аспекты мета- и диджимодернизма в концепции постпостмодернизма; выявить способность новых систем взглядов выразить и отразить происходящие перемены. Методологию исследования составляют методы сравнительного анализа и синтеза, которые предоставили возможность выявить основные черты и ключевые понятия постпостмодернизма. Историко-культурный подход позволил понять, что модерн в процессе своего становления отрицал весь предыдущий культурный опыт, а постмодерн обличал его лицемерие, но не предлагал ничего конструктивного. Системный метод применялся для осознания взаимосвязей в системе культурной среды, поскольку метамодерн уже использует предыдущий опыт и традиции не с позиции отрицания,

пародии и сарказма, а с позиции уважения. Научная новизна заключается в анализе предпосылок, приведших к смене основных парадигм XX–XXI в. (модерна, постмодерна) и становлению постпостмодерна. Рассмотрены их основные эстетические аспекты, схожесть и различия, ошибки и открытия. Выводы. Установлено, что зарождается новая концепция постпостмодернизма. Отвергая агрессивное отрицание предшествующего опыта, она вбирает в себя все лучшее от модернизма и постмодернизма и в этом ее великая созидательная сила. Новое молодое поколение эпохи постпостмодерна с детских лет погружено в мир цифровых технологий и процессы глобализации и может комфортно, непринужденно чувствовать себя в среде перманентных изменений. Его новым качеством становится отсутствие страха перед необходимостью к изменениям в собственной жизни и окружающем мире. В то же время постпостмодернизм — концепция взглядов на современную жизнь, формирование которой продолжается по сей день. Он в развитии, как и мир, создавший его, требует доработок и дополнений, которые будут накапливаться по мере дальнейшего движения человечества вперед.

*Ключевые слова:* постмодернизм; аксиологический плюрализм; эклектизм; фрагментация; самоидентификация; виртуализация; информационное общество; цифровые технологии; виртуальная реальность; транссентиментализм



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