

## Article

# Installation Art and the Elaboration of Psychological Concepts: A Definition of the Term ‘Excursive’

Lilyana Georgieva Karadjova

Department of Cinema, Advertising and Show Business, New Bulgarian University, 1618 Sofia, Bulgaria; lkaradjova@nbu.bg

**Abstract:** This paper focuses on installation art and its potential to employ and elaborate psychological concepts. As Claire Bishop argues, installation art has a psychologically absorptive character because it activates and immerses the viewing subject. To analyze this immersive experience, she refers to Maurice Merleau-Ponty and the premise that subject and object are intertwined and reciprocally interdependent. In this paper I refer to these registers of artistic perception in order to explore the concept of ‘excursive object’, which was introduced by the contemporary artist and theorist Peter Tzanev in a site-specific installation (Credo Bonum Gallery, Sofia, 2018). It refers to both Elizabeth Helsinger’s term ‘excursive sight’ and to Michel Foucault’s notion of ‘discursive object’. Whereas the latter is a discursive textual formation, which consists of apparent internal relations inside a statement, the excursive object of art emerges as a less perceivable configuration of elements. It does not result in a clear perceptual experience and reflects the unstable phenomenological interdependence of subject and object. Thus, Tzanev’s novel excursive objects depart from the usual modes of perception. His concept reveals the viewer’s particular experience of unstable configurations of elements in installation art. Furthermore, it could be explored as a resourceful term to describe perceptive situations in the psychology of contemporary art.

**Keywords:** art; psychology; philosophy; phenomenology; discourse; discursive formation; excurse; excursive; excursive object; subjectivity; gestalt



**Citation:** Karadjova, Lilyana Georgieva. 2023. Installation Art and the Elaboration of Psychological Concepts: A Definition of the Term ‘Excursive’. *Arts* 12: 87. <https://doi.org/10.3390/arts12030087>

Academic Editor: Peter Tzanev

Received: 18 January 2023

Revised: 24 March 2023

Accepted: 26 April 2023

Published: 29 April 2023



**Copyright:** © 2023 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

Installation art is an art form that requires the participation of viewers and draws their attention to the process of perception. It is designed to create experience, to immerse the spectator and is inherently related to psychological theories. In *Installation Art*, Claire Bishop points out that this psychologically absorptive aspect is a characteristic feature of contemporary art, which activates and immerses the viewer, relying on his subjective perception to construct<sup>1</sup> the totality of installation that would otherwise remain a space of dispersed elements (Bishop 2005, p. 10). To substantiate this claim, she quotes Maurice Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 1974) and the premise that “subject and object are not separate entities but are reciprocally intertwined and interdependent” (Bishop 2005, p. 50). Therefore, the participation of the viewing subject is essential to the completion of the artwork. This aspect is fundamental to the understanding of psychological theories of contemporary art.

Whereas classical and premodern art theories attribute an autonomous status to the artwork as an object, ascribing it a uniform accessibility and fixed meaning, postmodern art theories consider the viewer’s highly subjective perception and the multiple layers of context it generates. To interconnect these opposing approaches, the contemporary artist and art theoretician Peter Tzanev proposes the term ‘excursive’. It eludes a particular subject–object relation in the viewer’s perception of his artworks. In the exhibition *Excursive Objects* in Credo Bonum Gallery, 4–29 April 2018, he makes a theoretical and artistic experiment by introducing this concept, which conflates complex linguistic references. The term ‘excursive’ was coined by the literary critic and art historian Elizabeth Helsinger (1982)

in her studies on the 18th and 19th century to analyze Romantic notions of perception of landscape like the ones introduced by Ruskin. She notes that there is a particular similarity between excursive sight and associative reading (Helsingier 1982, ch. 3). Tzanev alters the connotation of the term with regard to contemporary installation art, where the sight of the spectator moves around the gallery's space as if exploring a landscape. Furthermore, it refers to postmodern theory and is a counterpart to the key notion of "discursive object"<sup>2</sup>, discussed by Michel Foucault ([1971] 1972) and Gilles Deleuze (2018). The term denotes a discursive textual formation, which consists of internal relations inside a statement and could be analyzed. By contrast, the excursive object of art emerges as an ephemeral configuration, which is less perceivable and escapes cognition. Although quite experimental and speculative, the term "excursive object" aims to introduce an innovative approach and expand the critical psychological discourse on art.

## 2. What Is an 'Excursive Object'?

The concept of an 'excursive object' was introduced by Tzanev in his exhibition at Credo Bonum Gallery, provoking attention with its unusual character. The postmodern play with the familiar, and yet intentionally decontextualized 'discourse' instills uncertainty and signals to the viewers that they are about to experience an exhibition conceived outside of common communicative codes. They are introduced to a text written by the artist, suggesting that the displayed artworks resist conceptual definitions:

I call "excursive objects" the access of my consciousness to the phenomenal independence of a certain kind of interaction between the objects that create new objects. These new objects are "wandering", "deviating" from the usual modes of perception. These are objects that appear as temporary configurations. They have an illusory nature and cannot be supported by narrative structures of communication or conceptual forms of representation. These are objects that are constantly withdrawing from their presence. Their appearance in my consciousness depends on how much I have blocked the "social brain" of the parts from which they are composed, and how much I succeed in following and retaining them as autonomous configurations that have their own visual "theory of mind".

Excursive objects appear as a phenomenal experience, not as "real things" that we can take with us at home, explain to someone or transfer to the museum. Excursive objects happen at the same time beyond thinking about art and beyond exploring objects as an understandable part of the world around us. In this sense, they apply equally to the mind of the little child and to the consciousness of every casual spectator or artistic expert. (Tzanev 2018 [exhibition text])

The term '*excursive*' derives from the Latin verb *excurrere* (ex (out) + currere (to run, to gallop, to hurry)). An '*excursus*' is a commonly used term meant to signify a digression from the main topic for the sake of discussing a secondary question, as well as more generally a desultory or digressive way of reading (Groo 2019). The adjective '*excursive*' is used more rarely and signifies something that departs, diverts, or wanders, goes out or beyond the ordinary path. An excursive movement is an outwardly directed movement. The term excursive has also been used in art theory by Elizabeth Helsingier (1982) in her studies of 18th and 19th century art and literature to analyze Ruskin's Romantic notions. To analyze the perception of landscapes, she discusses the idea of an *excursive sight*, which refers to the viewer's eye moving from detail to detail (Helsingier 1982, ch. 3)<sup>3</sup>. Although Tzanev's concept is linguistically related to Helsingier's studies of Romantic explorations, his *excursiveness* has a different meaning and is not concerned with the attention process. In a postmodern manner, he changes the connotation of the term with regard to his work in contemporary installation art. The excursiveness refers to the ephemeral character of his artwork. It does not suggest an autonomous perceptive experience of the subject, who explores the space, but rather a phenomenological interdependence between subjective perception and objective presence. Instead of the Romantic liberated sight which moves

from view to view to explore the landscape, the postmodern approach to spectatorship of installation art aims to create an immersive sensory perception reflecting the configurations inside the gallery's space. Therefore, what is essential to the perception of installation art is not the movement of the eyes from detail to detail, but rather the overall experience triggered by configurations of elements inside the space. However, what would happen if these configurations were unstable, as in Tzanev's work? In this case, the term *excursive* is used to better describe this instability in experiencing installation art. It denotes the appearance and disappearance of certain types of 'objects' in a fluctuating perceptive process.

The second important reference behind the coinage of the 'excursive object' is the prominent postmodern notion of 'discursive object', which can easily be conceived as its counterpoint. Michel Foucault comprehensively discusses *discursive objects* as *discursive formations* consisting of internal relations (Foucault [1971] 1972). Gilles Deleuze's (2018) reflections on this concept in a lecture on "Foucault, Part I: Knowledge (Historical Formations)", which took place on 29 October 1985, provides a definition that is particularly useful in our analysis of *excursive objects*:

... statements have objects that are proper to them, objects that belong to them, that do not exist outside of them. These objects are discursive objects. So, 'I know something'—what's more, visibilities themselves have objects, objects that are their own. To know is to see and to state, it is to combine the visible and the statable. There are objects of visibility, there are objects of stating [*objets d'énonciation*], discursive objects. ... I can perfectly well say "I see something," but this something is internal to knowledge, it's not an object that would exist independently of knowledge or that would preexist knowledge. (ibid.)

This brief explanation of *discursive objects* can easily be related to concepts outside of semantics. Just as *discursive objects* exist only in statements, *excursive objects* exist only in perceptive objects. The former crystallizes as a result of analysis and the latter emerges regardless of cognition: it is an unmediated perceptive experience. Deleuze focuses on the principles of textual formation as part of the statement and Tzanev explores the temporary configurations in subjective perception as part of an installation. However, as already noted, these concepts could be considered counterparts. While Deleuze relates knowledge to combining the visible and the stable, namely, the discursive object, Tzanev notes that *excursive objects* "cannot be supported by narrative structures of communication or conceptual forms of representation" and furthermore, they are unstable, "constantly withdrawing from their presence" (Tzanev 2018). Thus, the new concept preserves the wandering character of excursiveness, as in the mentioned interpretations on 19th century art; moreover, it is analyzed in the context of the postmodern narrative structures and subject-object relations. Therefore, although linguistically referring to Helsinger's studies of Romantic notions of perception, Tzanev successfully incorporates the term in the postmodern discourse of art.

Furthermore, through its inclusion in postmodern art theory, the concept of an *excursive object* acquires distinctive characteristics of its own, among a myriad of other concepts as summarized by Antony Hudek (2014): Michelangelo Pistoletto's 'minus objects', Hélio Oiticica's 'trans-objects', 'affective objects' and so forth. These concepts are all built upon more classical notions such as 'found objects', 'dematerialized objects', 'anti-objects', 'site-specific objects', and 'post-mediatic objects', which are presented in a collection of essays by notable artists, historians and critics. These conceptually defined 'objects' not only contribute to postmodern artistic discourse, but define particular forms of art. As Hudek notes, "The object becomes a prism through which to reread contemporary art and better understand its recent past" (ibid. [editor's summary]).

*Excursus*, as already discussed, has a meaning derived by its close etymological relation with the prominent term *discourse* and its usage in postmodern theory. In the context of the abovementioned overview of objects, *excursive objects* are clearly phenomena of perception. They make some analogies with Ferreira Gullar's theory of the non-object: "The non-object is not an anti-object but a special object through which a synthesis of sensorial and mental

experiences is intended to take place. It is a transparent body in terms of phenomenological knowledge: while being entirely perceptible it leaves no trace. It is a pure appearance? All true works of art are in fact non-objects; if this denomination is now adopted it is to enable an emphasis on the problems of current art from a new angle" (Hudek 2014, p. 120). Gullar's theory is intended to describe the perception of abstract and Cubist painting, but his ideas of a "transparent body in terms of phenomenological knowledge", "being entirely perceptible" could be applied to a broad range of media, as he notes that "all true works of art are in fact non-objects". Although both non-objects and excursive objects are related to sensorial and mental experiences, the latter concept also encompasses the idea of the ephemeral character of site-specific installation art, which is perceived in an unstable way, changing its access to the consciousness. Thus, Tzanev's concept is a resourceful addition to the preceding theory on art objects and gains distinctive characteristics of its own.

### 3. Excursive Objects and Visual Perception in Peter Tzanev's Exhibition *Excursive Objects*

What is important for an excursive object is that it creates an experimental model of perception, characterized by instability and working by means of fine-tunings. The *excursive object* is a 'thing', which shows its presence with an explicit direction for its dissemination<sup>4</sup>; it is directed towards the viewer.

The very definition of installation art states that it is designed to create an experience and it requires the viewer's active perception. As Claire Bishop notes, installation art has a psychologically absorptive character, immersing, activating, and decentering the viewing subject (Bishop 2005). She refers to Julie Reiss' book *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art* (Reiss 1999) and suggests that one of the characteristic features of installation art is that "the spectator is in some way regarded as integral to the completion of the work" (Bishop 2005, p. 6). However, Bishop notes that Reiss's point remains undeveloped in her book, and raises many questions that remain unanswered: "Who is the spectator of installation art? What kind of 'participation' does he or she have in the work? Why is installation at pains to emphasize first-hand 'experience', and what kinds of 'experience' does it offer?" (ibid.).

To tackle these questions, Bishop refers to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological propositions on the subject-object relations (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 1974, pp. 77–83). She argues that in order to understand the psychological connection between the viewer and the artwork, one should consider the phenomenological relation between subject and object, which are reciprocally intertwined and interdependent. According to Bishop, "One of the key claims of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is that 'the thing is inseparable from a person perceiving it, and can never be actually in itself because it stands at the other end of our gaze or at the terminus of a sensory exploration which invests it with humanity'" (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 1974, p. 320; Bishop 2005, p. 50). Just as Merleau-Ponty insists that the subject's perception can never be truly distanced—"I do not see [space] according to its exterior envelope, I live it from the inside; I am immersed in it" (Merleau-Ponty [1961] 1964, p. 178; ibid.)—the viewer's subjectivity is an integral part of installation art.

Bishop breaks installation art into four modalities categorized by the type of experience they structure for the viewer: the dream scene, heightened perception, mimetic engulfment, and activated spectatorship (Bishop 2005). In these modalities, sensory immediacy, physical participation and immersion create the experience altogether, or one of them could gain stronger impact than the other. Graham Coulter-Smith (2006) reconsiders Bishop's ideas on immersion and elucidates the abovementioned characteristics of experience. The starting point of his propositions is that the "viewer's phenomenological experience constitutes the content of the work" (Coulter-Smith 2006, Conclusion). According to him, the major characteristic aspect of installation art is the process of putting elements together by projecting subjectivity in three-dimensional images and the viewer's physical participation is of secondary importance (ibid.). The process of perceiving an integral object, however, could be problematic and an artist could intentionally play with it. "What is special about

the ‘walk in and aroundable’ work of art is that the gaze can be divided across a spatially extended distribution of objects, rather than being focused on an integral object” (Coulter-Smith 2006, ch. 4). This “extended distribution of objects” indicates that the process of putting elements together is not easily achievable. Furthermore, as the spectators move in the gallery space and adopt multiple viewpoints, they construct the artwork in a non-linear way (Coulter-Smith 2006, ch. 2). Their active perception attempts to create a fixed and stable configuration between the ambiguous elements in the installation.

Tzanev’s notion of the *excursive object* enters this theoretical line of exploring the constitution of the artwork and outlines some more characteristic features. According to his concept, in installation art like his one, any configurations are only temporary and the subject is in constant struggle to maintain them. As already mentioned, this instability of perception can be explored in the phenomenological sources as the subject–object relation. As Merleau-Ponty notes, “Our perception ends in objects, and the object once constituted, appears as the reason for all the experiences of it which we have had or could have” (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 1974, p. 77). When discussing visibility, he points out: “To see an object is either to have it on the fringe of the visual field and be able to concentrate on it, or else respond to this summons by actually concentrating upon it” (ibid. p. 78). Therefore, a stable perception is dependent on stable and accessible objects. Thus, a reasonable question raised by contemporary conceptual art is: “How do we refer to objects lacking visibility, and furthermore, lacking a clear and stable appearance?” As Tzanev notes, they cannot “be supported by narrative structures of communication” (Tzanev 2018). If we have to define and refer to an *excursive object* on the subject–object axis, it does not fall in either of these two gravitational extremes, but rather belongs to the invisible and subtle intermediary levels. This vast space, whose end points have been marked by language as ‘subject’ and ‘object’, is populated by specific mentalities, fleeting *excursive* phenomena and experiences.

Peter Tzanev has similarly provoked the potential theoretical fields in his earlier works, where he entered the in-between space of familiar forms of phenomenological givenness. *Discontinuation of the Subject* (2014) provokes an attempt to reach an inaccessible point of view, whose constructiveness would indeed be possible if the viewer were able to rise 50 cm above the ground. *Disconnecting of the Object* (2015) (Figure 1) affects with its hyper-intensified perceptiveness, enhanced by a photograph that corrects the point of view up to a stage when representation comes to disconnect the givenness of the object. In *Excursive Objects*, perception is neither physically restricted nor purposefully intensified. Here, the viewing subjects resign under the pressure of their own weight upon the object. In the experience of trying to put the evasive objects together, the viewers are directed towards another, imaginary perceptive interaction and towards an imaginary intentionality, unsusceptible to the gravitational traps of the subject–object axis.

In his book *The Power of the Center*, Rudolf Arnheim ([1983] 1984) analyzes the viewer as a perceptive center, which sends out vectors towards artistic objects. This classical notion seems inapplicable to Claire Bishop and Graham Coulter-Smith and their postmodern reflection on the intertwining and decentered subject and object in the perception of installation art. However, through such traditional gestalt notions one can better understand the instability of excursive objects. Arnheim insists that perception brings forth centric (gravitational and eccentric) dynamic forces (Arnheim [1983] 1984, pp. 2–3, 13–21). In his theory, the artwork also sends out its ‘vectors’, which act upon the viewers and determine the dynamics of their approach and receding (Arnheim [1983] 1984, pp. 5–8). When the viewers leave their position as a center and interrupt their own activity, the object starts operating with its own structure independently of the subject. The artwork expands its activity and attains subjective traits. A perceptually stable artwork creates a comfortable distance and balances off these vectors. *Excursive Objects* are its contrary—they are the perfect perceptually unstable artwork. They are impermanent in their accessibility. The configurations seem to come to the surface of experience and then to disappear again.





**Figure 1.** Peter Tzanev, *Disconnecting of the Object*, 2015, installation art, Goethe Institut, Sofia, Bulgaria. © Author's personal collection.

#### 4. Peter Tzanev's Exhibition *Excursive Objects*

Putting aside the highly theoretical concept discussed above, Tzanev's exhibition welcomes every viewer with its material ordinariness. Its expressive means have been influenced by post-minimalism and arte povera. The excursive objects do not let the subject construct the artwork as in Coulter-Smith's definition of art installation (Coulter-Smith 2006). Neither do they follow the theatricality of the installation according to Michael Fried's definition (Fried 1967). Rather than in sculptural and spatial terms, the elements act upon the viewer through the entangled, multidimensional space of the pictorial plane, coded around distinct graphic elements. This sense is further intensified through the inclusion of two photographic canvas prints. The installation could emerge as an 'object drawing', which is concise and graphic, featuring a few geometric accents.

The work was created in three days, during which Tzanev built an improvised composition from light everyday objects he had at hand in the gallery. The toolbox consists of canvas (two photographs and stretched canvas), mixed plastic (trims, two boxes), plastic foam (rubber sponge), and mixed materials such as metal, wood, and polyester (chair, plinths, brush) (Figure 2). The objects' functionality is not overcome through the mechanical displacement and re-contextualization typical of the ready-made's prefabricated formula, but rather through an artistic improvisation in the act of arranging various elements in a complex configuration. The composition engenders visual lightness, delicate interrelations and even uncanny tensions.



**Figure 2.** Peter Tzanev, *Excursive Objects*, 2018, installation art, Credo Bonum Gallery, Sofia, Bulgaria. © Author's personal collection.

The most easily discernible supra-visual (and *excursive*) object places the viewer on an unstable ground. The floor is visually raised by means of several elements that are grouped according to gestalt principles in a subjective horizontal line. This mental orientation device proves to be unstable. In his book *The Power of the Center*, Rudolf Arnheim ([1983] 1984, pp. 36–43) discusses the dominion of the horizontal line as a source of physical activity, movement and action which, in the exhibition space, is used to explore the *excursive object*. The viewer finds himself in an indeterminate psychological zone; the attempt to 'step on' the elements arranged on the floor also turns out to be challenging. These elements are placed below the line of sight which, according to Arnheim, increases an impression of over-accessibility (Arnheim [1983] 1984, pp. 38–39). The entry into their concrete materiality, however, acts as a form of departure from the psychological work of art. This sense is reinforced through a composition of two plinths and of vertical elements. Gradually, the power of each element as a center subsides and a multitude of 'departing' objects takes over. All elements come to participate in the struggle for visibility. The repetitive vertical elements interrupt the integrity of the space below the line of sight. The excursive objects combine a phenomenal experience from different moments and points of view, but are never assembled according to gestalt principles as they continue their paths in different directions. The well-known postulate of gestalt theory that *the whole is more than the sum of its parts as it includes their relations* is radically overturned. As the elements have more substance than the composition, their arrangement into a whole would imply a reduction of the excursive objects and their rich non-conceptual content. Over time, the material ordinariness of these elements stands out as if to shelter them from the dematerialization of the artwork, which is characteristic of conceptualism (Lippard 1973).

The most active excursive object in the exhibition (Figure 3) is the one that acts as a commentary to Joseph Kosuth's legendary conceptual work *One and Three Chairs* (1965). There are two photographs of the object drawing (composed of a chair and a broomstick), which are shot from different angles and function as a 'drawing within a drawing'. The pictures do not objectify the chair and do not exclude any subjectivity, as in Kosuth's work, but rather confront two visual statements: the chair is at first an isolated independent object and then—a central figure of the complex composition. The isolated object brings constancy

of perception, whereas the complex composition counteracts the constancy of perception with newly emerging excursive elements. These *excursive objects* act as imaginary stimuli, which on the contrary to Foucault's *discursive objects* cannot be synthesized or inscribed into cognitive schemes. Thus, perception holds these 'stimuli' at a pre-conceptual level. They rather engender small, invisible, yet tangible collapses of perceptive constancy and its accommodating patterns. As the installation art which resists these patterns is composed of common everyday objects, the viewers overcome their familiar relationship towards them. The banality of these objects renders the rational inaccessibility of their infinite multitude more bearable. Within the gallery space, this difficulty is, however, evaded by means of a scarcity of elements. Instead of reaching a critical state, as would be the case in a real environment, the imperceptible presence and givenness of *excursive objects* in the gallery creates a perceptive dilemma and hinders the constructive action of the subjective point of view (Arnheim [1983] 1984, ch. 3, pp. 36–50).



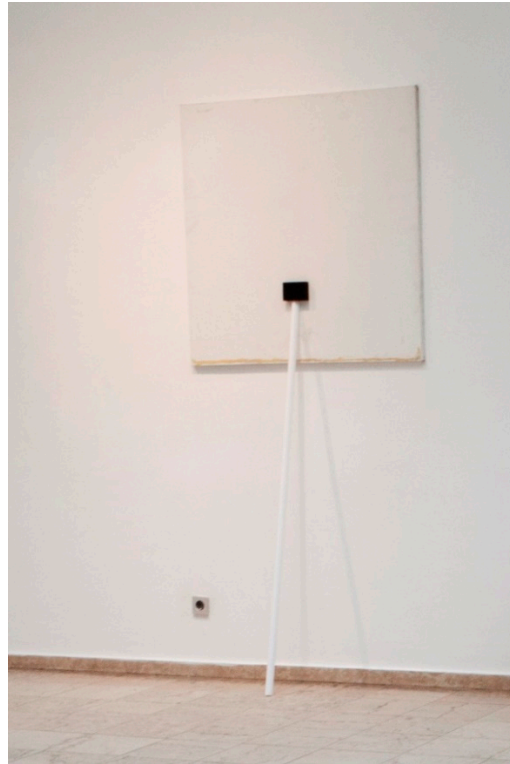
**Figure 3.** Peter Tzanev, *Excursive Objects*, 2018, installation art, Credo Bonum Gallery, Sofia, Bulgaria. © Author's personal collection.

The small scale and visual lightness of *Excursive Objects* prompts a subjective activity. This is, however, a phenomenal trap, because excursive objects transport the attention invested in them on the terrain of their inaccessibility. In this way, subjective ruptures in experience emerge—unclear psychological zones between the impossible gestalt and the cognition that is put on halt. Here, the experience of the viewer enters a new route. We come to such works of contemporary art in galleries with a set of expectations, relational knowledge, and schemata (Minissale 2013, p. xxxi). However, as the excursive objects work outside of the fixed perceptive models, gestalts and contextual factors, they are clearing away accumulated apperception.

As the *excursive objects* exert their influence on the viewers, they cleanse their perception from the matrixes of the ordinary and from informational noise. They interrupt stock models of perception with their fixed banal internal relations and meanings. Moreover, although “we cannot take [them] with us at home, explain to someone or transfer to the museum” (Tzanev 2018), *excursive objects* remind us that banality (as source of material for the exhibition) is abundant with inexhaustible things—always in our vicinity and awaiting our senses. Their content remains inaccessible, yet their experience works as a rerouting of



perception towards the unexplored. The excursive objects in the gallery invite precisely such exploratory acts. They seduce the subject to 'lift' the vertical axis marking the space's parameters (a trim propped up on a canvas) in order to count its shadows (Figure 4). Are there one or three shadows? And is this a conceptual question, an enticing illusion or merely a shadow, recalling art as a different kind of phenomenal existence?



**Figure 4.** Peter Tzanev, *Excursive Objects*, 2018, installation art, Credo Bonum Gallery, Sofia, Bulgaria. © Author's personal collection.

## 5. Conclusions

Peter Tzanev's psychological art develops an original theoretical and artistic approach exploring subtle aspects of perception. He finds expression in post-minimalism's everyday objects and has developed an artful irony towards its characteristic principles, such as the accessibility of objects or the activity on behalf of the viewer. In *Excursive Objects*, the specific visual language of installation art has been riskily put to work in the direction of an unexplored and supra-visual territory in the phenomenal experience. It constructs unclear psychological zones, in which the subjective perception cannot create a stable artwork and furthermore, cognition is suspended. Both subjective independence and objective givenness are re-evaluated without a clear formula of interdependence. Moreover, in a speculative manner, his work questions principles of artistic communication. As noted in Tzanev's concept, it does not support "narrative structures of communication", nor does it enter the registers of discursive formations. It parries any preconceived forms of communication, and challenges the viewers in a subtle play with their perception and cognitive attempts.

*Excursive Objects* are a postmodern conceptual synthesis employing an innovative approach through which Tzanev addresses questions of perception in the psychology of contemporary art. However, he does not have the pretense of solving any philosophical or psychological problems, but rather to more clearly and provocatively address them. They do not draw historical conclusions about the fate of the artistic object or the viewing subject, but rather create interesting and experimental psychological perspectives. *Excursive Objects* provide a resourceful concept and a visual commentary for a specialized professional

audience. They prompt psychological approaches to interpretation and reveal the broad perspective of contemporary art to explore and innovate philosophical and psychological terms.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Data Availability Statement:** Not applicable.

**Acknowledgments:** I would like to thank Yasna Bozhkova for her encouragement and careful reading of this article, and the two anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments and suggestions.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The notion that an artwork is being ‘constructed’ by active viewers echoes the postmodern theories of conceptual, social, etc., constructs and directly addresses Coulter-Smith’s idea that the “viewer’s phenomenological experience constitutes the content of the work” (Coulter-Smith 2006, Conclusion). The term ‘construct’ is important to the discussion in the article, which explores the ambiguities and unstable character of the viewer’s perception in its attempts to constitute a fixed image (see ch. 3).
- <sup>2</sup> Fr. “objet de discours”, translated as *discursive object* or *discourse object*. This denotes what is being talked about in a discursive textual formation, a statement with semantic relations. See ch. 2 of the article.
- <sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Helsingier is specific about the attention in excursive seeing: the sight moves “from detail to detail, from view to view, through a gradual unfolding of the landscape”, “excursiveness becomes a way of seeing implicit in the views themselves” (Helsingier 1982, ch. 3).
- <sup>4</sup> The concept of dissemination is particular to postmodern theory. Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle note that it is another way of thinking about postmodern fragmentation: “Dissemination involves a sense of scattering (as in a scattering of seeds or ‘seeds’), a scattering of origins and ends, of identity, centre and presence. Postmodern fragmentation is without origins, it is dissemination without any assurance of a centre or destination” (Bennett and Royle [1995] 2004, p. 251).

## References

- Arnheim, Rudolf. 1984. *The Power of the Center: A Study of Composition in the Visual Arts*. Oakland: University of California Press. First published 1983.
- Bennett, Andrew, and Nicholas Royle. 2004. *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*. Harlow: Pearson Longman. First published 1995.
- Bishop, Claire. 2005. *Installation Art a Critical History*. London: Tate.
- Coulter-Smith, Graham. 2006. *Deconstructing Installation Art: Fine Art and Media Art, 1986–2006*. Southampton: CASIAD. Available online: <https://web.archive.org/web/20180430124414/http://www.installationart.net/index.html> (accessed on 15 October 2022).
- Deleuze, Gilles. 2018. *Foucault: Lecture 2, 29 October 1985*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Research Repository. [CrossRef]
- Foucault, Michel. 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Harper & Row. First published 1971.
- Fried, Michael. 1967. Art and Objecthood. In *Artforum*. New York: Artforum Media, LLC, vol. 5, no. 10. p. 21.
- Groo, Katherine. 2019. *Bad Film Histories: Ethnography and the Early Archive*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Helsingier, Elizabeth K. 1982. *Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Available online: <https://victorianweb.org/authors/ruskin/artofthebeholder/3.html> (accessed on 24 October 2022).
- Hudek, Anthony. 2014. *The Object*. London and Cambridge: Whitechapel Gallery and the MIT Press.
- Lippard, Lucy. 1973. *The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*. New York: Praeger.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1964. *Eye and Mind*. In Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Primacy of Perception*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press. First published 1961.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1974. *Phenomenology of Perception*. New York: Routledge & K. Paul. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press. First published 1945.
- Minissale, Gregory. 2013. *The Psychology of Contemporary Art*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Reiss, Julie. 1999. *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art*. London and Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Tzanev, Peter. 2018. *Excursive Objects*. [Exhibition Text] Credo Bonum Gallery, Sofia. April 4–29. Available online: <https://artfacts.net/exhibition/peter-tzanev:-excursive-objects/1042124> (accessed on 27 September 2022).

**Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.