

Hungarian University of Fine Arts

Doctoral School

# **Critical Perspectivism in the Light of Post-Factual Phenomena**

The theses of the DLA dissertation

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## **The topics of the research**

My doctoral research focuses on two main topics, *post-factuality* and *perspectivism*, which have been important aspects of both my creative practice and the artistic research behind it for years. I have been following the phenomenon of *post-truth* since it first emerged in the public sphere, systematically researching it since 2017, and examining it within the framework of my doctoral studies since the fall of 2018. Perspectivism and the underlying spatial sensitivity have fundamentally influenced my artistic practice and my way of thinking for over 10 years since I graduated. The connection between these two topics has been evident to me from the beginning, so I have continuously incorporated various aspects of it into my artworks and exhibitions, which typically focus on the confrontation of imagery and spatiality, or specifically address the problematic nature of visual sources and medial transformations.

## **The objectives of the research**

In my doctoral dissertation, I primarily aimed to establish the concept of *critical perspectivism* and outline the framework within which the concepts of *imagery*, *appearance*, and *fact* are interpreted not in isolation but in the context of *spatiality*, *reality*, and *truth*. Instead of focusing on the obvious aspects of image- and art theory or epistemology, I attempted to illuminate the impact and relevance of these concepts on our everyday lives. In doing so, I also sought to outline and collate the highly complex and elusive post-factual condition with the aforementioned observations.

Initially, I tried to expand the considerations primarily related to the political and social sphere and offer an interpretation that focuses on our relationship to reality, and how one can grasp and represent it. I see the manipulative and misleading potential of this relationship as fundamentally tied to visual logic. In my view, this has a natural layer that stems from the functioning of human perception and thought, and another, consciously applied layer that exploits visuality, using it as a tool or even as a weapon to achieve its own – sometimes nefarious – objectives.

Part of my goal was to showcase in the dissertation those best practices that, beyond the artistic context, can provide examples rooted in physical reality and have real stakes as well. According to my research, these are mostly based on a multi-view, walk-around, perspectival approach, which, when coupled with appropriate spatial awareness and sensitivity, results in coherent spatial reconstructions that are much closer to the ideals of clarity and certainty than what can be achieved with traditional, single-view visual logic.

### **The thesis statements of the dissertation**

1. The relationship between imagery and spatiality is analogous to the concepts of *appearance* and *reality*, as well as *fact* and *truth*. From this perspective, certain post-factual phenomena can also be interpreted when examined through the instrumentalization of the logic of images.
2. The various modes of image creation and the technologies behind them are continually expanding towards spatiality, utilizing and harnessing its features. However, they have primarily become tools for creating fiction and spatial illusions. To fully take advantage of the potential inherent in spatiality and multi-view perspectives, greater spatial awareness and a commitment to clarification are both necessary.
3. Critical perspectivism creates an opportunity to anchor images to reality, allowing for the reconstruction and verification of past situations through their spatial synthesis, and exposing manipulations that rely on single-view visual logic.

## **The structure of my dissertation**

The structure of my dissertation follows this outline: In Chapter 2, I introduce the concepts I intend to use and clarify any potential misunderstandings surrounding them. In the subsequent three chapters, I explore the interrelationships of the key concepts, specifically focusing on the relationships between imagery and spatiality, post-factual phenomena and visual logic, and the connections between post-factual phenomena, spatiality, and critical perspectivism.

The questions outlined by my theses span across these chapters, acting as a framework that ties them together. For instance, in Chapter 3, I present my first thesis, which examines the analogous relationship between the concepts of imagery, appearance, and fact in the context of spatiality, reality, and truth. This relationship can then be connected to the set of post-factual phenomena and tactics that clearly operate according to a form of single-view visual logic – though I will delve deeper into this in Chapter 4.

My second thesis is partially interwoven and originates from Chapter 3, where I outline the technological developments that have contributed to the visual world surrounding us since the 2000s, which we recognize from various films, advertisements, or user-shared static and moving content on social media. Continuing this line of thought, I examine the advancements and examples that have played a role in capturing, representing, and visualizing spatiality, through which imagery has extended its toolkit into the realm of spatiality. Within this, my primary interest lies in whether the multiperspectival, rotatable, or walkable content has automatically contributed to fully harnessing the advantages of greater spatial awareness, or if they have merely become tools for fiction creation and spatial illusion, serving as a novel form of spectacle. Chapter 5 will provide a counterpoint to this by discussing the practical examples of OSINT and the practice of Forensic Architecture, which, in my opinion, convincingly demonstrate that the approach they employ can achieve tangible results in unraveling certain contentious or particularly problematic cases.

This, in turn, directly relates to my third thesis, which, in the context of Chapter 4 – dealing with fake news, disinformation, conspiracy theories, and artificially generated doubt – explores whether critical perspectivism offers the potential to anchor images to reality in some way. I attempt to demonstrate that with the right approach and tools (greater spatial awareness and the spatial synthesis of images), it is indeed possible to reconstruct and verify certain situations from the past, and even reveal some of the manipulations that rely on single-view image-based visual logic.

## **The results of the dissertation**

One of the main goals of my doctoral dissertation was to summarize, both for myself and for those interested in the topic, the framework of ideas and connections that have taken shape in my mind over the years. This research and the process of writing the dissertation have refined these thoughts significantly, introduced several new and important insights, and enriched the work with what I consider to be vivid and relevant examples that I might not have otherwise encountered. These developments have obviously had an inspiring impact on my artistic practice throughout the process, and I hope they will continue to provide fertile ground for the creation of new works in the future. I also hope that my observations will offer fresh perspectives, useful contributions, or valuable insights to professionals shaping the discourse in the relevant academic fields beyond the artistic domain.